

## Notice of Meeting and Agenda Education and Children's Services Policy Board

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 15 January 2026	13:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

MARK CONAGHAN  
Head of Corporate Governance

### Membership

Councillor Emma Rodden (Convener): Councillor Jim Paterson (Depute Convener):

Councillor Jennifer Adam: Councillor Fiona Airlie-Nicolson: Ms Mary Jane Bird: Provost Lorraine Cameron: Councillor Carolann Davidson: Councillor Audrey Doig: Councillor Edward Grady: Councillor Gillian Graham: Councillor Neill Graham: Councillor Anne Hannigan: Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes: Councillor David McGonigle: Councillor Marie McGurk: Councillor Iain McMillan: Mr Jack Nellaney: Councillor Iain Nicolson: Mr Ravinder Singh: Councillor Ben Smith:

### Hybrid Meeting

Please note that this meeting is scheduled to be held in the Council Chambers. However, it is a hybrid meeting and arrangements have been made for members to join the meeting remotely should they wish.

### Members of the Press and Public

Members of the press and public wishing to attend the meeting should report to the customer service centre where they will be met and directed to the meeting.

## **Further Information**

This is a meeting which is open to members of the public.

A copy of the agenda and reports for this meeting will be available for inspection prior to the meeting at the Customer Service Centre, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley and online at <http://renfrewshire.cmis.uk.com/renfrewshire/CouncilandBoards.aspx>

For further information, please email [democratic-services@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:democratic-services@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

## **Webcasting of Meeting**

This meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site – at the start of the meeting the Convener will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed. To find the webcast please navigate to

<https://renfrewshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

## Items of business

### Apologies

Apologies from members.

### Declarations of Interest and Transparency Statements

Members are asked to declare an interest or make a transparency statement in any item(s) on the agenda and to provide a brief explanation of the nature of the interest or the transparency statement.

- |          |  |                |
|----------|--|----------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring</b>   | <b>4 - 13</b>  |
|          | Joint report by the Director of Finance & Resources and the Director of Children's Services. |                |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Early Learning and Childcare Consultation - 2025</b>                                      | <b>14 - 39</b> |
|          | Report by the Director of Children's Services.   |                |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) Level Return 2024</b>              | <b>40 - 51</b> |
|          | Report by the Director of Children's Services.   |                |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Learning Estate Programme Update</b>  | <b>52 - 55</b> |
|          | Report by the Director of Children's Services.   |                |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Annual report Fostering and Adoption Panels</b>   | <b>56 - 85</b> |
|          | Report by the Director of Children's Services.   |                |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together Annual Report</b>                                   | <b>86 - 90</b> |
|          | Report by the Director of Children's Services.   |                |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Education Scotland Inspection of St James Primary School Paisley</b>                      | <b>91 - 96</b> |
|          | Report by the Director of Children's Services.   |                |



**To:** Education and Children's Services Policy Board

**On:** 15 January 2026

**Report by:** Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Children's Services

**Heading:** Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring as at 14 November 2025

## 1. Summary of Financial Position

- 1.1. The projected Revenue outturn at 31 March 2026 for Children's Services is an overspend of £1.061m (0.4%) against the revised budget for the year.
- 1.2. The projected Capital outturn at 31 March 2026 for Children's Services is a break-even position.
- 1.3. This is summarised in the table below and further analysis is provided in the Appendices.

<b>Table 1: Revenue</b>				
<b>Division</b>	<b>Revised Annual Budget £m</b>	<b>Projected Outturn £m</b>	<b>Budget Variance £m</b>	<b>Budget Variance %</b>
Children's Services	278.118	279.179	(1.061)	(0.4%)

<b>Table 2: Capital</b>				
<b>Division</b>	<b>Revised Annual Budget £m</b>	<b>Projected Outturn £m</b>	<b>Budget Variance £m</b>	<b>Budget Variance %</b>
Children's Services	53.194	53.194	0	0%

## 2. Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- 2.1. Note the projected Revenue outturn position for Children's Services detailed in Table 1 above;
- 2.2. Note the projected Capital outturn position for Children's Services detailed in Table 2 above; and
- 2.3. Approve the Premises Related budget virements totalling £0.110m set out at section 6.3.

### **3. Children's Services Revenue Budget Projection - overspend of £1.061m by 31 March 2026**

- 3.1. The Revenue Budget Monitoring report at Appendix 1 identifies a projected annual overspend of £1.061m (0.4% of total budget).
- 3.2. It should be noted that the projected outturn position reported here is based on the latest information available, which is subject to change during the financial year. The impact of any change on this projection will be updated at each board cycle. Budget holders are obliged to seek mitigating action to minimise significant budget variances.

### **4. Objective Analysis - Significant Variances**

#### **4.1. Early Learning & Childcare - £0.450m underspend**

Employee Costs are currently projected to underspend, mainly due to vacancies. This is partly offset by a projected overspend in Transfer Payments, due to projected payments to partner providers. These will continue to be reviewed throughout the year with management.

#### **4.2. Primary Schools - £0.536m overspend**

Employee costs, Premises costs and Transport costs are currently projected to overspend. The Employee costs overspend relates to teaching staffing, the overspend in Premises costs is due to janitorial supplies being greater than budget and the Transport costs overspend is due to the SPT school transport contract being greater than available budget.

#### **4.3. Secondary Schools - £0.588m overspend**

Employee costs, and Transport costs are currently projected to overspend. The Employee costs overspend relates to teaching staffing and the Transport costs overspend is due to the SPT school transport contract being greater than available budget.

#### **4.4. ASN Schools - £0.233m overspend**

Employee costs and Premises costs are currently projected to overspend. The Employee costs overspend is due to teaching staffing and Premises costs overspend is due to janitorial supplies being greater than available budget.

#### **4.5. Additional Support for Learning - £0.598m overspend**

Employee costs are currently projected to overspend, mainly arising from an increase in demand for Additional Support Needs Assistants (ASNAs) within mainstream schools. Transport costs are currently projected to overspend, partly due to demand and partly due to increased cost of provision.

#### **4.6. Children & Families - £0.416m underspend**

Employee Costs and Third-Party Payments are currently projected to underspend, and these are partly offset by projected overspends in Supplies and Services and Transfer Payments. The underspend Employee costs is mainly due to turnover and the underspend in Third Party Payments relates to

Fostering & Adoption, where the number of fostering and kinship arrangements is less than previously predicted. The Supplies and Services projected overspend mainly relates to demand for both Care at Home for children with additional support needs, and payments to care leavers. The overspend in Transfer payments relates to Direct Payments and Section 22 payments across localities.

## **5. Subjective Analysis - Significant Variances**

### **5.1. Employees - £0.429m overspend**

Overspends are currently projected in teaching staffing across Primary, Secondary and ASN schools, and are partly offset by underspends in Early Learning & Childcare and Additional Support for Learning. The cost impact of the Scottish Government's commitment to reduce class contact time has still to be factored into the projections, and this will be kept under review as the year progresses and the actual impact on teacher numbers becomes clear. Projected overspends arise in non-teaching staffing in Additional Support for Learning due to the demand for Additional Support Needs Assistants (ASNAs) and are partly offset by projected underspends in Early Learning & Childcare and Children & Families, mainly due to vacancies and staffing turnover.

### **5.2. Premises Related - £0.380m overspend**

The overspend in Premises costs is mainly due to increased janitorial costs across the school estate.

### **5.3. Transport Related - £1.077m overspend**

The overspend in Transport costs is due to SPT contracts for both mainstream school transport and ASN transport being higher than available budget, predominantly caused by price inflation and, to a lesser extent, by an increasing number of children requiring transport.

### **5.4. Third Party Payments - £1.451m underspend**

The projected underspend in Third Party Payments relates mainly to fostering, adoption and kinship, and will be kept under review throughout the year.

### **5.5. Transfer Payments - £0.906m overspend**

The projected overspend in Transfer payments relates to Early Learning & Childcare in relation to payments to partner providers, and to Children & Families in relation to Direct Payments and Section 22 payments, which are demand-driven. This will be kept under review throughout the year.

### **5.6. Income - £0.278m over-recovery**

An over-recovery of income is currently projected within Primary and Secondary schools, in relation to insurance premium rebates within schools PPP contracts.

## 6. Revenue Budget Adjustments

- 6.1. Under the Council's financial regulations, Directors and their nominated officers, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources, have certain delegated authority to transfer sums between subjective budget headings within a service division to enable budget management throughout the financial year. This is known as 'budget virement'.
- 6.2. Transfers between divisions of the same service / department in excess of £100,000, and transfers between services / departments must be authorised by the respective service Director and the Director of Finance and Resources for submission to the relevant policy board for approval.
- 6.3. The Director now seeks approval from the Board for the following affected virements since the last report:

<b>Revenue Budget Adjustments</b>			
<b>Objective Heading</b>	<b>Subjective Heading</b>	<b>Amount (£m)</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Children's Services	Premises Related	(0.110)	Corporate Landlord transfers to Environment, Housing and Infrastructure relating to small repair projects

- 6.4. The remaining budget adjustments are either within delegation, or in line with the earmarking of funds set aside in the 2025/26 budget motion and the allocation of centrally held budgets already approved.

## 7. Capital Budget Projection - break-even position by 31 March 2026

- 7.1. The Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30 was approved by the Council on 27 February 2025. Education and Children's Services' revised Capital spend for 2024/25 is £53.194m.
- 7.2. The in-year Capital budget is forecast to break even by 31 March 2026. However, this will be monitored as the projects progress. Further details of the programme can be found in the Capital Monitoring report at Appendix 3.
- 7.3. There are no budget adjustments to report since the previous board report.

## Implications of this report

### 1. Financial

The projected budget outturn position for Children's Services' Revenue budget is an overspend of £1.061m. Income and expenditure will continue to be monitored closely for the rest of the financial year and steps will be taken to mitigate any overspend, including virement, applying flexibility within specific grant funding as permitted by the Scottish Government, and potential use of earmarked reserves.

The projected outturn position for Children's Services' Capital budget is a break-even position. The Capital programme will continue to be monitored closely for the rest of the financial year.

### 2. HR and Organisational Development

While staffing budgets form a significant proportion of the Council's revenue budgets, there are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

### 3. Community/Council Planning

<b>Community Plan</b>	
Our Renfrewshire is thriving	The Council's revenue and capital spend ensures that its facilities are fit for purpose and safe for the community, to maximise accessibility.
Our Renfrewshire is well	
Our Renfrewshire is fair	
Our Renfrewshire is safe	
<b>Council Plan</b>	
Reshaping our place, our economy, and our future	The Council's revenue and capital spend ensures that its facilities are fit for purpose and safe for the community, to maximise accessibility.
Building strong, safe, and resilient communities	
Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all	
Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy	Ongoing revenue and capital budget monitoring is a tool to enable good financial management so that the Council has resources now and in the future for continued service delivery.
Working together to improve outcomes	

### 4. Legal

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**5. Property/Assets**

The capital expenditure noted in this report will result in lifecycle maintenance improvements to existing properties and replacement of ICT assets and infrastructure.

**6. Information Technology**

While ICT assets and revenue costs are included within these reported budgets, there are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**7. Equality and Human Rights**

While new areas of spend may impact on particular groups, any such impact would be assessed prior to the spend being incurred, therefore there are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**8. Health and Safety**

The capital expenditure noted in this report will result in lifecycle maintenance improvements to existing properties and replacement of ICT assets, which may in some cases improve health and safety arrangements.

**9. Procurement**

While Procurement is an important consideration prior to the Council incurring any revenue or capital spend, there are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**10. Risk**

The potential risk that the Council will overspend its approved budgets for the year will be managed at a Council-wide level by the Chief Executive and Directors.

**11. Privacy Impact**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**12. Children's Rights**

There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**13. Climate Risk**

The Council aims to reduce its carbon and other emissions to net zero by 2030, however there are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**14. CoSLA Policy Position**

n/a

**List of Background Papers:**

- Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2025/26, Council 27 February 2025
- Capital Investment Programme 2025/26 to 2029/30, Council 27 February 2025

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Linsey McGregor, Capital Accountant

**RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT 2025/26**  
**1 April 2025 to 14 November 2025**

**POLICY BOARD : EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Objective Summary	Annual Budget at Period 6	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget at Period 8	Projected Outturn	Budget Variance (Adverse) or Favourable		Previous Projected Outturn Variance	Movement
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	%	£000	£000
Directorate	1,453	9	1,462	1,463	(1)	(0.1%)	(2)	1
Early learning and childcare	36,552	(235)	36,317	35,867	450	1.2%	677	(227)
Primary	71,840	(463)	71,377	71,913	(536)	(0.8%)	(590)	54
Secondary	97,369	446	97,815	98,403	(588)	(0.6%)	(97)	(491)
ASN Schools	8,552	67	8,619	8,852	(233)	(2.7%)	(84)	(149)
Additional support for learning (ASL)	20,704	165	20,869	21,467	(598)	(2.9%)	(441)	(157)
Psychological services	1,423	0	1,423	1,423	0	0.0%	0	0
Education development	2,195	2	2,197	2,166	31	1.4%	0	31
Attainment Challenge	(702)	(1)	(703)	(703)	0	0.0%	0	0
Facilities management	532	(27)	505	507	(2)	(0.4%)	43	(45)
Children & Families	38,271	(34)	38,237	37,821	416	1.1%	340	76
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>278,189</b>	<b>(71)</b>	<b>278,118</b>	<b>279,179</b>	<b>(1,061)</b>	<b>(0.4%)</b>	<b>(154)</b>	<b>(907)</b>

**RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT 2025/26**  
**1 April 2025 to 14 November 2025**

**POLICY BOARD : EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Subjective Summary	Annual Budget at Period 6	Budget Adjustments	Revised Annual Budget at Period 8	Projected Outturn	Budget Variance (Adverse) or Favourable		Previous Projected Outturn Variance	Movement
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	%	£000	£000
Employees	197,854	284	198,138	198,567	(429)	(0.2%)	233	(662)
Premises Related	12,506	(57)	12,449	12,829	(380)	(3.1%)	(355)	(25)
Transport Related	7,285	24	7,309	8,386	(1,077)	(14.7%)	(807)	(270)
Supplies and Services	30,993	12	31,005	30,973	32	0.1%	(102)	134
Third Party Payments	17,818	0	17,818	16,367	1,451	8.1%	1,522	(71)
Transfer Payments	17,000	(103)	16,897	17,803	(906)	(5.4%)	(1,243)	337
Support Services	1,103	0	1,103	1,133	(30)	(2.7%)	(49)	19
<b>GROSS EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>284,559</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>284,719</b>	<b>286,058</b>	<b>(1,339)</b>	<b>(0.5%)</b>	<b>(801)</b>	<b>(538)</b>
Income	(6,370)	(231)	(6,601)	(6,879)	278	4.2%	647	(369)
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>278,189</b>	<b>(71)</b>	<b>278,118</b>	<b>279,179</b>	<b>(1,061)</b>	<b>(0.4%)</b>	<b>(154)</b>	<b>(907)</b>

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL  
CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY - NON-HOUSING SERVICES  
1st April to 14th November 2025  
POLICY BOARD: EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Project Title	Prior Years Expenditure to 31/03/2025  £000	Current Year 2025-26					Full Programme - All years						
		Approved Budget 2025-26  £000	Budget Adjustments since previous Board report  £000	Revised Budget 2025-26  £000	Projected Outturn 2025-26  £000	Budget Variance (Adverse) or Favourable	Total Approved Budget to 31-Mar-30  £000	Projected Outturn to 31-Mar-30  £000	Budget Variance (Adverse) or Favourable				
<b>EDUCATION &amp; CHILDREN SERVICES</b>													
Primary Schools Estate Programme(SEMP)	10,544	80	0	80	80	0	0%	10,623	10,623	0	0%		
Paisley Grammar New Campus	34,582	42,000	0	42,000	42,000	0	0%	85,600	85,600	0	0%		
Thorn PS New Build	309	273	0	273	273	0	0%	14,000	14,000	0	0%		
Dargavel Extension (Modular Units)	2,237	12	0	12	12	0	0%	2,250	2,250	0	0%		
Thistle Primary School	1,116	7,634	0	7,634	7,634	0	0%	45,000	45,000	0	0%		
Other Schools Investment Programmes	0	95	0	95	95	0	0%	95	95	0	0%		
Total Schools Estate(inc Early Years) Programme	1,553	270	0	270	270	0	0%	1,823	1,823	0	0%		
PMHS Extension	672	1,750	0	1,750	1,750	0	0%	36,894	36,894	0	0%		
ELCC Improvements	6	82	0	82	82	0	0%	88	88	0	0%		
Technology Replacement Strategy ICT	0	998	0	998	998	0	0%	4,998	4,998	0	0%		
<b>TOTAL EDUCATION &amp; CHILDREN'S SERVICES BOARD</b>	<b>51,019</b>	<b>53,194</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53,194</b>	<b>53,194</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>201,371</b>	<b>201,371</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>		



**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 15 January 2026**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Early Learning and Childcare Consultation - 2025**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires local authorities to consult every 2 years with representative populations of parents and carers on how mandatory early learning and childcare, day care, out-of-school care and discretionary services should be made available.
  - 1.2 This report advises on the findings of the early learning and childcare consultation carried out by Renfrewshire Council. Data collection began on 1 September until the 13 October 2025. The consultation report is attached as appendix one to this report.
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## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Service Policy Board is asked to note the findings of the early learning and childcare consultation - 2025, which is attached as an appendix to this report.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Part 6 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to consult representative populations of parents and carers on how mandatory early learning and childcare should be made available and to publish plans for future delivery in response to the consultations. Parts 7 and 8 of the Act also requires an authority to consult representative populations of parents on how discretionary early learning and childcare (under the 1980 Act) and discretionary day care and out-of-school care for children not in need (under the 1995 Act) should be provided and supported.

- 3.2 There is a requirement to consult every 2 years and to publish plans in response to these consultations.
- 3.3 Renfrewshire Council has continued to comply with the duty of the 2014 Act, with the last consultation carried out in autumn 2023. Findings from previous surveys have been used by the council to support the planning and delivery of early learning and childcare services.
- 3.4 The current and most recent online survey carried out by Renfrewshire Council from between 1 September and middle of October 2024 sought the views of parents and carers on early learning and childcare and out-of-school care provision. Questions were designed to gather information on current and future usage of early learning and childcare 0 to 14 years, parental perceptions and barriers to accessing provision. The survey was structured to provide information within three categories: needs and services for parents of children accessing early learning and childcare, those accessing out-of-school care, and the needs of parents considering early learning and childcare and/or out-of-school care in the next 2 years. The survey included a number of closed questions.
- 3.5 Appendix one provides the overall findings from the 2025 survey, including information on headline results and responses to all the questions asked.
- 3.6 A total of 498 respondents took part in the survey, which is a reduction of around 200 from the last survey. The survey period was extended from 4 to 6 weeks and further communications provided via the Council's social media channels to maximise the number of participants.
- 3.7 Due to the small sample size of respondents who participated in the consultation the responses provided can only be seen as an indicator of the wishes, demand and perceptions which may not fully represent the views of the wider community across Renfrewshire.

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#### **4. Key Findings – Early Learning and Childcare Survey – 2025**

- 4.1 A total of 498 respondents took part in the survey. Almost all localities within Renfrewshire were represented, except for Howwood and Kilbarchan. The largest proportion of respondents were from Bishopton (13%), followed by the area Foxbar, Glenburn and Brediland (11%) and Renfrew (11%).
- 4.2 All respondents detailed the age of each child they have who are either currently accessing childcare or considering accessing this in the next 2 years. 38% of children were within the 3-5 bracket, while 33% were of school age. Only 9% fell into the 2-3 age bracket, and 20% of children were within the 0-Under 2 bracket.
- 4.3 The key findings of the survey are as follows:
- Currently Accessing Early Learning and Childcare*

- In total, 389 parents who responded to the survey were currently accessing early learning and childcare (ELC).
- 57% of parents/carers accessed ELC through a local authority ELC class or centre, while 48% accessed ELC through a private or voluntary nursery, and 4% through a registered childminder.
- The largest proportion of parents/carers accessing funded ELC used a 2.5 /3 day, over an extended year model of place (38%), followed by term-time only model (32%).
- A smaller proportion of parents/carers chose up to 10 hours per day extended day care for some of the year (5%) and morning or afternoon placement (4%).
- 86% of parents/carers were accessing the funded entitlement through their preferred model of provision.
- Of those accessing funded ELC, 80% were using the full entitlement to 1140 hours. Identified reasons for not using the full entitlement were preferring to care for their child at home (15%), not enough availability of places in my area (11%), and childcare providers not being flexible enough (13%).
- Parents were asked if they were considering deferring their child's transition to primary school. Overall, 16% said they were considering this option and 10% advised they would maybe consider.

#### *Currently Accessing Out of School Care*

- 99 parents/carers who responded to the survey were accessing out-of-school care (OSC) for their child.
- The type of OSC parents/carers accessed varied, 33% accessed breakfast clubs or before school care, 69% accessing after school care, and 45% accessing out-of-school care (during the holidays). Utilising the support of family or friends was identified by 32% of respondents and 8% reported using a registered childminder.
- The most cited benefit of accessing OSC was that parents can continue to work, train or study (94%). Furthermore, 47% stated that their child enjoys attending their OSC setting, while 24% cited their child's development has been supported. Additionally, 4% stated that they have been able to access wider family support.
- Parents/carers were asked about any barriers they may face accessing OSC. The most frequently cited barrier was the lack of available places (63%), followed by affordability of OSC (37%) and lack of flexibility of hours and accessing information on OSC options both at 35%.

#### *Planning on Accessing Early Learning and Childcare / Out of School Care in the Future*

- 473 parents/carers respondents are looking to access either ELC or OSC in the next 2 years.

- 39% of respondents are looking to access both ELC and OSC, 38% are looking to access ELC only and 23% looking to access OSC.
- Those looking to access ELC provided information on the age their child will be when they begin accessing this: 57% will be aged 3-5 years or have not yet started school; 18% will be aged 2-under 3 and 26% aged 0-2 years,
- 72% parents/carers would rather their child accessed ELC in a local authority nursery or centre, while 25% would prefer a private or voluntary nursery, and 4% a registered childminder.
- 44% of respondents considering ELC in the future would prefer to access this through a 2.5-day model over 48 weeks while 42% stated that they would prefer a term-time, school day model. Additionally, 8% cited they would prefer up to 10 hours a day extended day care while only 7% stated they would prefer a morning or afternoon only session.
- Of those considering OSC in the future, 27% stated they would like to access after school care, with 33% wishing to access breakfast clubs and before school care. 16% would wish to access out-of-school care during the holidays.

4.4 It is important to note that, due to the smaller sample size, these findings should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive. They reflect the perceptions, demand, and experiences of parents and carers who are currently accessing childcare or planning to do so in Renfrewshire within the next 2 years.

4.5 Although a small sample size, the findings in relation to early learning and childcare will continue to assist the council in its delivery options of provision of the 1140 hours entitlement of early learning and childcare. The findings in relation to other aspects of childcare will be considered when undertaking any future planning of childcare services for Renfrewshire.

### Implications of this report

**1. Financial**

None

**2. HR and Organisational Development**

None

**3. Community /Council Planning**

Our Renfrewshire is thriving                      Ensuring the best start in life for children and young people.

Our Renfrewshire is well                      Earlier intervention will lead to healthier outcomes for young children.

Reshaping our place, our economy, and our future                      The engagement process informs the redesign of ELC provision.

Building strong, safe and resilient communities

The quality of community life is enhanced by supporting parents, children and young people.

Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all

Effective governance arrangements ensure that the organisations receiving funding comply with legislative requirements.

Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy

Support to families through a range of flexible and accessible places will support parents into and sustain employment, training or enter education

**4. Legal**  
None

**5. Property/Assets**  
None

**6. Information Technology**  
None

**7. Equality and Human Rights**  
A review of impact on equalities and human rights will be conducted to inform future proposals and implementation as required.

**8. Health and Safety**  
None

**9. Procurement**  
None

**10. Risk**  
None

**11. Privacy Impact**  
Personal information will only be held as required in order to deliver the service. This will be done in accordance with all data protection legislation.

**12. COSLA Policy Position**  
None

**13. Children's Rights**  
None

**14. Climate Risk**  
None

**List of Background Papers**  
None

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**Renfrewshire Council Children And Young People Consultation 2025**

**Consultation on Early Learning and Out of School Childcare**

## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1 Introduction

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on all local authorities across the country to consult with parents and carers every 2 years to identify how childcare services for children and young people aged 0-14 years should be made available and inform their next steps for delivery. This report outlines the findings of the Children and Young People consultation conducted in autumn 2025.

The consultation was conducted through an online survey which was promoted on Renfrewshire Council's website and social media channels. Data collection initially began on 1 September 2025 and was planned to remain live for one month. A smaller number of responses were gathered than expected, resulting in an extension until 13 October 2025.

### 1.2 Key Findings

A total of 498 respondents took part in the survey. Within the findings, almost all localities were represented except for Howwood. The largest proportion of respondents were from Bishopton (13%), followed by the area Foxbar, Glenburn and Brediland (11%) and Renfrew (11%).

The key findings are as follows:

#### *Currently Accessing Early Learning and Childcare*

- In total, 389 parents who responded to the survey were currently accessing early learning and childcare (ELC).
- 57% of parents/carers accessed ELC through a local authority ELC class or centre, while 48% accessed ELC through a private or voluntary nursery, and 4% through a registered childminder.
- The largest proportion of parents/carers accessing funded ELC used a 2.5 /3 day, over an extended year model of place (38%), followed by term-time only model (32%).
- A smaller proportion of parents/carers chose up to 10 hours per day extended day care for some of the year (5%) and morning or afternoon placement (4%).
- 86% of parents/carers were accessing the funded entitlement through their preferred model of provision.
- Of those accessing funded ELC, 80% were using the full entitlement to 1140 hours. Identified reasons for not using the full entitlement were preferring to care for their child at home (15%), not enough availability of places in my area (11%), and childcare providers not being flexible enough (13%).
- Parents were asked if they were considering deferring their child's transition to primary school. Overall, 16% said they were considering this option and 10% advised they would maybe consider.

### *Currently Accessing Out of School Care*

- 99 parents/carers who responded to the survey were accessing out-of-school care (OSC) for their child.
- The type of OSC parents/carers accessed varied, 33% accessed breakfast clubs or before school care, 69% accessing after school care, and 45% accessing out-of-school care (during the holidays). Utilising the support of family or friends was identified by 32% of respondents and 8% reported using a registered childminder.
- The most cited benefit of accessing OSC was that parents can continue to work, train or study (94%). Furthermore, 47% stated that their child enjoys attending their OSC setting, while 24% cited their child's development has been supported. Additionally, 4% stated that they have been able to access wider family support.
- Parents/carers were asked about any barriers they may face accessing OSC. The most frequently cited barrier was the lack of available places (63%), followed by affordability of OSC (37%) and lack of flexibility of hours and accessing information on OSC options both at 35%.

### *Accessing ELC/OSC in the Future*

- 473 parents/carers respondents are looking to access either ELC or OSC in the next 2 years.
- 39% of respondents are looking to access both ELC and OSC, 38% are looking to access ELC only and 23% looking to access OSC.
- Those looking to access ELC provided information on the age their child will be when they begin accessing this: 57% will be aged 3-5 years or have not yet started school; 18% will be aged 2-under 3 and 26% aged 0-2 years,
- 72% parents/carers would rather their child accessed ELC in a local authority nursery or centre, while 25% would prefer a private or voluntary nursery, and 4% a registered childminder.
- 44% of respondents considering ELC in the future would prefer to access this through a 2.5-day model over 48 weeks while 42% stated that they would prefer a term-time, school day model. Additionally, 8% cited they would prefer up to 10 hours a day extended day care while only 7% stated they would prefer a morning or afternoon only session.
- Of those considering OSC in the future, 27% stated they would like to access after school care, with 33% wishing to access breakfast clubs and before school care. 16% would wish to access out-of-school care during the holidays.

## **2. Overall Survey Results**

The overall results from this survey are detailed below. Due to the small sample size of respondents who participated in the consultation the responses provided can only be seen as an indicator of the wishes, demand and perceptions which may not fully represent the views of the wider community across Renfrewshire. The findings in relation to early learning and childcare will continue to assist the council in its delivery options of provision

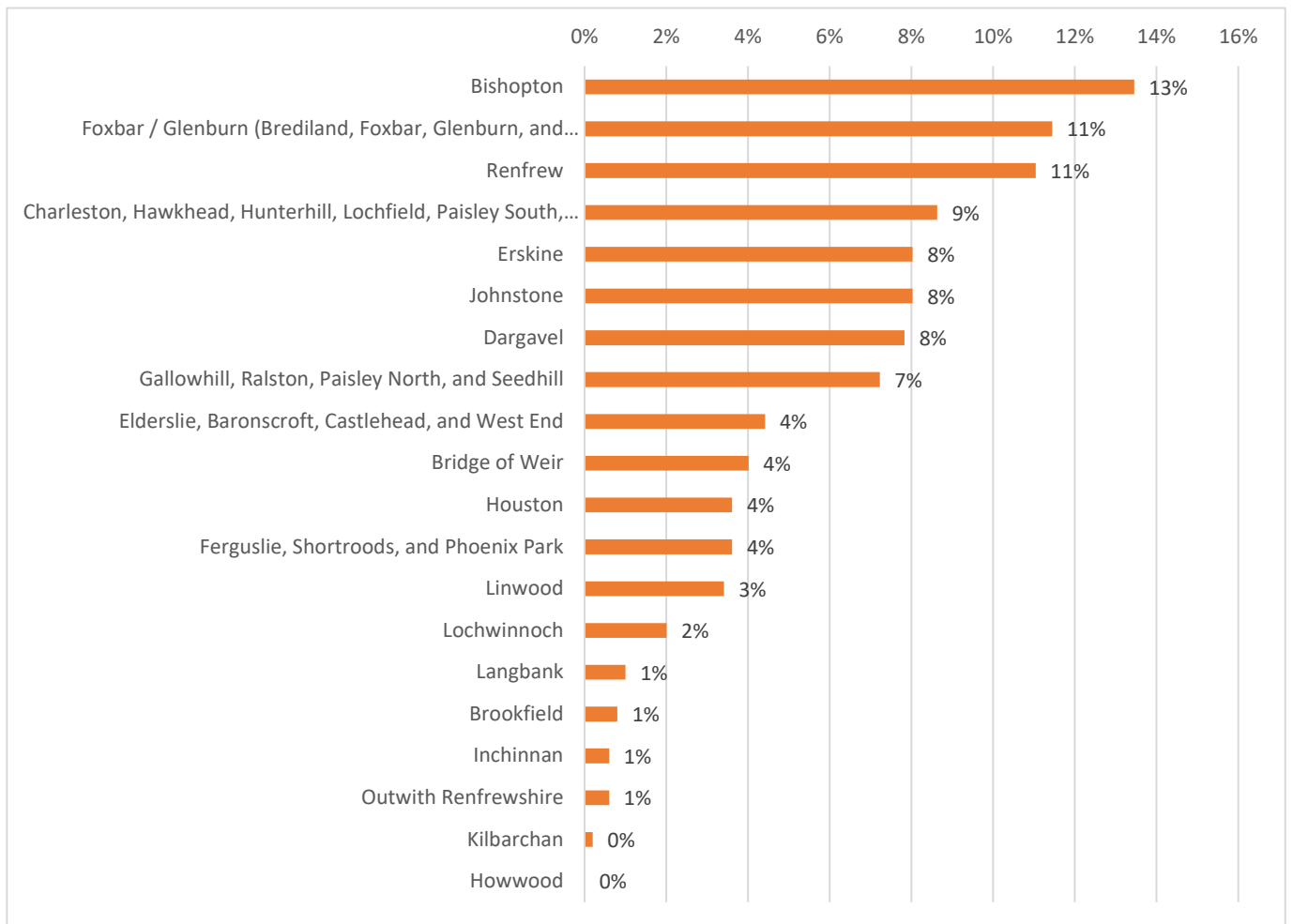
of the 1140 hours entitlement of early learning and childcare. The findings in relation to out-of-school care will also be considered when undertaking any future planning of childcare services for Renfrewshire.

**2.1 Respondent Profile**

2.1.1 The 498 responses to this survey represented 796 children in Renfrewshire aged 0-14 years. 38% of these children were within the 3-5 age bracket and 29% aged under 3 years.

2.1.2 Respondents identified the areas of Renfrewshire they lived in. There was representation of all areas of Renfrewshire except Howwood. The highest percentage of respondents was from the Bishopton area with a 13% response rate. Figure 1 details the area responses in full.

Figure 1 Respondents by Area (%)



2.1.3 All respondents detailed the age of each child they have who are either currently accessing childcare or considering accessing this in the next 2 years. 38% of children were within the 3-5 bracket, while 33% were of school age. Only 9% fell into the 2-3 age bracket, and 20% of children were within the 0-Under 2 bracket.

**Table 1 Age of Respondents' Children**

Age of child	N	%
0 - under 2	160	20%
2- under 3	70	9%
3- under 5	305	38%
5- under 8	145	18%
8- under 12	87	11%
12-14.	29	4%

*\*Note. Percentage represents total number of children represented in the survey (N= 796).*

- 2.1.4 Respondents identified whether they are currently accessing childcare, and the type of childcare accessed. 80% were currently accessing childcare, while the remaining 20% were looking to access childcare in the future.
- 2.1.5 Of those currently accessing childcare, the majority were using ELC (66%), while 8% were accessing OSC. Additionally, 12% of respondents advised that they were accessing both services. The responses to the type of childcare accessed are detailed in Table 2:

**Table 2 Types of Childcare Accessed**

What type of childcare do you currently access in Renfrewshire	N	%
Early Learning and Childcare	331	66%
Out of School Care	41	8%
Accessing Both Services	58	12%
Not Currently Accessing	68	14%

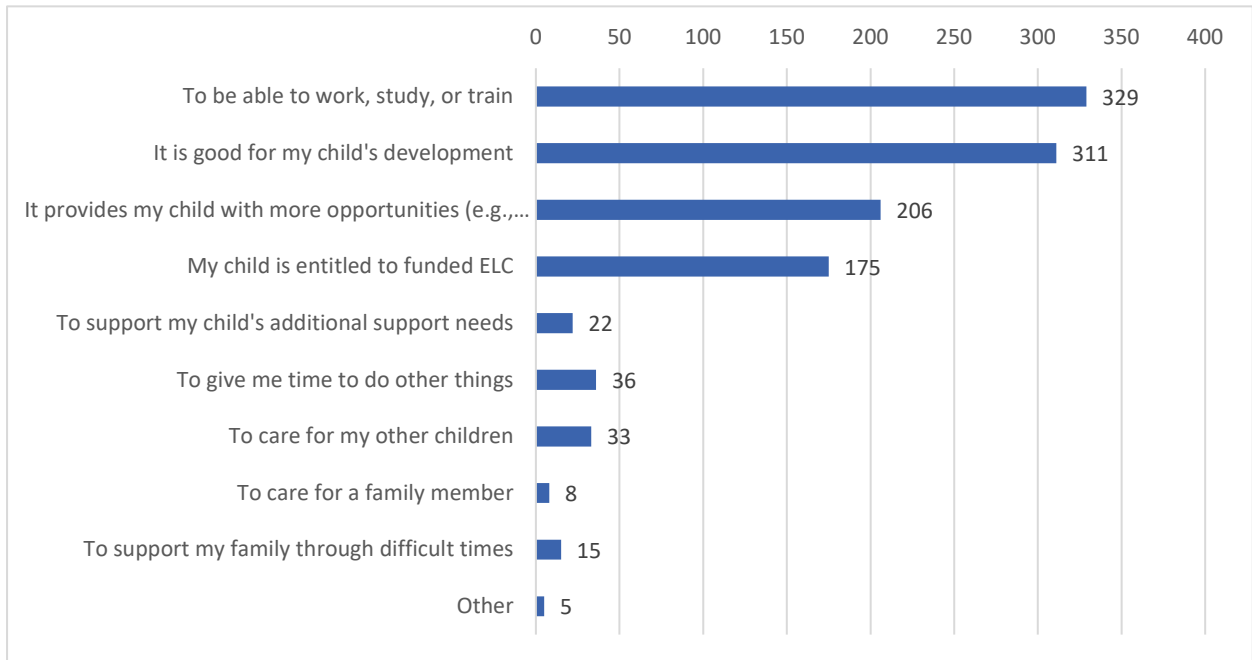
- 2.1.6. Majority of respondents had a child who was eligible for funded ELC (55%), and 82% of these children became eligible at age 3. The highest number of eligible 2-year-olds were found to live in Foxbar/Glenburn (7) and Paisley North/East – Gallowhill, Ralston, Seedhill (7).
- 2.1.7 The number of respondents accessing ELC and OSC varied by area, with Bishopton (45) and Renfrew (43) having the highest number of families accessing ELC. In terms of OSC, the area with the most respondents accessing this type of childcare was Bishopton, which had a response level of 15.

## 2.2 Early Learning And Childcare

- 2.2.1 A total of 389 respondents were accessing ELC at the time of completing this survey. The majority were accessing ELC through a local authority ELC class or centre (57%, 223) while 48% (188) had a child attending a private or voluntary nursery, and 4% (15) were using a registered childminder. A larger number of parents/carers in Foxbar/Glenburn (27), Bishopton (28) and Charleston/Hawkhead/Hunterhill/ Lochfield (25) were using a local authority nursery, while many of those with a child attending a private or voluntary nursery were found to live in Bishopton (33), Renfrew (33) and Dargavel (16).

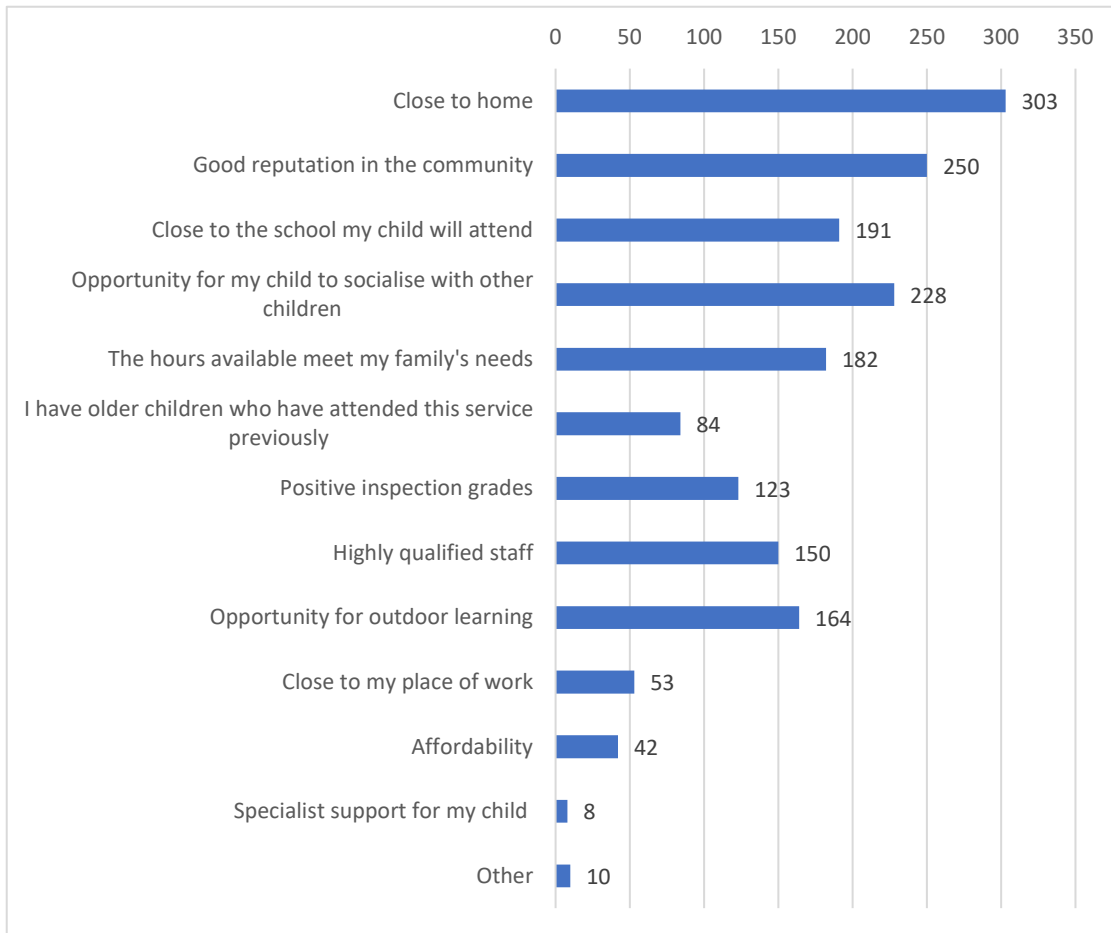
2.2.2 Respondents were asked to identify their main reasons for accessing ELC. They were able to choose from a list of statements and select the reasons they perceived to be most important. The most common reasons were to allow parents to work, study or train (85%), followed by the perception that it would be good for their child’s development (80%) and that it would provide their child with more opportunities (e.g. outdoor learning) (53%). Figure 2 details the spread of these responses.

Figure 2 Reasons for Accessing ELC



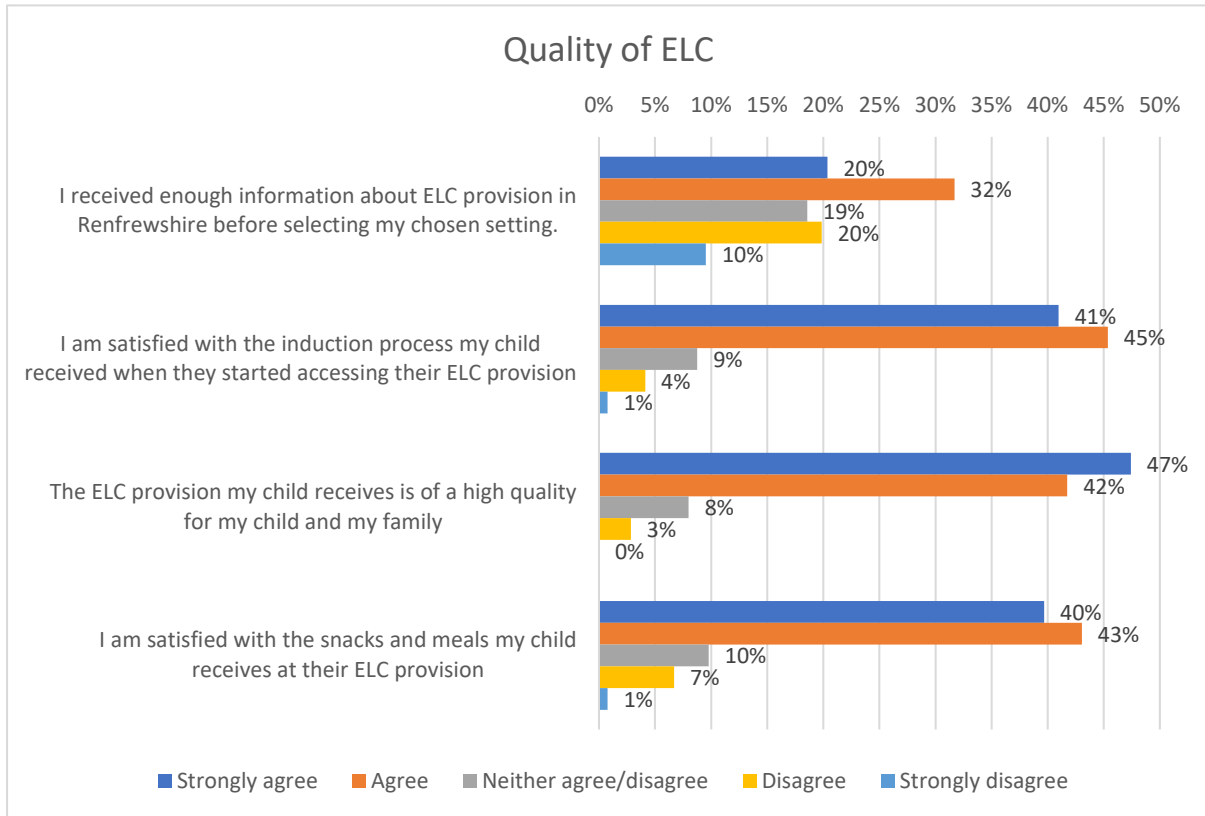
2.2.3 Respondents were also asked to indicate the three factors they considered most important when choosing their childcare provider. As shown in Figure 3, the most cited reasons for their choice of provision were that it was close to home (78%), it had a good reputation in the community (64%), and it provided an opportunity for their child to socialise with other children (59%).

**Figure 3** Reasons for Choice of Childcare Provider



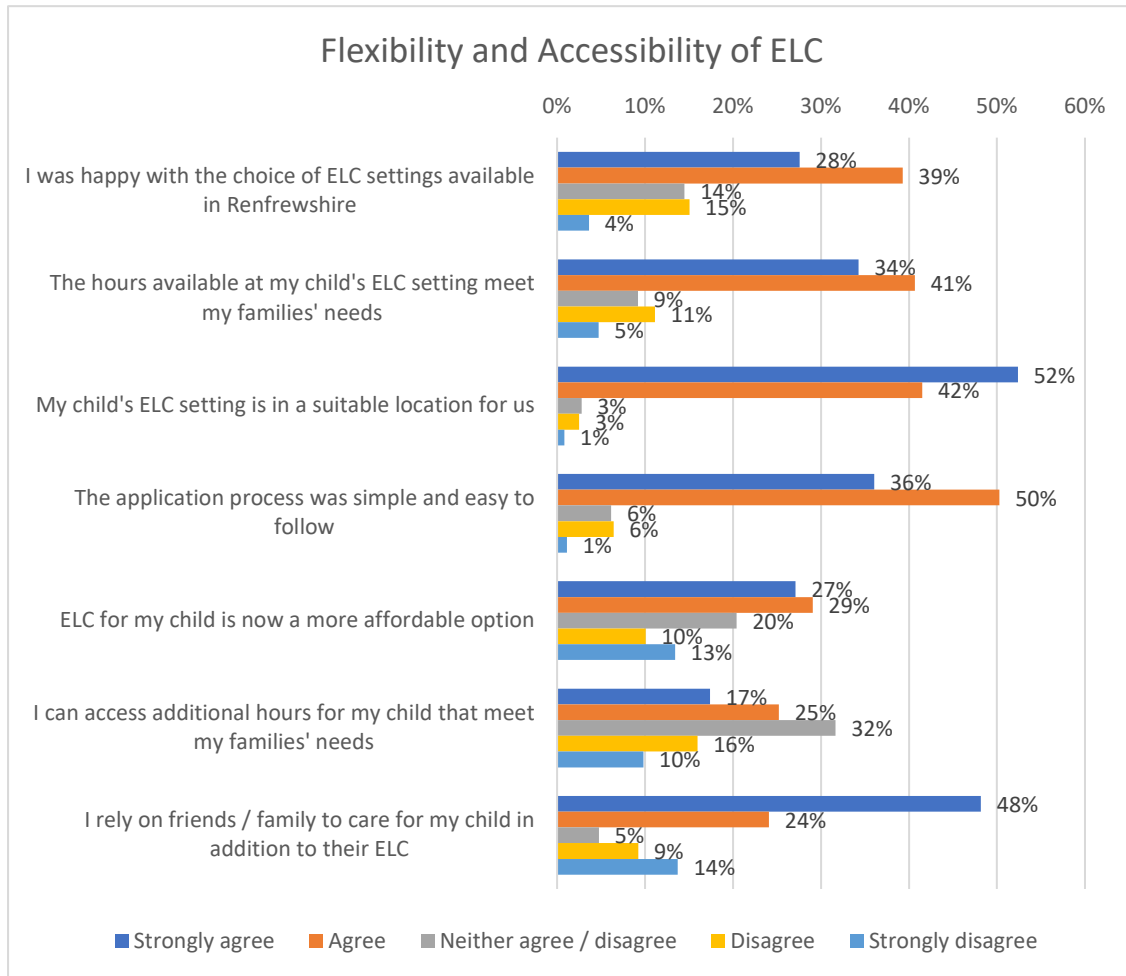
2.2.4 To gather respondents' perceptions of the quality of ELC they access, a Likert scale was included that had a list of statements and required respondents to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with all statements. Overall, a high percentage of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statements provided, with 89% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the ELC provision their child receives is of high quality. Just over half (52%), agreed or strongly agreed that they received enough information about ELC provision in Renfrewshire before selecting their chosen setting. The results pertaining to this scale can be viewed below in figure 4.

Figure 4 Perceived Quality of ELC

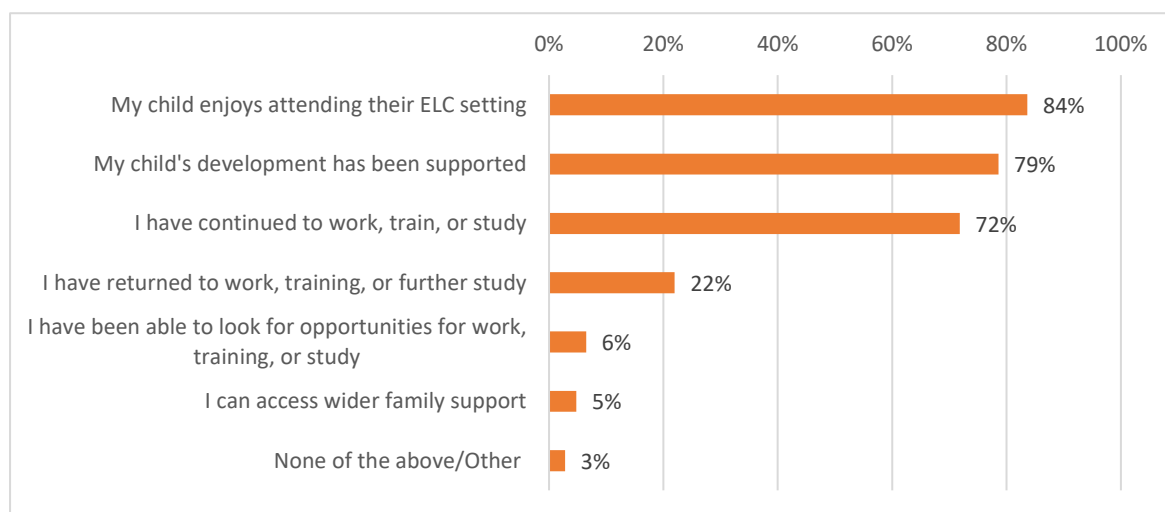


2.2.5. In addition to asking respondents their perceptions on the quality of ELC, a Likert scale was also provided to measure their view on the flexibility and accessibility of ELC within Renfrewshire. Overall, 67% of respondents were happy with the choice of ELC settings available, and 94% found their setting to be in a suitable location. Only 42% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they could access additional hours that met their needs and 56% that ELC was now a more affordable option. The results to this scale are in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Flexibility and Accessibility of ELC



2.2.6. Respondents were asked to identify how accessing ELC has impacted on themselves, their child and their family by selecting from a range of statements. Figure 6 illustrates that 84% of respondents stated their child enjoys attending their ELC setting, 79% felt that their child's development had been supported, and 72% have continued to work, train or study. Additionally, 22% of respondents advised that they have now returned to work, training or further study.

**Figure 6** Impact of Accessing ELC for the Child, Parent/Carer and Family

- 2.2.7 Respondents were asked about their main source of information regarding ELC provision. The most cited source was word of mouth at 32%, followed by direct contact with ELC providers (30%) and 16% accessing information from Renfrewshire Council's website. Smaller proportions of respondents indicated that they accessed information through a health visitor (9%) and ELCC websites (5%). In addition, 4% of respondents selected 'other category', citing pre-existing knowledge of ELC provision due to working in the sector, that they reviewed the local area, had older children who had attended an ELC setting previously, and consulted with the Care Inspectorate website.
- 2.2.8 Of those accessing funded ELC, 32% were doing so through a time term-time only model, while 38% were using a 2.5-day or 3-day model of provision across the calendar year. Furthermore, smaller levels of respondents indicated they were utilising 10 hours a day extended daycare (5%) and a morning or afternoon placement (4%).
- 2.2.9 Respondents were asked which model they would like to access and matching this with their current model indicated that 86% were accessing their preferred choice. The majority of those who were not accessing their preferred model stated that they would rather access the entitlement through a term-time place.
- 2.2.10 Parents/carers accessing funded ELC were also asked whether they use the full entitlement of 1140 hours. Overall, 80% were accessing the entitlement in full. Those not accessing the full entitlement stated that this was due to preferring to care for their child at home (15%, 11), not enough availability of places in their area (11%, 8) and childcare providers not being flexible enough to meet their specific needs (13%, 9). Of the 20% of respondents not utilising the full entitlement, the majority were living in the areas of Foxbar/Glenburn (15), Renfrew (12) and Paisley North (7). The full list of reasons for not accessing the entitlement in full can be found below.

Why do you choose not to use the full entitlement for your child?	N	%
Childcare providers are not flexible enough to meet my specific needs	9	13%
Not enough availability of places in my area	8	11%
I prefer to care for my child at home	11	15%
Availability of ASN staff	1	1%
I prefer that a Family Member cares for my child at home	7	10%
To manage around school hours	5	7%
Other	15	55%

2.2.11 Since August 2023, all children who are aged 4 when they are due to start school and whose parents choose to defer are entitled to an additional year of funded ELC. Respondents were therefore asked whether they were considering deferring their child's start to school. 74% stated they were not considering this option, while 16% (58) responded 'Yes' and 10% responded 'Maybe'. The 26% of respondents who were considering deferral were most likely to live within the areas of Bishopton (14), Foxbar/Glenburn (8), Dargavel (5), and Erskine (6).

2.2.12 When asked what elements influenced this decision 49 advised their child would benefit from more time to develop, followed by 36 who believed that their child needed more time to build confidence or independence. Furthermore, 14 respondents advised that their child had additional support needs. Respondents were able to select multiple options.

## 2.3 Out of School Care

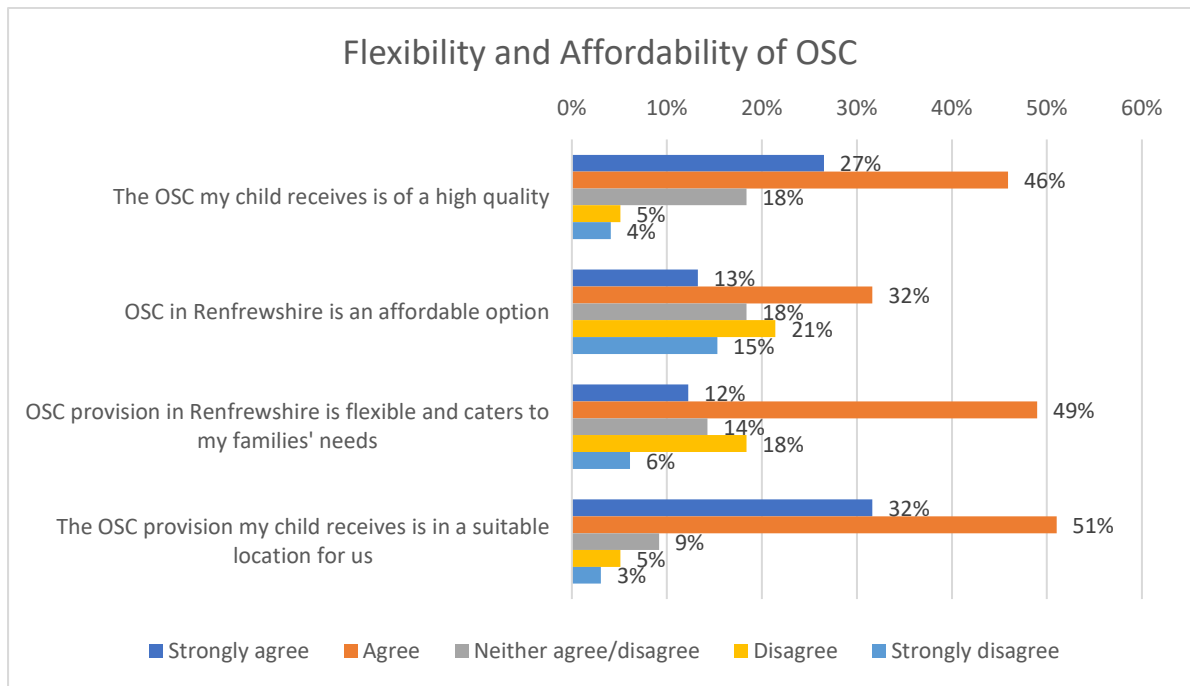
2.3.1 A total of 99 respondents were accessing OSC in Renfrewshire. The type of OSC service access varied, with 69% accessing after school care, 33% accessing breakfast clubs and before school care and 45% accessing out-of-school care during the school holidays periods. Additionally, 13% of respondents accessed playschemes and 8% accessed registered childminders. 33% of respondents indicate that they use family or friends to care for their children. These results can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3 Type of OSC Accessed**

What types of OSC do you currently access? (Please select all that apply)	N	%
Before school care (term-time only)	32	33%
After school care (term-time only)	68	69%
Breakfast clubs (in school, term-time only)	32	33%
Out-of-school care (during the holidays)	44	45%
Registered childminder	8	8%
Playschemes	13	13%
Family/Friend	32	33%
Other	2	2%

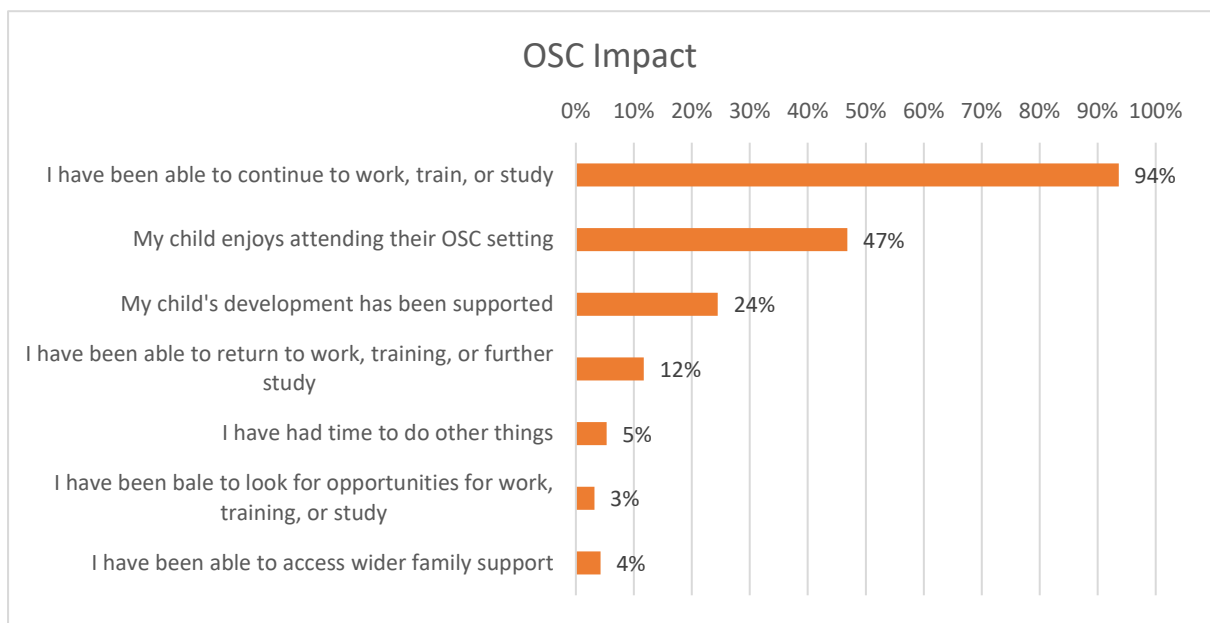
2.3.2 A Likert scale was included to assess the quality, flexibility, and affordability of OSC. As noted in figure 7 below, 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the OSC their child receives is of a high quality. Additionally, 45% of parents/carers felt that OSC was an affordable option, 61% stated that the OSC catered to their family’s needs and 83% felt that OSC provision was in a suitable location.

Figure 7 OSC - Quality, Flexibility and Affordability



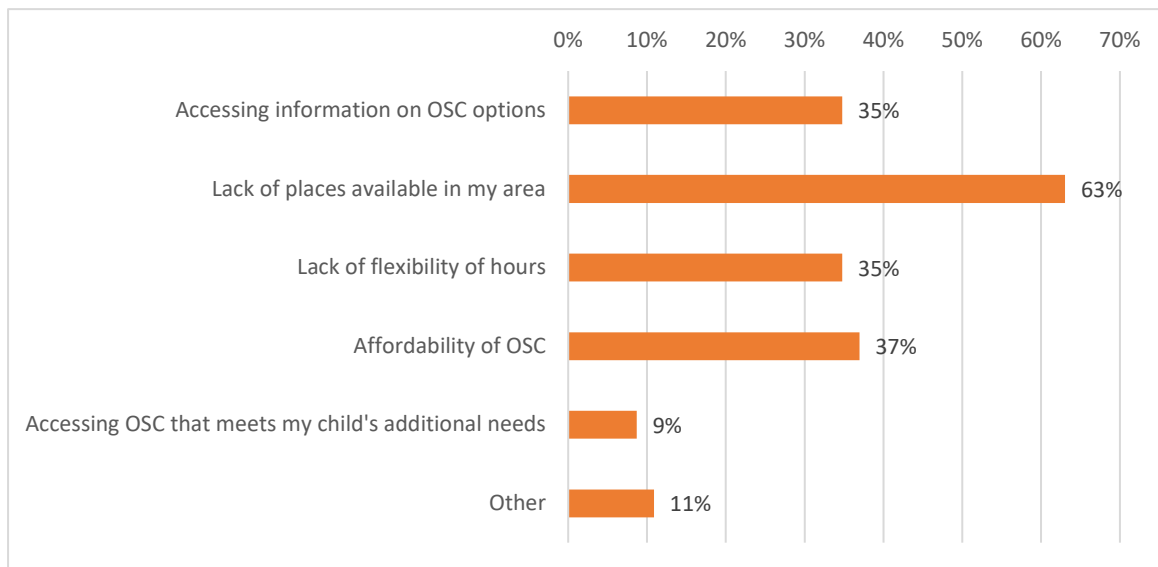
2.3.3. Parents/carers were also asked about the impact of accessing OSC for themselves, their child, and their family. 94% of respondents stated that they have been able to work, train, or study, and 47% stated their child enjoys attending their OSC setting. The full list of responses can be viewed in Figure 8.

Figure 8 Impact of Accessing OSC For Parents/Carers, Children and Families



2.3.4. Respondents were asked if they had experienced barriers to accessing OSC. Overall, 53% of parents/carers identified that they had not experienced any whereas 47% cited that they had experienced barriers to accessing OSC. Respondents were asked to identify any barriers they have faced to help understand reasons for this. Overall, 63% of parents/carers listed lack of available places in their area as a barrier, while 37% cited affordability, and 35% accessing information on OSC options and lack of flexibility. The areas with the highest number of respondents experiencing barriers to accessing OSC were Bridge of Weir (5), Johnstone (5), Bishopton (6), and Renfrew (6). Responses in full can be seen below in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Barriers to OSC



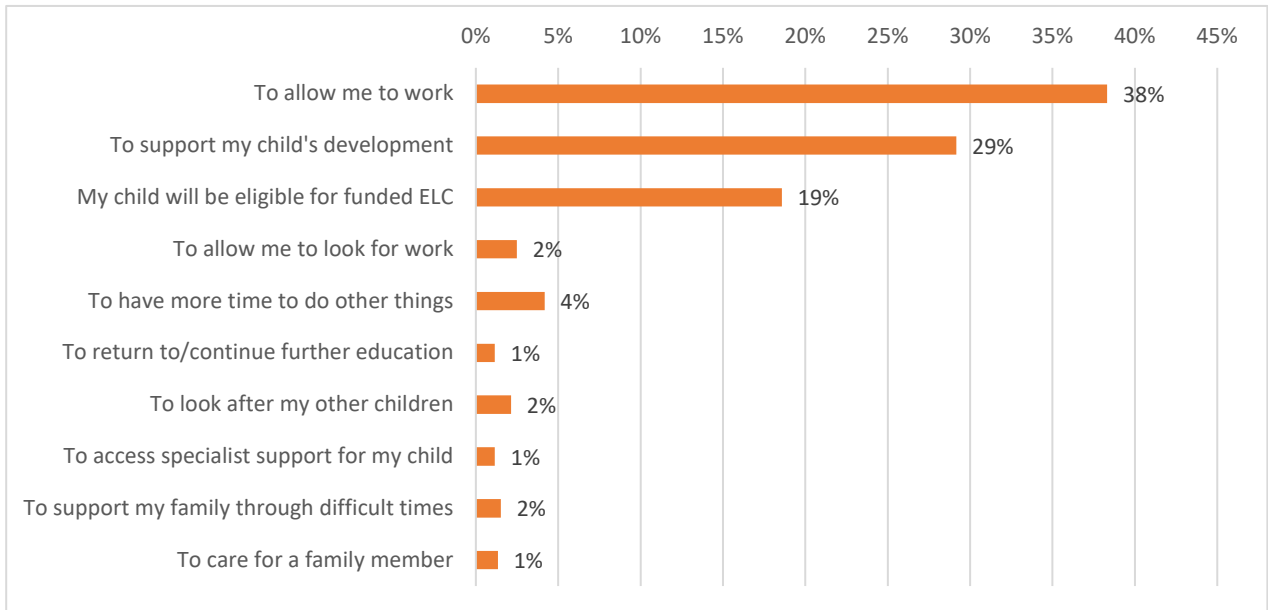
**2.4 Accessing Childcare In The Future**

2.4.1 A total of 473 respondents advised that they were looking to access childcare in the next two years, with 180 considering ELC (38%) and 109 considering OSC (23%). Additionally, 184 (39%) of respondents advised that they were looking to access both ELC and OSC. While the location of these families varied, Bishopton (24), Foxbar/Glenburn (23) and Renfrew (23) had the highest number of parents/carers considering ELC only, while Bishopton (14), Foxbar/Glenburn (16) and Renfrew (13) had the highest number of families considering OSC only. Additionally, Renfrew (19), Dargavel (22) and Bishopton (29) had the highest number of families considering both ELC and OSC.

2.4.2 Those considering ELC in the next 2 years were asked to note the age their child will be when they attend. 57% of respondents stated their child will be between 3 to +5 years, while 26% stated their child will be under 2 years, and 18% that their child will be aged 2 to under 3 years.

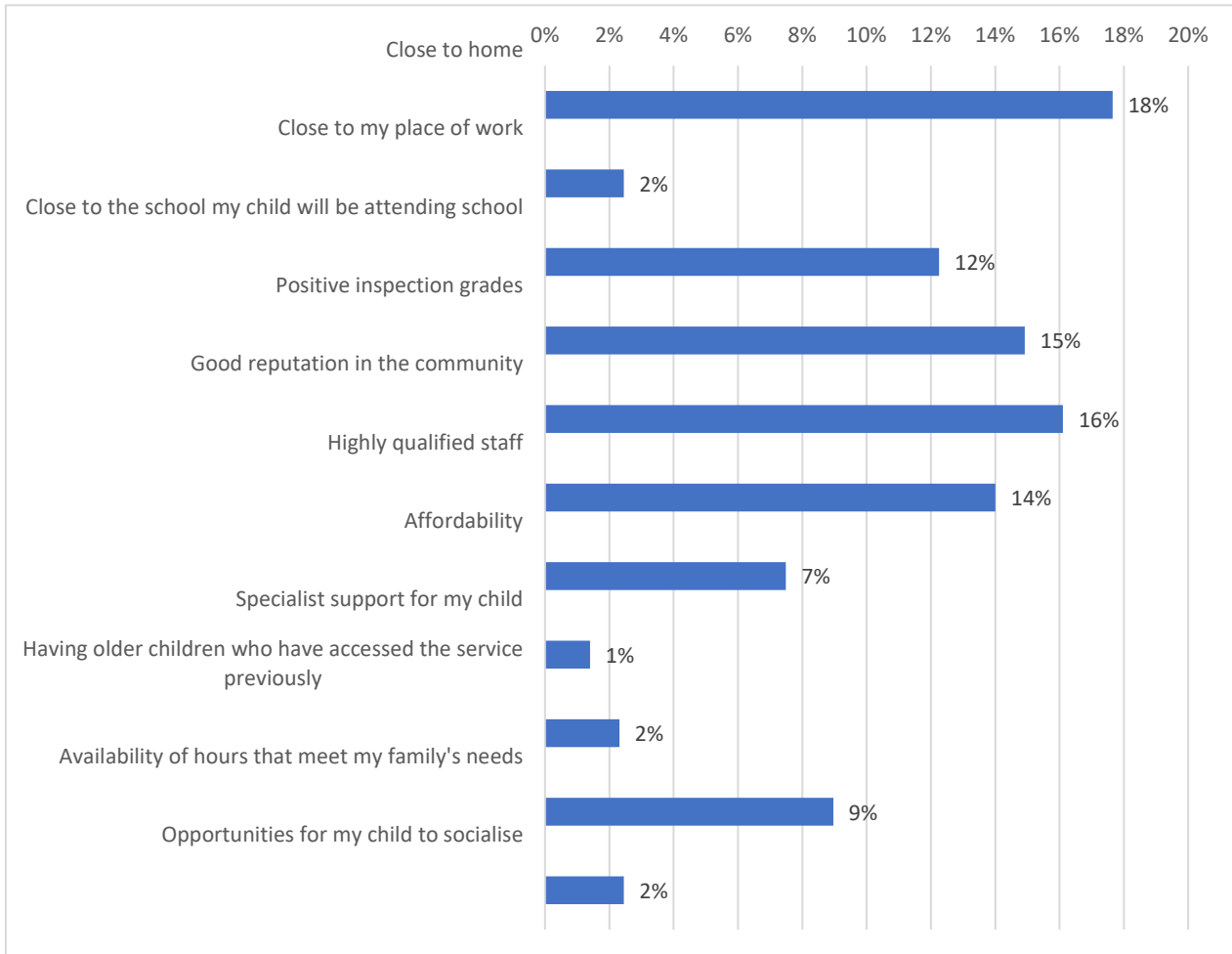
2.4.3 Parents/carers considering ELC were asked their reasons for considering ELC in the future. Similar responses were given to those currently accessing ELC, with 38% stating it would allow them to work, 29% that it would be good for their child’s development, and 19% stated their child will be eligible for funded ELC. The responses to this question are found in Figure 11.

**Figure 10** Reasons for considering ELC in the future



2.4.4 In addition to asking their reasons for considering ELC, parents/carers were asked what factors would influence their choice of provider in the future. As shown in figure 12 below, these responses were again similar to those currently accessing ELC, with 18% stating it must be close to home, 16% stating it should have a good reputation in the community, 15% citing it should have positive inspection grades and 14% stating it should have highly qualified staff.

Figure 11 - Important Factors when Considering Childcare



2.4.5 Respondents were asked where they would prefer to access ELC. 72% stated they would wish for their child to attend a local authority nursery or centre, 25% would like their child to attend a private or voluntary nursery, and 4% prefer to access this with a registered childminder.

2.4.6 All respondents looking to access ELC were asked if they would be interested in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) as part of their child's ELC, with 18% (86) stating they would consider this. Furthermore, 14% (68) stated that they were unsure if they would consider this. The highest number of families who would consider this were found to live in Renfrew (17), Bishopton (10), Foxbar/Glenburn (10) and Paisley South (Charleston/Hawkhead/Lochfield/Todholm) (8). It is important to note that the highest number of families that were unsure resided in Renfrew (11), Paisley South (Charleston/Hawkhead/Lochfield/Todholm) (9), Dargavel (9), and Johnstone (9). It was found that of the highest proportion of families interested in GME had children who fell into the 3-5 age bracket (41%), followed by 25% in the 0-2 bracket and 15% in the 5-8 bracket. This can be seen in Table 4 below.

**Table 4 Families Interested in GME - Age of Child/Children**

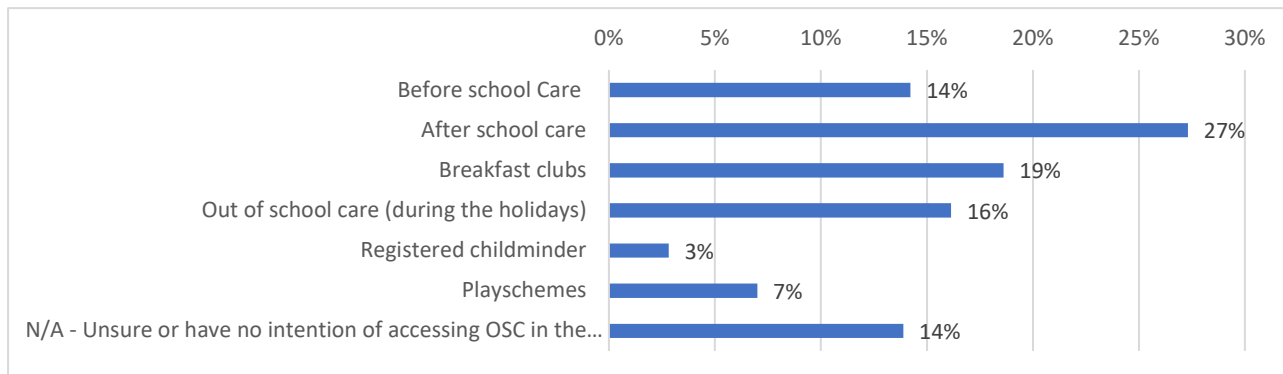
Age of Child/Children	N	%
0-Under 2	33	25%
2-Under 3	8	6%
3-Under 5	54	41%
5-Under 8	19	15%

2.4.7 The majority of parents/carers (57%) considering ELC stated that their child will be eligible for funded ELC in the next 2 years, with 71% of these being within the 3 to 5 age group. Almost all these parents (91%) predicted they will be using the entitlement in full. The 9% of respondents not intending to use the full entitlement identified the following reasons: managing their child’s placement around school hours (48%), childcare providers are not flexible enough for their needs (24%), and that they prefer to care for their child at home (21%).

2.4.8 Just under half of parents with children who will be eligible for funded ELC would rather access this through 2.5 days a week over 48 weeks model (44%), closely followed by a term-time model (42%). In addition, 8% stated that they would prefer 10 hours a day extended day care for some of the year and 7% cited they would prefer a morning or afternoon only session.

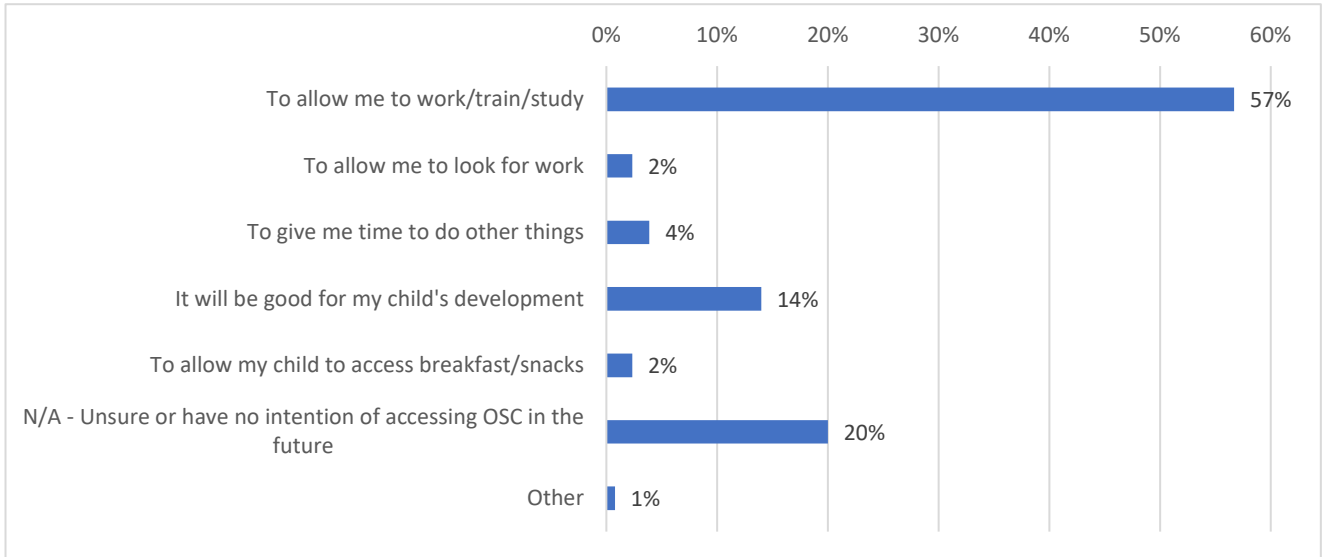
2.4.9 109 respondents indicated they are planning on accessing OSC in the next 2 years. Figure 13 below indicates the type of service to be accessed:

**Figure 12 Type of Future OSC**



2.4.10 Parents/carers considering OSC were also asked their reasons for doing so and gave similar responses to those currently accessing OSC. The majority of these respondents stated accessing OSC would enable them to work, study or train (57%), while 14% stated that it would be good for their child’s development. These results are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 13 Reasons for Considering OSC (%)



**2.5. Qualitative Data – Common Themes**

All survey respondents were provided with one open-ended question: “Is there anything else Renfrewshire Council should consider in regard to ELC or OSC? This data was analysed to create key themes, which have been produced in a “you said, we did” format to demonstrate how this feedback will be used to shape the delivery of childcare across the authority.

You said	We did
<p>ELC – Flexibility and Choice</p> <p>Respondents’ views on preferred models of delivery varied, with some commenting on their preferences for term-time, whilst others said 52 weeks/ extended.</p>	<p>All three and four-year-old and some two-year-old children are eligible to 1140 hours of free funded ELC. Parents in Renfrewshire can continue to access a funded ELC place for their child in either a Council ELC class or centre or in an approved Funded Provider nursery or childminder.</p> <p>In response to ongoing feedback from parents Renfrewshire continues to offer a range of ELC Providers and provision options across each geographical area to meet the needs of families. The range of delivery models, include term-time and 52 weeks per year, full day, and part-time places, as follows:                      services which open between 8 am to 6 pm over the school year, or calendar year                      services which open for a school day model over the school year                      2.5 days or 3 days places over the calendar year;                      or half days, either mornings or afternoon places over the calendar year                      - blended placements – enabling children to access their ELC entitlement across more than one setting.                      All ELC services are regulated by the Care</p>

<p>Greater information and access to wrap-around care.</p>	<p>Inspectorate and as such, must deliver ELC to a set number of children each day. This means only a set number of term-time places / 5 day per week places can be offered to parents each year. In 8-6 EYC settings, our early years staff work shifts to accommodate attendance patterns.</p> <p>Information on early learning and childcare can be found here.</p> <p>There continues to be a number of services that can offer a flexible approach for parents/carers to access their funded hours and to purchase extra hours in addition to the 1140 hours of funded ELC for an eligible child. This is both within Funded Provider and local authority settings.</p> <p>Within local authority settings, wraparound care can only be purchased if there is capacity to enable this.</p> <p>Information on wrap-around care is available directly from the setting and available on Renfrewshire Council website. Information on this can be found here.</p>
<p>Availability and Infrastructure</p> <p>Concerns regarding the number of nurseries and childcare places available in growing communities such as Bishopton.</p> <p>Requests for additional nurseries attached to schools for easier transitions.</p>	<p>Across Renfrewshire there is a range of ELC Providers and provision options across geographical areas which is sufficient to meet the demand. The Council continues to monitor uptake and demand in settings and geographical areas, which includes monitoring of population projections, to ensure places available are sufficient to meet demand in geographical admission panel areas.</p> <p>There continues to be a range of delivery models and sufficient ELC provision in geographical areas to meet demand and need, this includes ELC classes which are in some primary schools. Whilst not all primary schools have an ELC classes attached to it, there are effective transition arrangements across all ELC settings and primary schools to ensure a smooth transition for children moving from ELC on to primary school.</p>
<p>Funded ELC for Younger Children</p> <p>Availability and access to funded ELC for children under 3 years of age.</p>	<p>The entitlement to 1140 hours of funded ELC only applies to children aged 3-4 years, and eligible 2-year-olds.</p> <p>There is however some provision available for non-eligible children aged 0-2 years in Renfrewshire Council ELC centres. These</p>

	<p>placements are limited and are allocated in-line with Renfrewshire Council’s Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy. More information can be found here.</p> <p>In addition, parents can purchase ELC for children under 3 years of age (those who are not eligible for a 2-year-old funded place) in a private or voluntary nursery and childminder.</p>
<p>ELC Provision - meals</p> <p>A small number of respondents commented that the lunch and snack option were limited and had concern about the quality of the food provided.</p>	<p>All meals provided in ELC are required to follow nutritional guidelines, ‘Setting the Table’ for children aged under 5 yrs. These menus are varied and include either a starter and a main course, or a main course and a dessert.</p> <p>Menus for meals served in Renfrewshire Council ELC classes and centres can be found here. Children’s menu choice is made at an establishment level. Further information on meal options will be available from your ELC provider.</p>
<p>Additional Support Needs - ELC</p> <p>Access to suitable provision for children with additional support needs.</p> <p>Sufficient training and staffing to support children with additional support need.</p>	<p>All local authority and Council ELC settings are inclusive, and staff are trained to meet the needs of all children, including children with a range of additional support needs. ELC staff also work in partnership with other agencies and families to ensure appropriate supports and strategies are identified for children.</p> <p>Staff continue to regularly access general and specific training to ensure children with additional support needs receive a quality ELC experience and that their needs are met. This is usually agreed at an individual setting level.</p>
<p>Affordability of Childcare - ELC</p> <p>The increasing cost of ELC, which can limit access to provision.</p> <p>Access to funded ELC for children aged 3.</p>	<p>All children aged 3 to 5 years and some 2-year-olds are entitled to 1140 hours of funded ELC per academic session. Parents can choose to access their child’s funded hours in either a Funded Provider or local authority setting.</p> <p>In Renfrewshire, 3-year-olds who are born between 1st September and end of February can access their funded ELC place from the month following their 3rd birthday. This is earlier than the statutory entitlement, with 3-year-olds being entitled to ELC from the term after their 3rd birthday.</p> <p>Whilst, within Scotland there is currently no entitlement to funded ELC for children under 2 years of age. There is however some discretionary provision available for children aged 0-2 years, with these placements allocated in-line</p>

	<p>with Renfrewshire Council's Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy</p> <p>Information on who is eligible for funded ELC can be found here.</p>
<p>Availability, Affordability and funding of OSC</p> <p>Limited access to OSC to support working parents.</p> <p>Cost of OSC services was identified as a barrier.</p> <p>Difficulties in accessing OSC for children with ASN.</p>	<p>There is currently no entitlement to OSC and as a result Renfrewshire Council does not receive Government funding to deliver OSC provision across Renfrewshire.</p> <p>Currently there 38 OSC services available in Renfrewshire, which offer after school and holiday care for children up to 14 years. 36 of these services are operated by providers in the private and voluntary sectors and 2 by the local authority. Some childminders also provided before /after school service to school age children. More information on OSC services can be found here.</p>
<p>Information/Communication</p> <p>Access to ELC placement application process.</p> <p>Access to information on ELC entitlement provision.</p> <p>Access to information on OSC provision.</p>	<p>All information in relation to ELC is available on Renfrewshire Council's website, and can be found here.</p> <p>Renfrewshire Council advertises ELC places each year in December and January, in advance of the allocation process for the coming academic session. This advertisement advises of the application process, the ELC entitlement and the provision available.</p> <p>A webpage for OSC was developed following feedback from the last Children and Young People consultation. Information relating to OSC is also now available on Renfrewshire Council's website and can be found here</p> <p>Renfrewshire Council continues to monitor and develop its communications with parents.</p>



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**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 15 January 2026**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) Level Return 2025**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report summarises attainment in the Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (ACEL) return for 2024-25. The Achievement of a Curriculum for Excellence Level (CfE) return contains data on the highest CfE level achieved for all pupils in Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 and Secondary 3.
  - 1.2. The 2024-25 return demonstrates that there has been an increase in attainment across almost all curricular areas and stages. Attainment is now in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels. It is important to note that data from 2024-25 remains provisional.
  - 1.3. National figures are not available until the official ACEL return in December 2025. Figures from 2023-24 are used to allow for a comparison between local and national attainment. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all stages and curricular areas for 2023-24. This has been a consistent trend in almost all stages and curricular areas, however the decreases in Renfrewshire's data post pandemic were greater than national figures resulting in very close alignment in 2021-22. The 2023-24 data illustrates that Renfrewshire has made greater progress over the previous 3 years and is now comfortably ahead of national figures.
- 

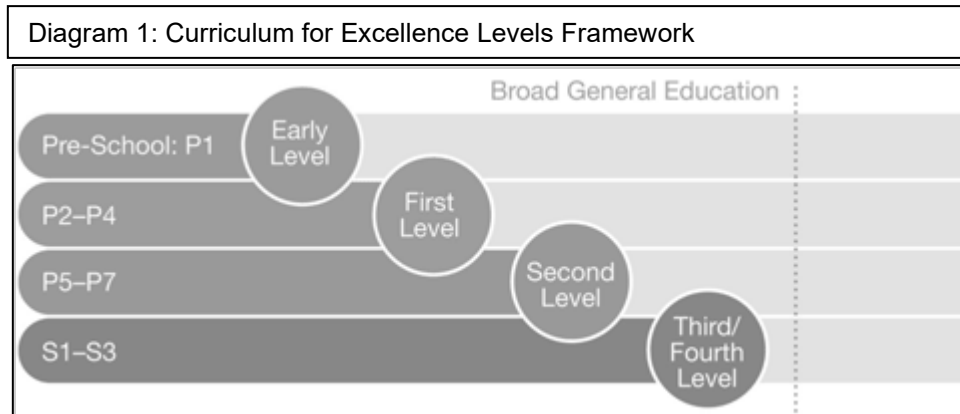
## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Members of the education and children's policy board are asked to:

- note the content of this report;
- note the efforts of the children and young people and the significant commitment of teachers and support staff.

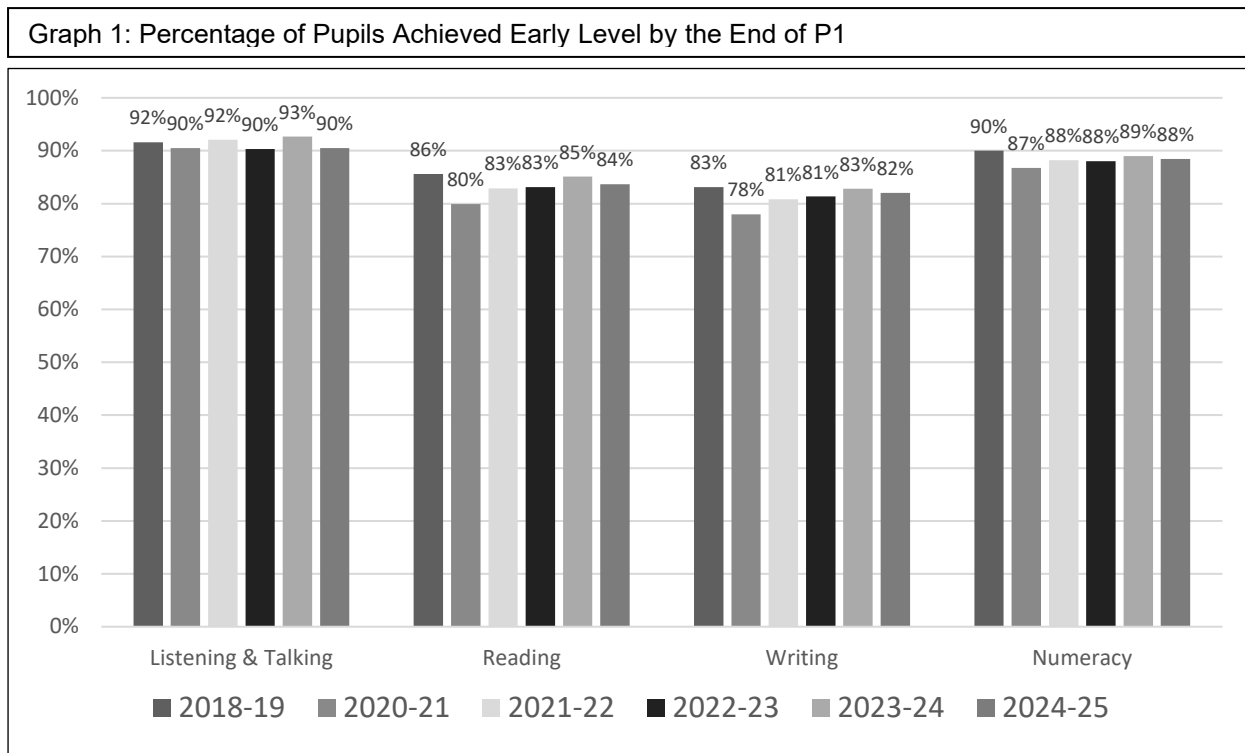
### 3. Background

- 3.1. The 2025 ACEL return includes data on all Primary 1, Primary 4, Primary 7 pupils and Secondary 3. The data measures performance in the literacy curricular areas (listening & talking, reading, writing) and numeracy. Assessment of the level achieved is based on teacher professional judgements.



- 3.2. Diagram 1 shows the 4 curriculum levels within broad general education (P1-S3). The ACEL return measures the percentage of pupils that have achieved early level by the end of Primary 1, first level by the end of Primary 4, second level by the end of Primary 7 and third/fourth level by the end of S3. This reflects the path that most children and young people are expected to follow. However, the framework displayed in diagram 1 is designed to be flexible to permit careful planning for those with additional support needs.
- 3.3. The return is submitted for the 2024-25 school session and is published nationally in December 2025. Due to school closures, there was no return for the 2019-20 school session as it would not have been possible to gather accurate data. The closure of schools in March 2020 and January 2021 had a negative effect on some pupils' progress and attainment with socio-economically deprived children amongst those who were most negatively affected. This was reflected in the 2020-21 figures and should be kept in mind when interpreting trends over the previous 7 years.

#### 4. Attainment by Stage



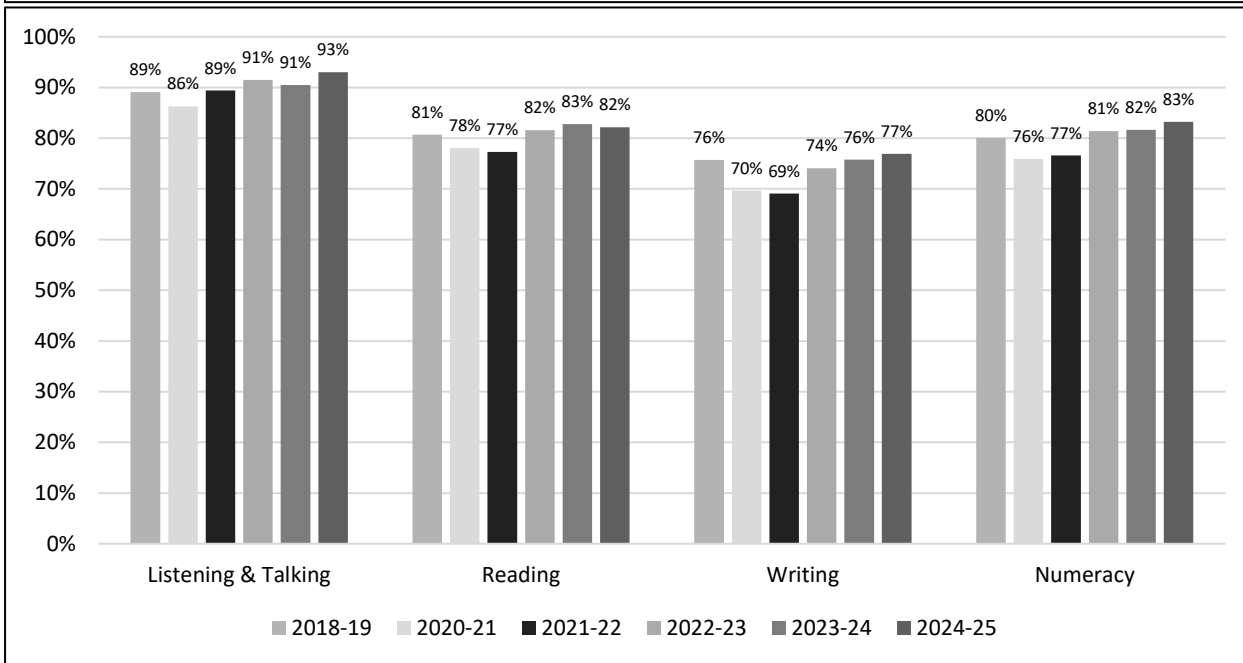
4.1. Graph 1 shows that attainment has decreased across all measures in P1 since 2023-24. The largest decrease has been in listening and talking which is down 2 percentage points. Listening and talking, reading, literacy and numeracy attainment are now within 2 percentage points of 2018-19 figures. Writing is within 1 percentage point of 2018-19 figures.

Table 1: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Early Level by the end of P1. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	93%	85%	83%	89%
National	87%	81%	79%	85%

4.2. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures at this stage across all curricular areas for 2023-24. The largest difference is in listening and talking where Renfrewshire is ahead by 5 percentage points. Renfrewshire has been consistently ahead of national data at this stage since the data collection started in 2015-16.

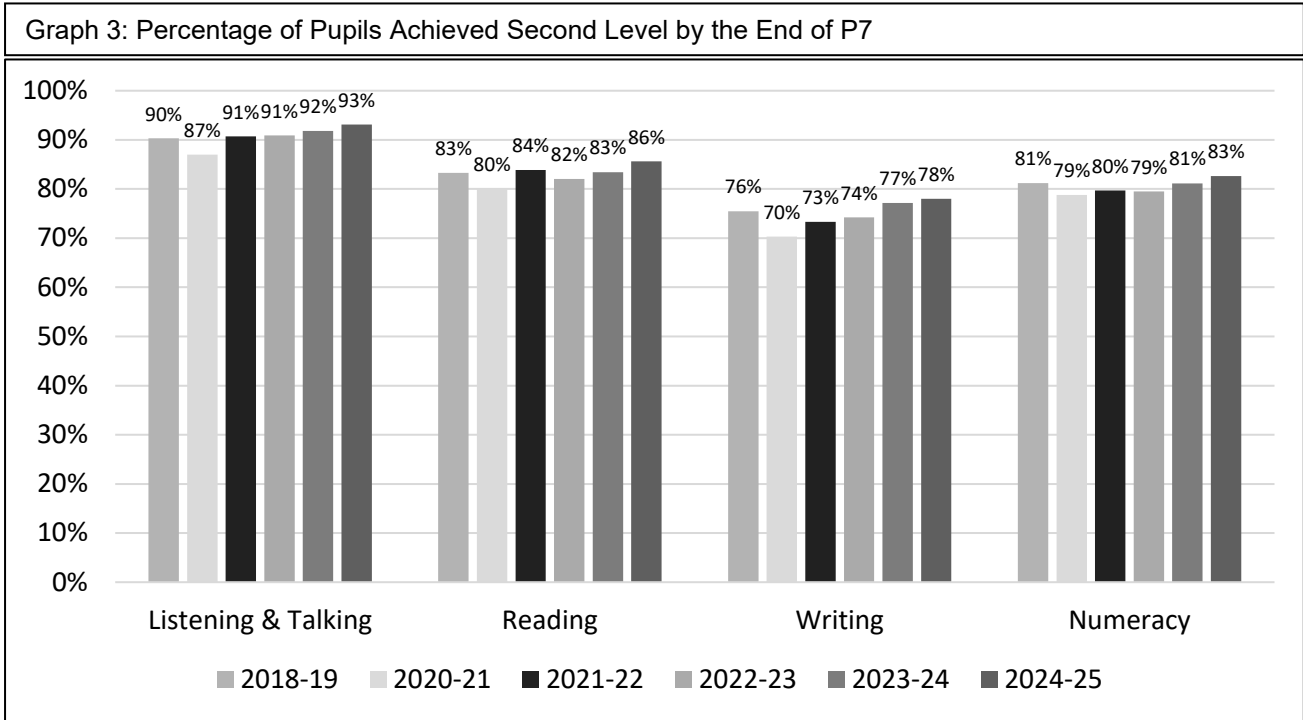
Graph 2: Percentage of Pupils Achieved First Level by the End of P4



4.3. Graph 2 demonstrates attainment has increased in listening and talking, writing, literacy and numeracy since 2023-24. There has been a marginal decrease in reading, however this is less than 1 percentage point. All curricular areas are in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels.

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	90%	83%	76%	81%
National	87%	79%	74%	78%

4.4. Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all curricular areas in P4 for 2023-24. The percentage differences are within 2 to 4 percentage points across the curricular areas, with the largest difference found in reading at 4 percentage points. This has been a consistent trend in almost all curricular areas since 2015-16 however Renfrewshire was -0.6 percentage points behind the national figure in 2021-22. Since that point Renfrewshire attainment has increased by 6 percentage points, compared with 4 percentage points nationally, resulting in the positive difference within the 2023-24 figures.

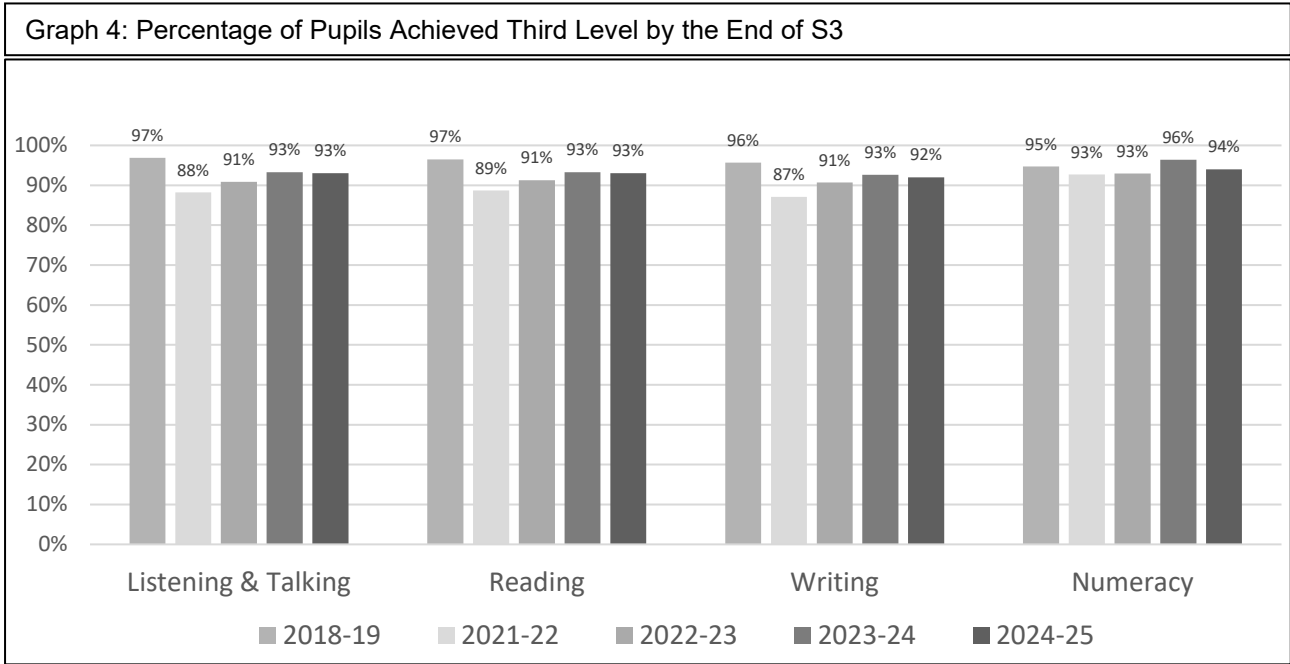


4.5. In Primary 7, attainment has increased in all curricular areas since 2023-24. The largest increase has been in reading which has increased by 3 percentage points and has now surpassed pre-pandemic levels. All other measures remain in line or ahead of pre-pandemic levels.

Table 3: Percentage of Pupils Achieved Second Level by the end of P7. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	92%	83%	77%	81%
National	88%	81%	76%	78%

4.6. Renfrewshire is ahead of the national figures in all curricular areas for 2023-24, within a range of 1 to 4 percentage points. This has been a consistent trend in listening and talking, reading and numeracy. Writing attainment was behind national figures by 1 percentage point in 2022-23 but the increase within Renfrewshire’s data over this period has resulted in the local authority moving 1 percentage point ahead of national.

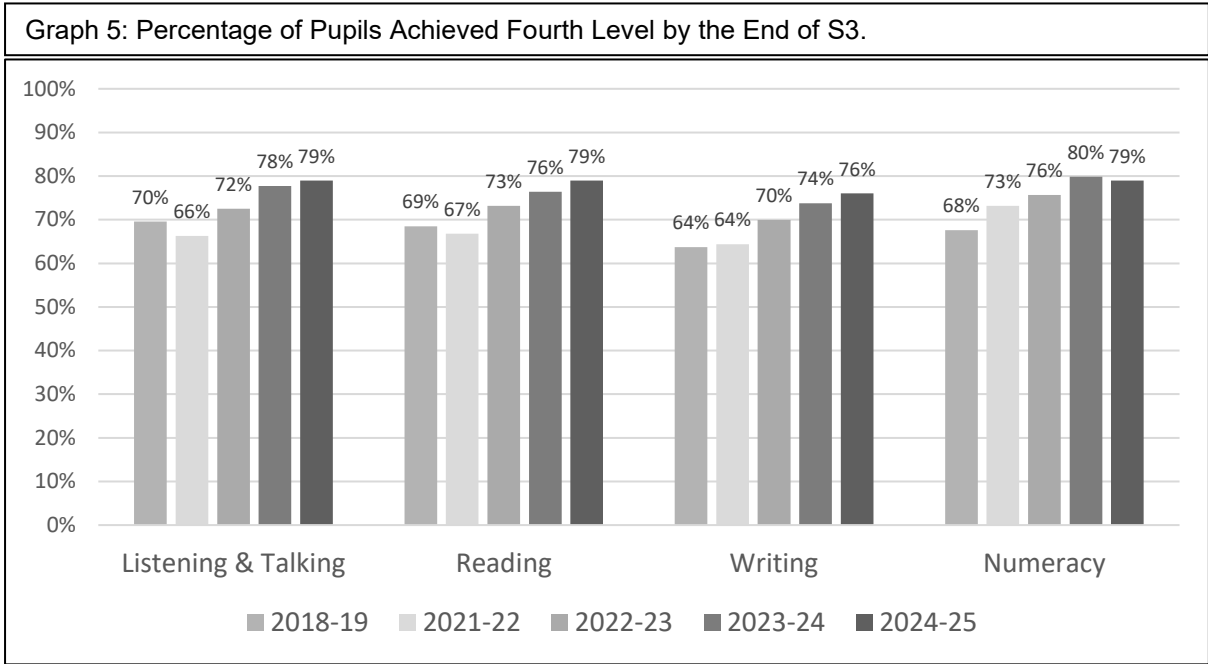


4.7. The ACEL return measures the percentage of pupils who achieve third and fourth level in S3. The percentage of pupils that achieved third level or above are displayed in graph 4. Attainment has remained level across listening and talking and reading since 2023-24. Attainment has decreased in writing by 1 percentage point, and numeracy by 2 percentage points since 2023-24.

Table 4: Percentage Pupils Achieved Third Level or Above by the end of S3. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	93%	93%	93%	96%
National	91%	90%	90%	90%

4.8. As shown in table 4, Renfrewshire is ahead of national figures across all curricular areas in S3 for 2023-24. The largest difference is in numeracy which is 6 percentage points ahead of the national figure. The literacy organisers are all 2 to 3 percentage points ahead. These figures had moved in line with or in some cases marginally behind national figures in the post-pandemic figures therefore the 2023-24 data demonstrates that Renfrewshire has increased at a higher rate than national figures in the previous 2 years.



4.9. Graph 5 shows the percentage of pupils achieving fourth level across all curricular areas. Attainment has increased across listening and talking, reading, and writing since 2023-24. Attainment has decreased in numeracy since 2023-24, but this is by less than one percentage point. All areas remain considerably above pre-pandemic levels.

Table 5: Percentage of Pupils Achieving Fourth Level by the end of S3. 2023-24

	Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Renfrewshire	78%	76%	74%	80%
National	64%	63%	61%	65%

4.10. Renfrewshire is ahead of national data across all curricular areas in this measure for 2023-24. The differences range from 12 to 15 percentage points, with the largest difference in numeracy. This is greater than in other stages however is in line with previous years at this level.

**5. Poverty- Related Attainment Gaps**

5.1. The attainment gap is measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) which is an area-based measure based on pupil postcode. In line with the Scottish Government approach, the data in the section below is split into SIMD quintiles which represent the 20% most deprived areas (quintile 1) to 20% least deprived areas (quintile 5).

Graph 6: Attainment in Literacy by SIMD Quintile (P1, P4, P7 Combined)

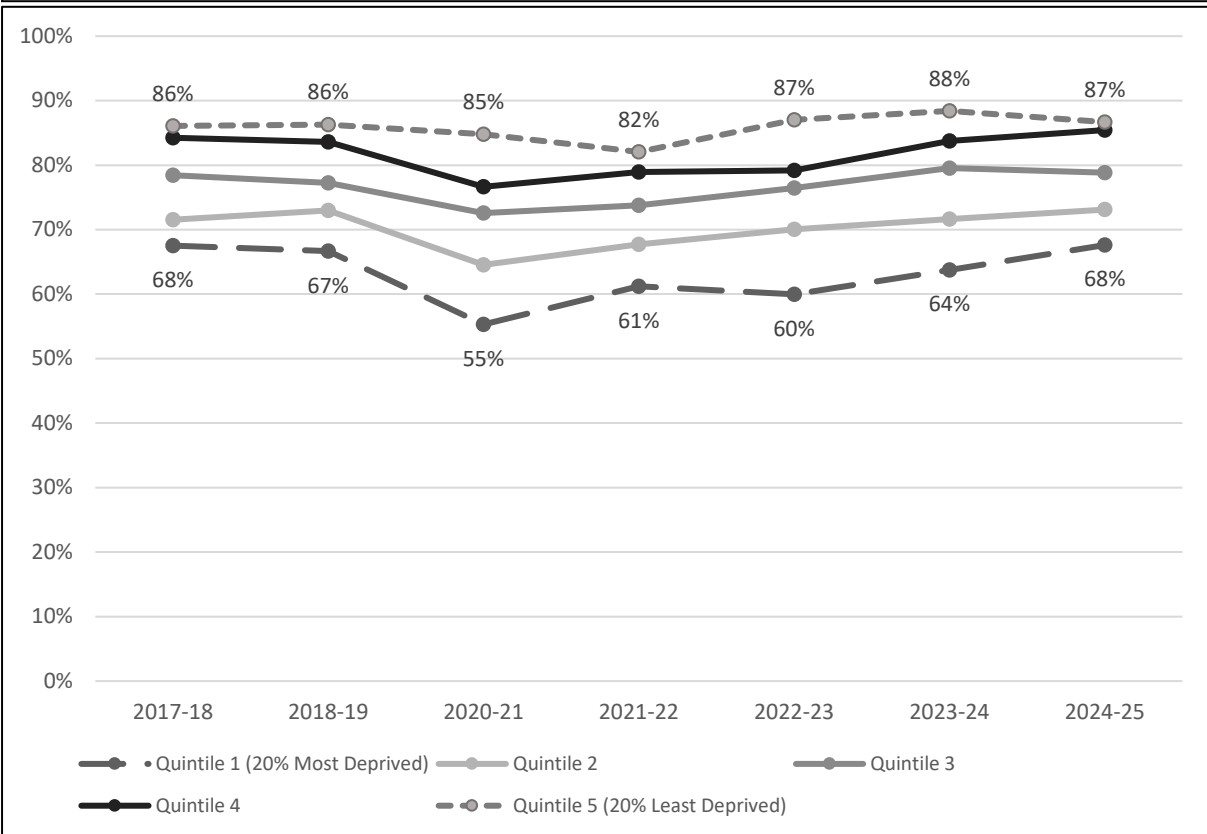


Table 6: Percentage Point Gap Between Quintile 1 and 5 in Literacy (P1,P4,P7)

	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Literacy	-20%	-30%	-21%	-27%	-25%	-19%

5.2. Graph 6 shows that pupils living in SIMD quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas) have increased attainment by 4 percentage points since the previous year. This is now in line with pre-pandemic levels. Pupils living in SIMD quintile 5 (20% least deprived areas) have decreased attainment but remain above pre-pandemic levels. Attainment of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas were most significantly impacted by the pandemic, with a 12-percentage point drop in this group between 2018-19 and 2020-21. This compares to a 1 percentage point drop for pupils living in 20% least deprived areas over the same period. As a result, the size of the gap (shown in table 6) has decreased by 8 percentage points since 2022-23 to 19 percentage points. This is lower than in 2021-22 however there has been some year-on-year variation since this point.

Graph 7: Attainment in Numeracy by SIMD Quintile (P1, P4, P7 Combined)

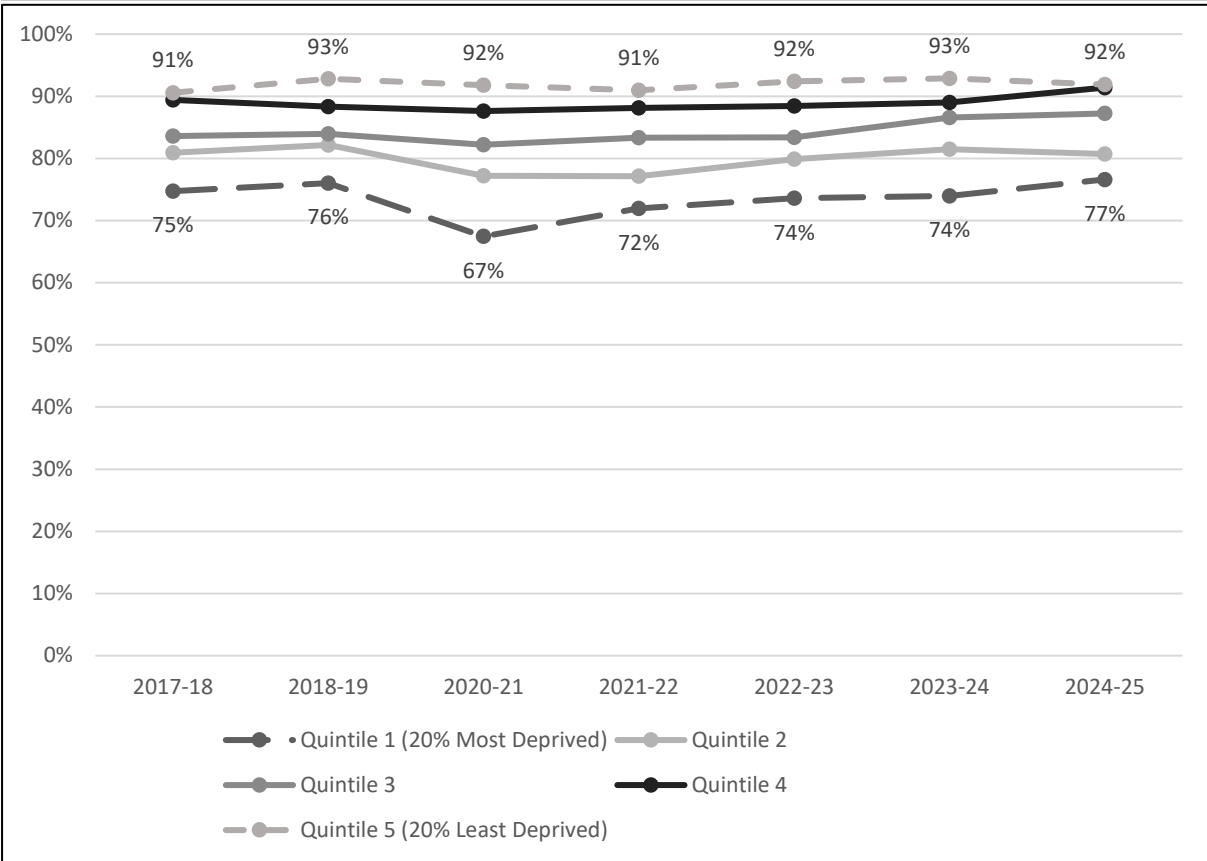


Table 7: Percentage Point Gap Between Quintile 1 and 5 in Numeracy (P1,P4,P7)

	2018-19	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Numeracy	-17%	-24%	-19%	-19%	-19%	-15%

5.3. Graph 7 demonstrates attainment in numeracy by SIMD quintile. Similar to literacy, attainment of pupils living in SIMD quintile 1 (20% most deprived areas) had the largest decrease in 2020-21. There has been improvement in this measure since 2020-21, however 2023-24 figures for pupils living in quintile 1 were unchanged on the previous year. In 2024-25, the percentage of pupils living in quintile 1 attaining in numeracy increased by 3 percentage points. Percentage point gaps, shown in table 7, remained unchanged between 2021-22 and 2023-24. The current figure of 15 percentage points is lower than in 2020-21 and the pre-pandemic figure of 17 percentage points.

	Literacy		Numeracy	
	Renfrewshire	National	Renfrewshire	National
Quintile 1 (Most Deprived)	64%	64%	74%	72%
Quintile 2	72%	70%	82%	77%
Quintile 3	80%	74%	87%	81%
Quintile 4	84%	79%	89%	85%
Quintile 5 (Least Deprived)	88%	85%	93%	89%
<b>Percentage Point Gap between Quintiles 1 and 5</b>	<b>-25%</b>	<b>-20%</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>-17%</b>

5.4. Renfrewshire is in line with or ahead of national figures across all SIMD quintiles in literacy and numeracy for 2023-24. The difference is most marginal in quintiles 1 and 2 literacy, however is broadly consistent within numeracy. While attainment is higher in Renfrewshire, the size of the gaps also remain larger than nationally. In literacy, this is a difference of 5 percentage points, however in numeracy the difference is only 2 percentage points.

## 6. Conclusion and next steps

- 6.1. The Achievement of a CfE Level (ACEL) provisional data for 2024-25 has demonstrated that attainment continues to improve with increases across many measures since 2023-24. These increases have resulted in most measures returning to pre-pandemic levels. The exception to this is attainment at early level in P1 and third level in S3 however there has been improvement in attainment at fourth level at this stage.
- 6.2. Attainment gaps are in line with or less than pre-pandemic levels. Pupils living in SIMD 20% most deprived areas were most significantly impacted by the pandemic and the 2020-21 figures demonstrated large decreases in attainment. Attainment has improved across both groups and gaps have reduced since 2020-21. For pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas, attainment is now in line with or ahead of pre-pandemic levels, and as a result attainment gaps have reduced.
- 6.3. Renfrewshire were consistently ahead of national figures in 2023-24 due to greater increases within Renfrewshire data in the previous year. This is an improvement on recent years where figures for some stages and curricular areas were within 1 percentage point of national figures.
- 6.4. While the 2024-25 figures are positive, we recognise there is scope for further improvement, particularly around attainment of our pupils living in most deprived areas. We will continue, through our quality improvement framework, to support and challenge our schools and ensure continual professional learning is available across a wide range of areas. Additionally, Renfrewshire's targeted schools programme remains in place for 2025-26 which is providing focused support for primary schools with high levels of deprivation and below average attainment levels. This programme alongside our universal offer aims to increase attainment for all and reduce the poverty related attainment gap.

## Implications of this report

- 1. Financial Implications**  
None.
- 2. HR and Organisational Development Implications**  
None.
- 3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**  
  
Children and Young People - High levels of attainment and achievement provide our children and young people with the best start in life
- 4. Legal Implications**  
None.
- 5. Property/Assets Implications**  
None.
- 6. Information Technology Implications**  
None.
- 7. Equality and Human Rights Implications**  
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
- 8. Health and Safety Implications**  
None.
- 9. Procurement Implications**  
None.
- 10. Risk Implications**  
None.
- 11. Privacy Impact**  
None.
- 12. COSLA Policy Position**  
None.

**13. Climate Risk**

None.

**14. Children's Rights**

This links to, Article 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

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**List of Background Papers**

(a) none

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*Children's Services  
JO/FE  
18/11/2025*

*Author: Alex Evans, Management Information Officer, Children Services,  
alex.evans@renfrewshire.gov.uk*



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**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 15 January 2026**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Learning Estate Programme Update**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The current phase of the Learning Estate Delivery Programme is ongoing with the following live projects:
- Paisley Grammar School Community Campus
  - Park Mains High School Extension & Internal Interventions
  - Thistle Primary School
- 1.2. This report provides a short update on the latest development of project construction and design progress.
- 1.3. The Learning Estate Strategy is also concurrently delivering a series of business cases, initially covering the Johnstone learning estate (both primary and secondary) and Trinity High School. An update is provided on the progress of this work and the next steps.
- 

## **2. Recommendations**

Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to:

- 2.1. Note the progress of project delivery in the Learning Estate Programme.
- 2.2. Note the progress of business case development for priority projects and next steps.
- 

## **3. Paisley Grammar School Community Campus**

- 3.1. The project to deliver a new Paisley Grammar School Community Campus continues to deliver on time, and on budget, and is scheduled to complete by the summer of 2026.
- 3.2. Construction continues to progress with large areas of the internals now progressing towards completion with the fit out of loose furnishing in areas beginning shortly.

- 3.3. Work is now progressing on the major construction of the new Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMIDS) South project that will deliver core travel infrastructure supporting the school including a new link road that connects Renfrew Road to Harbour Road, facilitating alternative travel routes for both active travel and vehicular access to the new school.
- 3.4. Work has also now commenced on site to construct a new underpass connecting Gallowhill to existing active travel routes by utilising a former railway underpass, allowing pupils and members of the community to safely pass under Renfrew Road without the need to navigate the road. This will incorporate access directly to the new access point of the school.
- 3.5. Officers across the project team have been working in collaboration with colleagues in the Roads Department to identify areas for improvement across the entire stretch of Renfrew Road which will become a key travel route to the new school. This process has identified circa 50 improvements that are already being actioned including resurfacing of roads and footways, the creation of new pedestrian crossings, and various safety improvements.
- 3.6. As the construction of the new school progresses to the final months of delivery, a large focus is being applied to move management planning, school fit out, and elements such as digital and learning/teaching equipment.

#### **4. Park Mains High School Extension & Internal Interventions**

- 4.1. The design process of the extended Park Mains High School is largely complete with some final contractor and sub-contractor design portions that will follow at the point of construction. The contractor is now completing the market testing process where all sub-contractors, specialists, and materials will be procured and costed.
- 4.2. This market testing process will allow a final contract price for construction to be agreed ahead of formally awarding both an advanced works contract, and a main works contract in early 2026 ahead of construction.
- 4.3. Planning permission for the project was formally agreed at the Planning and Climate Change Policy Board on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025. This will allow the project to progress, and as a result, the submission of building warrants for construction approval is now progressing.
- 4.4. Close work is taking place with the school to plan in detail the phasing of the construction works, and a schedule of move management.
- 4.5. Pending formal contract approvals and awards in early 2026, construction is scheduled to begin in March 2026 and the project remains on track to complete in the summer of 2027.

#### **5. Thistle Primary School**

- 5.1. Work has now commenced on site to construct the new Thistle Primary School in Dargavel. This follows a detailed and controlled design and approval process with the Contractor BAM UK (Through Hub West Scotland) working on initial site preparation, foundations, drainage and formation of hard landscaping areas through to early 2026 where elements of the structure will then begin.
- 5.2. The project remains on track to complete in the summer of 2027 and updates will be provided to this Board on the progress of construction as it progresses.
- 5.3. Recruitment is underway for a Head Teacher for the school with an appointment expected in early 2026. This will be an important leadership role with responsibility for planning the school

identity, set up, operation and procedures, and recruitment of staff prior to the opening of the school.

## 6. Business Case Development

- 6.1. Following the most recent detailed update in October 2025 regarding the progress of business cases for priority schools, work has been ongoing to define the Outline Business Case for each project that will be reported to the next Policy Board in March 2026.
- 6.2. Work continues to assess the options associated with each route forward in greater detail and all options will be included in the Outline Business Cases presented in March 2026. In March, members of this Board will be asked to make a decision on the recommended shortlist of options for each project to progress to Full Business Case stage throughout 2026 where a deeper level of analysis will be conducted, with the aim of providing a single recommended option to proceed with in early 2027.

## Implications of this report

### 1. Financial

All budgets associated with the capital projects discussed in this report have been agreed by Council and undergo rigorous management and quality assurance on a regular basis.

### 2. HR and Organisational Development

None.

### 3. Community/Council Planning

Our Renfrewshire is thriving - *New, and improved, learning estate assets will allow our children and young people to thrive with the best possible infrastructure to support their school experience. Staff, and community users will benefit from modern and inclusive environments.*

Reshaping our place, our economy and our future - *The learning estate shall be appropriately scaled and equipped to meet curriculum expectations and deliver an appropriate learning and teaching experience for all.*

### 4. Legal

None.

### 5. Property/Assets

These projects will deliver significant improvements to the learning estate, extending the life of assets, and improving the experience of young people, staff, and the wider community.

### 6. Information Technology

Digital improvements will be delivered through the learning estate strategy, where access to technology for all, will be a key priority for projects.

**7. Equality and Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

**8. Health and Safety**

None.

**9. Procurement**

Any procurement work required is conducted in collaboration with the Council's Procurement team and adheres to appropriate regulations.

**10. Risk**

All projects are bound by rigorous governance and supported by detailed risk registers. Risk is reported and managed at various levels with scrutiny applied to ensure mitigations and contingency plans are in place.

**11. Privacy Impact**

None.

**12. Climate Risk**

New, and improved, learning estate assets will directly contribute to the Council's journey towards net zero. Sustainability is a key concept of all projects.

**13. Children's Rights**

When considering any future school provision, the impact this will have on children is a key consideration, and any work will be based around the direct needs of children to allow their education experience to thrive. Whilst children have a right to choose where they wish to attend school in collaboration with their parents, the council's admissions policy applies to ensure that schools that are oversubscribed can be managed.

**14. Cosla Policy Position**

None.

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**Children's Services**

JL/GM/JO Dec 2025

**Author:**

Jack Lochans – Strategic Learning Estate Manager  
jack.lochans@renfrewshire.gov.uk



**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 15 January 2026**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Annual report of the Fostering and Adoption Service**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides elected members with the opportunity to review the 18<sup>th</sup> annual report of Renfrewshire's Fostering and Adoption Service (appendix 1).
  - 1.2 The annual report sets out the work undertaken by the Fostering and Adoption Panel and the Fostering and Adoption Service in the period 1 August year 2024 to 31 July 2025. The annual report notes that on 31 July 2025 there were 68 fostering households approved by Renfrewshire. During the period covered by this report, 12 children and young people had a permanence plan considered by the panel and approved.
  - 1.3 The report considers the work of the panel and the continued work of the fostering and adoption service.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The Education and Children's Services Policy Board is asked to:
    - a) note the contents of the Fostering and Adoption Annual Report 2024/25 attached as appendix 1.
- 

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Looked After (Scotland) Regulations 2009 and the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009 require Social Work in its role as a Fostering and Adoption agency to operate a Fostering Panel and an Adoption Panel. This panel has the responsibility for putting forward recommendations to the agency decision makers John Trainer (Head of Children and Justice Social Work and Michelle McCargo, (Strategic Manager for Children and Justice)

regarding the suitability of people to adopt or foster children. Furthermore, the Panel considers and approves plans for children to be adopted or for the Council to apply for Permanence Order for a child. The Panel considers and approves the matching of a particular child with a particular family where the plan is for the child to live there permanently. The Panel is also responsible for reviewing Renfrewshire foster carers.

- 3.2 Renfrewshire operates a Fostering Panel and Adoption Panel with one constitution. The panel separates out the fostering business from the adoption business to ensure that the appropriate regulations are met regarding a quorum, and for the attendance of the legal and medical advisers. The panel has two chairpersons who are independent from the work of the service: One is a senior manager in social work, and the other is from the Association for Fostering Adoption and Kinship Scotland (AFKA).
- 3.3 There are currently 23, members of the panel comprising elected members, social work, health and education staff, legal advisers, a medical adviser, carers, independent panel members, and an independent member from AFKA. The panel sits at least monthly- there were 18 panels in the reporting period. There are typically 3 panel members at each meeting along with appropriate advisors. The panel considered 55 agenda items over the course of the year.
- 3.4 The panel has a unique overview of the work being undertaken to assess and approve foster carers and adopters alongside the work being undertaken by social workers to progress plans for children who cannot be cared for within their own family. The annual report has been produced as a means of sharing this work with a wider audience and to assist in the process of service planning.
- 3.5 Renfrewshire had 68 active households of foster carers on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025. In the period 1/08/24 and 31/7/2025 there were no new registered foster carers, however three assessments are ongoing. Four foster care households left the service: one household was deregistered following a foster care investigation that concluded the care offered did not meet the standards of being a Renfrewshire carer. One household retired and two households converted from fostering to continuing care households.
- 3.6 The report notes the ongoing need to recruit Renfrewshire foster carers and adopters because of children being accommodated and in need of permanent care, and our commitment to reducing the number of children being placed externally. This year Renfrewshire was part of the Scottish Government national foster carer recruitment campaign which ran over 6 weeks in the Spring of 2025. During this period there was no expressions of interest in fostering to our service, and this response was reflected nationally. Most of our fostering applications continue to come from people who already have foster carers as friends or family. The service continue to work with communication and marketing to consider how best to promote fostering recruitment.
- 3.7 In the period 1/08/24 and 31/07/2025 a total of 3 Renfrewshire households were approved as adopters at the Renfrewshire panel.
- 3.8 The Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014 increases the responsibility/ duty of Local Authorities to provide continuing care placements

for young adults up to the age of 21. This means that more young people are remaining in the same placement after they are 18. The service continues to assess foster carers to become continuing carer/supported carers wherever this is appropriate.

- 3.9 We currently have 10 young adults living with supported carers, 8 of these carers were previously the young adults foster carer, while two supported carers look after children previously known to them.
- 3.10 The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 became law in 2021 and places new duties on local authorities to place brothers and sisters together in placements and place a new duty on local authorities to promote contact between brothers and sisters who are looked after. This is in keeping with the independent care review report, The Promise.
- 3.11 Renfrewshire approved the “Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together Policy” in May 2021. The policy contains the following pledge “When children come into care Renfrewshire will place brothers and sisters together”. The policy recognises that there will be times that brothers, and sisters can’t be placed together but requires us to report on this. The annual report on the application of the policy is being considered elsewhere on the agenda for this Board today.

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## Implications of this report

### 1. Financial

The Council supports foster carers through the payment of a fee and maintenance allowance for each child. The Council provides adoption allowances for some adoptive carers where this is considered to be in the best interest of the child.

### 2. HR and Organisational Development

None.

### 3. Community/Council Planning

Our Renfrewshire is safe - *The provision of foster care provides Renfrewshire’s children with safety and care*

### 4. Legal

There are no new legal duties as a consequence of this report. The report satisfies the statutory duties of the local authority to have in place a fostering and adoption panel.

### 5. Property/Assets

None.

### 6. Information Technology

None.

**7. Equality and Human Rights**

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report.

**8. Health and Safety**

None.

**9. Procurement**

None.

**10. Risk**

None.

**11. Privacy Impact**

None.

**12. Climate Risk**

None.

**13. Children's Rights**

This report demonstrates compliance with Article 3 (best interest of child), Article 9 (keeping families together), Article 12 (respect for children's views), Article 19 (protection from violence), Article 22 (refugee children) and 25 (review of a child's placement) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**14. Cosla Policy Position**

None.

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**List of Background Papers**

- (a) None

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*Children's Services*  
FD 24/11

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**THE FOSTERING AND  
ADOPTION  
PANEL AND SERVICE**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025**

## **Foreword**

## **Introduction**

### **Context**

- Accommodated and Looked After Children/Young People
- Overview of the work presented to the Fostering and Adoption Panel 01/08/24 – 31/07/25
- Panel Membership
- Staffing
- Commitment to permanency planning

### **Introduction of Senior practitioner role**

- Panel development
- Permanence drop-in

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- Recruitment Activity
- Preparation Groups
- New Foster Carers and deregistration
- Foster Carers Reviews
- Permanent Foster Carers
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- Consultation Group
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- Future Development of Fostering Service 2024 -2025

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- Overview of Continuing and Supported Carers Service
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- Development within the Adoption Service 2024 – 2025
- Recruitment, Preparation and Assessment of Adoptive Parents
- Family Finding
- The Adoption Register Scotland
- Adoption Plans and Links
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- Letterbox Contact
- Training
- Future Development of the Adoption Service 2024 – 2025

## Conclusion

## Foreword

Welcome to the annual report of Renfrewshire's Fostering, Adoption and Supported Care Service and The Fostering and Adoption Panel. This report reviews the previous year and looks to future developments.

On 31 July 2025, Renfrewshire Council had 548 Looked After Children. Of these, 134 children and young people were looked after at home, 242 were looked after by kinship carers or friends/relatives and 161 were accommodated with foster carers, in pre-adoption arrangements or within residential placements. Renfrewshire Council had 68 Fostering households at this time.

Children who are looked after in foster care, can either be with Renfrewshire foster carers or with foster carers approved by an external agency or charity. Wherever possible we try to have children live with Renfrewshire foster carers and only look to external agencies when a suitable match cannot be made with Renfrewshire carers. On 31 July 2025 there were 25 children/young people living with external providers, an increase of one from the previous year.

The work of the Fostering and Adoption Service continues to ensure that children are living in the best and safest environments to meet their individual needs, and that children who require to live permanently in foster care or to be adopted are matched with an appropriate foster or adoptive family at the earliest opportunity.

The Fostering and Adoption Service remains committed to ensuring that the principles of Renfrewshire's 'Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together' policy are embedded in all aspects of its practice. Where we cannot place brothers and sisters together, the service supports natural family time between brothers and sisters out with formal arrangements wherever possible.

The Fostering and Adoption Panel provides an important quality assurance role in ensuring that the work undertaken to assess children's long-term care needs, and the assessment of their potential carers, is carried out to the highest standards. The Panel's role is to make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who ultimately approves children's permanence plans or confirms that a household can adopt or become foster carers.

Panels continue to deal with a range of complex issues and to progress children's plans in a timeous, focussed manner. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, 12 children's permanence plans were approved by the Agency Decision Maker.

We hope that you enjoy reading this year's annual report.

John Trainer  
Head of Children and Justice Social Work  
Chief Social Work Officer

Michelle McCargo  
Strategic Manager for Children and Justice  
Depute Chief Social Work Officer

## Introduction

This is the 18<sup>th</sup> annual report of Renfrewshire Council's Fostering and Adoption Panel and Service and covers the period 1 August 2024 - 31 July 2025.

Renfrewshire Council has a statutory duty to operate Fostering and Adoption Panels. In Renfrewshire we have one Panel which carries out both functions.

The Adoption and Fostering Panel operates within the statutory framework of the Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (Part II) (AAS Regulations) and the Looked After (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (Part VI) (the LAC Regulations).

These regulations set the basis for the membership of the Panel, the frequency of meetings, the appointment of advisors and the different functions of the Panel.

There is a Business Meeting at the start of each Panel to review overall functioning. The quorum for individual meetings of the Panel is three members, and it is ensured that this number includes people with relevant experience and a range of backgrounds to provide robust and independent scrutiny of the business presented.

Responsibility for the functions and decisions of the Panel rests with the Chief Social Work Officer. Authority is delegated to a Senior Manager in Children's Services to chair the Panel. We have a second chair from the Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland (AFKA). The Head of Children and Justice Social Work, and the Strategic Manager for Children and Justice act as Agency Decision Makers for the Panel. This is to ensure compliance with the recommendation of the Guidance on Looked After Children Regulations (Scotland) 2009, to appoint more than one Agency Decision Maker, to cover, holidays, illness, alternatives for review (appeal) panels and other circumstances.

The Panel has several purposes. This includes considering prospective foster carers, prospective adopters, and supported/continuing carers. It also involves reviewing existing registrations for foster carers, prospective adopters and supported/continuing carers. In addition, the Panel considers individual children's needs for alternative permanent carers (where the care plan for the child is that they do not return home to their birth family); this includes considering the most appropriate legal route to secure this outcome. The Panel also considers the matching of a child with specific foster carers or adoptive parents within permanence plans.

The fostering and adoption team is responsible for the recruitment, training, supervision and support of suitable foster carers and prospective adopters. There is also a significant role in tracking permanence and providing post adoption support to adopted families once Adoption Orders are granted. Ensuring we have sufficient carers with the skills and experience necessary to meet the needs of the diverse range of babies, children and young people who need care away from their birth families is the over-arching objective of the team.

## Context

The work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel should be viewed in the context of the overall numbers of Renfrewshire Council's Looked After and Accommodated children.

## Accommodated and Looked After Children/Young People

As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, Renfrewshire Council had 548 Looked After Children/Young People. The number of children living in Kinship arrangements has slightly reduced from the previous year, from 264 to 242. The number of children living with Renfrewshire Council's foster carers has reduced by 14 from the previous year, whilst those residing with independent/charity sector foster carers also increasing by 1.

	31/07/2024	31/07/2025
Local Authority – Children in Children's Houses	21	20
Local Authority – Children in Foster Carer	115	101
Independent Sector Children in Foster Care	24	25
Independent Sector Children in External Residential Resource	37	18
Pre – Adoption	5	8
Children Looked After by Kinship carers/friends/relatives	264	242
Children Looked After at home	153	134
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>548</b>

<b>Cases presented to the Fostering and Adoption Panel</b>		
Business Item	Aug 23 -July 24	Aug 24 - July 25
Child adoption plans and links	5	9
Approval of Renfrewshire adopters (households)	2	3
Approval of adopters to increase registration	0	0
Conversion of Foster carers to Adopters	0	0
Approval of Adopters for children from overseas.	0	0
De registration of adopters	0	2
Review of Registration (Adoption)	1	1
Children's Permanence Order plans	1	3
Links with Permanent Foster Carer	1	3
Approval of new Foster Carer	1	0
Approval of Foster Carer – change from interim to permanent status	0	2
De registration of foster carers	5	4
Approval of Supported Carers	5	4
Initial review of Foster Carers after 1 year	6	0
Foster Carer Reviews (after year 3)	24	24
<b>Total Number of Agenda Items</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>55</b>

There were a total of 18 Fostering and Adoption Panels held between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025.

## Panel Membership

There has continued to be a committed Panel membership over the past year. Very positively, the number of panel members has significantly increased in the past 2 years from 12 to 23. This overall number includes Panel Chairs. The majority of Panels are chaired by the delegated Senior Manager from social work and the other is independent and commissioned from the Association of Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland. The Panel membership reflects a wide range of experience from including colleagues from social work, education, health, independent panel member, and those with lived experience of fostering and adoption and elected officials. The focus now is on building experience of the panel membership in place.

As part of the Panel member appraisal process, members provided feedback in respect of their role which will inform future training, to ensure panel members feel confident to make legally competent recommendations.

The Medical Advisers continue to offer a valuable service and support to the Panel in respect of provision and interpretation of medical information in relation to the children and adults being presented to Panel. The Medical Adviser provides up-to-date written information regarding any health issues in relation to a child or a prospective foster carer or adoptive parent. The medical advisor will attend Panel if this is required where health needs are more complex.

The Panel has a representative from the council's legal services who act as Legal Advisor and provides written legal advice to the Panel in relation to adoption and permanence work. The Legal Advisor attends the Panel whenever permanence is being considered, and on other occasions where the chairperson feels their advice is required.

At present, it is the role of the Senior Practitioner to act as Panel Advisor and assume responsibility for all Panel business. The Team Managers for Fostering and Adoption act as Panel Advisor when required, providing a supporting role. The Medical, Legal and Panel Advisors are non-voting members.

## Staffing

Following an internal social work service redesign implemented in November 2024 the structure of the Fostering, Adoption and Continuing Care/Supported Care Service is as follows:

Senior Social Work Manager - Registered manager of the services

1 Team Manager Adoption (responsible for adoption and permanence service)

1 Team Manager Fostering (responsible for the fostering, continuing and supported care service)

1 Senior Practitioner (Responsible for all panel business)

5 full time fostering social Workers

1 part time fostering social worker

1 full time continuing care/ supported care social worker

3 full time adoption social workers

1 part time adoption social Worker

1 Adoption Support and Development Worker

1 Birth Connections co-ordinator

Both teams work closely together and share expertise and learning.

### **Commitment to permanence planning – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

During this period, Renfrewshire has progressed adoption and permanence plans for 12 children. This is a significant increase from last year. Renfrewshire Council continues to recognise the importance in progressing plans for children within appropriate timescales. The service re-design has now been implemented, and this has enabled greater focus on permanence work. This work has also been supported with the introduction of a monthly permanence drop-in service.

Renfrewshire social work service is committed to keeping children with their birth families where it is safe to do so and is working to improve identification of potential alternative care arrangements within parents' wider family network at the earliest possible stage. This important work with parents occurs before presentation to the Fostering and Adoption Panel. Following this, even where permanence out with the family becomes necessary, it can provide the child with important life-long links with their birth family and contribute to more positive long-term outcomes for children.

The decision to place a child permanently out with their birth family rightly involves a high level of assessment to ensure the plan is in the best interests of the child and will meet their needs throughout their childhood. During the permanence process, checks and balances are in place to ensure the best possible outcome for the child. Permanence planning work is complex however, it is also highly rewarding when children find new families and have the opportunity to thrive into adulthood.

### **Introduction of Senior practitioner role**

In November 2024, the Senior Practitioner role was introduced to the fostering and adoption team as part of the service redesign. The Senior Practitioner fulfils the role of panel advisor and is responsible for the delivery of key operational priorities within the fostering and adoption panel. The senior practitioner works closely with the Team Managers to ensure that practice and knowledge opportunities within the team are maximised and leads on complex cases where appropriate.

### **Panel development**

A permanence drop-in service was created by the fostering and adoption service in February 2025. This takes place monthly with a rotation of different office locations to support the attendance of the children and families workforce. The aim of the permanence drop in is to offer advice, guidance and support with any permanence related matter to achieve robust and timeous outcomes. The permanence drop in has been well attended by social workers, social work managers and Independent Decision Makers. Feedback is collated at the end of each session for the purpose of service improvement and to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the workers who attend. Since its roll out in February, the drop in has been solely facilitated by the management team for the purpose of offering continuity of information however over the next 3 months the plan is to expand this to social workers from the fostering and adoption service who will co-facilitate the drop in and act as mentors to workers who attend and need support. Feedback has been very positive with workers attending sharing feelings of increased confidence and understanding in permanence work and more robust assessments are being presented to Panel which has supported Panel members in their recommendations. Based on the feedback received checklists have been created and shared in respect of permanence processes which will further support workers in their role with permanence work.

## Report on Fostering Service

The fostering service continues to offer a high standard of care to children in the care of Renfrewshire Council. The number of foster carers has reduced over the period, as has the number of children being cared for in foster care. At times carers have gone out with their registration to care for children needing care. The most common reason for this has been to keep brothers and sisters together. When carers go out with their registration this must be approved by the Agency Decision Maker. It is a testament to the commitment of Renfrewshire carers that there are fewer foster carers caring for more children.

### Developments within the Fostering Service 2024 – 2025

- Embedding the principles of the Promise by encouraging all staff and carers to become Promise Keepers.
- Implemented bi-monthly service improvement meetings
- Social Events for Foster Carers
- Specific social event for short break carers
- Specific training event for short break carers
- Reviewed and implemented a new approach around Preparation Groups
- Introduced Tures (Online) Training pathway for all foster carers which includes child protection and adult support and protection modules
- Implemented an Annual (in person) training calendar for all foster carers
- Offered new training e.g. wee minds matter/ Understanding Neurodiversity in children and young people and sudden infant death syndrome training
- Reviewed and implemented a new looked after review process
- Reviewed and implemented a new Safer Carer Process and Safer care templates in line with new guidance
- Reviewed and implemented a new assessment and review process for babysitters
- Reviewed and implemented a new assessment and review process for Nominated carers
- Reviewed and implemented a new approach to Fostering & Adoption duty
- Introduced matching templates
- Reviewed and implemented a new Individual placement agreement template
- Regular engagement with neighbouring authorities and Social Work Scotland
- Participation in AFKA West of Scotland Consortia managers forum.
- Participation in the Community of practice practitioners' group
- 2 social workers were trained in Seasons for growth (supporting adults with Grief and loss)
- Non-violence Resistance groups were facilitated by education Psychology and a fostering social worker
- 2 social fostering social workers were trained in Non-violence Resistance
- Collaboration with Educational Psychology to offer specific support to foster carers to help support the child in their care

### Recruitment activity/ Preparation groups

The Fostering Team manager works with Renfrewshire Council's Communication team to continue to develop and refine a recruitment strategy making use of social media. The Fostering Network have estimated that 400 additional fostering households are required to meet demand in Scotland. It is recognised nationally that there is a shortage of foster carers and in May 2025

the Scottish Government in partnership with the Fostering Network and Scotland's 32 local authorities launched a national recruitment campaign

"The ordinary can be extraordinary for a child in foster care".

The fostering service embraced this partnership and two carers represented Renfrewshire at the event launch in Edinburgh with the First Minister, John Swinney.

Results thus far have been disappointing nationally and during this campaign, the service did not receive and uptake in enquiries to become foster carers, although since then there has been 5 households who have contacted the service and may progress through the process.

When a person makes a fostering enquiry, an initial visit is carried out by a social worker from the fostering service. Following this there is discussion between the social worker and the team manager, and they consider whether to progress the enquiry based on the fostering criteria. Ideally at this stage the enquirer would be invited to attend preparation groups, and it would not be until they had completed the preparation groups and with the agreement of the service, they would then submit their application, and the home study part of the assessment process would begin.

We have adapted our approach to managing enquiries by streamlining the process and ensuring that the same worker will oversee the enquiry from the initial telephone call, home visit and decision to progress the carers to preparation group stage.

The preparation groups are facilitated by social workers from the fostering team, and they use the materials produced by the Fostering Network "Skills to Foster". The preparation groups provide the opportunity for the participants to receive more in-depth information and to discuss the implications of fostering. The preparation groups tend to run over 5 evening (or weekend) sessions and cover topics such as why children come into care, what a foster carer does, identity and life chances, working with others including birth parents, attachment and brain development and creating a secure environment.

Experienced foster carers come along to talk to the group about their different experiences of caring for foster children, financial issues and support.

Preparation groups were held between October and November 2024 and from these 3 households are continuing with process and have scheduled dates for Panel.

### **New foster carers and carers deregistered**

In the period August 2024 – July 2025, no new foster carers were approved. During this period there were four fostering households deregistered. One household was deregistered following a foster carer investigation, one household retired, and two converted to continuing care households.

### **Foster Carer Reviews**

A Review of Foster Carers Registration takes place at the Fostering Panel at the end of their first year of fostering and every three years thereafter. Out with this timescale, foster carers will also return to Panel if their registration requires a review due to a change in registration, consideration of a complaint or allegation, breakdown, or a significant change in circumstances. In Renfrewshire, Foster Carer Reviews take place annually, so when not reviewed by the Fostering Panel, the review is conducted by a Social Work Senior

Manager.

Between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025, the Fostering Panel reviewed 24 foster care households, and 41 internal foster care reviews took place.

Foster Carer Reviews are an opportunity for foster carers to talk about their experience, training, and support etc. Renfrewshire Council's foster carers, in the main expressed satisfaction with their experiences of fostering and their learning and remain enthusiastic and committed. They have found the support provided by their social worker to be beneficial and available as required.

The foster carers provide written and verbal contribution to the review process, as well as written reports from their birth children. Reports by their supervising social worker and child's social worker are all part of the review process. Foster children are encouraged to contribute to the review process and birth parents are encouraged to submit a report for the Foster Carer Review regarding the care their child/children is receiving.

The duties of the supervising social workers from the fostering team are to keep regular contact with the foster carers, this includes home visits and telephone contact. Supervision between carers and their worker generally takes place four weekly. This is dedicated time that allows discussion and reflection about caring for the children, training and development as well as performing a range of duties including ensuring health and safety checks are carried out annually, annual medical information is received and PVG checks are up to date, Safer caring policies are in place for each fostering household which include a minimum of two unannounced visits annually. Supervising social workers will also attend Looked After Children Review meetings and conduct joint visits with the child's social worker as necessary.

### **Permanent Foster Carers**

Three children had their plan for a Permanence Order approved between 1 August 2024– 31 July 2025. The children's carers were also assessed and matched within this time

### **Foster Carer Training**

The fostering service take pride in our ability to take on board feedback and use this to improve and develop the service offered to our foster carers. One thing foster carers tell us regularly is that they want training that is accessible, tailored to their individual needs and something they can access in their own time. Therefore, in August 2024, the fostering service launched an online training pathway (TURAS) for all foster carers. This has been received well, and the service has recorded a significant uptake in foster carer training since this training pathway was implemented.

Additionally, foster carers have told us that they value in person training as this can be a helpful way to network with other carers however, they would like dates in advance so that they can plan their diary to suit their other commitments. Therefore, the fostering service launched an annual (in person) training calendar in January this year. Foster carers have the opportunity to attend training designed specifically for them which is provided by the Social Work Training team, social workers and other professionals from wider services and members of the fostering and adoption team. The latter have also provided evening sessions to capture carers who work. The range of training offered, covers dealing with health emergencies, Fire safety training, child protection, safer care, life story work, promoting positive behaviour, understanding neurodiversity, children with disabilities and contextualizing safeguarding which is delivered using Virtual Reality headsets.

Social workers and foster carers can also attend external training courses. The Fostering Network and Association of Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland have provided training and network lunches to foster carers, the fostering and adoption team staff, who have also attended network lunches and practitioners' forums.

### **Foster Carers' Support Group**

The foster carers have their own informal support group where they can share information/experiences, and any issues raised within the group are fed back to the fostering team via the carers supervising social worker or the foster carers consultation group. The group meets monthly and is supplemented by a "WhatsApp" group that the carers use for communication.

### **Consultation Group**

The Carers Consultation Group met four times between August 2024 and July 2025. All foster carers are invited to this group, and it is attended by the Fostering Team manager and the Senior Practitioner and the Senior Manager has attended two. This provides an opportunity for foster carers to be kept updated with any changes within the service and discuss any issues that have arisen for them or other carers. There is usually a group of between 10-12 carers who regularly attend but actions from the meeting are circulated to all carers. It is also the opportunity for more informal discussion.

### **Future of foster care consultation event**

A Scottish Government public consultation on the Future of Foster Care ran between 24 October 2024 and 6 February 2025. The consultation set out a vision for the future of foster care in Scotland that prioritises children's experiences, and meets their many and varied needs, in a changing sector and society. It proposed a flexible approach to fostering, that builds on the unique skills and qualities of foster carers, good practice and innovation and is underpinned by comprehensive ongoing support for foster carers. The proposals were developed in partnership with stakeholders, including the voices of children, young people, families and foster carers. The Scottish Government seeks to ensure fostering is fully aligned to the national approach to supporting children, young people and their families in Scotland - Getting It Right for Every Child. In other words, it is intended that fostering be child-centred, providing a strengths-based, holistic approach to supporting children, young people and families when it is needed, for as long as it is needed.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2025, Renfrewshire fostering service partnered with the Fostering Network and the Scottish Government to offer a Renfrewshire exclusive engagement event to all Renfrewshire foster carers where they were encouraged and supported to share their views in relation to the Future of Foster care consultation. MSP Natalie Don-McInnes minister for Children, Young People and the Promise, also attended this event and carers had the opportunity to share their views directly with Natalie.

A particular highlight of the session was when the carers were asked if they feel supported by Renfrewshire Council's fostering service and there was an overwhelming positive response.

### **Foster Carer Events**

The Fostering Service has facilitated 2 Foster Carer Coffee Mornings over the last year, these have been an informal opportunity, where all fostering households are invited along as well as all the fostering and adoption staff and managers. Attendance at these events has been high,

the foster carers come along, tea/coffee and cakes are provided people can have a chat in a very informal setting, it is also an opportunity for foster carers to put a face to the names of staff members whom they may not have met in other circumstances.

The Fostering Service organised a Fostering Day Out at Barnhill Farm in May 2025 to coincide with "Fostering Fortnight", a national campaign organised by Fostering Network to raise the profile of fostering. Foster carers were invited along with the children they care for including birth and foster children. This event was enjoyed by 38 children along with 32 foster carers and staff and managers from the fostering service including the Head of Service.

There are 9 short break carers who provide an invaluable service mostly to families in the community by offering short breaks to children to allow parents/carers respite. Undoubtedly, this support has prevented some children being accommodated. Carers in this group also offer short break/holiday cover for our foster carers. This role has many similarities to our foster carers but also there are some differences. Many of this group continue in paid employment and offer support at weekends and so do not have the same opportunities to network. The fostering service held a short break carers coffee evening in April this year. 6 out of 9 households attended. Social Workers from the fostering service facilitated discussion and delivered a presentation on "Letter to the child". This was a successful event which allowed the opportunities to meet other carers and staff within the service.

### **Breakthrough Group**

Aileen Byrne, fostering social worker continues to facilitate the Breakthrough Group who have enjoyed two outings over the course of this reporting period. In April' 25 they had a fun day out at Skyline Xscape and then at the end of the summer they enjoyed a trip to an outdoor water park based in the East coast of Scotland. These outings are always very well attended by the children and young people.

The Breakthrough Group are delighted to be celebrating 10-year anniversary this year. Starting in 2015 the group has been facilitated by Renfrewshire Council Children's Services and Who Cares? Scotland.

The young people who attend the group are, or have been, in foster care. This semi-structured group meets monthly for 1½ hours, giving the young people an opportunity to meet others who may be experiencing similar issues or who may simply understand what it's like to grow up outside of their birth family home. The focus of the group has been to support and amplify the voices of young people on issues important to them. Originally, these voices and stories were gathered and published in a quarterly newsletter, which was then posted to all of Renfrewshire's young people in foster care.

Over the years, the group has naturally evolved, and the young people have found more creative ways to tell their stories and raise issues that matter to them. Their focus has shifted from completing individual pieces of work to collaborating on creative projects designed to share their messages through different mediums.

Over the past year, they have been working on a project titled *We ~~Are in~~ Care*. With the help and guidance of group volunteers, the young people have created an iMovie featuring spoken word, highlighting what is important to them and what they care about—for themselves and for other young people. As part of the planning and completion of the iMovie, each young person has logged their time and efforts over the past 10 months and submitted applications for a Youth Dynamic Award to recognise the challenge they set for themselves last year.

With the iMovie now complete, the group is looking to showcase it as part of a larger event that is planned to celebrate the 10th anniversary later in the year.

## **Newsletter for Foster Carers**

The fostering newsletter is produced by Robin Lawson, fostering social worker in Spring, Summer and Winter and distributed to all foster carers by e-mail. The focus of the newsletter is providing foster carers with updates on legal or practice changes that affect them or the children they care for and providing some thought-provoking articles about fostering issues. The newsletters seek to keep foster carers informed of changes within the social work service or procedures and also advertise training opportunities specific to fostering. The hope is that foster carers will become more involved in the content and focus of the newsletters. Carers are contacted regularly to solicit contributions or ideas for contributions. These editions covered topics including the Children's Services social work redesign and feedback from our carer's participation in the government sponsored consultation about the Future of Fostering. The carers were informed about recent changes to our Individual Placement Agreement, nominated carer and safer caring processes. There were also reflections on recent foster carer social events and edited articles from recent media publications about how to encourage young people to have a balanced approach to the use of their phones and the experiences of foster carers in Italy looking after the children of Mafia bosses. The newsletter provides the carers with links to explore more information on the topics covered and provides encouragement for carers to record any additional learning.

## **Future developments of the fostering service 2025 – 2026**

- Increase the number of carers producing "Letter to the Child"
- Develop and produce Permanence Training for social workers
- Deliver training to social workers using the Staying Connected Toolkit
- Deliver Seasons for growth training to foster carers and continuing/ supported carers
- Implement a "caring for babies" support group
- Set up a regular support group for short break carers
- Review core training for foster carers
- Implement "Adolescents matters" training in partnership with the Children's Health Scotland
- Foster carers will pilot a Lifestory App (My Story App)
- Introduce quarterly groups supervision/ reflective discussion opportunities

## **Report on Supported & Continuing Care Service 2024-2025**

### **Current carers and outcomes for young people**

At present the service consists of 8 continuing carers and 2 supported carers supporting 10 of Renfrewshire's young adults. Of the 10 young adults, 3 attend college placements fulltime, 2 attend university, 2 have an apprenticeship and 2 are in fulltime employment and 1 is in part-time employment.

Many of our young adults have had the opportunity to go on holiday either with their carers or as independent adults both domestically and internationally.

Several young adults are undertaking driving lessons with some having secured their driving licence over the past 12 months.

### **Developments within the supported & Continuing care service 2024 – 2025**

- Implemented annual reviews for all continuing and supported carers
- Carers have been actively encouraged to engage in the training and enhance their knowledge to support them to be more informed carers.
- Introduced Turas (Online) Training pathway for all continuing and supported carers which includes child protection and adult support and protection modules
- Implemented an Annual (in person) training calendar for all continuing and supported carers
- Offered new training e.g. Understanding Neurodiversity in children and young people and Letter to the Child
  
- Regular engagement with neighbouring authorities and Social Work Scotland
- Participation in AFKA West of Scotland Consortia managers forum.
- Participation in the Community of practice practitioners' group
- 2 social workers were trained in Seasons for growth (Understanding and supporting Loss and grief in adults)
- NVR training and level 3 groups were facilitated by education Psychology and a fostering social worker
- 2 fostering social workers were trained in NVR level 1 and 2
- Collaboration with Educational Psychology to offer specific support to continuing and supported carers to help support the young person in their care

### **Future Developments within the supported & Continuing care service**

- Discussion with Care Inspectorate regarding registration as Continuing Care Service
- Review Practice and paperwork templates for the continuing and supported care service
- Review core training for continuing and supported carers
- Implement “Adolescents matters” training in partnership with the Children’s Health Scotland
- Implement bi-monthly service improvement meetings with a focus on continuing and supported care
- Introduce quarterly groups supervision/ reflective discussion opportunities

### **Report on the Adoption Service**

#### **Developments within the Adoption Service in Renfrewshire 1 August 2024 - 31 July 2025**

1. Secured a further year of funding from The Promise, allowing the Birth Connections service, which supports birth family members affected by adoption, to continue until the end of March 2026.

2. Significantly developed opportunities for the voices of lived experience to be heard. Birth parents involved with Birth Connections helped create a video of their views, which has been shared in various forums to promote wider understanding.
3. Further developed practice by promoting empathy for birth parents amongst prospective adopters from early stage – the Birth Connections’ video has been shared at Adoption Preparation Groups as part of this.
4. Secured adoption plans and moves to prospective adoptive families for nine children, a considerable increase on equivalent numbers from recent years, and against the national trend of the numbers of adoption matches decreasing.
5. Continued work with Scottish Adoption Register/Link maker. This year, this included matching through Link Maker, and attending Exchange Days and an Adoption Activity Day.
6. Highlighted the importance of Listening to and Supporting the Experience of Adoption during Adoption Week Scotland.
7. Contributed to AFKA’s Permanence Guides (Adoption Subgroup), to develop best practice nationally.
8. Worked with colleagues in Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to offer training opportunities for adopters.
9. Established a monthly peer support drop in for adopters and adopted children. This is run at weekends, and staff members are available for additional support.

### **Recruitment, Preparation & Assessment of Adoptive Parents**

Within the reporting period the Adoption Service received 26 initial enquiries which is three more than the figure from the previous year. Some of these did not progress due to a range of issues, and others continue to progress with their adoption journey. Two preparation groups were held, in September-October 2024 and May-June 2025. We continued to have contributions from adoptive parents at these groups, to support the learning of those attending. This year, we also expanded the contributions of those with lived experience by showing our Birth Connections video. This allowed prospective adopters to hear from the outset how birth parents feel about issues such as their children being outwith their care, what they hope for their children’s futures, and the importance of letterbox contact. Overall, the feedback we received from participants was extremely positive, particularly in relation to the contributions that came from lived experience.

The Adoption Service progressed 3 adoption applications (households) to the Adoption panel during the reporting period, and all were approved. Feedback received about the adoption assessment noted that prospective adopters recognised the need for thorough assessment, and on many occasions participants found the experience useful and therapeutic.

Renfrewshire Council’s Adoption Service will continue to use Scotland’s Adoption Register as required. Once applicants have been approved as adopters for a brief period, their information and what age of child they have been approved for is added to the Register. Adoption social workers across Scotland can then access this information should they be trying to place a child

for adoption. However, this has not been necessary for households approved in this reporting period, as they have been considered for linking through other methods within short time periods.

## Family Finding

There continued to be a need in this reporting period for adoptive parents for Renfrewshire children of all ages; particularly for brother and sister groups, older children, and children with additional support needs. Nationally, there was an increase in the number of children requiring adoption, and a decrease in the numbers of approved adopters available to meet their needs. This led to fewer matches being achieved nationally through Link Maker over the last year. However, the number of matches in Renfrewshire increased in that time.

Scotland's Adoption Register introduced a new process for Exchange days, featuring video presentations as well as opportunities for face to face connection between prospective adopters and workers. Renfrewshire engaged in this and also attended an Activity Day to seek families for our children.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, the Adoption Service was actively family finding for 17 children in Renfrewshire, a slight increase on 15 from last year. Of these children, 9 had adoptive family links formally agreed through the Fostering and Adoption Panel, and all of those were then placed with their prospective adoptive family. Of the 17 children mentioned, a further 4 had adoptive family links potentially identified, but not formally agreed during this reporting period. Of these 17 children, a further 3 had decisions made to pause their adoption plans (1 due to new health information requiring exploration to ensure clarity on their needs, and 2 as new birth family potential options were discovered), and the service continued to search for an adoptive family for the remaining 1 child.

## The Adoption Register (Scotland) - National Position

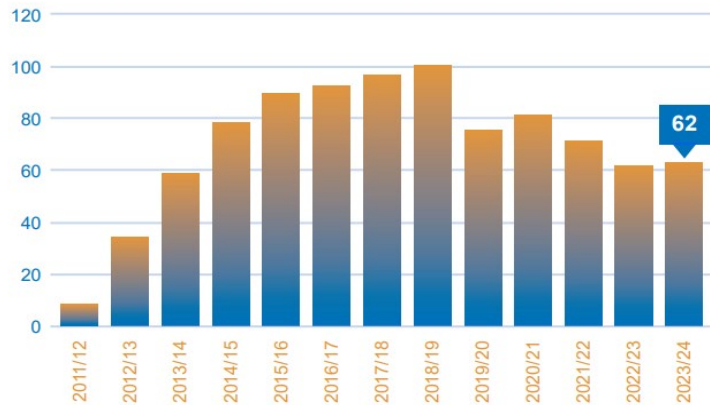
Scotland's Adoption Register continued to be a statutory service fully funded by the Scottish Government which provides a free service to support local authorities and voluntary adoption agencies with family finding activity. The Register is committed to facilitating social workers' overall goal of securing children's futures through moves to and links with permanent families who provide safe, loving, and stable homes.

A total of 61 children were matched with adoptive families through the Scottish Adoption Register in 2024/25.

The Register played an active role alongside AFKA Scotland and AUK Scotland in the delivery of Adoption Week Scotland 2024 with a focus on the needs of children, young people and their families throughout the lifetime of adoption.

The Register received a higher number of referrals for children requiring family finding services during 2024/25 than in previous years. At the same time, they noted a steady decline in the number of prospective adopters being referred to the service. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 there were 175 children on the Register compared to 113 the previous year and 125 prospective adopters on the Register compared to 169 the previous year. This may have accounted for the reduction in matches for Scottish children via the Register for the past year, down from 62 to 35. It should be noted that the trend for fewer adoptions in Scotland continued to reflect the UK wide experience of lower numbers of children moving to adoptive families, as the UK nations experienced greater numbers of children waiting than available families. As noted, however, Renfrewshire's Adoption Service performed against this trend.

MATCHES MADE VIA THE REGISTER 2011-2024



The end of year total of matches is a very small increase on the previous year, up from 61 to 62 despite the continued increase in numbers of children being referred throughout the year. On 31st March 2024 there were 113 children on the Register compared to 134 the previous year, and 169 adopters on the Register compared to 209 the previous year.

**GENDER**

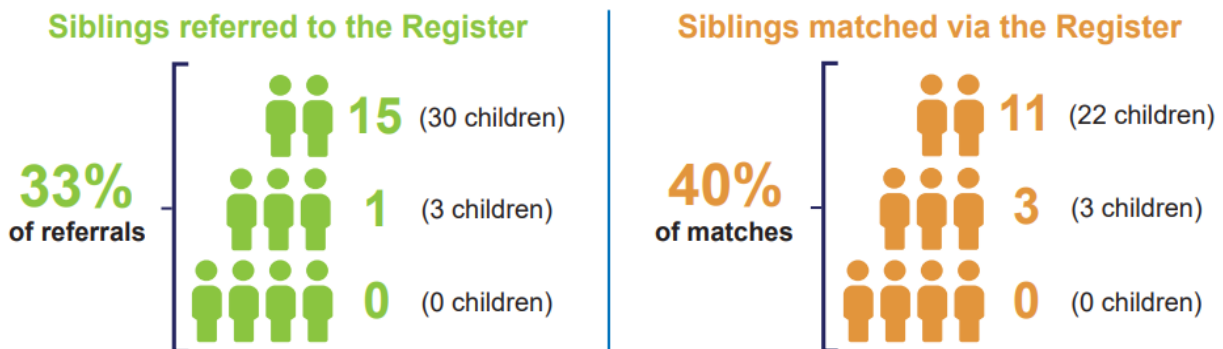
Of the 137 children referred to the Register in 24/25, 65 (47%) were girls and 72 (53%) were boys. This sees a return to the previous recordings of more boys than girls following a change in 21/22 where more girls than boys were referred to the Register since its inception in 2011.

**ETHNICITY**

124 (90%) White British 4 (3%) Other White 2 (0.9%) Black African heritage 1 (0.7%) Asian heritage 3 (2%) Irish Traveller heritage 6 (4%) Mixed heritage

**SIBLINGS**

38% of the children referred to the Register in 2024/25 were part of a sibling group. This is an increase from 33% last year. 11% (4) of the total number of matches made in this period were for sibling groups. No sibling groups of three have been matched this quarter. The continuation of sibling groups being matched with adopters is a positive outcome for those brothers and sisters who will benefit greatly from remaining together. It is a strength of the Register that it offers a wider range of prospective adoptive families to meet the needs of brothers and sisters.



During the reporting period, 9 children were presented to the Adoption Panel for consideration of their adoption plans and links. This is a significant increase on the 5 adoption plans considered in the previous year (and more than double the 4 in the year before that). In all these cases, the Agency Decision Maker accepted the panel's recommendations to approve the adoption plan and links between the child and their prospective adopters.

### **Adoption Support Group**

The Adoption Service continued to engage positively with families through our Adoption Support Events facilitated by the team. Our Summer Adoption Support Event took place in Barshaw Park in August 2024, and on this occasion we had some support from Renfrewshire's Active Communities, who provided us with some games to play, including archery, golf, and hoola hoops. There was a total of 37 adoptive family members in attendance. It was great to see the children and Adopters interact with each other and there was ample opportunity for Adopters to speak with the team if they wished to do so. Following this, our Christmas 2024 Event was held in Station Seven, where we had 7 adults and 10 children in attendance. This year, we decided not to see a pantomime, but provided time for families to more easily speak and connect with one another. A range of activities were available, including Christmas crafts and a 'Silent Disco'. The Silent Disco was a huge success, and we received lots of requests for Christmas songs. The biscuits were Christmas themed, with mince pies on offer, the children danced, and the adults mingled and chatted. Finally, in April 2025, we held our Easter Event at Barshaw Park. The 2 adults and 6 children who attended took part in an Easter Hunt in the park, searching for laminated letters attached to benches, fences and play equipment which spelled out 'The Easter Bunny'. These were then presented to the 'Easter Bunny' who had an Easter Egg for everyone, before playing football and tig with the children.

Having run such Events (with varying content) for several years, the Adoption Service was aware that adoptive parents used this as a positive opportunity to connect with other adopters, and we observed that some of the children recognised one another and were excited to come together. Adoptive families consistently fed back that they valued the opportunity to come together, to form connections with other families, and for their children to be with other adopted children with shared lived experience.

Therefore, this year, the Adoption Service significantly expanded our group based support to adoptive families. A monthly Adoption Peer Support Drop-In started on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and ran every second weekend of the month thereafter, sometimes on a Saturday, and sometimes a Sunday. The group took place at 'The Shed' at Station 7. This provided a large space for lots of different activities, ensuring families could find something they were keen to do. A board games table was available, and a pool or table tennis table. There was also a reading corner, boxes of LEGO to be enjoyed, and arts and craft materials to use. Everyone could have a hot or cold drink, a chat, and if the weather allowed we had outdoor games like hopsctotch and hula hooping. The drop-in was set up to run on a regular, consistent basis, every month. That way families could rely on its availability, increasing the likelihood of attendance, and overall support. The group provided an opportunity for adoptive parents to gain support from others with the same lived experience, and afforded children the chance to meet other adopted children, promoting their positive sense of identity and wellbeing. Moreover, staff members attended each session. This ensured adoptive families could ask questions, have a general chat, or discuss any difficulties they experienced with a worker from the Adoption Service in a relaxed, face to face environment. Equally, families who did not need additional support at that time will potentially be more comfortable with asking for this in the future where they have maintained positive, informal links with the Adoption Service in the meantime. In the Adoption Service, we fully appreciate that adoptive families are all likely to experience challenges at some stage. We strive to reassure families that this is very common and that anyone seeking support will be

welcomed rather than judged. Our drop-in - which is informal, fun, and routinely available – has been one way of conveying this approach.

### **Adoption Support to Individual Families**

Throughout the year the adoption team have provided adoption support on an individual basis to 24 adoptive families. Barnardo's Scottish Adoption Advice Service (SAAS) also continues to offer support, including counselling, to Renfrewshire families. A total of 42 children in 33 families received an adoption allowance during the reporting period.

Post Adoption Support Planning meetings are held for all families at key stages on their adoption journey, including six weeks after a child is placed, and when an adoption order is granted to consider their support needs. An adoption social worker is allocated to Renfrewshire adoptive parents for 1 year following the granting of an adoption order at which point the adoptive family are invited to a review meeting to consider any further adoption supports required.

Within Renfrewshire there were 87 adoptive households on our mailing list in this reporting period. All receive the quarterly newsletter and notification of support groups and training events.

### **Birth Connections**

Birth Connections continued to support birth family members affected by adoption. Kirstin Harvey, Birth Connections Co-ordinator began providing a direct service since March 2023 and continued to do so during this reporting period. Birth Connections' aim has always been to provide lifelong support so that birth family members can access support at the time when they feel best able to, and can choose when they do or do not wish to engage. The support offered through Birth Connections has been both individual - tailored to the birth family member's specific needs - and group based. Kirstin was seconded to this post, initially for a year (2022-23) as the CORRA Foundation provided 12 months of funding to start up a Birth Family Support service. We were fortunate to receive a further 3 funding rounds (one in this reporting period) to allow us to maintain and grow the support offered through Birth Connections. This continued Scottish Government funding was an indication of the success of the service to date, which has comprehensively supported birth family members affected by adoption. Our current funding runs until 30th March 2026.

The individual support provided over the reporting period involved a huge range of activities, some of which are noted, as follows:

- assisting people to understand the Adoption process and terminology surrounding this
- helping birth family members engage in life story activities for children (such as photo albums, memory boxes and letters)
- practical input with completing forms (including housing and counselling referrals, and accessing bus passes and passports)
- supporting birth parents to attend final family times with children, and promoting life story assisting work there
- accompanying birth parents to meetings and appointments (such as Looked After Reviews, Children's Hearings, GP, Addiction support, and Justice requirements),
- social support to help build confidence in the community and linking in with community led groups and organisations
- letterbox exchange; helping birth family members to write letters to children and offering emotional support on receiving letters from adoptive families.

Our core Group support launched in May 2023, providing a fortnightly Group run at The Shed at Station 7 (Active Communities). During this reporting period, the Group continued to provide a therapeutic environment for birth parents to meet with others with similar lived experience. Each session provided opportunity for arts and crafts, cooking, playing games, discussion and eating together. This was in a relaxed atmosphere and work was opportunity led; discuss was guided by those who attended on each occasion. A worker cooked and each attendee had the option to support this or not (many did). This allowed attendees to learn new skills, or to share their existing skills with their peers. It also meant we had the nurturing activity of sharing a meal on each occasion. This Group was instrumental in creating our Birth Parents' Voices video (along with other Birth Connections service users who did not attend the Group), and the attendees were then keen to consider additional ways they could share their views in the future. The feedback from Group attendees during this reporting period was consistently positive, with people valuing the support of staff and their peers. Our Birth Connections Co-ordinator also liaised closely with Active Communities and the community opportunities they provided. This allowed us to provide an additional Cooking/Baking group, run quarterly, and other classes such as Barista Training.

Birth Connections also organised a group activity to Edinburgh Zoo, a destination chosen by our service users, in September 2024. This activity combined those who received individual support with those who attended the Group. Those who did not attend the Group had opportunity, therefore, to meet others with similar experiences and to access peer support. The trip was a huge success with many of the birth family members stating they were looking forward to writing about this in their next letterbox letter, as going to the Zoo was something that they may have in common with their children now. Many of the birth family members who attended had never seen some of the zoo animals in real life before, and nor had they been to Edinburgh. They spoke about opportunities their children have had since being adopted and felt they could then relate a little more to these.

Birth Connections offered a Christmas meal again, in December 2024 to our Group attendees, in partnership with Station 7 (Active Communities). This was the second year we were able to offer this, and it was great to see the birth family members get into the Christmas spirit, dressing up and enjoying a full Christmas dinner. Again, attendees discussed how the Birth Connections Christmas dinner was the only way they celebrated Christmas, as this could be an extremely difficult time of year for them. To be able to share a Christmas dinner with others who shared their Christmas experience validated their feeling of loss, whilst still allowing them to celebrate together in a safe and inclusive environment.

Birth Connections received 33 referrals between 1st August 2024 and 31st July 2025. Of these 13 engaged in support, 12 did not respond to the offer of support, 3 said no to support, and the remaining 5 said they were interested but did not feel ready for the support at that time. In total, Birth Connections supported 42 birth family members with individual support in this reporting period, with 6 birth family members actively involved in the Group Support. These numbers continued to grow, and we anticipate this will remain the case.

"Birth Connections ensures we meet our legal duties under s 1 (3) (c) (d) and (f) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 to provide an adoption service to birth parents, siblings and grandparents. The support provided can focus on directly adoption related issues, such as helping birth parents understand adoption processes, facilitating final family time sessions, or promoting engagement with letterbox connection. This promotes better outcomes for children as birth parents are more likely to engage with processes they understand and feel included in. Moreover, children benefit from final family times which are calm and affirming, and from knowing as they grow older that those experiences were as favourable as possible. This promotes a positive sense of identity, through feelings of being valued by birth parents. Equally,

children benefit from ongoing letterbox connection, as part of understanding their life stories and navigating their adopted identity. Equally, our support can relate to wider issues, such as birth parents' mental health, addiction or social isolation. We understand that those issues may have contributed to the need for a child to be adopted, so are still adoption related. In addition, it is impossible for many birth parents to engage with issues directly related to adoption until they have a foundation of safety and stability, so dealing with these wider issues can be a precursor to this. Through this wider support, birth parents can achieve more stable lifestyles which are hugely beneficial for them. Some birth parents we support have even told us they have chosen not to have more children at this time, as a result of our support. Birth Connections' support is in no way conditional on our service users not having further children; we support service users to achieve any safe outcomes they identify for themselves. However, we do see it as positive that some birth parents have recognised when they are not in circumstances that are conducive to raising children, as it is beneficial for them to not experience further loss, and beneficial for future children to have parents who wait until they can manage parenting before re-embarking on this. Moreover, this wider support is also beneficial for adopted children. They are more likely to receive ongoing letterbox exchanges from birth parents who have support and are stable enough to engage with this. In addition, where adopted children make attempts to trace birth parents as they grow older, this is more likely to be a safe and positive experience where the birth parents they encounter are living more stable lives. As such, Birth Connections supports birth family members, as a valuable objective in itself, and as means of significantly supporting adopted children.

### **Adoption Newsletter**

The Adoption Newsletter continued to be compiled quarterly by Emma Mackie Johnstone, Adoption Social Worker, and was sent out to all families on our Adoption Support mailing list. The Newsletter contained updates on the Adoption Team within Renfrewshire, event dates for Adopters' diaries, current affairs within the UK relating to adoption or care experienced children, dates for Renfrewshire Council's training courses for adopters and also dates for training courses with other agencies. The Newsletter also provided activities based on that Newsletter's theme, ranging from ideas for outings with children during the holidays to recipes for baking Halloween cakes. Emma collected children's artwork, which was displayed in the Newsletter, to showcase the talent we had among the families we supported. The Newsletter also contained information about our Adoption Support events and the monthly Adoption Peer Support Groups and always noted contact details for the individual workers with the Adoption Team. In addition, the Newsletter contained a QR code which Adopters could scan with their phone, to complete a survey about the Newsletter, and general Adoption Support. This allowed us to more formally seek feedback on our service. The verbal feedback received about the Newsletter was positive, with some adopters really appreciating the fact that they could show their child their artwork in it, and others finding this very informative.

### **Letter Box Contact**

The Letterbox Contact Service continued to facilitate indirect communication between birth families, adoptive parents, sister and brother groups, and permanent foster carers. Kayleigh Wilson, Adoption Support and Development Worker, alongside other team members, supported participants in both composing and responding to letters this year, helping maintain meaningful connections in a safe and structured manner.

During the current reporting period, the service held a caseload of 134, with 87 cases actively operational (an increase from 125 and 79 in the year before). The frequency of contact was determined on a case-by-case basis. While most contacts occurred annually, some were scheduled biannually, quarterly, or more frequently depending on individual needs.

This year, to improve accessibility and engagement, the service introduced personalised support and digital communication options for some families. These included email correspondence and supported video calls via platforms such as Microsoft Teams. The introduction of these methods resulted in a notable increase in participant engagement.

In addition to facilitating written contact, this year the service expanded its support to include follow-on interventions. For example, sister and brother groups who initially engaged through letterbox contact progressed to face-to-face meetings. Furthermore, some young people who maintained letterbox contact with birth parents were supported in making direct contact with them as they transitioned into adulthood.

## **Training**

This year, we highlighted the importance of Listening to and Supporting the Experience of Adoption during Adoption Week Scotland. Utilising the resources provided by Adoption UK, we shared training events for workers in our own service and the wider Children's Social Work Service, and used our mailing list to advertise events for adopted families. We also shared the voice of lived experience by outlining the story of an adopted family, and the support they received from our service on both social and general media.

The Adoption Service also contributed to future national practice learning as our Adoption Team Manager contributed to AFKA's Good Practice in Permanence Guides by meeting with the Adoption Subgroup for this. This ensured Renfrewshire practice was available for others' learning, and provided an opportunity to learn from the good practice of others. The initial drafts of these were completed during this reporting period, with a plan to pilot them subsequently. The final versions of the guides will be created and disseminated across Scotland in March 2026.

Finally, this year, we built on our existing links with colleagues in Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy to offer training opportunities for adopters. Colleagues from these three disciplines worked collaboratively to provide a training session entitled 'Neurodiversity: What does this mean and how can you support your young person?'. This was provided both in person - in an evening slot – solely for adopters, and online. The online session was provided during the day and was available for adopters, foster carers and workers. This was video'd so it is now available for other adopters who were unable to make the live sessions to view as a recording.

## **Future developments of the adoption service**

Over the next year the service intends to strengthen the adoption service by developing the following:

1. Increase representation of birth family members' voices through the production of a written document outlining advice to future birth family members and future social workers.
2. Consider how the post adoption support process for newly established adoptive families could be standardised to improve consistency and predictability.
3. Highlight the importance of Growing Your Family during Adoption Week Scotland.
4. Formally gather feedback from the Peer Support Drop-In, to ensure this provision is responsive to need, using a QR code.

## Conclusion

This report has highlighted the work of the Fostering, Adoption and Supported Carers Services and the work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel during August 2024 - July 2025. The activity of the Fostering and Adoption Panel reflects the number of children unable to live with their birth families within Renfrewshire.

The Fostering, Adoption and Supported Carers Services are committed to safeguarding children's lives in Renfrewshire and to continual improvement.

As the Registered Manager for the Fostering and Adoption Service, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our panel members for their commitment to Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children.

I would also like to express my thanks to Renfrewshire Foster Carers, Continuing Carers, Supported Carers and Adopters who have continued to show their commitment and love to the children they look after, and adopt. They help us to ensure that the children receive the best outcomes that they can.

As always, we look forward to the coming year and to progressing our work with all partner agencies to continue to improve the outcomes and secure the future of Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children.

Fiona Duncan  
Social Work Senior Manager  
(Registered Manager of Fostering and Adoption Service)

## Appendix 1 Renfrewshire Council Fostering Criteria

### Who Can Foster?

Renfrewshire Council accepts applications from different backgrounds as everyone has their own individual experience to offer.

### Requirements to foster:

1. Are over 21 years,
2. Are in good health and
3. Have a spare bedroom.

### You can be:

1. Single, married, cohabiting or in a civil partnership.
2. Own or rent the property you live in
3. Be employed or not employed.
4. Be of any religious background or sexuality.

### Preparation Groups

Enquirers will be required to attend preparation groups before making a formal application. The purpose of these groups is to provide the opportunity to learn more about fostering, and the children who require to be in a foster placement.

If preparation groups are not available other means will be considered to provide and share information with enquirers.

### Local Authority, Health, and Police Checks

All applicants will be subject to stringent local authority, health, and police checks. These will extend to any other resident in the household over 16 years of age and to anyone who will have care of the child.

## **Renfrewshire Council Adoption Criteria**

### **Age**

All applicants must be over 21 years of age.

### **Status**

Applications will be considered from couples or single applicants irrespective of their sexuality.

A couple may be the same sex or unmarried. Same sex couples are not required to be in a Civil Partnership.

Joint applicants must be in an enduring family relationship.

### **Preparation Groups**

Enquirers will be required to attend preparation groups, if groups are available, prior to making a formal application. The purpose of these groups is to provide enquiries with the opportunity to learn more about the children needing adoption, their backgrounds and the genetic factors adopters may have to consider when parenting adopted children.

If preparation groups are not available other means will be considered to provide and share information with enquiries.

### **Infertility**

Prospective adopters should have completed infertility investigations at least 6 months prior to application.

### **Local Authority Health and Police Checks**

All applicants will be subject to stringent local authority health and police checks. These will extend to any other resident in the household over 16 years of age and to anyone who will have care of the child.




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**To:** Education and Children's Services Policy Board

**On:** 15 January 2026

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**Report by:** Director of Children's Services

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**Heading:** Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together – Annual Report

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 The Renfrewshire *Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together* policy was approved by the Board in May 2021. It was developed in response to the Independent Care Review, which highlighted concerns about siblings being separated when placed in care by local authorities. To address this, Children's Services worked in partnership with the Children's Champions Board to produce the report *Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together*, recommending practice improvements to help more siblings remain together when in local authority care. Renfrewshire remains the only Council in Scotland with a formal policy statement in relation to Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together.
- 1.2 The policy is ambitious and includes the following pledge: "*When children come into care, Renfrewshire will place brothers and sisters together.*" It also commits to an annual report being produced to show how the policy is being implemented and providing an explanation where the service has been unable to keep brothers and sisters together.
- 1.3 The first annual progress report, covering June 2021 to May 2022, was presented to the Board on 27 October 2022. This is the fourth annual report presented to Board on the implementation and impact of the Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together Policy.
- 1.4 The policy requires that any decision to place brothers and sisters in separate care arrangements must be approved by the Head of Children and Justice Social Work. The policy recognises there are circumstances which mean that brothers and sisters cannot be cared for together there is a clear, documented decision-making process and robust arrangements to maintain family relationship, alongside regular care reviews.
- 1.5 This report covers our activity to keep brothers and sisters together between June 2024 and May 2025. Of the 70 children and young people who were newly accommodated during the period, 44 had a sibling aged under 16 years. Of these 44 children, 24 were placed with at least one sibling. 13 children had a sibling who remained at home with birth parents. 7 children who had at least one sibling under the age of 16 years were placed separately from their siblings.

- 1.6 A review of cases where siblings were placed separately confirmed that separation was both necessary and appropriate. The primary reasons included differing individual needs and care plans, significant support requirements for some children, complex family dynamics, a high number of half-sibling relationships, and limitations in the capacity of kinship carers to care for multiple children.
- 1.7 In situations where siblings were separated, comprehensive family time plans have been implemented to maintain relationships. These arrangements are tailored to the individual needs and wishes of the children, ensuring ongoing support for sibling connections.
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## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Board are asked to:
- a) note the content of this report detailing the progress implementing the Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together Policy.
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## 3. Background

- 3.1 The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 became law in January 2021 and placed new duties for local authorities in relation to ensuring that brothers and sisters in care are supported to be together and where this is not possible, to have their relationship supported on an ongoing basis. Our Brothers and Sisters policy is compliant with the requirements of this piece of legislation and has been highlighted as national best practice.
- 3.2 The policy opens with a pledge *“When children come into care, Renfrewshire will place brothers and sisters together.”* It is recognised, however, that there are circumstances in which this will not be possible, or indeed in the best interests of the individual children and young people. Moreover, there are times when siblings’ individual needs are not compatible with each other, and difficult decisions require to be made by the team of professionals responsible for their care that they should be placed separately.
- 3.3 In circumstances where the separate placement of brothers or sisters is due to the unavailability of kinship or foster carers, or residential service able to take a family group, or for significant safeguarding reasons, there is a requirement that a robust family time contact plan is in place and the possibility of the children being reunited in placement is regularly reviewed via the established Looked After Reviews process. This review process has been strengthened following the social work service re-design and the implementation of the role of Independent Decision Makers (IDMs). IDMs are independent of the management of children’s care plans and their role is to critically evaluate the appropriateness and progress of plans, as well as to provide a wider quality assurance function.
- 3.4 When a care plan proposes separating a family group for reasons other than care plan necessity or child safety, the policy requires explicit approval from the Head of Childcare and Justice Services. The rationale for separation must be clearly documented in each child’s file, and a family time contact plan must be created. To ensure accountability, an annual report on progress against the pledge is presented to the Board.
- 3.5 A range of practice tools are in use to support staff in assessing the needs of children in

Renfrewshire, including tools to be used where brothers and sisters cannot be cared for together to ensure that important relationships are maintained irrespective of where they are living. The Promise Ambassador developed child friendly documentation to ensure children are aware of and understand their family time plans.

- 3.6 This is the fourth year of reporting to Board on the implementation of the Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together Policy. During the period June 2024 and May 2025, 70 children and young people were newly accommodated by children's services. 44 of the children had a sibling aged under 16 years when they were accommodated. Of these 44 children, 24 were placed with at least one sibling. 13 children had a sibling who remained at home with birth parents. 7 children who had at least one sibling under the age of 16 years were placed separately from their siblings.
- 3.7 The group of 7 children who were accommodated separately from their siblings, includes those children whose siblings were brought into care at different times, or who remained at home with at least one birth parent, and others who had an older sibling or siblings already in care.
- 3.8 The reasons for children not being placed with their brothers and sisters were:
- placed with kinship carer who couldn't accommodate a sibling (1 child)
  - child's father was not the same person for the brothers and sisters and the kinship carer was from the parental side of the family (4 children)
  - placed separately from siblings because of a protection plan (1 child)
  - complex care needs meant that separation was necessary (1 children).
- 3.9 Renfrewshire has made considerable progress in recent years towards shifting our balance of care away from foster care towards kinship care. Well over half of our accommodated children and young people are now in kinship placements. Kinship carers tend to have less capacity to provide placements for multiple children. Review of our placement of children with siblings highlights that while many kinship carers are managing very well with one or two children, they are unable to take on new siblings as they come into care. The complexities of family composition and relationships also mean that some kinship carers do not feel able to offer care to the half-siblings of children already in their care. There is a very high frequency of half-sibling relationships amongst our population of accommodated children.
- 3.10 In line with the requirements of the policy, all children accommodated separately from their siblings have a 'family time' contact plan which specifically addresses their contact with siblings. This is reinforced by the statutory duties imposed by the children's hearings system which requires that all reports submitted about children who have siblings includes a specific assessment of their relationship and each child's individual views and wishes about sibling contact.

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## Implications of this report

### 1. Financial

The support costs for all children accommodated in the reporting period were contained within the children's social work budget.

### 2. HR and Organisational Development

All staff in children's social work have been trained in the operation of

the Policy.

### 3. **Community/Council Planning**

- Our Renfrewshire is thriving - Providing good quality care is central to ensuring that the most vulnerable children in Renfrewshire are provided with an opportunity to thrive in a safe and nurturing environment.

### 4. **Legal**

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 placed a new duty on local authorities in relation to how they support and promote contact between brothers and sisters. The current policy satisfies the authority's duty in this area.

### 5. **Property/Assets**

None.

### 6. **Information Technology**

None.

### 7. **Legal**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations. Our approach locally is compliant with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 8. **Health and Safety**

None.

### 9. **Procurement**

None.

### 10. **Risk**

None.

### 11. **Privacy Impact**

None.

### 12. **Cosla Policy Position**

None.

### 13. **Climate Risk**

None.

### 14. **Children's Rights**

The report demonstrates the council is compliant with and actively promoting Article 3 (best interest of child), Article 9 (keeping families together), Article 12 (respect for children's views), Article 19 (protection from

violence), Article 22 (refugee children) and Article 25 (review of a child's placement) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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### **List of Background Papers**

Keeping Brother and Sisters Together - Report to Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 20 May 2021

Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together – Progress Report – Report to Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 27 October 2022

Keeping Brothers and Sisters Together – Annual Report – Report to Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 15 January 2025

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### ***Children's Services***

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**Author:** Karen Nowland, Quality Assurance & Practice Development Officer,  
email - karen.nowland@renfrewshire.gov.uk




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**To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board**

**On: 15 January 2026**

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**Report by: Director of Children's Services**

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**Heading: Education Scotland Inspection of St James' Primary School, Paisley**

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## **1. Summary**

1.1 St James' Primary School was inspected by Education Scotland in September 2025 as part of a national sample of education. Education Scotland uses different models of inspection and at St James' Primary School the short model approach was deployed. Inspectors assessed the school with a focus on two quality indicators which are referenced in How Good is our School? 4

Quality Indicator 2.3	Learning, teaching and assessment.
Quality Indicator 3.2	Raising attainment and achievement.

1.2 This was a very positive inspection which evaluated all quality indicators as '

Quality Indicator 2.3	Good
Quality Indicator 3.2	Good

1.3 As part of the inspection model the following area was also reviewed:

Quality Indicator 2.1 Safeguarding

Education Scotland do not attach an evaluative grade to this. Instead in the Summary of Inspection Findings there are evaluative statements provided which are positive and contribute to the overall school ratings.

1.4 The inspection report in the form of a letter to parents, published by Education Scotland on 25 November 2025, is attached as an appendix to this report and is also available from the Director of Children's Services or from the Education Scotland website.

- 1.5 The letter to parents identified three key strengths of the school.
- Senior leaders and staff work very well together to create nurturing and inclusive learning environments for children. These are underpinned by shared values and positive relationships.
  - Children are polite, friendly and respectful. They are proud of their school and engage well with their learning.
  - Senior leaders and staff have developed effective ways to check children's progress in learning. They use this information well to inform strategic decisions which is helping to improve learning and teaching and raise attainment.
- 1.6 The inspection report also identified two areas for further improvement:
- Continue to develop approaches to ensure all children understand the progress they are making and their next steps in learning. Teachers should ensure children who are capable of achieving more are appropriately challenged in their learning.
  - Continue to focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- 1.7 There is an agreed set of procedures for responding to inspection reports which will support the school and Children's Services to plan how the area for further improvement will be addressed. Actions are detailed within the school improvement plan which is shared with parents. In addition, the school will be supported in its improvement journey by Children's Services.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board are asked to note and celebrate the key strengths and recognise the areas for further improvement in the Education Scotland report on St James' Primary School, Paisley.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1 Children's Services welcomes the process of audit undertaken by Education Scotland as supportive to continuous improvement in Renfrewshire's education establishments. The school team at St James' Primary School, Paisley approached the inspection in a positive manner and embraced it as a professional learning opportunity in partnership with colleagues from Education Scotland.
- 3.2 The report includes two areas for further improvement, and progress in addressing this will be monitored by Children's Services staff through the Quality Improvement Framework.
- 3.3 The inspection report will inform planned improvement activity and will enable the school to build on the recognised strengths and focus further development on areas for improvement to enable the school to continue to deliver a quality educational provision.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community/Council Planning** – engaging with, and learning from external inspection, ensures that our Renfrewshire is thriving. High standards of education provision ensure that children and young people are given the best start in life so that they promote and contribute to a more prosperous, fairer society. It also ensures our Renfrewshire is well – by providing an environment which encourages care, welfare and development, establishments play a crucial role in developing children and young people so that they become responsible citizens.

The inspection process also supports delivery of the Council Plan cross-cutting theme of improving outcomes for children and families as well as other Council Plan key strategic outcomes, for example:

### **Economy**

Equipping all children and young people to achieve success in life

#### **Fair**

- Creating inclusive and supportive learning environments for children and young people.
- Embedding children’s rights in our decision-making processes

4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** –

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals’ human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council’s website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None
9. **Procurement** – None
10. **Risk** – None
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

12. **Cosla Policy Position** – N/A
13. **Climate Risk** – None
14. **Children’s Rights** - This links to, Article 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children’s dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

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**List of Background Papers** - The inspection report and additional evidence is published on the Education Scotland website.

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*E Henry, 25 November, 2025*

**Author:**

Emma Henry, Head of Education, [emma.henry@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:emma.henry@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

25 November 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In September 2025, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited St James's Primary School (Paisley). During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- Senior leaders and staff work very well together to create nurturing and inclusive learning environments for children. These are underpinned by shared values and positive relationships.
- Children are polite, friendly and respectful. They are proud of their school and engage well with their learning.
- Senior leaders and staff have developed effective ways to check children's progress in learning. They use this information well to inform strategic decisions which is helping to improve learning and teaching and raise attainment.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Renfrewshire Council.

- Continue to develop approaches to ensure all children understand the progress they are making and their next steps in learning. Teachers should ensure children who are capable of achieving more are appropriately challenged in their learning.
- Continue to focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school’s work using quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4<sup>th</sup> edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

## Here are Education Scotland’s evaluations for St James’s Primary School (Paisley)

Quality indicators	Evaluation
<b>Learning, teaching and assessment</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Raising attainment and achievement</b>	<b>good</b>
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: <a href="#">How good is our school? (4<sup>th</sup> edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale</a>	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

[St James's Primary School | Inspection Report | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland](#)

### What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Renfrewshire Council will inform parents/carers about the school’s progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Robyn McIlroy  
HM Inspector