Wallacetown Child Poverty Accelerator Fund Report

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Overview of Child Poverty and Support in South Ayrshire

The report examines the link between child poverty, additional support needs, and the effectiveness of community and service responses in the Ayr North area, highlighting key challenges and recommendations for holistic support.

Child Poverty and Support Needs in South Ayrshire

South Ayrshire faces significant child poverty, with **15**% of children living in relative low income families after housing costs, **13**% before housing costs. In Ayr North Harbour/Wallacetown/Newton South this figure increases to 22%, and a strong over-representation of children with additional support needs (ASN). These figures are from the financial year ending 2025.

- **1 in 7** children are living in relative low income families (after housing costs) across South Ayrshire.
- Poverty rates range from **12**% in Ayr South and the villages, this includes Alloway & Doonfoot to **22**% in Ayr North Harbour/Wallacetown/Newton South.[1]
- 27-30 months check-up shows children in Ayr North and Whitletts are more likely to have developmental delays than the national average.
- **19** data zones in South Ayrshire are in Scotland's **15**% most deprived areas, affecting approximately 12,888 people.
- **6** data zones in Ayr North are within the **5**% most deprived in Scotland.
- Children experiencing poverty are over-represented in ASN statistics, with families often facing multiple vulnerabilities.

Relative low income is defined as a family in low income in the reference year. A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits, or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.

Child Poverty across South Ayrshire

1 in 7

Children in South Ayrshire

15%

1 in 5

Children in Wallacetown/ Ayr North

22%

1 in 8

Children in Ayr South

12 %

1 Source data: LGBF (After Housing Costs); DWP Children in Low Income Families (CILIF), local area statistics 2024/25/Scotland's Census (Before Housing Costs).

Our Aims

- Establish links with family support services available in the Wallacetown area.
- Know who our family supports in Wallacetown are in detail (mapping).
- Develop a parental wellbeing monitoring system to better understand how services are or are not reaching and delivering for priority families where a diagnosed or suspected additional support need is present.

Our approach

A needs assessment:

We require dedicated support to gather and analyse local data on families living with additional support needs who are also residing in areas of deprivation. Family and practitioner interviews woild assist this support, as would linking with existing groups and national research on correlation between poverty and additional support needs. This will support understanding of early intervention and prevention support for parents.

Development of a parental wellbeing outcomes framework:

We will seek to develop parental wellbeing measures locally and understanding their correlation to poverty, supported by the Scottish Government Experimental parental wellbeing indicators: Mental Wellbeing, Social Networks and Community Cohesion. Understanding parental wellbeing where poverty is present will be crucial to understanding the impact of poverty and parenting where additional needs are present.

Development of effective support pathways for priority families:

We aim to develop a holistic understanding of parenting support for families with additional support needs in Ayr North. To achieve this, we need to design effective parenting wellbeing monitoring systems that help us understand how well services are reaching – and delivering for – priority families where a diagnosed or suspected additional support need exists. Our approach will ensure that the voices and insights of those with lived experience are fully recognised, valued and used to shape future support. The resulting recommendations from families will be aligned with the six thematic areas of the next Children's Services Plan, including the Child Poverty workstream.

Phase 1:

The Research and Implementation Officer (Child Poverty) began with a relaxed, informal introduction to families in the Ayr North Area. Being based in the Community hub at Newton Primary school was key to initiating local engagement with the project.

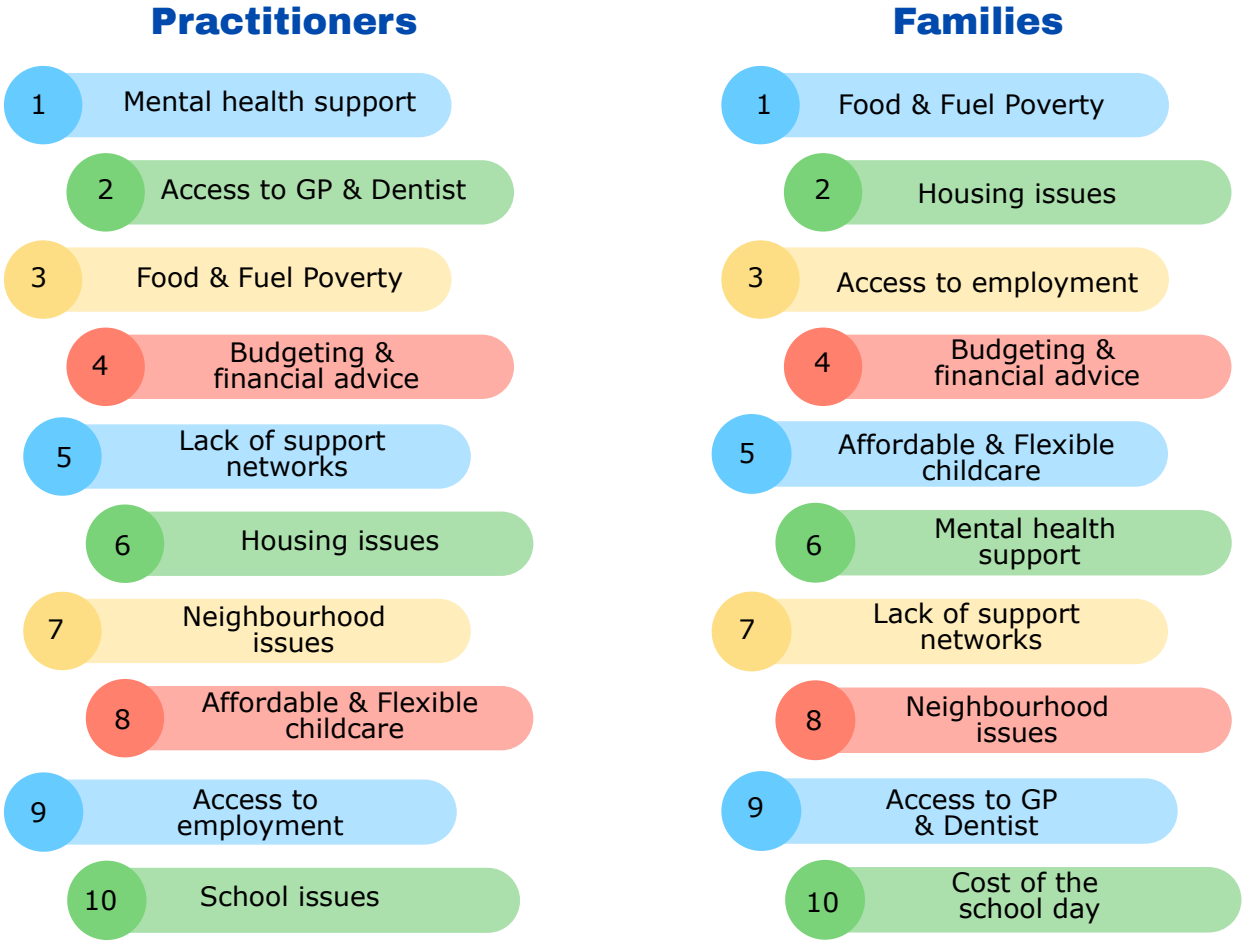
The Community hub in Newton Primary provides a food bank twice per week and gives the opportunity for people to access energy vouchers, support from the information and advice hub, community link practitioners, Riverside Church Community Navigators and Seascape.

The Research and Implementation Officer also had a stall at Thriving Communities Family Learning Event and the Dialogue Ayr North Event. These provided the opportunity to meet families in their community and to talk about the CPAF project and generate interest in families to take part.

In the local area the Cosy Café is on twice per week (Lochside Community centre), Teddy Bear tots (St Quivox Church), Care & Share and Toddlers group (Riverside Church) and Compass (Recovery Support services under one roof) which also gives opportunities to meet families and practitioners.

Russell Drive Playpark

There were 10 themes emerging from initial conversations with families and practitioners that impact on parental well-being in the Ayr North area. Families focussed on the cost of the school day but practitioners spoke about a broader range of school issues, the remaining themes were the same. The themes are listed below in prioity order for each group.



Process

Mixed methodology was used to gather the data. The purpose of this was to give a better understanding and yield more complete evidence in the question being asked.[2]

Method

A flyer (Appendix 1, p.29) was printed and distributed to the venues listed in Appendix 2 (pp.30-32). The flyer was posted in the Community hub window and the 3 notice boards in the community.

An electronic version of the flyer was shared on the social media channels of Working for Wallacetown,[3] Family Nurse Partnership,[4] Spotty Zebra's,[5] the parents portal of the schools and early years centres in the Ayr North area, the South Ayrshire council tenants newsletter, and on South Ayrshire Connects website.

An online webinar was held with the Ayr North children and families social work teams to raise awareness of the project too.

The Research & Implementation Officer attended some Spotty Zebra's events and drop-ins to connect with families who have children with additional support needs.

1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/384402328_Mixed_Methods_Research_Combining_both_qualitative_and_quantitative_approaches
2. https://www.facebook.com/people/Working-For-Wallacetown/100080583364989/#t
3. https://www.nhsaaa.net/services/services-a-z/family-nurse-partnership/
4. Spotty Zebras

The flyer has a QR code that families can scan to complete a short form to express interest in participating in the project. The Research and Implementation Officer then contacted the families to ask if the would like to complete an MS forms or a face to face interview. (Family MS forms)

Families who took part were also given the option of taking part in a focus group.

All families who participated received a £20 Scotland Loves Local gift voucher. [6]

A link to the practitioner MS forms was sent to all contacts made in phase 1 and an invite to take part in a focus group to explore ideas further. (Practitioner MS forms)

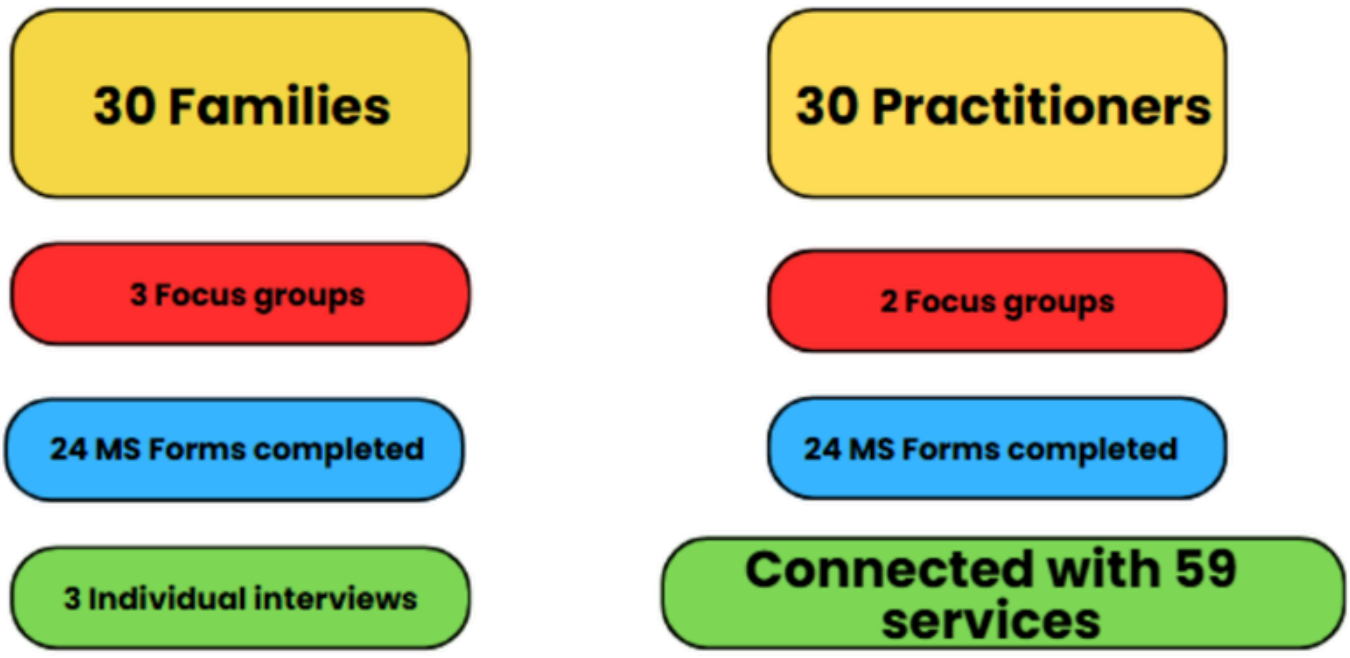
The focus groups were held in Ayrshire Housing venue " The Local",[7] which is accessible venue, near the main bus route , and a short walk from the town centre.

Scores from Mums and Dad's questionnaires were combined to give one dataset called Families.

Impact of Response Volume

The number of responses varies significantly between the groups—21 mums compared with 3 dads. This means mums' scores carry greater statistical weight and represent a broader range of experiences. While comparing raw scores across groups is inappropriate due to the different sample sizes, comparing the rank order of priorities still provides valuable insight into perceived needs.

Consultation Process



6 South Ayrshire Gift Card - Scotland's Town Centre Recovery Campaign - Home of the Scotland Loves Local campaign.

7 The Local | Ayrshire Housing

Families Summary

Physical Health

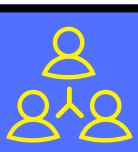
Physical attacks on parents during meltdowns.
Parents run down- lack of sleep and constantly being on alert

Mental Health & Well-being

Parenting an ASN child is stressful.
Waiting times for diagnosis
Neurodiversity in parents

Poverty & Financial Hardship

Rising energy costs and the increased cost of food shopping
Reliance on benefits



Support Networks & Community Engagement

Limited support networks
Prefer resources in their own area

Childcare & Employment

Families keen to work but childcare for ASN children is difficult to access, especially if there is no diagnosis

Housing & Neighbourhood environment

Poor housing , that does not meet families needs.
Antisocial behaviour.

There were 6 main areas of emphasis from families and practitioners.

Practitioner Summary

Physical Health

Difficulty in accessing appointments with GP's & Dentist's

Mental Health & Well-being

High levels of poor mental health, addiction, trauma
Social isolation.

Poverty & Financial Hardship

Reliance on food banks and fuel support.
High cost pre-payment meters
Difficulty budgeting

Support Networks & Community Engagement

Weak, inconsistent support networks.

Childcare & Employment

Limited suitable childcare for ASN children.
Barriers to work - benefit concerns and generational low aspirations to employment.

Housing & Neighbourhood environment

Overcrowding
Poor maintenance
Anti-social behaviour
Accessible housing

Key Themes from Families and Practitioners

Families and practitioners identified common issues impacting wellbeing, including financial hardship, housing, health, and neurodiversity.

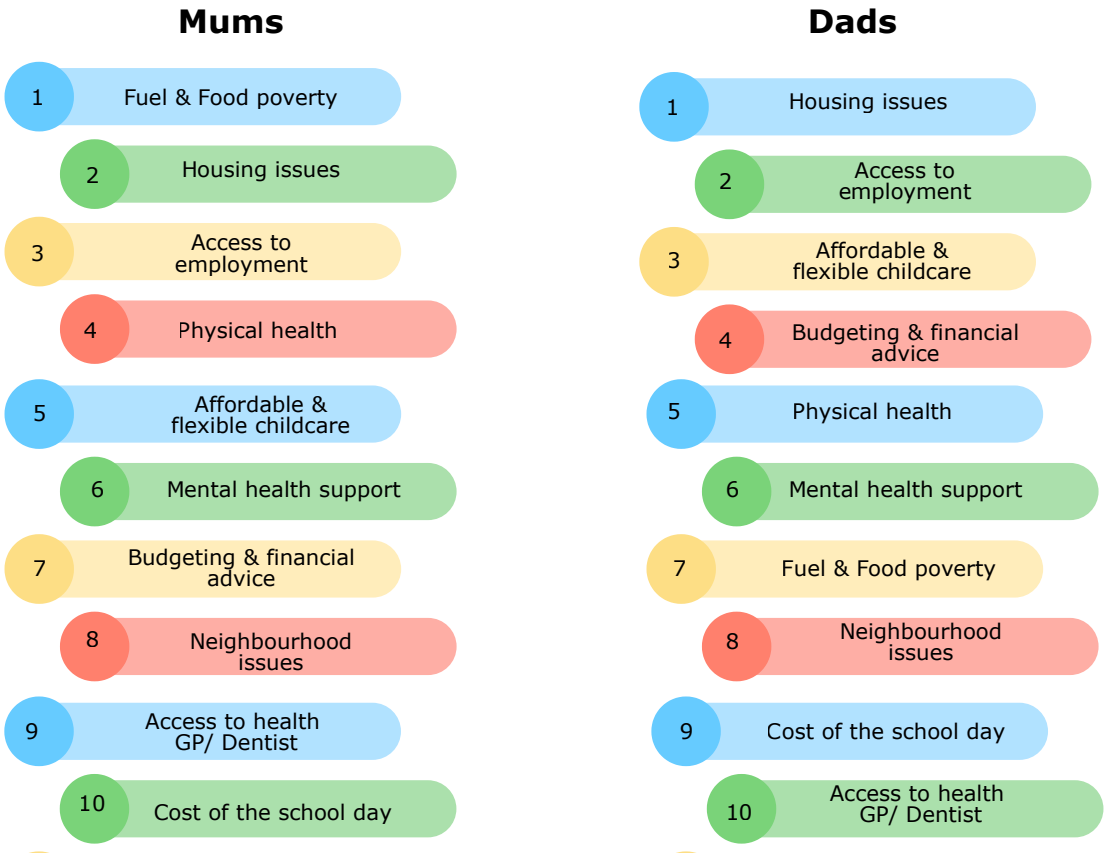
- Families focus on the cost of the school day; practitioners highlight broader school issues.
- Physical health concerns include limited access to GPs and dentists, reliance on food banks, and poor housing.
- Housing issues involve overcrowding, poor maintenance, and antisocial behaviour.
- Families face stress from poverty, social isolation, and mental health challenges.
- Practitioners emphasize mental health, physical wellbeing, and poverty as major factors affecting family stability.

Families

Family Demographics and Support Priorities

33% of families who responded identified with two or more priority groups at risk of child poverty. (Appendix 4, p32)

- Identifying with more than one priority group increases a families vulnerability.
- Data shows a strong link between poverty and multiple ASN children in families.
- Families prioritise housing stability, employment, and day-to-day affordability.
- Mums rank fuel and food poverty as top concerns; dads prioritise affordable, flexible childcare.
- Lower priorities include neighbourhood safety, healthcare access, and school costs.



Comparison of Family Support Priorities – Mums and Dads

Both groups highlight similar areas of concern; and clear differences emerge in the issues each group perceives as most urgent.

Shared Priorities

Both mums and dads identify several common priority areas. Housing issues and access to employment rank near the top for both groups, demonstrating broad agreement that stability in housing and pathways into work are fundamental needs for families. Similarly, issues such as physical health, mental health support, and budgeting and financial advice appear in the mid-range for both groups, suggesting these are important but not considered the most immediate concerns. (Appendix 8, Chart 27, p50 Aggregated responses).

Range and Types of Additional Support Needs

Children in the area show diverse needs, with emotional wellbeing, neurodevelopmental conditions, and health issues most common. (Overall response Appendix 7 Chart 26 , p49) By individual family Appendix 5 Charts 2-25, p 34-37)

- Anxiety, ASD, and ADHD are the most frequently reported needs.
- 38% of families have children who have no formal diagnosis, indicating emerging or unmet needs.
- Sensory differences, dyslexia, and young carer responsibilities are also prominent.
- Less common needs include developmental delay, language disorders, and depression.
- Families rank food & fuel poverty, housing, employment, physical health, and childcare as support priorities.

Family Service Engagement and Support Patterns

Universal services like health visiting and GPs are most used; targeted and specialist services are accessed by smaller groups.

- Families mainly engage with health visiting, social work, and community support.
- Families value accessible, empathetic, and relationship-based support.
- Barriers include digital overload, long waiting times, and difficulty navigating services.
- Informal networks, especially family and friends, are the most valued support source.

Barriers to Family Wellbeing

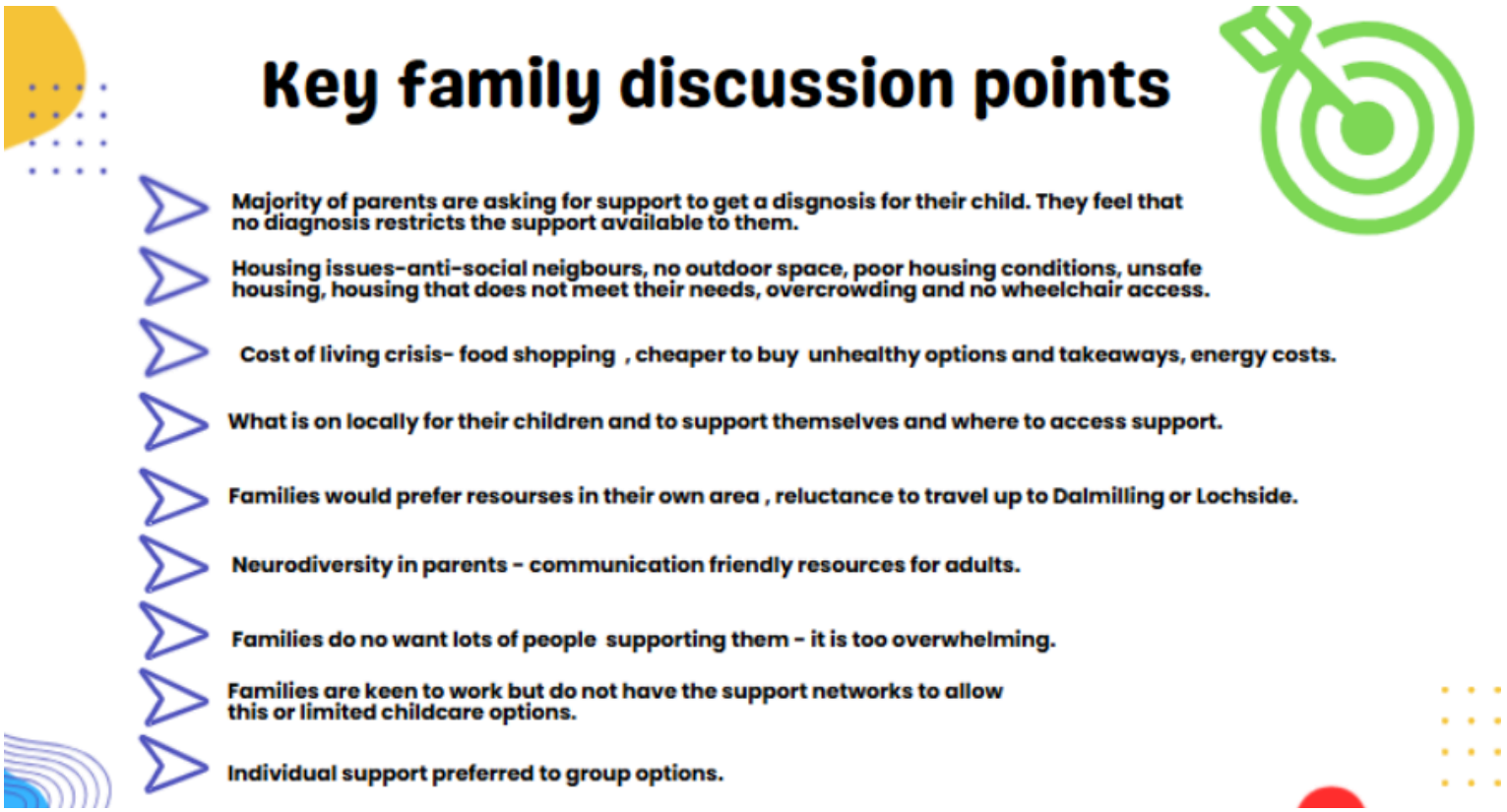
Barriers include housing, financial hardship, mental health, and social isolation, compounded by addiction and intergenerational trauma.

- Housing issues involve overcrowding and inaccessible homes for disabled parents/carers.
- Poverty-related issues such as rising energy costs and food insecurity are prevalent.
- Addiction (drugs, alcohol, gambling) significantly impacts family stability.
- Families experience difficulty accessing timely diagnosis and tailored support for neurodiverse children.
- Digital systems can be overwhelming, especially for neurodiverse parents, who prefer printed materials and sensory-friendly communication.
- Accessible public spaces support wellbeing and social cohesion. Improving these spaces supports children’s development and parental mental health.

Family suggestions to improve support systems

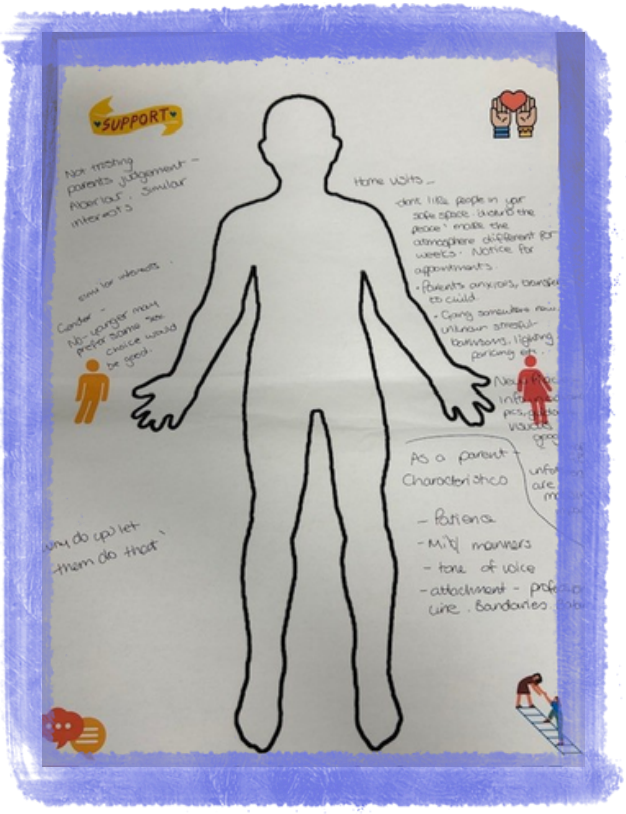
Families suggest strengthening multi-agency collaboration, improving accessibility, and involving families in service design.

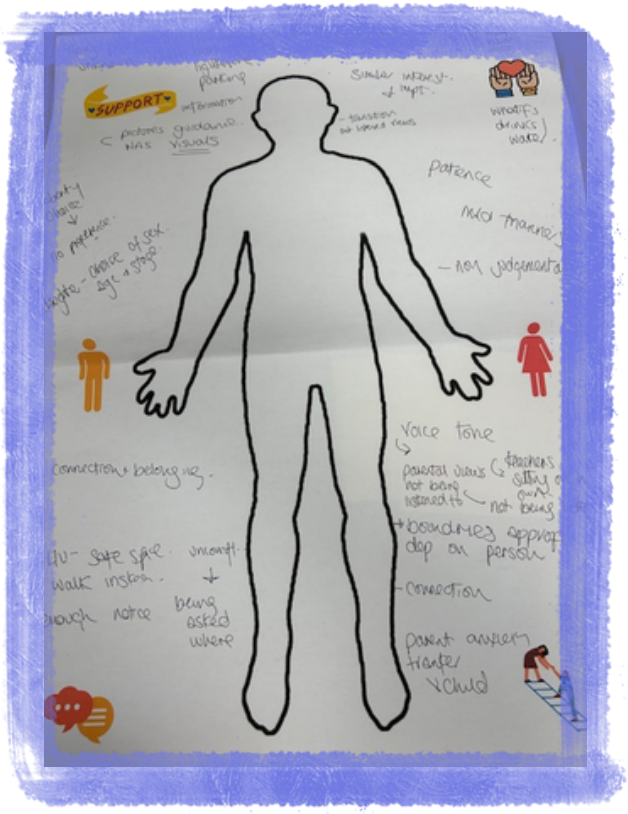
- Provide navigation support for undiagnosed children and streamline diagnosis pathways.
- Offer printed and sensory-friendly communication materials e.g. school lunch menus.
- Prioritise housing for overcrowded and disabled families.
- Raise awareness of income maximisation and promote low-cost healthy eating.
- Increase affordable, flexible childcare and employment support.
- Enhance service visibility, self-referral options, and community-based support.
- Train staff in trauma-informed and neurodiversity-aware practices.
- Develop and distribute a comprehensive local resource booklet.
- Improve data sharing and support journey mapping to identify gaps.
- Involve families, especially neurodiverse parents, in designing services and communication strategies.
- Parks, youth facilities, and community hubs are vital in communities and should be invested in.

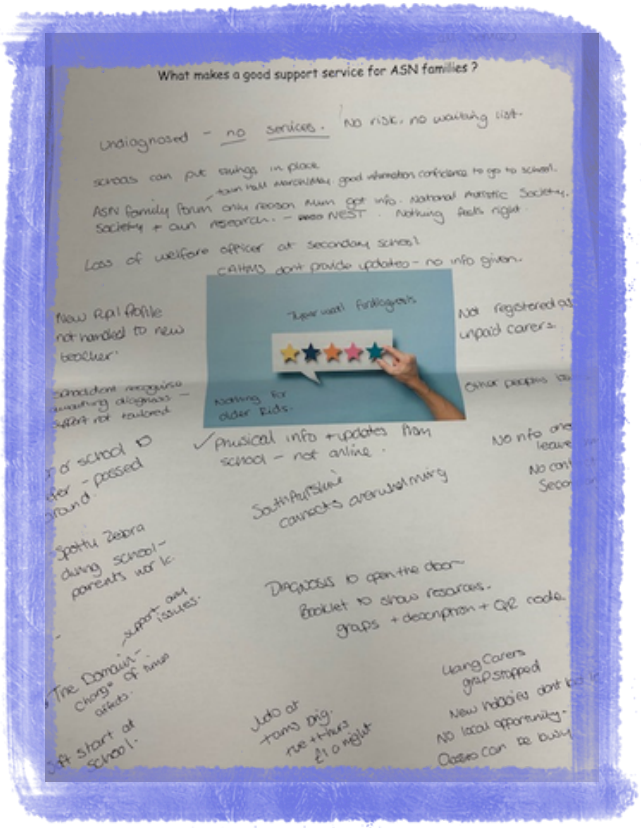


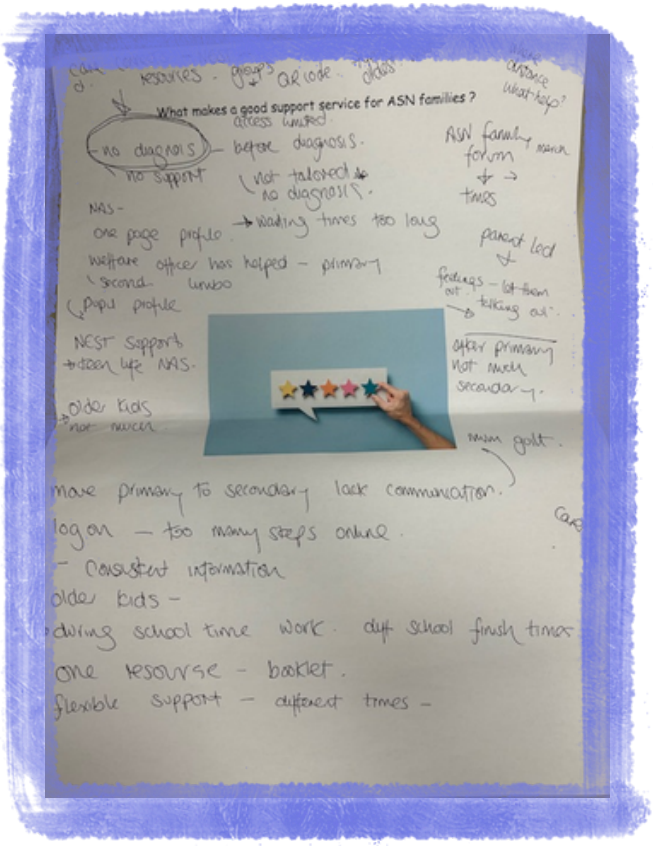
We asked families what makes a good support service?

They told us :



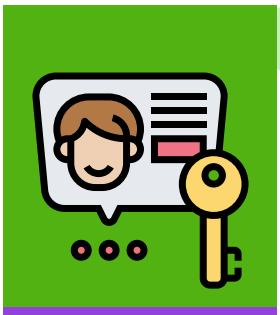






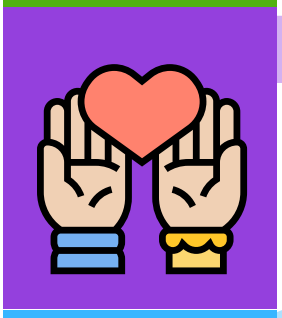
Families :

What makes a good support service summary



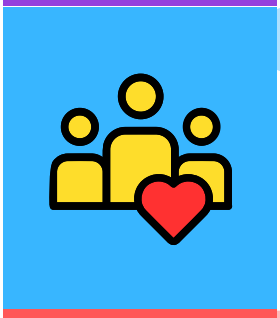
Accessibility & Ease of Use

- Easy to access and book into.
- Approachable and available when needed.
- Services should be regularly promoted and visible.
- Clear communication and answers to questions.



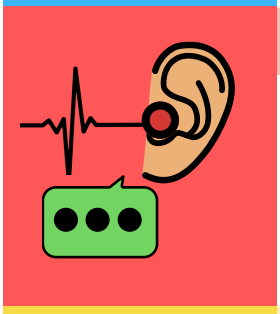
Trust & Relationship Building

- Good relationship with workers.
- Feeling that people around you are trying to help.
- Consistent and reliable support.



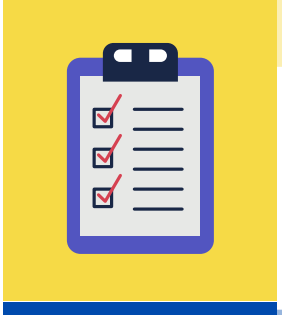
Empathetic & Non-Judgmental

- Friendly, helpful, and understanding staff.
- Non-judgmental environment.
- Ability to read situations without bias.
- Creates a safe and confidential space.



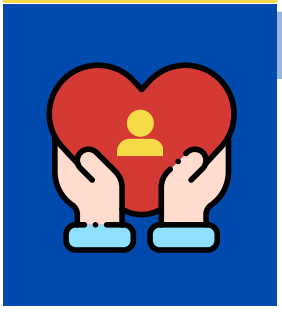
Listening & Emotional Support

- Someone who truly listens and understands.
- Time to speak properly, not rushed.
- An "ear" for emotional support, even by phone.
- Reassurance that parents are doing the right thing.



Practical Help & Follow-Up

- Active help, not just words.
- Information readily available.
- Clear steps and solutions offered.
- Follow-up to ensure needs are met.



Individualised & Holistic Approach

- One-on-one advice for unique child needs.
- Support for all types of people.
- Variety of help and advice.
- Collaboration with schools, GPs, and other services.

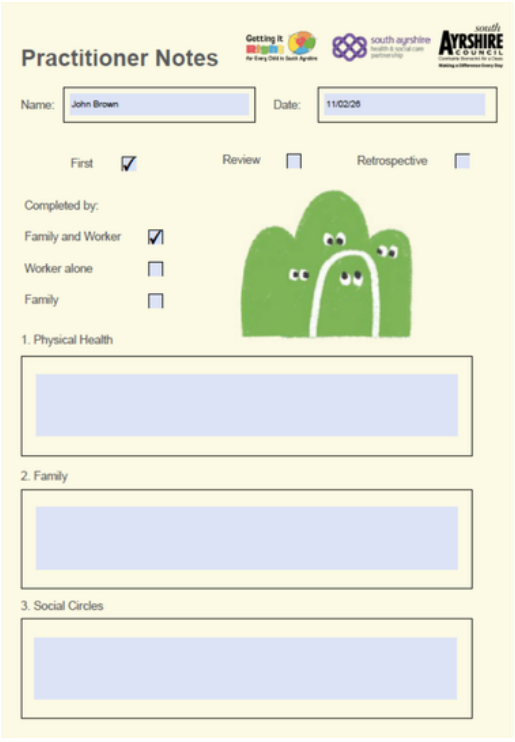
Parental Well-being tool

This work focuses on developing a scalable model of holistic parenting support for families with additional support needs in Ayr North. Central to this is the creation of a wellbeing monitoring system that provides a clearer understanding of how effectively services are reaching and meeting the needs of families. This approach ensures that the perspectives of people with lived experience are meaningfully acknowledged and used to inform future service design and delivery.

The Parental well-being tool was developed from the themes identified by families in Ayr North, which impact on parental well-being. Through discussions at family events, individual interviews and focus groups with families, ten main themes were identified, that impact on parental wellbeing.

The ten themes were arranged around a star shape to give a similar presentation to the Shanarri wellbeing web.[8] The Shanarri web is part to of the GIRFEC framework that has been practiced in Scotland for over 10 years.

From these themes the Wellbeing tool, Practitioner notes and a Practitioner toolkit were developed, with families being involved at each stage. (Appendix 6 p38-48).



8 **https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/wellbeing-indicators-shanarri/**

Area	Goal	Action	By who?	By when?	Effectiveness	Re-evaluation

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Well-being Toolkit

Practitioner Question Guide:

The following list is a guide of potential questions to ask under each heading and not intended to be asked in full.

Well-being Tool Categories:

1. Education:

Access to learning for both parents and children, including parenting programmes, adult learning, and early years education. Education is a pathway to empowerment and opportunity.[1]

2. Family

Supportive relationships within the family unit, recognising the strengths and needs of all members[2]. Services are designed with families, not for them, ensuring their voices shape support.[3]

3. Social circles

The presence of a reliable network of family, friends, community groups, or professionals who provide emotional, practical, or informational support. Strong social connections reduce isolation and improve resilience. Informal networks of friends, peers, and extended family that offer emotional and practical support. Strengthening these circles reduces reliance on formal services and builds resilience.[1]

4. Finances & budgeting

The ability to meet basic needs such as housing, food, and childcare without constant financial stress. Economic security is a major factor in reducing anxiety and improving family wellbeing.

Support to manage income, access entitlements, and build financial capability. Tackling child poverty is central, with wraparound support to reduce financial stress.[2]

5. Routines & boundaries

Parents' belief in their ability to raise their children well, supported by access to parenting resources, education, and guidance. This includes understanding child development and managing behaviour positively.

Consistent daily structures that support children's development and family stability. Services help families establish routines that reflect their values and needs.[3]

1 (PDF) Adult Education as a Pathway to Empowerment: Challenges and Possibilities
2 maps-money-mental-2023-health-rapid-evidence-review.pdf
1 Social connectedness as a determinant of mental health
3 Associations between Family Routines, Family Relationships, and Children's Behavior | Journal of Child and Family Studies

Practitioner Question Guide:

The questions are examples to help guide what you might ask in each wellbeing area. You do not need to ask all of them.

Physical Health:

Arey you registered with a Doctor & Dentist?

Has anyone in the family had a recent illness?

Do you have any worries or concerns about anyone in the families health?

Do the children sleep well?

Has there been any health issue that has affected your child's attendance at school?

Has your child(ren) had all their immunisation and health checks?

Does anyone have any allergies?

Do you feel that you all eat a variety of foods including fresh fruit and vegetables?

Is anyone in the house a fussy eater?

Is anyone taking any medications?

Do you have contact with any addictions services?

How was your pregnancy/pregnancies?

Education:

How would you describe your child's behaviour at school?

Does your child even have any difficulty following instructions?

What subjects do they like the most?

What is your child's attendance like at school? Are they on time?

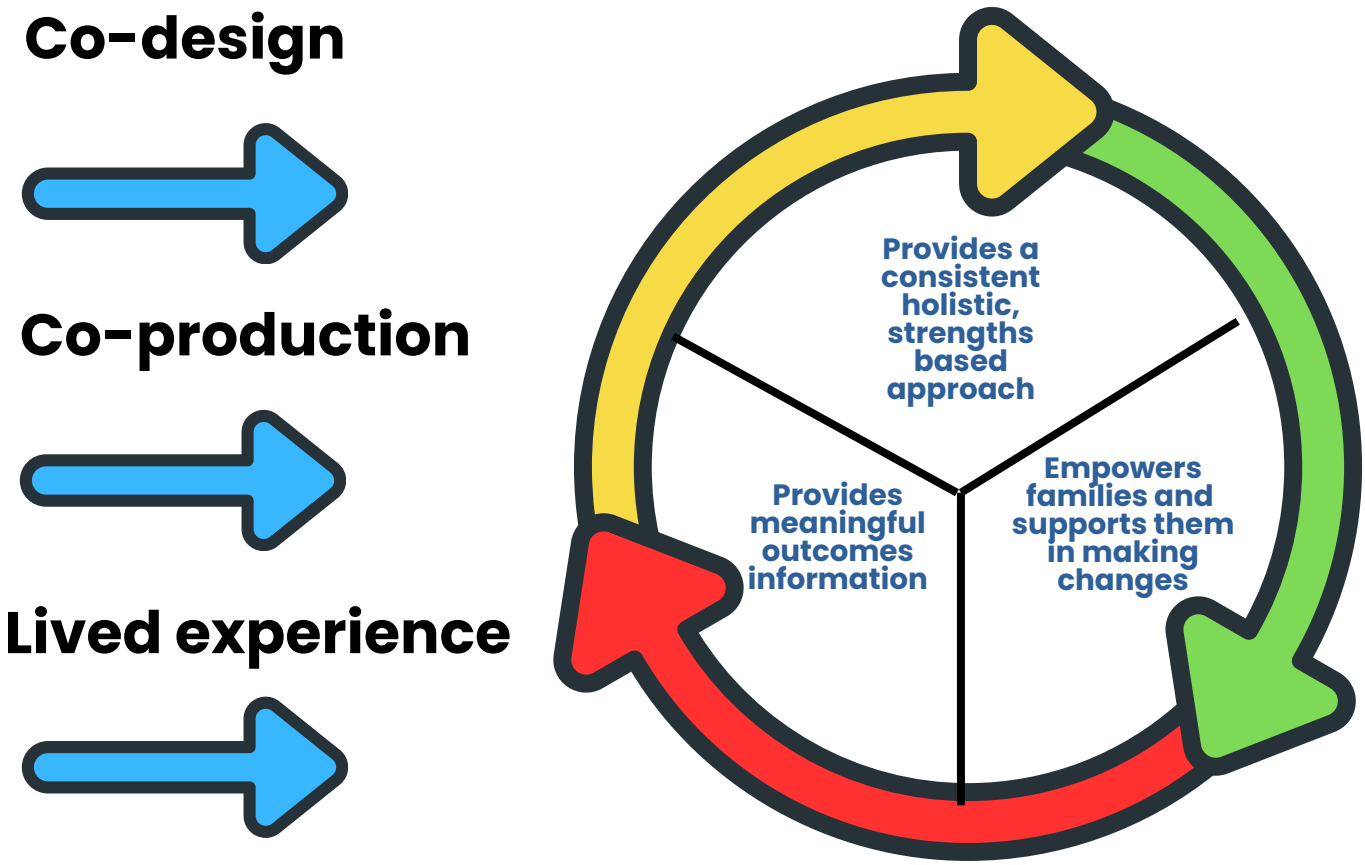
Do you have any worries or concerns about their education?

Do you attend parents nights and events?

Do they do homework? Who helps?

Does your child attend preschool?

What does your child want to do in the future?



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Raman and French (2022)[9]emphasise that genuine participation in design-led work requires people with lived experience to be treated as equal partners throughout the entire process. This involves recognising their lived experience as a form of expertise, shaping participation so it reflects real everyday life, and creating conditions that support reflection, creative exploration, and shared decision-making. They also highlight the importance of nurturing relational and transformative experiences both during and beyond the co-design process.

The wellbeing tool was developed using insights from families in Ayr North who have children with additional support needs. It is grounded in their lived experience, with families contributing directly to the design process and offering feedback at each stage.

9 Ramen & French ,2022,Towards a shared understanding of genuine co-design with people with lived experience

Feedback from Families

- Families liked the tool and idea behind it .
- Gives families a voice.
- Asks about the things that really matter to them.
- Keep workers accountable.
- Right support at the right time by keeping goals focused.
- Visually they thought it looked nice, easy to read and they can see changes.
- Families would like the option of paper or digital 50/50 split.
- Families recognised the similarities with the SHANARRI wellbeing web and liked the familiarity of it.
- Families understood the headings.

I don't know about digital ...I like paper. All they apps for the school are too much...too hard to see... font size and seeing pages. Just give me paper.

I don't know why she asks me what I did at the weekend, what's for the dinner..... they're supposed to help me

I like it, its asking what do I need .... what's important for me and my weans

She comes in to help with parenting and routines..... my house is full of dampness and that's all I can think about. I can't think about anything else

it's like that thing the wean does at school

[SHANARRI well-being web]

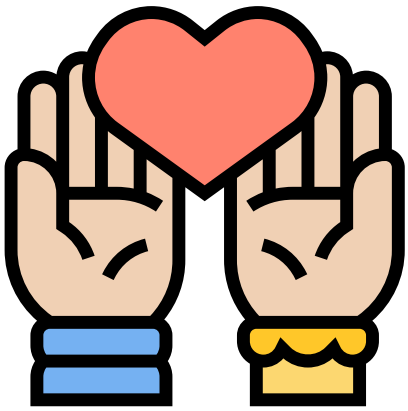
Good Practice story

School Non-attendance

One parent told us about the housing issues that she faced and how they impacted on her daughter, who has a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum disorder. They were living in a block of flats. We were told that two sets of the neighbours were behaving in an "anti-social" manner. There were regular late night parties which went on well into the early hours and sometimes even the next day, loud music playing, banging, fighting, smoking cigarettes and cannabis in the close, drug paraphernalia in the close and suspected drug users coming and going from their block.

There had been occasions when the parent was trying to take her daughter to school that there were people lying in the close or evidence of fights – blood and smashed objects. Her daughter became anxious about leaving their flat because of the fear of what she might see and in time, the parent was unable to support her daughter to leave their flat to go anywhere including school. Her daughter became a school refuser.
The family were supported by their school Welfare Officer, at an Ayr North primary school . The parent speaks very highly of their worker and feels that she was instrumental in supporting them with their housing issues which resulted in a move of house. They have been moved to another flat, it has completely changed their lives. They are not far from their old flat and the children can still attend the same school.

Once they were settled in their new place and her daughter adjusted to that change they were supported by the Welfare Officer to re-engage with education. Her daughter is now back at school and attending full time again.



Affordable and flexible childcare:

Families told us about the difficulties that they face trying to access childcare because their children have additional support needs.

Childminder ratios are impacted if they have a child with additional support needs. Families also told us childminders are also reluctant to take on ASN children if they have younger children and babies that they care for.

Families also told us that finding childcare is slightly easier while their children are at early years and primary school age. They have found holiday clubs and other providers have an age cut off after p7 and the wider expectation is that at around the S1 age children do not need the same level of supervision. The families that we have spoken to told us of the frustration around this because although a child may be age 7 , they are functioning at a much younger age . In one case a mum told us that her son is 7 but she feels developmentally he is more like a 3-4 year old and the expectations of what he can do independently are too high because of high chronological age. Another parent told us she has a 14 year old who has a fascination with fire and cannot be left unattended. This parent has also had to give up work because of these additional caring responsibilities that most parents do not face the challenge of when their child reaches the age of 14.

Another parent told us that they had to give up their employment because the caring responsibilities for their child had become too much. They had been with the same employer for 17 years and at one point juggled another part time job as well.

Families also told us that they are unable to access specific ASN childcare holiday support because they do not have a diagnosis for their child.

Practitioner responses

Looking at practitioners' overall, the largest proportion of respondents work within the NHS (33%), followed by HSCP staff (26%), the third sector (17%), Education (14%), and Thriving Communities (10%). (Appendix 10, Chart 29 p51).

Practitioners identified many services in Ayr North that support parental well-being with Wallacetown hub, Barnados , Early years centres and Spotty Zebras being the most frequently mentioned. (Appendix 10, chart 29,p51)

When looking at those practitioners who reported not being aware of services that support parental wellbeing in Ayr North, a different pattern emerges.

NHS practitioners make up 66% of those unaware—double their representation in the overall practitioner group—potentially indicating a gap in awareness within this workforce. Education and third sector staff each account for 17% of those unaware, which is broadly consistent with their overall representation. In contrast, no HSCP or Thriving Communities staff reported a lack of awareness of parental wellbeing supports. This suggests that these two groups are comparatively well-informed about available services. (Appendix 12, Chart 31 p.52)

Summary of Practitioner Perspectives

Practitioners highlight mental health, physical wellbeing, and poverty as the most impactful issues affecting family stability. (Appendix 13, Chart 32, p.52)

- Key issues include mental health, food and fuel poverty, and financial hardship.
- Social isolation, housing problems, and neighbourhood safety are significant barriers.
- Systemic issues like addiction and intergenerational trauma are recurrent concerns impacting family resilience.

Practitioners told us that families in Wallacetown face complex, interconnected issues rooted in generational trauma, poverty, and systemic barriers, impacting their ability to access and engage with support services effectively. Trauma and inherited behavioural cycles hinder families from breaking patterns of instability.

- Generational trauma influences family dynamics and stability.
- Long-standing behaviour patterns make change difficult.
- These issues create a "knock-on effect," leading to addiction, poor mental health, chaotic routines, and service engagement difficulties.
- Overwhelmed Home Lives and Parental Capacity
- Families struggle with daily routines and managing challenging behaviours, reducing support engagement.
- Families often miss appointments due to disorganisation.
- Parental capacity is limited by overwhelmed responses to children's sleep and behaviour issues.
- Shame, guilt, and low self-esteem act as hidden barriers to seeking help.

Social Environment and Community Tensions

Neighbourhood conflicts and safety concerns increase stress and social isolation.

- Areas with historic family conflict create tension when new families move in.
- Poor neighbourhood dynamics worsen safety and community cohesion.

Basic Needs and Poverty-Related Challenges

Meeting fundamental needs is essential before higher-level support can be effective
.

- Poverty, food insecurity, and housing instability limit engagement.
- Families struggle with basic child needs, prioritising these over other support.
- Income, food, and housing insecurity directly impact family functioning.

Distrust and Systemic Barriers to Services

Past negative experiences and system complexity reduce trust and engagement.

- Families view services as "the same," leading to mistrust.
- Multiple professionals and bureaucratic hurdles overwhelm families.
- Long waiting lists for health assessments and diagnoses hinder timely support.

Carer Roles and Hidden Family Needs

Support for unpaid carers and recognition of siblings as young carers are vital.

- Clear understanding of ASN (additional support needs) within families is necessary.
- Families often have hidden needs related to disability, care, and young carers.

Impact of Income and Housing Instability

Financial and housing insecurity significantly affect parental capacity.

- Income instability, food insecurity, and poor housing are prevalent.
- These issues limit parents' ability to engage with support and parenting.

Family Needs Are Highly Diverse

Support must be flexible to accommodate different household circumstances.

- No two households are the same.
- Tailored approaches are necessary for effective support.

Outreach and Relationship Building

Effective engagement requires proactive, relational outreach.

- Door-to-door outreach builds trust better than leaflets or social media.
- Genuine relationships are key to families accepting help.

Safe and Stable Housing as Foundation

Housing stability is fundamental to overall wellbeing
.

- Poor or insecure housing affects all family life aspects.
- Access to safe, secure homes is a priority.

Interconnected Needs Require Flexible Support

Multiple issues feed into each other, demanding adaptable services.

- Support must respond to each household’s unique challenges.
- Family circumstances vary widely.

Clear Communication and Service Coordination

Families need straightforward, consistent information.

- Families often unaware of available services.
- Duplication and poor communication hinder support.
- Better coordination between agencies is necessary.

Long-term Investment and Trust Building

Sustainable, long-term funding is essential for meaningful change.

- Trust takes time to build but can be lost quickly.
- Longer engagement periods are needed in communities with service gaps.

Addressing Structural and Environmental Barriers

Wider issues like employment and healthcare access impact families.

- Support must extend beyond frontline services.
- Solutions to housing, and employment are crucial.

Community-led and Relationship-based Approaches

Building relationships and involving families in service design improve engagement.

- Support should be optional, respectful, and family-centred.
- Co-designing services with families ensures relevance and acceptance.

Basic Needs and Social Isolation

Meeting fundamental needs and reducing isolation are priorities.

- Families struggle with housing, food, and financial stability.
- Opportunities for social connection, like peer groups and community activities, are vital.

Enhancing Community Infrastructure and Environment

Physical environment improvements support wellbeing.

- Safer housing, and communal spaces are needed.
- Community centres and recreational spaces foster resilience and community cohesion.
-

Collaboration, Long-term Planning, and Structural Change

Sustainable progress requires coordinated, long-term efforts.

- Avoid duplication; promote whole-family approaches.
- Address wider issues like employment and housing to improve family stability.

Key Practitioner discussion points

- High levels of poor mental health, addcition, trauma and social isolation.
- Heavy reliance on food banks and the need for energy vouchers.
- Limited access to GPs and dental appointments.
- High cost pre-payment meters and legacy debts impact on families. Car insurance and home insurance more expensive in KA8 postcode compared to other areas in Ayr.
- Reliance on benefits and generational low aspirations around employment.
- Difficulties budgeting, and social media pressure resulting in living out with their means and debts accruing.
- Weak or inconsistent support networks for families.
- Housing issues - temporary housing, poor housing, over crowding, lack of green space and anti-social behaviour (drug taking. drug dealing, dog fouling and littering).
- Limited childcare options and inconsistent use of Early years placements - no legal requirement to attend.

Key themes for Support Improvement

Mental health, emotional wellbeing, and timely access to support are priorities.

- Increased mental health services are needed.
- Support for basic needs like food and housing is critical.
- Trauma-informed, compassionate practices are essential.
- Peer support and community connection reduce isolation.
- Affordable, flexible childcare remains a barrier**.**

Families and Practitioners' shared perspectives

Both groups emphasise the need for accessible, compassionate, and coordinated support rooted in community relationships.

- Recognise trauma, mental health, and addiction as core issues.
- Support must meet families' basic needs first.
- Trust, relationships, and long-term investment are key to positive outcomes.

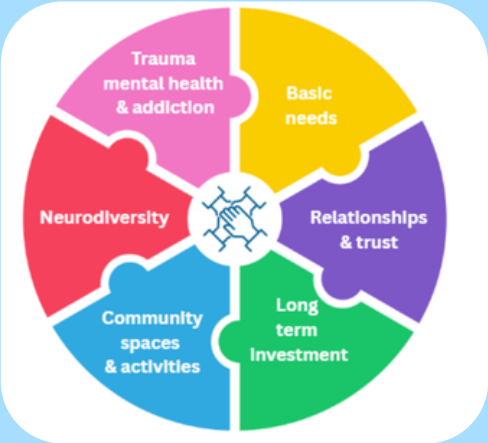
Summary

The feedback highlights significant challenges impacting on parental well-being in the Wallacetown area, particularly around financial strain, housing insecurity, mental health needs, and support for neurodiverse children. Common themes include difficulty accessing timely diagnoses, lack of tailored educational support, and barriers to essential services such as childcare, after-school activities, and healthcare. Parents also expressed the need for clear information, empathetic and non-judgemental support, and practical help that goes beyond advice.

These insights underline the importance of creating accessible, holistic, and responsive support systems that address both immediate needs (e.g. food vouchers, energy costs, housing) and long-term challenges (e.g. diagnosis pathways, mental health care, inclusive education). Building trust through consistent communication, individualised approaches, and strong relationships will be key to ensuring families feel supported and empowered.

Overall message

Families and practitioners in Wallacetown want the same things. Support that is accessible, compassionate, joined-up, and rooted in the realities of people's lives.
They call for sustained investment in trauma-responsive practice, early intervention, mental health support, community spaces, and practical help with basic needs. The route to improving wellbeing in Wallacetown lies in strengthening relationships, listening to residents, and ensuring the right support is available at the right time—and in the right way.



Conclusion

Families in Ayr North face interlinked challenges rooted in poverty, trauma, neurodiversity, and systemic barriers. Their needs are diverse and complex, requiring flexible, coordinated, whole-family support. Both families and practitioners emphasise that sustained investment, clear communication, safe housing, and relationship-based approaches are essential for improving parental and child wellbeing, reducing poverty, and building resilient communities.

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Recommendations

1. Strengthen early pregnancy support by expanding the booking in appointment to include poverty pressures, parental wellbeing etc to ensure support from earliest point (NHS Health)

2. Togetherness (The Solihull approach) to be rolled out across the workforce, to enhance attuned, consistent support for children and families.

3. Embed the Parental Wellbeing Tool as a routine early help conversational tool - ensuring that parental wellbeing is recognised as central to child wellbeing.

4. Expand CFE work into Adult Servces or wider CSPP to support parents communication needs.

5. The Integrated Neighbourhood Team to receive comprehensive training in all aspects of parenting support to enhance their capacity to work effectively with families.

6. Increased visibility and awareness of South Ayrshire Connect resourcees with families and practitioners

Communication boards

The South Ayrshire Communication Friendly Environments (SACFE) Communities Team works with community settings across the South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to create Communication Friendly Environments. The team has also installed communication boards in local parks, beaches and woodland areas. These boards use pictures, symbols and words to help people communicate their needs, feelings and ideas. The boards hope to increase inclusivity for children and young people, as well as adults with dementia, and can be especially helpful for individuals with speech, language or communication difficulties, such as non-verbal autistic children.

The team required sponsorship for the boards, and we are proud to have funded two communication boards in the Ayr North area through the CPAF funding — one in the Russell Drive playpark at the heart of Wallacetown and another in the skate park across the road, on Craigie Road.

Russell Drive Play park
Communication Friendly board

Craigie Road Skatepark
Communication Friendly board

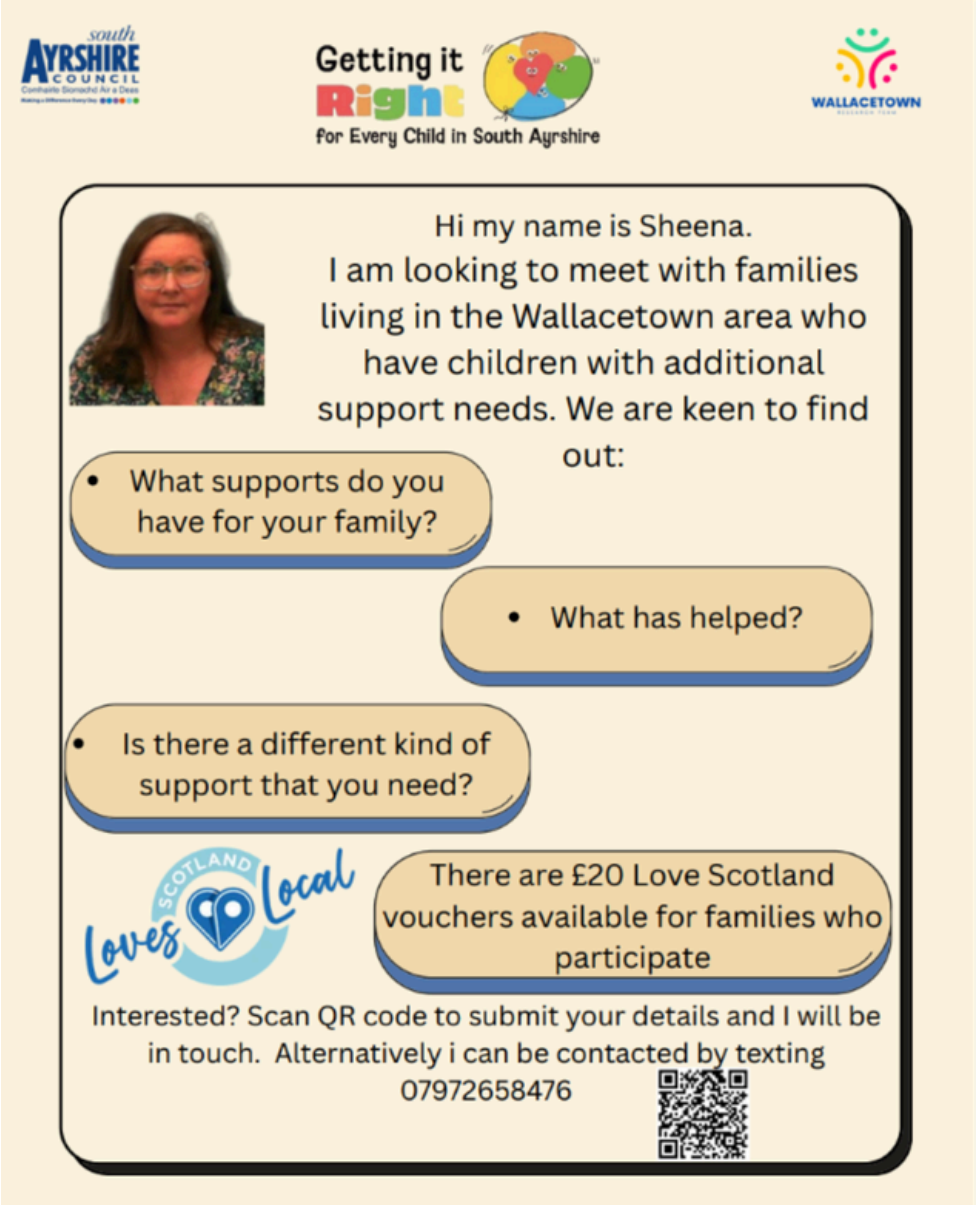
10 https://www.nest.scot/service/south-ayrshire-communication-friendly-environments-in-the-community-(sacfe)t

Unintentional Outcomes

Families supported during the reseach process

Service	Connection
South Ayrshire Food Bank	2 referrals made
Info and advice hub referrals	6 referrals made for income maximisation
Baby to Teen Babybank	Placed referral into baby bank for 3 year old and new baby – all items requested fulfilled.
PEEP	Pregnant Mum referred to PEEP with Newton Primary.
Bookbug	Details provided to young Mum of how to access local Bookbug.
Toddler groups	Details provided to young Mum of how to access local toddler groups.
Fuel voucher referral	1 referral made
Night Before Christmas	1 x red bag request for one family mum, toddler and baby.
School clothing bank	1 referral made
Girvan support	One family connected in in with supports in Girvan area
Data sims	2 free data sims issued from the National data inclusion network
Unpaid carers	4 parents registered
Time to Live Fund	4 parents given information on time to live fund
Care Connects website	Resource shared with 4 parents
Community Dentist	Referral information shared with 2 parents
NEST	1 referral made for support with HPV vaccinations
Employability and Skills	Family with 21 year old with additional support needs to supported to contact employability and skills.
Recycle Ayr and Harbour Ayrshire	Link made between 2 organisations to support moving of furniture for people fleeing domestic violence or who have experienced

Appendix 1:


South Ayrshire Council
Getting it Right for Every Child in South Ayrshire
Wallacetown
Hi my name is Sheena.
I am looking to meet with families living in the Wallacetown area who have children with additional support needs. We are keen to find out:
• What supports do you have for your family?
• What has helped?
• Is there a different kind of support that you need?
Scotland Loves Local
There are £20 Love Scotland vouchers available for families who participate
Interested? Scan QR code to submit your details and I will be in touch. Alternatively i can be contacted by texting 07972658476

Appendix 2

Mapping of services in Ayr North

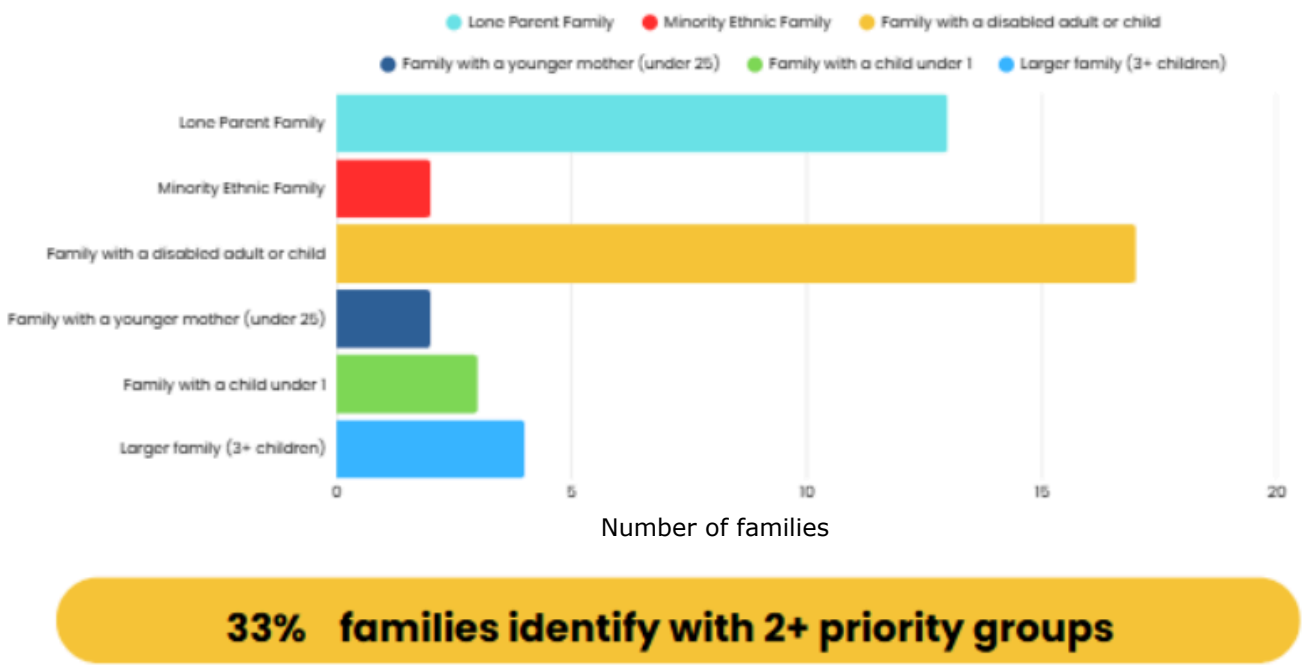
Name	Type of Support	Universal	Ayr North Specific
Ayr United	Holiday Club , After School Club, Honest men's club, weight loss management group, walking		x
Barnados	Family Support , Parenting Programmes	x	
ADP	Individual family support , Group Support, Recovery Groups	x	
PEEP Sessions	Group sessions baby to age 5 in early years centres , ante natal peep in Wallacetown hub		x
Compass	Drop Ins,1-1 support, family support, advocacy, access to services to support	x	
Speech & Language	Wallacetown early years drop in, virtual drop in		x
Calm Chameleon	Mental health support for children and young people	x	
ESOL	Provide family and group activities and 1-1 tuition across all ages		x
Housing	Antisocial behaviour officer linked to area, and part of the Working for Wallacetown core		x
Thriving Communities	Multi sports camp, targeted support groups for parents, parent and child groups, employability support , ESOL support, youth		x
Breakfast clubs	Available in local primary schools	x	
Info and Advice Hub	Weekly drop ins in Newton community hub ,income maximisation, money advice,		x
Resettlement Team	Support for Ukraininan families - English language classes, cultural		x
Spotty Zebras	Monthly drop in at Wallacetown EYC, support advice and activities for ASN families		x
Room 60	School based programmes and evening drop ins for S1 upwards	x	
Vics in the Community	Football Academy, holiday clubs, family support		x
NEST	Services and resources for Neurodiverse people and their families	x	
Number 48	ADP - Social activities and events, volunteering opportunities, drop ins, 1-1	x	
Cafe Hope	Weekly volunteer led recovery cafe for individuals and families	x	

Seascape	Housing support including furniture, befriending and rent deposit scheme,	x	
Quarriers	Youth housing support and supported accomodation- worker ar Tuesday drop in	x	
Children and Families Social work	Whitletts office - Family support to promote children & young people's well-	x	
Family centre	Wills Road Ayr : support for children and families to promote family relationships and the well-being of children, ealry	x	
Aberlour	Family support including parents groups for neurodiverse children, short breaks. 1 to 1 support and holiday playschemes for	x	
Carers Centre	Sandgate Ayr - support for unpaid carers and young carers	x	
Believe healing connections	Wallacetown hub support with suicide bereavement tuesdays	x	
Smoking cessation	Wallacetown hub support with quitting smoking/ vaping Tuesdays 1-4pm	x	
8 ball pool group	For adults with learning disabilites Tues 1.30-3pm Arthur Strret Ayr	x	
Carnegie library	Library service - book lending, school holiday activities, adult learning, familiy	x	
Newton Primary and early years centre	School SAC education department age 2 to p7	x	
Wallacetown Early years centre	SAC education department provision age 2-5	x	
St Johns Primary School	SAC education department provision p1-p7 - Faith school	x	
Dalmilling Primary school	SAC education department provision p1-p7	x	
Cherry Tree Early Years Centre	SAC education provision baby - age 5	x	
Breahead primary and early years	SAC education provision age 2 to p7	x	
Bookbug	in early years centres, Newton hub and Carnegie library	x	
Harbour Ayrshire	Supporting drug and alcohol recovery, Individual, group and family support . Can also support house removals for	x	
Kirktonholm Childcare	7 James Street Ayr - private nursery provision 0-5 years	x	
Baby to Teen	Baby items and clothing bank	x	

Riverside Community Trust	Fuel vouchers, care and share drop in - access to different services, toddlers		x
Police Scotland	Walk rounds, attend Wallacetown meetings, community police officers		x
Compass	One stop shop for individuals impacted by alcohol or drugs, access to services	x	
Connect South Ayrshire	Online directory of services and activities in South Ayrhsire	x	
Newton Foodbank	Tuesday and Friday afternoons Newton Community Hub - no referral		x
Lochside Foodbank	Tuesdays and Thursdays voucher required	x	
Recycle Ayr	Friday afternoons Newton Primary - clothing, electrical goods, toys, baby		x
Teddy Bear Tots	St Quivox Church 0-5 year olds, Wednesdays	x	
North Ayr TheGither	Community project St Quivox activities for children and families and those with		x
North Ayr Health Centre	Access to NHS services	x	
Ayrshire Housing	Housing support	x	
Lochside Community Centre	Community cafe, day trips, youth group, drop ins for employment and financial		x
Health Visiting Services	home visits to families with children under 5	x	
Advanced Nurser Practitioners	Support for young or care experienced mums until the child is 2 (then follow HV	x	
Working for Walllacetown hub	Community support - wellbeing support , benefits advice, financial inclusion, groups- womens, armed forces , antisocisla behaviour,employment, firther		x
Salvation army	Rainbow tots mondays, Foodbank Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays	x	
Threesixty	Public living room, walking group, well-being support	x	
Domain Youth Centre	Youth clubs and school holiday activities		x
Lochside Community Centre	Cosy space cafe Wednesday & Thursday, Thriving communities youth club, food bank, communty garden, adult learning ,		x
Community links practitioner	Available at Tuesday drop-in	x	

Appendix 3:

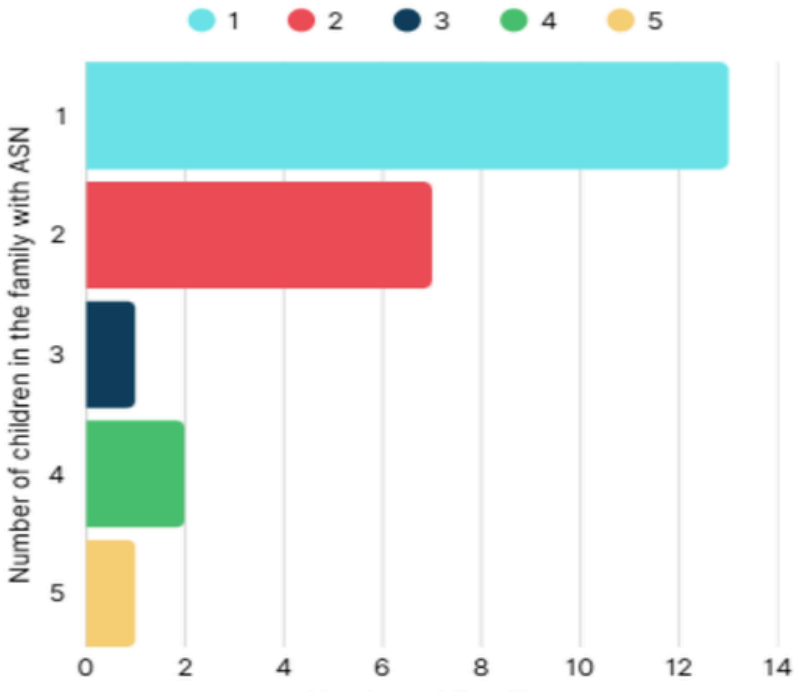
Chart 1 : Child Poverty priority groups



33% families identify with 2+ priority groups

Appendix 4

Chart 2: Number of children per family who have additional support needs



Appendix 5

Charts 2-25 Breakdown of additional support needs by family

Chart 2 Family 1

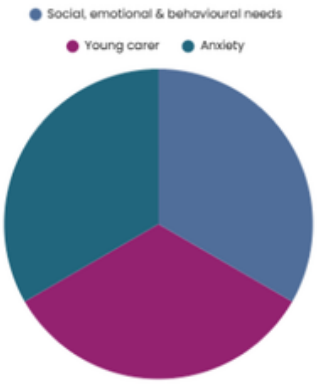


Chart 3 Family 2

Chart 4 Family 3

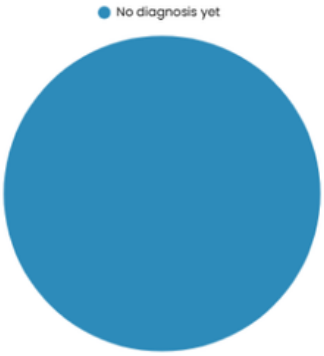


Chart 5 Family 4

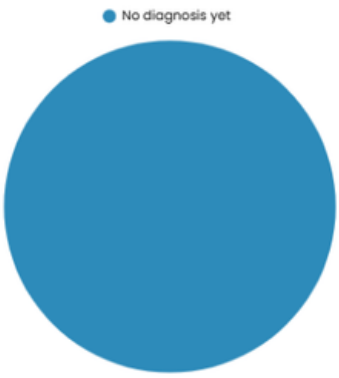


Chart 6 Family 5

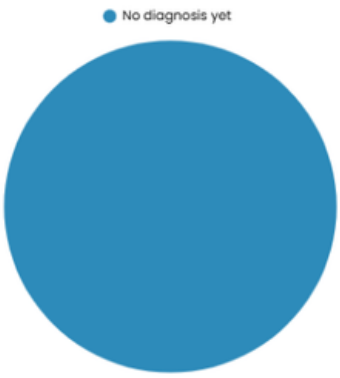
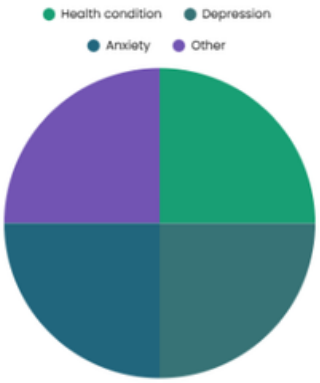


Chart 7 Family 6



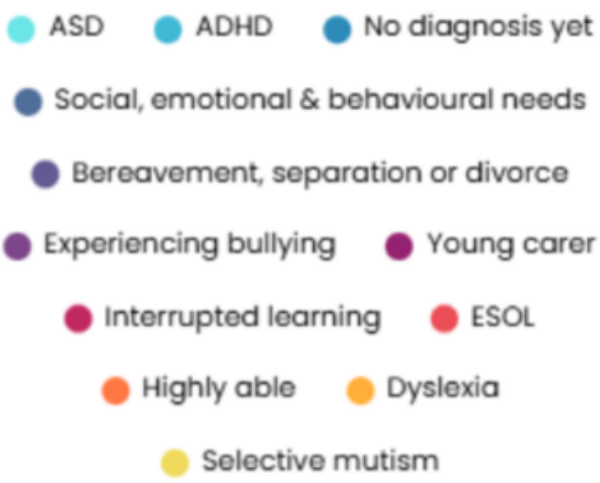


Chart 8 Family 7

Chart 9 Family 8

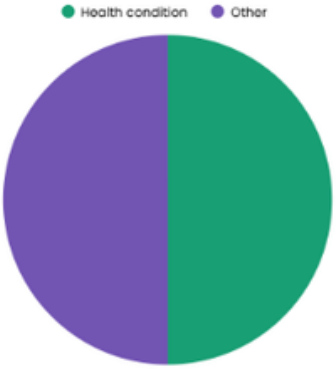


Chart 10 Family 9

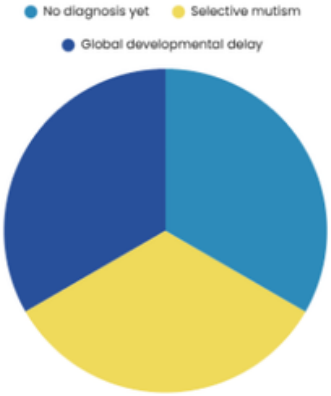


Chart 11 Family 10

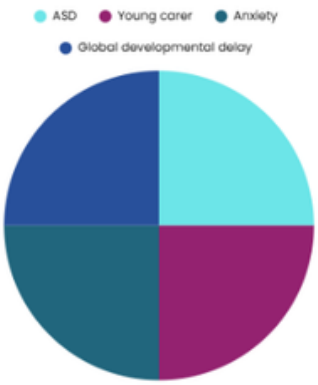
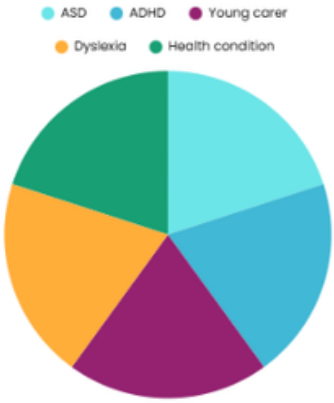


Chart 12 Family 11

Chart 13 Family 12



ASD ADHD No diagnosis yet

Social, emotional & behavioural needs

Bereavement, separation or divorce

Experiencing bullying Young carer

Interrupted learning ESOL

Highly able Dyslexia

Selective mutism

Physical or motor impairment

Language or Speech disorder

Health condition

Sensory processing differences

Depression Anxiety

Developmental language disorder

Global developmental delay Other

Chart 14 Family 13

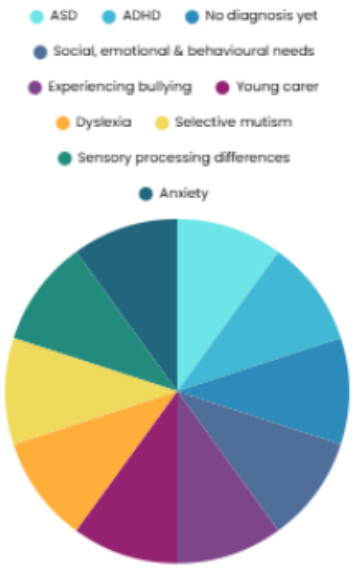


Chart 15 Family 14

Chart 16 Family 15

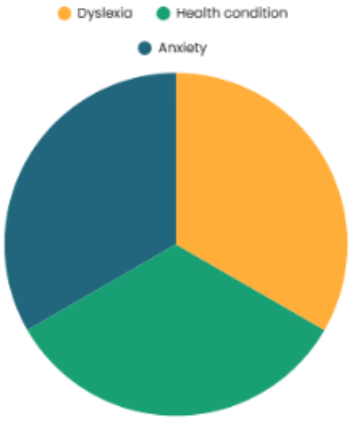


Chart 17 Family 16

Chart 18 Family 17

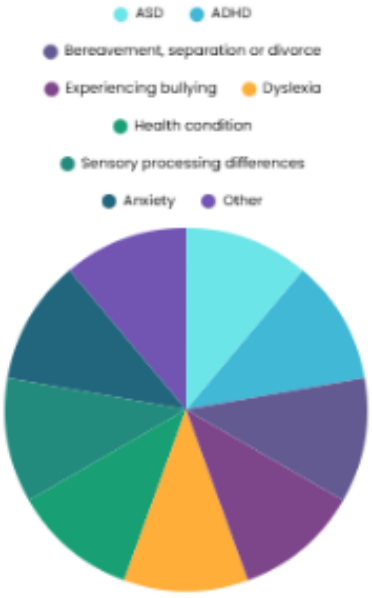
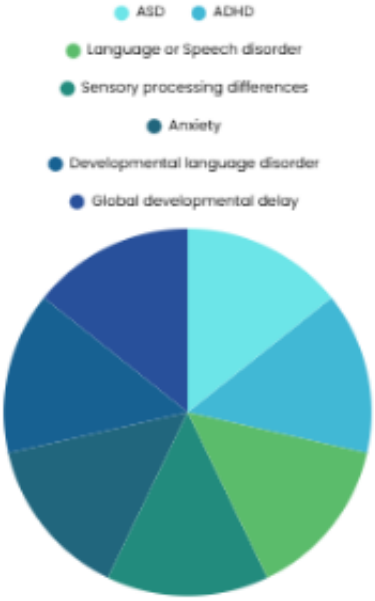


Chart 19 Family 18



ASD
ADHD
No diagnosis yet
Social, emotional & behavioural needs
Bereavement, separation or divorce
Experiencing bullying
Young carer
Interrupted learning
ESOL
Highly able
Dyslexia
Selective mutism
Physical or motor impairment
Language or Speech disorder
Health condition
Sensory processing differences
Depression
Anxiety
Developmental language disorder
Global developmental delay
Other

Chart 20 Family 19

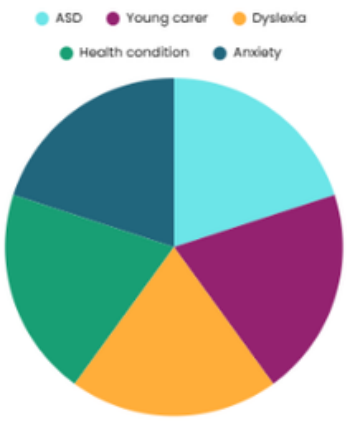


Chart 21 Family 20

Chart 22 Family 21

Chart 23 Family 22

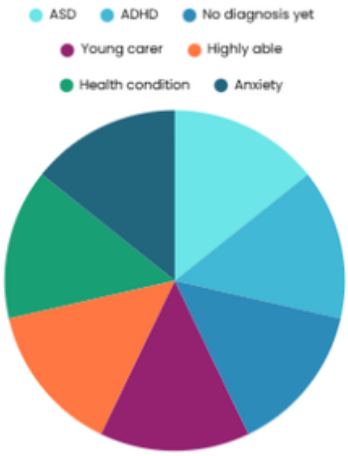


Chart 24 Family 23

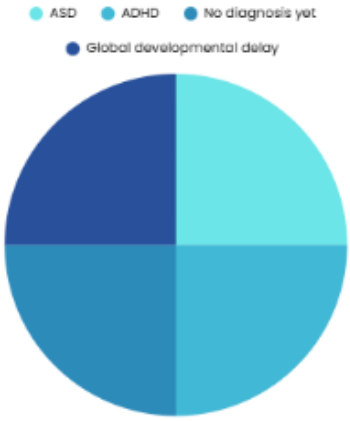
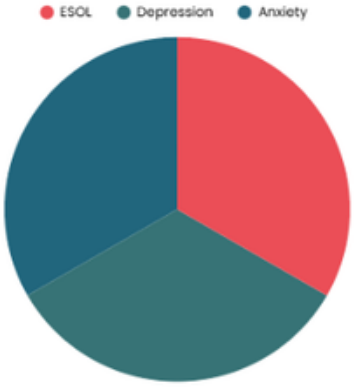


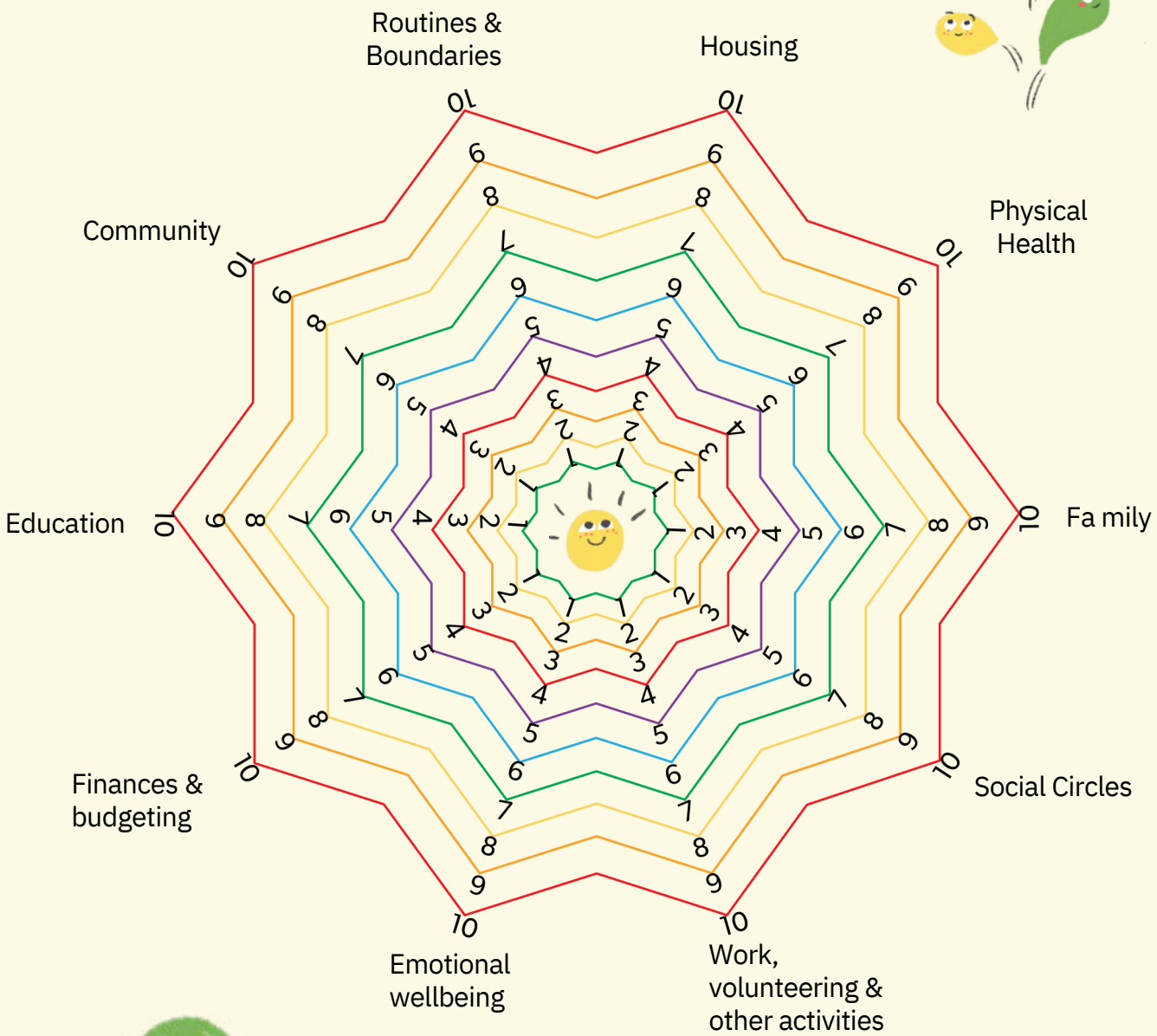
Chart 25 Family 24



South Ayrshire Parental Well-being Tool

South Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day

If you like, you can fill this in before your first visit.
If not, don't worry — your family worker will go through it with you when your support starts.
For each category, please give your family a score from 1 to 10:
1 means you are very concerned, and 10 means you are not concerned at all.



Getting it Right for Every Child in South Ayrshire

Practitioner Notes

Name: Date:

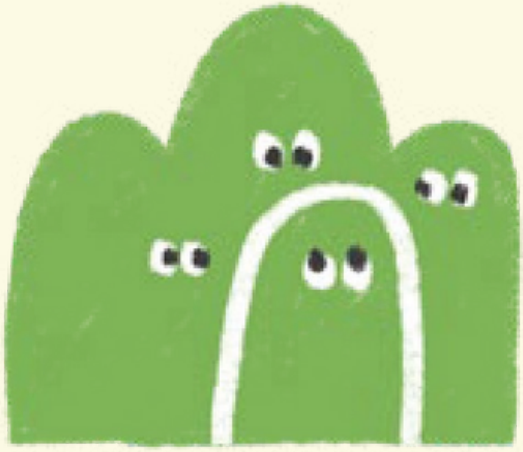
First ☐ Review ☐ Retrospective ☐

Completed by:

Family and Worker ☐

Worker alone ☐

Family ☐



1. Physical Health

2. Family

3. Social Circles

4. Work, Volunteering & other activities

Categories:

5. Emotional well-being

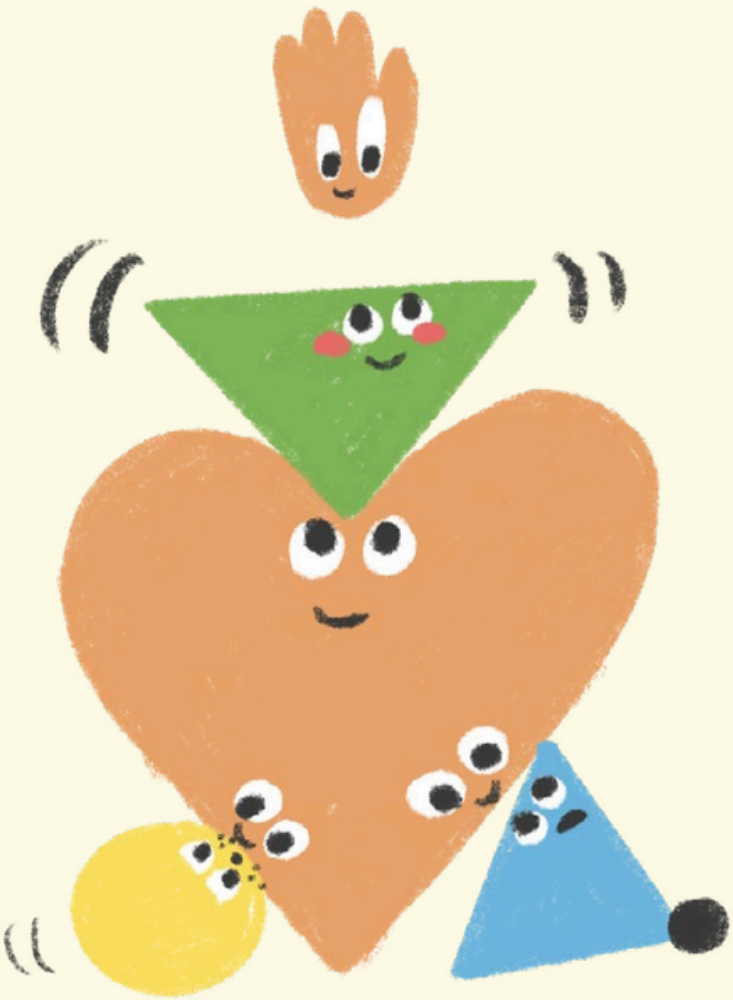
6. Finances & Budgeting

7. Education

8. Community

9. Routines & Boundaries

10. Housing



Wellbeing Tool Practitioner Action Plan

Area	Goal	Action	By who?	By when?	Effectiveness	Re-evaluation

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Well-being Toolkit

Practitioner Question Guide:

The following list is a guide of potential questions to ask under each heading and not intended to be asked in full.

Well-being Tool Categories:

1. Education:

Accesstolearning forboth parentsand children,including parenting programmes (e.g. PEEP , Togetherness-the Solihull Approach), adult learning, and early years education. Education is a pathwayto empowerment and opportunity. [1]

2. Family

Supportiverelationships within the family unit, recognising the strengths and needs of all members.Services are designed with families, not for them, ensuring their voices shape support.[2]

3. Social circles

The presence of a reliable network of family, friends, community groups, or professionals who provide emotional, practical, or informational support. Strong social connections reduce isolation and improve resilience. Informal networks of friends, peers, and extended family that offer emotional and practical support. Strengthening these circles reduces reliance on formal services and builds resilience.[3]

4. Finances & budgeting

Theabilitytomeet basicneeds such as housing, food, and childcare without constant financial stress. Economic securityis a major factor in reducing anxiety and improving family wellbeing.

Support to manage income, access entitlements, and build financial capability. Tackling child poverty is central, with wraparound support to reduce financial stress.[4]

5. Routines & boundaries

Parents'beliefintheir abilityto raise their children well, supported by access to parenting resources, education, andguidance. This includes understanding child development and managing behaviour positively.

Consistent daily structuresthat support children's development and family stability. Services help families establish routines that reflect their values and needs.[5]

1 (PDF) Adult Education as a Pathway to Empowerment: Challenges and Possibilities
2 The Importance of Supportive Relationships
3 Social connectedness as a determinant of mental health
4 maps-money-mental-2023-health-rapid-evidence-review.pdf
5 Associations between Family Routines, Family Relationships, and Children's Behavior | Journal of Child and Family Studies

6. Work, Volunteering, and other activities

Theability tomanage responsibilitiesatworkand home without excessive stress. Flexible working arrangements, parental leave, and childcare support are key contributors.

Opportunities for meaningful engagement that promote purpose, financial stability, and wellbeing. Support includes flexible pathways into employment, volunteering, and community participation.6

7. Housing

Stable,secure, and appropriate housing is foundational to wellbeing. Holistic support includes addressing housing needs to prevent crisis and promote dignity.

Availability and accessibility of services such as housing assistance helps parents to navigate challenges.[7]

8. Community

Feeling connected to and safe within a local community. Inclusive, welcoming environments contribute to a sense of identity and reduce feelings of isolation.

Inclusive, safe, and connected communities where families can access support locally. Community-based hubs and networks foster belonging and reduce isolation.[8]

9. Physical Health

The overallhealthand wellbeing of parents, including access to healthcare, nutrition, exercise, and rest. Good physical health supports energy levels, emotional resilience, and caregiving capacity.

Parents' access to and engagement with healthcare, nutrition, sleep, and physical activity. Good physical health enables parents to care for their children effectively and reduces stress.

Holistic health support including access to GPs, Dentists, nutrition, and physical activity. Services are trauma-informed and responsive to the whole family's health needs.[9]

10. Emotional Wellbeing

The ability of parents tomanage stress, express emotions constructively, and maintain a positive outlook. This includes feeling valued, supported, and confident in their parenting role The mental and emotional state of parents, including their ability to cope with stress, maintain positive relationships, and seek help when needed. Emotional wellbeing is central to effective parenting and family stability.

Mental health and emotional resilience supported through early help, peer support, and therapeutic services. Stigma-free access is key to ensuring families thrive.[10]

6 Health, work and wellbeing – evidence and research - GOV.UK
7 Housing and Wellbeing
8 Relationship between sense of community belonging and self-rated health across life stages - PMC
9 Physical Well-Being | SpringerLink
10 Parental Stress and Well-Being: A Meta-analysis | Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review

Practitioner Question Guide:

The questionsareexamples to helpguidewhat you might ask in each wellbeing area. You do not need to ask all of them.

Physical Health:

Arey you registered with a Doctor & Dentist?

Has anyone in the family had a recent illness?

Do you have any worries or concerns about anyone in the families health?

Does your child(ren) sleep well?

Has there been any health issue that has affected your child's attendance at school?

Has your child(ren) had all their immunisation and health checks?

Does anyone have any allergies?

Do you feel that you all eat a variety of foods including fresh fruit and vegetables?

Is anyone in the house a fussy eater?

Is anyone taking any medications?

Do you have contact with any addictions services?

How was your pregnancy/pregnancies?

Education:

How would you describe your child's behaviour at school?

Does your child even have any difficulty following instructions?

What subjects do they like the most?

What is your child's attendance like at school? Are they on time?

Do you have any worries or concerns about their education?

Do you attend parents nights and events?

Do they do homework? Who helps?

Does your child attend preschool?

What does your child want to do in the future?

Boundaries and behaviour:

How would you describe your child's behaviour?

Do you have any other worries about your child's behaviour?

Do you find managing aspects of your child's behaviour difficult?

Tell me about how you manage difficult or challenging behaviour?

Do you feel that you are able to be consistent?

Do you think your children understand consequences?

Do you think your discipline is appropriate and effective?

Do the children have a regular bedtime routine?

Describe a typical days routine for your children.

How do the children get to and from school or early years centre?

Emotional Wellbeing:

Are you the main carer for the children?

Do you feel stressed or anxious?

If you do get stressed/anxious what is your coping strategy?

Do you feel that you have a good sleep pattern?

Do you feel that you are able to enjoy time with your child(ren)?

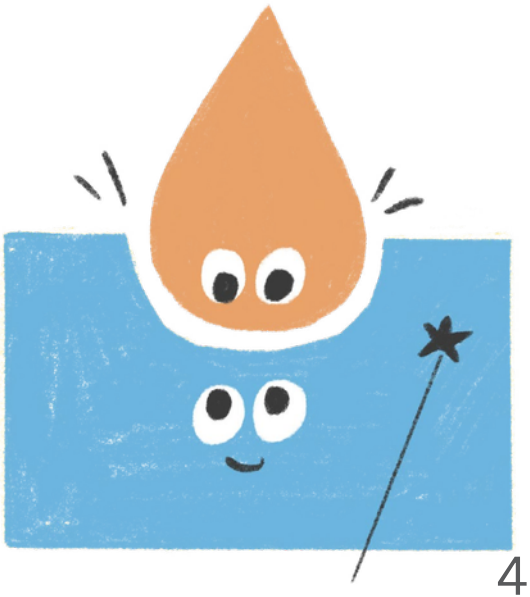
Do you care for anyone else outside of the family home-another adult family member etc?

Does your child have a best friend?

What impact do their friends have on them?

How does your child cope with big emotions or frustrations?

What makes your child happy or sad?



Social Circles:

Who do you turn to for help if there was a sudden problem?

- What do they do?
- How often do they help?

Do you attend any social activities in your area?

Do you attend any groups without your children?

How much time do you spend with friends/family?

Are there other people who are important to you that live nearby?

Do you get any help with shopping/childcare arrangements?

Do the children go to any clubs or activities?

Are you aware of groups and activities in your area?

Finances & Budgeting:

What is your main income?

How do you budget for food, bills, clothing etc?

Do you have any concerns about money?

Have you had an income maximisation appointment recently with the information and advice hub?

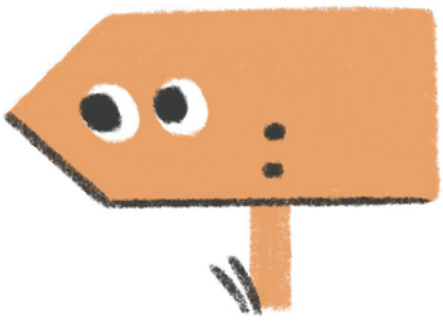
Have you had support with your finances before - if so when and was it helpful?

Housing:

What type of tenancy do you have?

Is there enough space for everyone?

Do you have any outstanding alterations or repairs?



Have you been or are you at risk of eviction?

How long have you been in your current home?

What made you leave your previous property?

Do you feel safe in your home?

Family:

Who makes up your family?

Are you a close family?

Do extended family members live locally?

How do you all get on as a family?

Do your children share their worries with anyone else in the family?

Community:

Are there people who are important to you that live nearby?

Do you attend any groups in your community?

Do the children attend any groups locally?

Do you use any community resources e.g. taking the children to the local park? shops?

Do you feel safe in your community?

Work, volunteering and other activities:

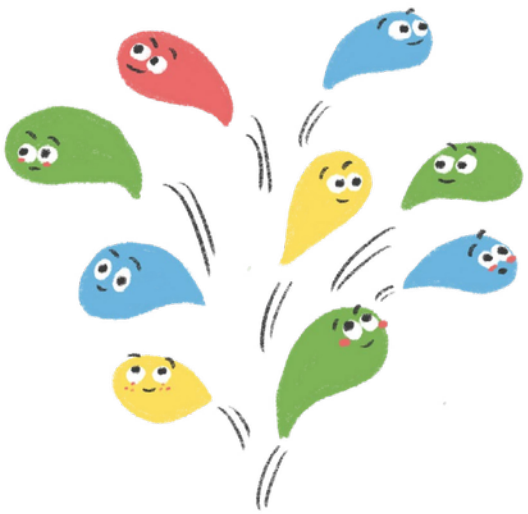
Have you been able to find work?

Would you like to find or change your employment?

Would you like to access any additional qualifications or training?

Do you volunteer anywhere or involved in any groups etc parent council?

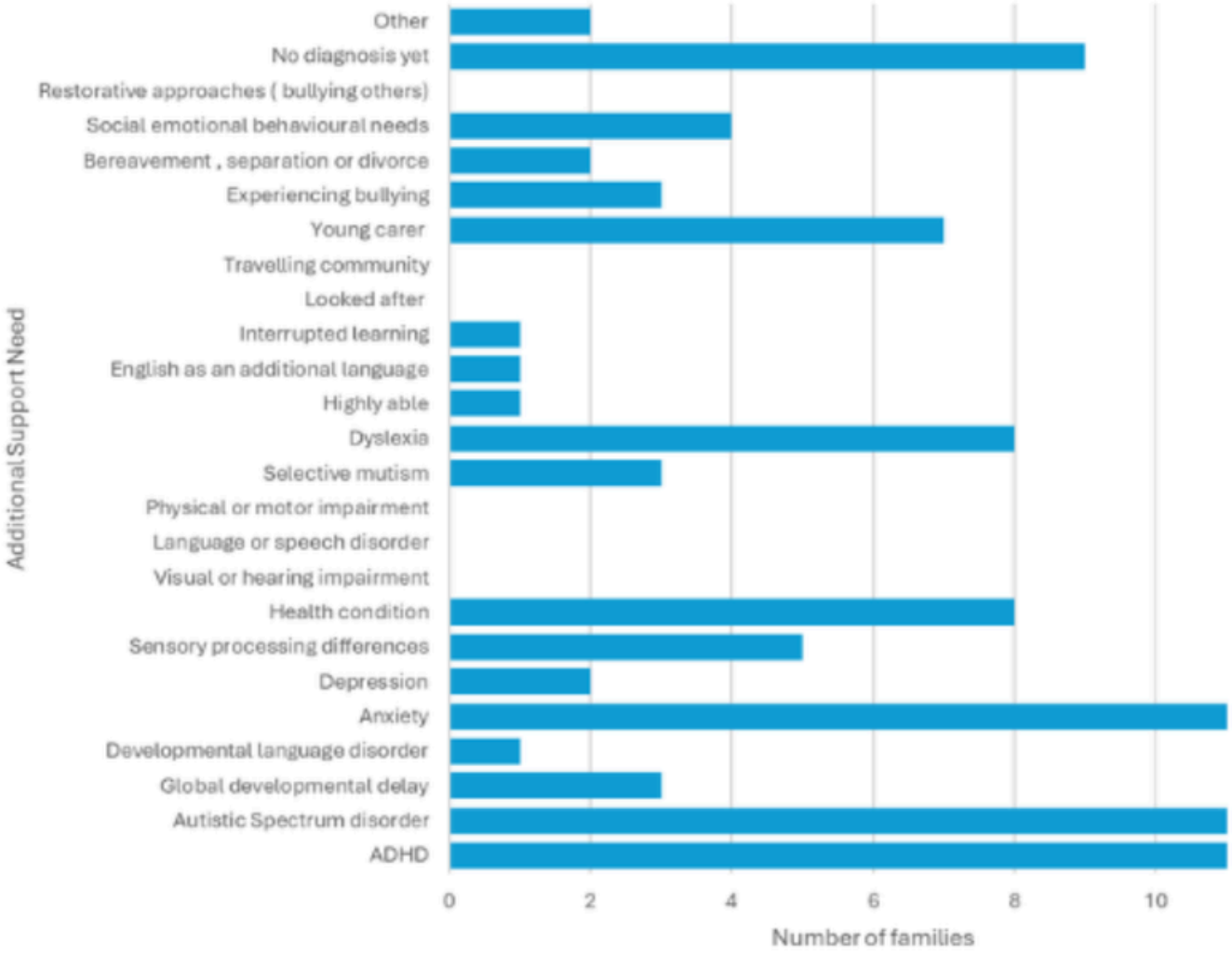
Do you have available childcare to help with work or social commitments?



Appendix 7

Chart 26 :

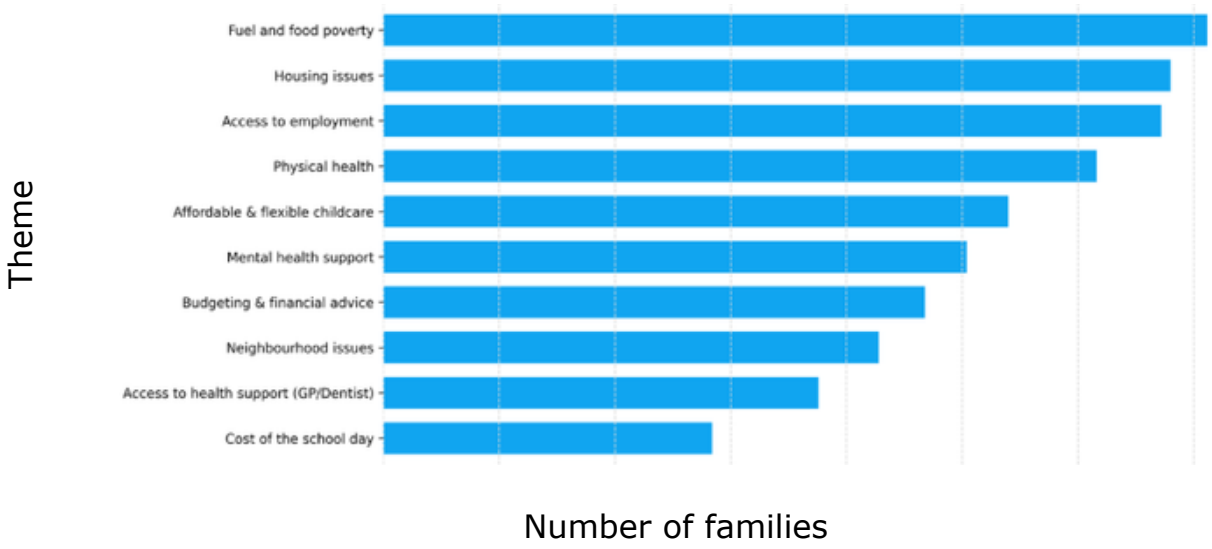
Additional supports needs identified by families



No diagnosis- 38% Families

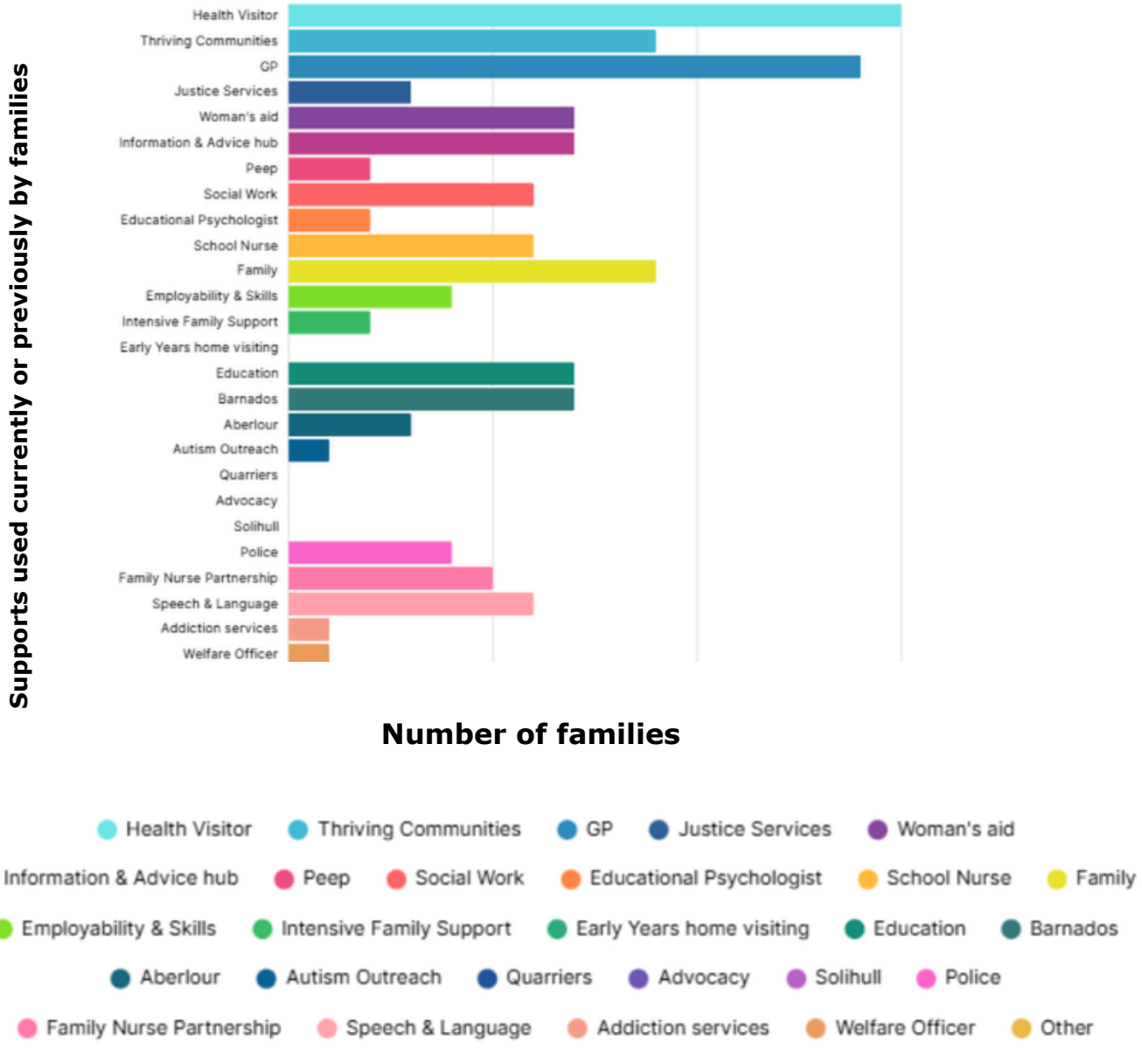
Appendix 8

Chart 27: Aggregated response to families question 1
(Mum and Dad scores combined)



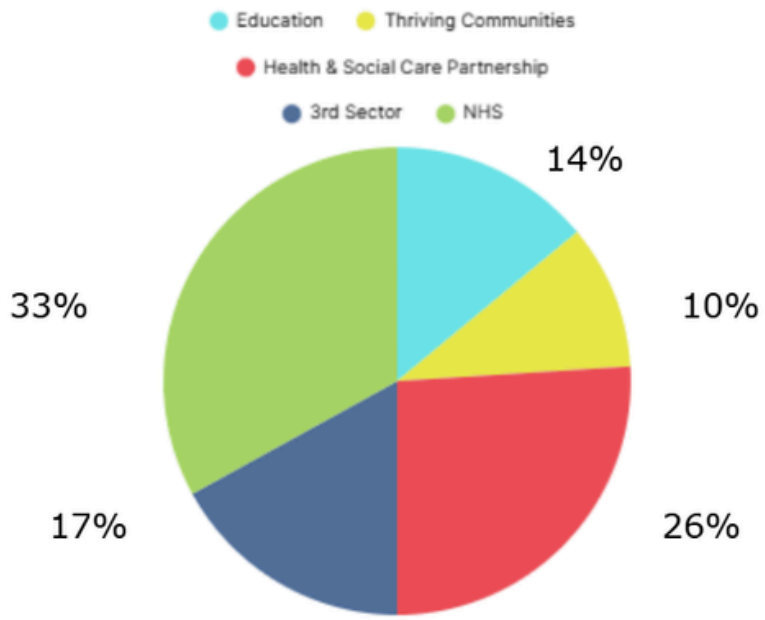
Appendix 9

Chart 28 : Services currently or previously supporting families



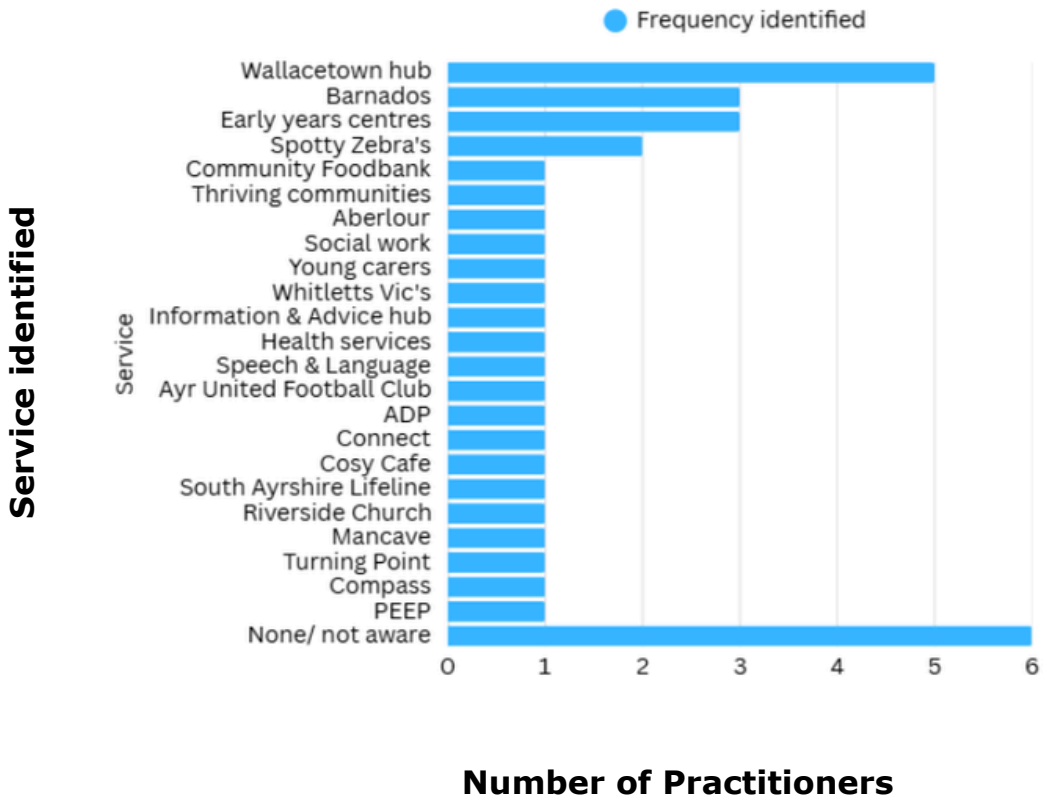
Appendix 10

Chart 29: Breakdown of service area of practitioners

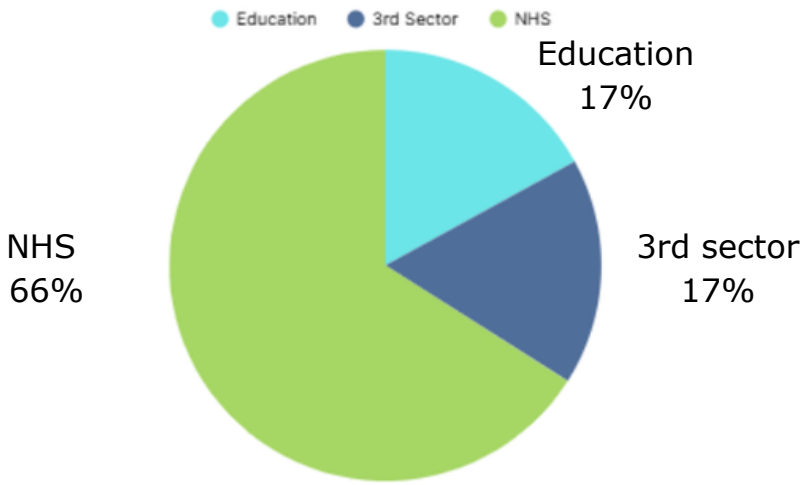


Appendix 11:

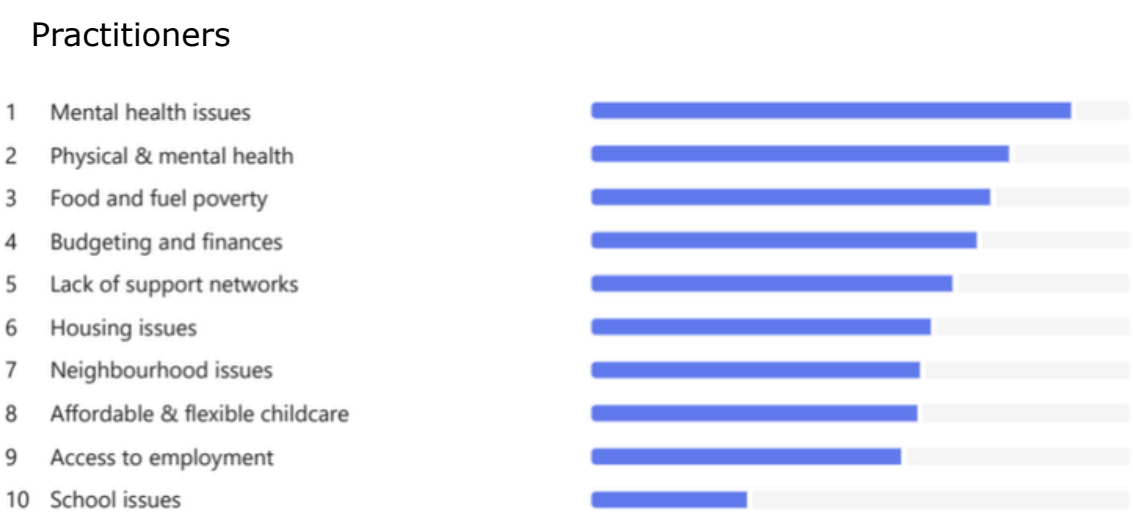
Chart 30 Services identified by practitioners that support parental well-being in Ayr North



Appendix 12
Chart 31
Breakdown of practitioner's service area who were unaware of support services in Wallacetown to support parental wellbeing



Appendix 13
Chart 32 : Practitioner response to what impacts on parental well-being in Ayr North



References :

Raman, Sneha and French, Tara (2022) Towards a shared understanding of genuine co-design with people with lived experience: reflections from co-designing for relational and transformational experiences in health and social care in the UK. In: Morton, S (ed.), Designing Interventions to Address Complex Societal Issues. Design Research for Change . Routledge.

Literature Review :

[Accessed June 17th 2025]
A Brief Measure of Parental Wellbeing for Use in Evaluations of Family-Centred Interventions for Children with Developmental Disabilities

The article develops and tests an eight-item parental wellbeing measure designed for use in family-centred interventions for children with developmental disabilities. Tested with over 400 parents of children with ASD, the tool showed good validity, acceptable reliability, strong acceptability, and sensitivity to differences in parental wellbeing—making it a practical, low-burden option for practitioners.

[Accessed June 17th 2025]
Changing Childhoods. Changing Lives. Barnardos (2024).
https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/202403/Changing%20Childhoods%20Changing%20Lives%20report.pdf

[Accessed 20 May 2025]

Barnardo’s report highlights that children in the UK are growing up under increasing pressure from the cost-of-living crisis, COVID-19’s long-term effects, digital harms, global instability and climate anxiety. A YouGov survey of 14–17-year-olds shows widespread pessimism: 55% believe they’ll be worse off than their parents, and many doubt they will ever own a home.

Children report rising mental health challenges, financial insecurity and reduced opportunities, with poverty affecting millions of families nationwide. Barnardo’s calls for urgent action and commits to increased investment in direct family support, aiming to tackle hardship and advocate for systemic change

[Accessed June17th 2025]

Family Star user guide

The Family Star is a visual, strengths-based tool used with parents and carers to assess progress across key areas of family life, including children's health, emotions, learning, behaviour, routines, home and money, and parental wellbeing. It uses a five-stage Journey of Change (from Stuck to Managing Well) to support reflective conversations, identify needs and strengths, and guide action planning. The updated 2023 editions make the tool more trauma-informed, accessible, and client-centred, with clearer wording and improved resources such as easy-read flashcards.

The Family Star and Family Star Plus are widely used in early help, parenting support and multi-agency work, helping practitioners and families co-produce goals and track change over time. They support holistic assessment, enhance engagement, and bring the family's voice into decision-making

[Accessed May 19th 2025]

Online interventions for the mental health and well-being of parents of children with additional needs: Systematic review and meta-analysis

Online interventions for the mental health and well-being of parents of children with additional needs: Systematic review and meta-analysis - PMC
The article titled "Interventions for the Mental Health and Well-Being of Parents of Children with Additional Needs: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis" examines the effectiveness of psychological and educational interventions designed to support parents of children with disabilities. The review found strong evidence that cognitive-behavioural interventions significantly reduce parental stress and improve mental health, while psychoeducational programmes also lead to meaningful improvements in wellbeing. Interventions commonly included CBT-based strategies, psychoeducation, mindfulness, and structured support groups, with meta-analysis showing moderate to large positive effects.

The authors concluded that these interventions are effective overall and recommended wider implementation alongside further high-quality research to strengthen clinical guidance.

[Accessed 12th December 2025]

Parental Stress Scale : Berry & Jones 1995
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0265407595123009

The Parental Stress Scale (PSS) is an 18-item self-report measure developed by Berry & Jones (1995) to assess both the positive (rewarding) and negative (stressful) aspects of parenting. It provides a brief, accessible alternative to longer tools and is widely used with parents of children across all ages. The scale demonstrates good reliability and validity, although factor structure can vary across populations, with some recent studies recommending refined versions for specific groups.

The PSS is sensitive to change, making it useful for evaluating parenting interventions, family support services, and programmes aimed at strengthening parenting capacity. It is quick to complete, easy to score, and widely used internationally, with evidence supporting its applicability in both general and clinical populations.

[Accessed June 17th 2025]

Poverty in Scotland 2025 | Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowantree Foundation report shows that nearly 1 in 4 children in Scotland continue to live in poverty, with levels largely unchanged in recent years. Poverty is deepening, with almost 1 in 10 people now in very deep poverty (incomes below 40% of the median). [jrf.org.uk]

Despite the positive impact of the Scottish Child Payment, which has helped reduce child poverty in many local authority areas, major structural issues remain. In-work poverty is widespread, affecting 6 in 10 people in poverty, and nearly three-quarters of children in poverty live in households where someone works. Disabled families face particularly high poverty rates, with over half of children in poverty living in a household where someone is disabled. [jrf.org.uk]

The report warns that Scotland is far off track from meeting its statutory 2030 child poverty targets unless bold action is taken to tackle low incomes, high living costs, and the inadequacy of benefits like Universal Credit

[accessed 20th May 2025]

Scottish Government: Child and parental wellbeing: measuring outcomes and understanding their relation with poverty

Child and parental wellbeing: measuring outcomes and understanding their relation with poverty - gov.scot
Scottish Government research highlights that parental wellbeing is closely linked to child wellbeing, with financial strain, the cost-of-living crisis and the long-term impacts of COVID-19 negatively affecting parents' mental health, stress levels and social connection. Families in low-income and high-deprivation areas experience the poorest wellbeing outcomes, reinforcing the need for whole-family policies that strengthen mental health, reduce isolation and address structural poverty.
The findings emphasise that income-boosting measures alone are not enough—support for parental mental health, relationships, resilience and family functioning is essential to improving life chances and reducing Scotland's poverty-related inequalities.
[Accessed June17th 2025]

Scottish Government child poverty analysis
Child poverty analysis - gov.scot

The Scottish Government's child poverty statistics track progress toward the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 targets, which aim to significantly reduce child poverty by 2030. The latest data (published March 2025) shows that relative and absolute child poverty rates have remained broadly unchanged in recent years, sitting above interim targets.
Relative child poverty, which measures household income below 60% of the UK median, fell between the mid-1990s and 2011–12 but has since plateaued. Material deprivation, a measure of families unable to afford essential goods and services, also remains slightly above target levels.
Persistent child poverty—children living in poverty for three out of four years—currently sits between 12% and 23%, above the interim goal, reflecting ongoing long-term financial hardship among families.
These statistics are used to monitor progress, inform policy decision-making, and support annual reports that detail how Scotland is addressing the structural drivers of poverty, including income from work, living costs and social security

[Accessed Jun 17th 2025]

South Ayrshire Children's Service Plan 2023 –2026
Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-2026 - Health and Social Care Partnership
South Ayrshire's Children's Services Plan (2023–2026) sets out a multi-agency vision to improve outcomes for children, young people and families through a focus on prevention, early intervention and whole-family support. The plan is shaped by extensive local engagement and follows national duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It identifies six key priorities: The Promise, Families, Included, Voice, Healthy and People, which guide integrated work across education, health, social care and third-sector partners.

Evaluation findings show progress in strengthening collaboration, improving family-centred support and embedding a whole-family approach, with an emphasis on listening to communities and providing help at the right time. This ongoing work aims to build strong, resilient communities and ensure South Ayrshire is a place where children and families can thrive.

South Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2024-2029
Child_Poverty_Strategy_2024_29_final_April_digital_2024.pdf

The South Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy 2024–2029 outlines a collaborative, multi-agency plan to reduce child poverty by addressing inequalities and improving outcomes for families. It is built on local data showing significant deprivation across areas of Ayr, Girvan and Maybole, and uses community voices to shape priorities. Early progress highlights successful income-maximisation support, with a focus on identifying additional income secured for families, expanded welfare-rights referrals, and the rollout of the Family First early-intervention model across school clusters. Community food pantries have also helped reduce household costs and provide social support.

The strategy emphasises prevention, early intervention, equality and whole-family support, supported by an Integrated Impact Assessment that ensures no group is disproportionately disadvantaged.

[Accessed 28th April 2025]

Child and parental wellbeing: measuring outcomes and understanding their relation with poverty - gov.scot

The Scottish Government's 2024 review provides a foundational assessment of child and parental wellbeing in Scotland and examines how wellbeing is shaped by poverty. It highlights that improving child outcomes requires addressing both material hardship and the wider relational, developmental and environmental factors affecting families' daily lives. [link.springer.com]

Children's wellbeing is closely linked to the wellbeing of their parents and carers; financial stress and hardship can negatively affect parent–child relationships and increase emotional strain within families. The report emphasises that the cost-of-living crisis and pandemic have had disproportionate impacts on low-income households, contributing to reduced social connection, increased isolation, and worsening mental health for both children and adults.

Evidence shows that children growing up in high-deprivation areas are more likely to experience developmental concerns in early childhood, lower levels of school attainment, reduced physical activity, and greater mental health challenges compared to their peers. While the poverty-related attainment gap had been narrowing in recent years, it widened again during the COVID-19 period and is only now beginning to close once more.

The report identifies significant limitations in current wellbeing measurement approaches, including inconsistent definitions, limited tools capturing lived experience, and a lack of integrated child-and-parent indicators. It calls for improved data systems capable of monitoring wellbeing trends and connecting outcomes to poverty drivers, drawing on Scotland's Children, Young People and Families Outcomes Framework and its 21 core wellbeing indicators.

Overall, the review concludes that tackling child poverty requires a dual focus: increasing family incomes and strengthening the conditions that support wellbeing—such as mental health support, safe housing, meaningful relationships, and inclusive community environments. Achieving sustainable progress toward child poverty targets depends on integrated, holistic policies that improve quality of life alongside financial security.

[Accessed June 17th 2025]

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale
https://measure-wellbeing.org/measures-bank/wemwbs/

The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) is a widely used, validated measure of positive mental wellbeing. Research consistently shows strong internal consistency and good construct validity across diverse groups, including adults, young people, minority ethnic communities and mental health service users.

Recent systematic reviews confirm that WEMWBS is reliable, responsive to change and suitable for use in both population surveys and intervention evaluations.
It has been translated into multiple languages with generally robust psychometric performance internationally.

The scale is sensitive to improvements in wellbeing, with evidence from 223 intervention studies showing positive effects across psychological, social, arts-based and physical-health programmes.

Glossary

For the purpose of the report the following acronyms are used :

Child Poverty Action Funding CPAF

Additional Support Needs ASN

Scottish Index Multiple Depravation SIMD

Early Years Centre EYC

National Health Service NHS

Child Poverty Plan CPP

Children's' Service Planning Partnership CSPP

South Ayrshire Council SAC

Health & Social Care Partnership HSCP

Child Adolescent Mental Health Service CAMHS

South Ayrshire Communication Friendly Environments SACFE

Getting it Right for Every Child GIRFEC

WALLACETOWN
RESEARCH TEAM