

cyrenians



# KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER ANNUAL REPORT



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# Summary of project

Over three years have worked alongside Scotland's five secure units supporting young people and families to rebuild their relationships with the aim, where possible, of enabling young people (aged 12+) to return to their family home. Cyrenians offer a combination of mediation, practical support and conflict resolution workshops at two stages: the point of admission and with those who are in the process of returning home.




## Mediation

Skilled Mediators offer 1-to-1 meetings with individual family members before bringing families together for facilitated conversations. Working with young people, parents/carers and siblings to encourage them to try new communication approaches which result in more positive relationships within families and in their wider interactions with others.



## Practical Support

Family Outreach Workers develop individual support plans for each family member, on the issues they identify as causing additional strain on family relationships.



## Conflict Resolution Workshops

Interactive workshops for young people who have been identified by secure care staff as struggling with conflict - promoting better communication and reducing the potential for future conflict. Our six week 'Fight or Flight' workshops skill up young people to better manage anger, build stronger relationships and limit the negative consequences of conflict.



# 1-INTRODUCTION

Thanks to Cashback for Communities innovation in supporting unique community-based activities, *Cyrenians Keeping Families Together* project (KFT) has offered families across the country whole-family support and mediation at some of the most difficult times of their life. The period 2022/2023 saw *KFT* enter it's third, and final year in this pilot stage.

As the only project working nationally across Scotland's five secure settings, with some of our most vulnerable children, Cyrenians has learned a great deal, and achieved a huge amount not just this year, but since we began in 2020. This report celebrates those achievements and highlights our learning, to ensure that in collaboration with our secure centre partners, we support families in times of crisis, provide the best possible opportunities, and get it right for every child.





## 2-ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW



Cyrenians' *Vision* is an **inclusive** society in which we all have the opportunity to live valued and fulfilling lives. Our *Mission* is to support people excluded from family, home, work or community on their life journey. Our Four values of *Innovation*, *Compassion*, *Integrity* and *Respect* shape the work we do and lead us to working in a way that respects and upholds children's rights as outlined in the UNCRC, and that all our staff are trauma informed to meet the needs of the families we engage with daily.

**Innovation**  
**Compassion**  
**Integrity**  
**Respect**

## 2.1- ADVISORY GROUP

Determined to ensure KFT meets the needs of young people, families and the wider community we at Cyrenians have been delighted to receive skills, guidance and knowledge from our incredible advisory group. Experts from across Scotland have ensure that KFT meets best practice and we continually implement change from our learning. The advisory board has this year consisted of:

- Dr Cara Jardine – The University of Strathclyde
- Dr Ruby Whitelaw – Children and Young People’s Centre for Justice (Chair)
- Andrew Nelson - The Care Inspectorate
- Alison Melville – The Scottish Government
- Mike Rodger- East Lothian Council
- Kevin Neary – Aid & Abet
- Scott Kennedy - Police Scotland Violence Reduction Unit
- Gillian Myers, Diane Marr and Kerry Watson - Cyrenians

The advisory group have been instrumental in:

- Bringing and sharing knowledge and expertise, from a range of interested stakeholders, of issues relating to working with families and young people who are entering or leaving secure care across Scotland.
- Providing insight on related policies and practice
- Raising awareness of the impact of the project and the benefits of offering a strategic intergenerational approach in supporting whole families.
- Advising on effective evaluation and monitoring.
- Nurturing collaboration and partnership working to achieve the best outcomes for young people and their families.
- Providing a consultative forum to offer advice on the future development of the Keeping Families Together project.

## 2.2- THE PROMISE

KFT sits central to our efforts to #Keepthepromise and forms one of the strongest of examples of Cyrenians being a leader in the way we as a nation, support children in care. Our CEO Ewan Aitken sits on the board of The Promise Oversight Committee where he highlights KFT, amongst other efforts within Cyrenians projects, as a key component in our dedication to improving the life chances of young people who come into contact with statutory agencies.

# 3- A TEST OF CHANGE

The *KFT* response to the challenges families face when one or more of their young people are accommodated in secure settings is unique and multi-pillared. In order to support the whole family holistically we offer three separate, yet interconnected, interventions:

.....



**Mediation between young people and their care-givers, siblings or other relevant family member**



**Outreach support breaking down barriers to education, well-being, employment, training or other**



**Group workshops to build resilience, conflict resolution skills, and emotional regulation.**



# 3.1– MEDIATION IN 22/23

Alongside our outreach whole family support, mediation forms the core of our service and remains a unique offering to families and young people involved in Scotland's criminal justice and care system. Mediation, in which a specially trained member of our team supports families to have meaningful conversations in a productive way, is being seen to have numerous benefits for our families, as evidenced in the feedback we receive.

## Families are supported to:

- Negotiate rules and guidelines for young people's return to home from secure.
- Set boundaries and communicate needs to each other both when visiting in secure and the transition to other environments (home, temporary accommodation)
- Discuss and receive a sense of closure on historical issues within the family. Mediation can help families draw a line and move on from specific issues.
- Improve general communication skills so needs can be expressed positively to professionals (social work, police, keyworkers, secure staff) in their lives

*I'm going to live back with Gran soon, so it might be good to have some mediation where I tell her that I'm 18 now and things will have to change a bit. You know what I mean? That could be good, let's do that.*

**Young person, recently released from Kibble secure**

The confidential nature of mediation has been well received by families who may have a distrust towards professionals due to years of involvement with statutory services during particularly hard times in their lives. We have found that both parents and young people build trust with us very quickly, knowing that whatever they say (beyond anything that places them in significant harm, of course) will not be shared out-with the mediation space. This is fundamental to mediation practice and why families seem to respond well.

*I just want to tell her that I didn't mean those things I said. She barely talks to me and I think she probably hates me for saying those things. Thanks for giving me the chance to say that to her. No matter how she responds.*

**Dad of young person in Rossie Secure.**

We are routinely receiving feedback that without mediation (and support) families would not be living together after moving on from secure care. Many times, we have heard a variation of the phrase “Without you, they wouldn’t be living here”. As believers that young people are safer when they have strong core relationships and live in a known, safe environment, these comments give us confidence that mediation is a vital addition to the support of these families in crisis.

*"Without them he wouldn't have a bed. Social work asked me what I needed and I said a bed, they never got it. Cyrenians did. I asked social work for help as i'm on benefits and nothing, it was Cyrenians that did it. I had a 6-8 week wait for my benefits to get up and running and they came here with £100 so I could get in groceries and pay for the electric heaters, the council gave me as I didn't have any heating.... FOW reassures me that I am doing enough and this is not my fault.*

**Mum of young person who transitioned back home from Kibble**

This year we have seen an increase in referrals from the units and an uptake by families for mediation. We have worked with 19 families both when accommodated in secure care s and during the transition and settlement back to the family home, or other suitable accommodation.



As always, we continue to develop our practice, ensuring staff are supported through good quality management, including support from a consultant clinical psychologist, working in a trauma informed way, embedding children's rights with all aspects of service and ongoing training and development. We are currently piloting a co-mediation model where mediators will work in tandem with an assistant mediator. This added resource to the families we work with is hoped to improve the quality of mediation, ensure reflective practice in our team and increase opportunity for families to engage with mediation.



## 3.2- OUTREACH SUPPORT IN 22/23

### Practical Support

Our Family Outreach Workers (FOWs) offer whole family support, working with family members in areas they would like support with such as, increasing young people's confidence in communicating their needs to others in a positive way, practical support around education, work, community engagement, developing skills to manage emotions (i.e. anger, emotional regulation) and understanding how relationships work. Our initial assessment is trauma informed, rights respecting and strengths based, which asks only two questions (what's good about your family? and what would you like to change?) ensuring that young people are listened to and identify what they would like support with. Our FOWs offer support to both young people and parents/carers/ siblings. They listen to the young person, build trusted relationships and use a variety of skills-building tools to improve self-esteem and reduce insecurities.



We support parents with issues which can influence parenting; such as health, emotional wellbeing, employment, housing, finance, and preparing to attend meetings relating to their child, i.e. Child Planning Meetings or Children's Hearings with the aim of increasing their confidence to communicate their needs within these meetings. Where appropriate, we discuss underlying family issues such as relationships problems, family dynamics and emotional wellbeing, helping families to explore and find ways to manage the effects of trauma successfully in their family. As a result, parents/carers report they feel better able to care for their children without the costly interventions of the state. We also signpost to other agencies when family members need more specialised support.



### 3.3- #keepthepromise

*If children are removed from the care of their parents, Scotland must not abandon those families. Families must continue to be provided with therapeutic support, advocacy and engagement in line with 10 family support principles of intensive family support.*

#### **The Promise**

Our work is closely aligned to the Promise and embeds the 10 principles of intensive family support in line with Scottish Governments aspiration for all families.

- Holistic and relational
- Therapeutic
- Non-stigmatising
- Patient and persistent
- Underpinned by children's rights
- Community Based
- Responsive and timely
- Work with family assets
- Empowerment and agency
- Flexible



As the project has developed and we've supported more young people and their families, some key areas of support which have proved crucial in helping them move forward have included:





Supporting young people and their families to attend meetings (e.g. LAC reviews, children's panels, care reviews and planning meetings) explaining the purpose of the meetings, who will be attending and why and helping them to prepare what they want to say and achieve. This also includes children's rights work and has helped young people and their families to communicate their needs positively to others ensuring their voices are heard (advocacy).

*[The mediator] and [FOW] have developed meaningful relationships with the family and have advocated for both the young person and his Mum, bringing current issues to my attention for me to action. It is clear that they really care about them. I am really pleased at the work they have put in to this family and the very fact that the young person has engaged well with the service tells me that he has also found it helpful and meaningful."*

**Social Worker**



Supporting young people and their families to understand neurodiversity and how neurodivergent conditions can impact on communication, behaviour and learning.

“I do deal with my granddaughter differently now, because of the diagnosis and I have taken on board that she doesn’t like me shouting. I have had to change my ways.”

**A Grandmother reflecting on how they communicate with their granddaughter after being supported to understand specific neurodivergent conditions.**



Liaising with social work and education to obtain school placements appropriate to the needs of the individual young people.



Sharing secure care pathways and standards with young people and families so they know what to expect; particularly upon transitions back to the community or family home.



Working with community-based agencies to help young people pursue hobbies and interests as this is an area that young people have highlighted is not always included in their children’s plan.



Supporting families to plan their own family days out to local attractions to allow them to spend meaningful, quality family time together. We have assisted with paying for activities, help with transport and money for food.

*“Thank you so much – we really appreciate all the help and support for our family. We loved every minute of it.”*

**Parent/carer (following a family day out)**



Supporting families with the stress of the cost of living crisis (e.g. support to access government schemes and other grants for gas and electricity, food, clothing, etc.)

*Thank you so much – I was very emotional. Thank you so much – you don’t know how much I appreciate this.”*

***Parent/carer (after we linked in with Home Start to collect and distribute gifts at Christmas as she expressed feeling incredibly anxious about affording things for her three children)***





*“When things are tight and parents are trying desperately to hold it together, money becomes a fraught topic.*

*Conversations around money can quickly blow up into big fights – for teenagers, being refused seemingly simple things like time online, new clothes, money to hang out with friends, or food they like can be hard to handle, while parents are often frustrated and angry at their child’s lack of understanding of how much things cost. Young people often don’t know how much things like food, heat and rent really cost – and to be clear, they shouldn’t have to be in a position where they need to worry about that. Most parents want their children to feel safe, in control, and not have to worry about money. But that’s hard to achieve when they themselves are in a situation that’s increasingly insecure.”*

**Lauren, Senior Family Outreach Worker**



With our support one young person who has completely desisted from crime, reported that this was down to spending more time with family, and going swimming (with Community Access Pass leisure card our FOW made a referral for). We were able to match the young person with a mentor quite soon after they returned from care. In doing so, the young person and his mentor have had conversations about carrying knives, gang involvement, peer pressure and the use of social media.



We are in the process of setting a young person up at his local boxing club – providing him with the kit and fees (which can be a huge barrier to participation)



Another young person has expressed wanting to avoid reverting back into involvement in criminal behaviour. They have been achieving this through engaging with youth organisations that we linked them in with and supported/encouraged them to attend.

## 3.4-TRANSITIONS

As we are in the unique position to continue our support when young people return to their family home or community we have identified that families need more intensive support to improve transitions. Our Family Outreach Workers have in many instances had to take on responsibility coordinating support and to help young people and their family's access what they are entitled to. i.e. the right to a quality home, education, care leavers rights and the additional resources that comes with these rights, recreation and leisure, financial support to sustain their family home and life. Unfortunately, there have also been occasions where we have had help the young people engage with CLAN Child law to get what they are entitled to. To avoid this in the future we will continue to work with Clan Child Law in the future to raise awareness of children rights/ care leavers' rights amongst others working with young people in secure care. Our intention is that is more people know about children's rights, there will be fewer breaches in the future and young people will get what they are entitled to.

*“Why could I not keep working with my key worker from secure? Why could they not come with me to the community, even for a while? I had to meet a whole new bunch of people who did not know me, did not know what I have been through.”*

**Young person**

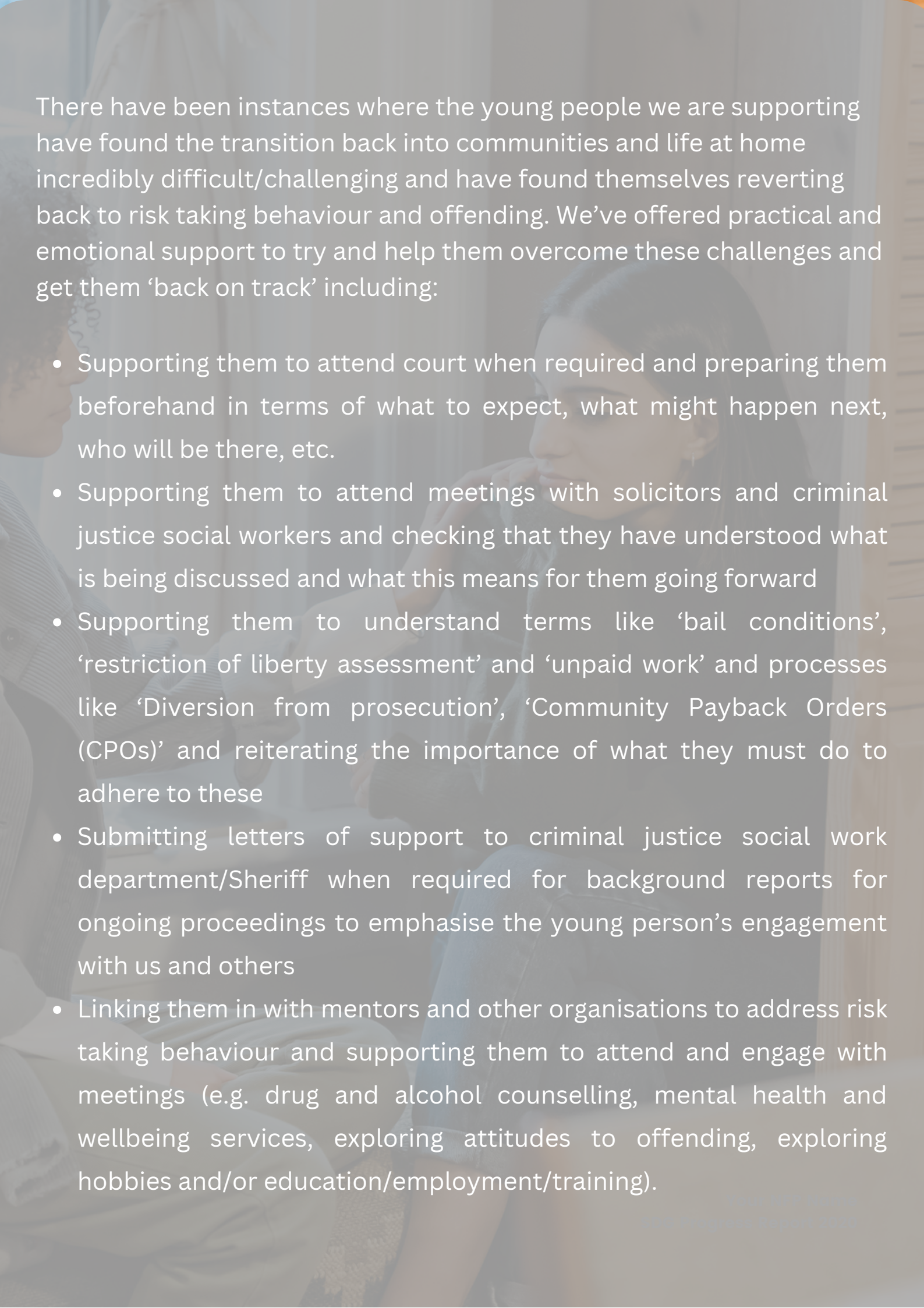


It is really difficult for young people to move from secure care where they have a full schedule of activities 24/7 with routine, schooling, recreational activities and staff on hand, to returning home with very little support in place as follow on. It should also be noted that parents and carers don't always get all the information on what the young person's daily routine was while they were in secure care, which causes problems when they are trying to create stability at home and continuity of support. Parents also stated that working with us is the first time in all the years that they have had support as a whole family.




*We as a family would have benefited from Cyrenians many years earlier, all families should be given support when they reach out for help”*  
**parent**





There have been instances where the young people we are supporting have found the transition back into communities and life at home incredibly difficult/challenging and have found themselves reverting back to risk taking behaviour and offending. We've offered practical and emotional support to try and help them overcome these challenges and get them 'back on track' including:

- Supporting them to attend court when required and preparing them beforehand in terms of what to expect, what might happen next, who will be there, etc.
- Supporting them to attend meetings with solicitors and criminal justice social workers and checking that they have understood what is being discussed and what this means for them going forward
- Supporting them to understand terms like 'bail conditions', 'restriction of liberty assessment' and 'unpaid work' and processes like 'Diversion from prosecution', 'Community Payback Orders (CPOs)' and reiterating the importance of what they must do to adhere to these
- Submitting letters of support to criminal justice social work department/Sheriff when required for background reports for ongoing proceedings to emphasise the young person's engagement with us and others
- Linking them in with mentors and other organisations to address risk taking behaviour and supporting them to attend and engage with meetings (e.g. drug and alcohol counselling, mental health and wellbeing services, exploring attitudes to offending, exploring hobbies and/or education/employment/training).



*"I feel like I can be honest with my mum. Sometimes I used to just try and cover it up and act as if everything was alright when everything was absolutely not. I can actually sit there and be honest with my mum. I never used to really cry in front of my mum. I used to just get angry and not show any emotion – it came out in a different way – but now I can sit down and maybe have a cry with my mum if something is wrong. I feel that I can be vulnerable with my mum because she understands me better now."*

**Young Person**

We are working towards embedding children's rights across our organisation and into our service delivery, we have spent time this year developing the team's knowledge on children rights and what we need to think about in relation to service delivery when working with young people and families in secure care. We have a strong emphasis on children's rights in relation to children having access to whole family support which is in line with the aims of our project in working towards system change, so that all children/young people in secure care are offered whole family support, which isn't the current position.



## 3.5– WORKSHOPS IN 22/23

Our ‘Fight or Flight’ conflict resolution and anger management workshops, designed in line with the curriculum for excellence, are an effective tool for trusted relationship building with staff and young people at secure centres, a safe and enjoyable way to challenge entrenched and normalised behaviours, reduce anger and aggression in young people and a means of increasing referrals to our more intensive mediation and support services. The group workshops have been designed to accommodate the unique setting of secure units, focusing on short interactive sessions of around 30-40 minutes, working closely with small groups of young people at a time, generally 3-5 young people and a workshop structure which allows for young people to benefit from attending one workshop, or the full programme of six workshops, should they return home or be moved elsewhere between our visits. We have worked with upwards of 20 young people in the past year. This relatively small number reflects the complexity of needs, the unique qualities of the setting and our desire to meaningfully interact and speak directly with the young people, hear their stories and discuss personalised options with them in a mature way, rather than offering a lecture style information session to larger numbers. The response from the units and young people themselves confirms this is the current approach.

We have been pleasantly surprised with how much young people have engaged with the settings. At each centre we have worked with this year we have been told that staff are surprised about how well young people engaged, and for how long, in comparison to their engagement in similar programmes or daily education. We are proud to receive these compliments but recognise we could not achieve this engagement without the support from staff and volunteers at the centres themselves.

This year we have focused on ensuring that workshop delivery is not hampered by distance from our headquarters in Edinburgh. Thus, we have prioritised delivery in Kibble, Rossie and Good Shepherd centres, settings we wished to work closer with this past year. This has seen a dramatic increase in mediation and support referrals from these settings, most notably Kibble secure who have responded extremely well to both workshops and mediation and support offerings:

*Thanks Alan, we love having you in to do the workshops. The young people respond really well and we are always amazed at how they engage with you both and how long they stay in the lessons. We have new kids in and they would greatly benefit from your input. I would love to get you guys in again!*

**John Hillcoat, Kibble Safe Centre**

The success of the workshops both in their own right and as a relationship tool to increase mediation and support referrals requires that we make necessary adjustments to the delivery model. Historically delivered by one dedicated workshop leader, we are in the process of re-developing our workshop plans and expanding our pool of trainers. Strategically we have decided that our family outreach workers, the staff responsible for the support element of the service, will support the design and delivery of the workshops to increase capacity for delivery, improve relationships and contact time with staff and young people, and use their incredible knowledge and skills to improve the workshop programme.

Our next step is to work with the centres to embed the workshops more deeply within their curriculum by offering six-week workshop programmes within their core PSE education.

*I actually thought it was decent, I learned some stuff I didn't know and you definitely got it right when you said I get angry quickly, I'll work on that.*

**Young person, Rossie School**



# 4- EVALUATION 22/23

As well as using SHANNARI indicators, we use a variety of methods to collect information at key points before, during and after the intervention in order to measure the difference achieved, including:

- Feedback from young people and their parents/carers regularly, including case studies giving greater detail and context;
- Case notes record the work undertaken with young people, including specific exercises they have completed;
- For workshops we use pre and post evaluation questionnaires to measure the impact. In all areas we average an improvement reported by over 90% of our participants.

Externally, we worked with Dr Briege Nugent and Media Education to capture the learning from the three years of the project. We measured and value the impact from 6 months after the first intervention, with participants and other stakeholders, through interviews, data collection and analysis. Additionally, we will create a film documenting the journey that participants have made and the impact that working with Cyrenians has had on them.

We gather feedback directly from the young person through their individual support plan which gathers information on the current difficulties they are facing based on each area of the SHANARRI Framework using the Wellbeing Wheel and My World Triangle (this is in line with the National Performance Framework and Getting in Right for Every Child)

Using an asset strength-based model which is underpinned by the 5 principles of trauma-informed practice (safety, choice, empowerment, trust and collaboration), young people and individual family members identified the areas of support that they would like to work on, ultimately shaping their individual support plans. Our initial assessment is formed of two questions what's good about your family? and what would you like to change? We spend significant time building trusted relationships with young people and families, which has been instrumental to the success of the work.

In the reporting year 2022/2023 we have worked with 45 young people including 11 families. Each family member is invited to self-reflect on their experience and progress during and after our intervention.



*It has helped. I just feel there is someone there, and there are supporting the whole family, so my brother and me too.*

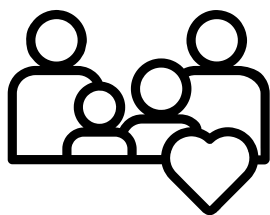
**A sibling of a young person**

## 4.1-Six outcomes

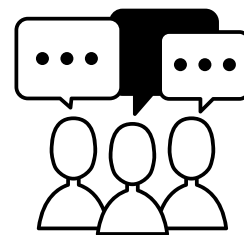
The young people's experience of KFT is measured using the following outcomes:

### Participant information for the year

We had 45 new young people access mediation and whole family support and or conflict resolution workshops during this year



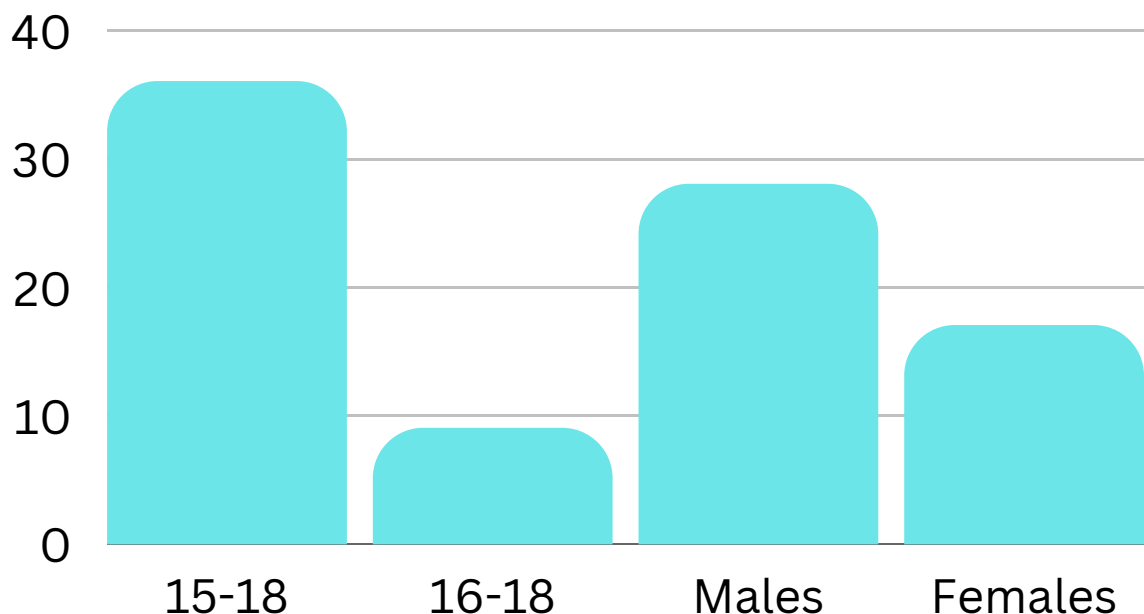
11 Families through  
mediation and  
support



34 Workshop  
participants

### Age range

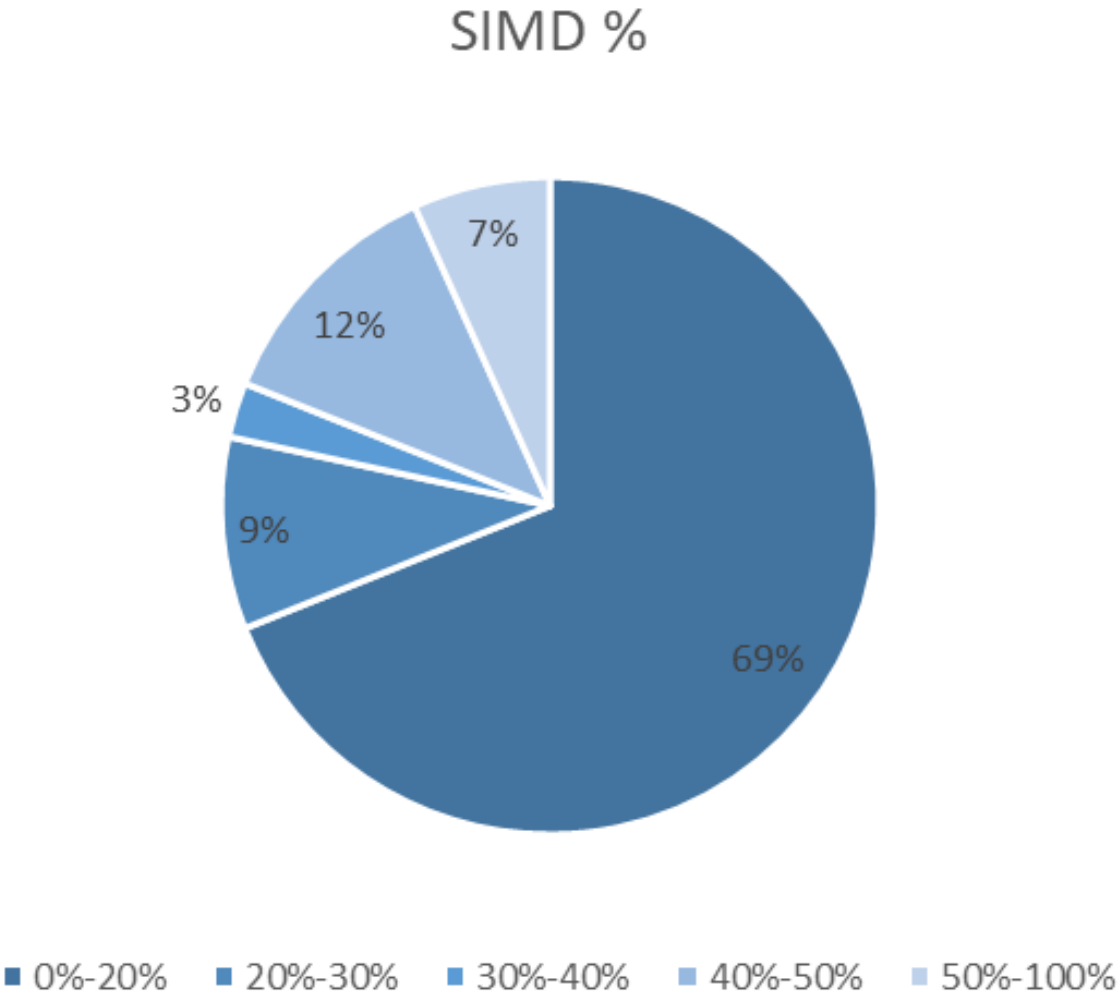
- between 10-15 – 36 young people were within this age range
- between 16 and 18 - 9 young people were within this age range
- Males-28 females- 17
- Of the young people that we worked with, 4 young people stated that their gender differed from that which they were assigned at birth.



The Scottish Index of multiple deprivation (SIMD)

The SIMD is the official tool employed by the Scottish Government for identifying small area concentrations of multiple-deprivation. If an area is identified as ‘deprived’, this can relate to people having a low income but it can also mean fewer resources or opportunities. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.

The graph below details the break down of participants and SIMD % over the three years of the project .





## Outcomes

phase 5 of the project comes to an end we are reporting on outcomes for all 74 participants who have participated over the 3 years

*Outcome 1: Young people build their confidence and resilience, benefit from strengthened support networks and reduce risk-taking behaviour.*

	Year 3	over the past 3 years
YP report increased confidence	95%	95%
YP report they are able to do new things	78%	75%
YP feel more resilient	87%	86%
Other stakeholders report increasing confidence in YP	100%	100%
YP report positive supportive networks	76%	75%
YP report positive changes in their behaviour	96%	93%
Other stakeholders report perceived positive changes in behaviour of young participants	100%	100%

## *Outcome 2: Young people develop their physical and personal skills.*

YP increased personal skills, achieving accredited learning

Year 3

3%

over the past  
3 years

4%

YP report an increase in their skills

87%

98%

Other stakeholders report perceived positive changes in behaviour of young participants

100%

100%

## *Outcome 3: Young people's health and well-being improves.*

YP improve wellbeing against SHANARRI indicators

Year 3

98%

over the past  
3 years

87%

Other stakeholders report perceived increases in SHANARRI indicators

100%

100%

*“Basically, just thank you because I think it’s been a really good help for me and my mental health as well. Me and my mum have been through the same kind of stuff and that’s probably how me and my mum understand each other better, is because of you guys and not because of anybody else, to be fair. You [FOW] and [mediator] were honest and you just knew how to help me and my mum. I don’t think anybody else would have known how to help me and my mum, to be honest.”*

**Young Person**

*Outcome 4: Young people participate in activity which improves their learning, employability, and employment options (positive destinations).*

YP will achieve a positive destination

Year 3

71%

over the past  
3 years

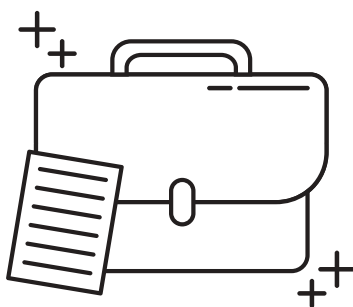
82%

YP will improve school attendance

76%

70%

**Positive destination breakdown, YP progress to:**



7%

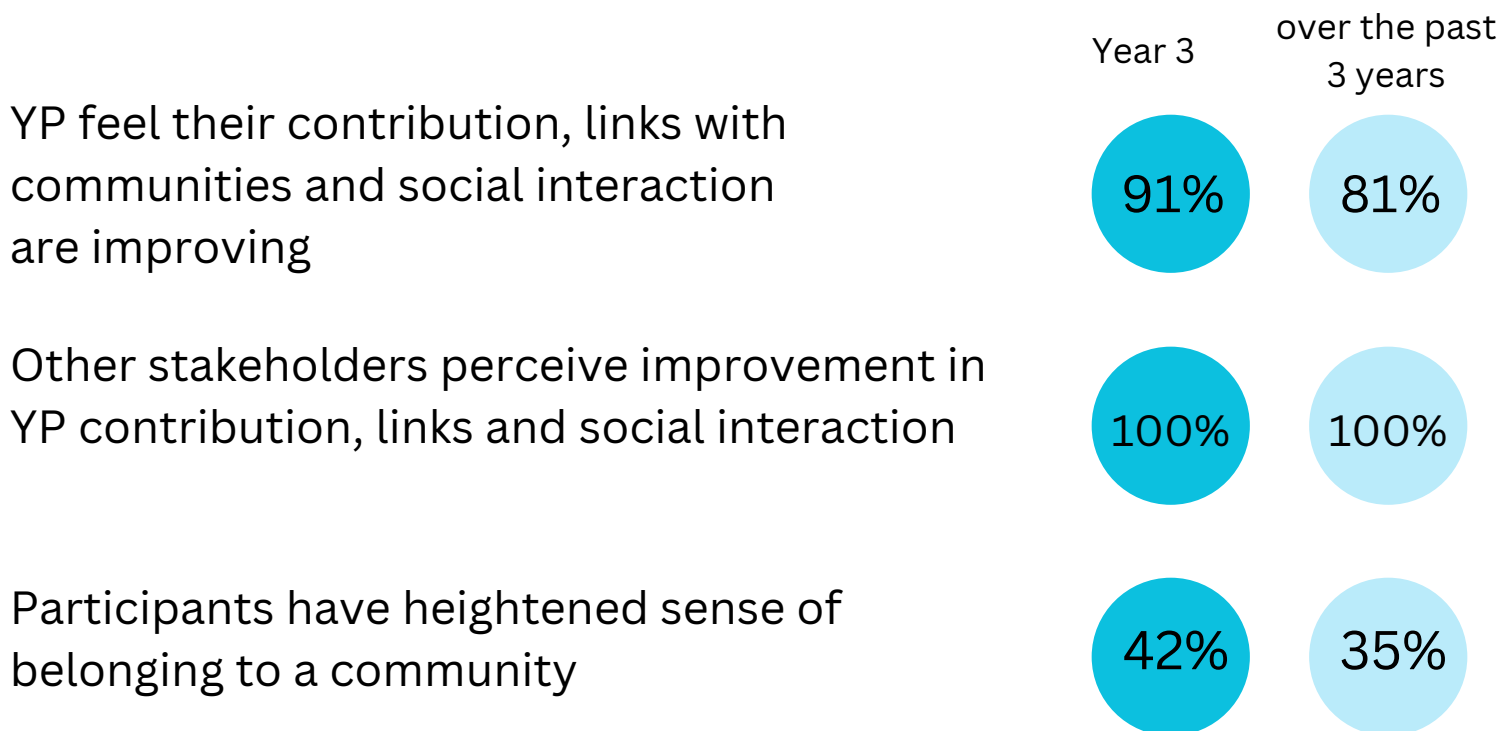
Employment



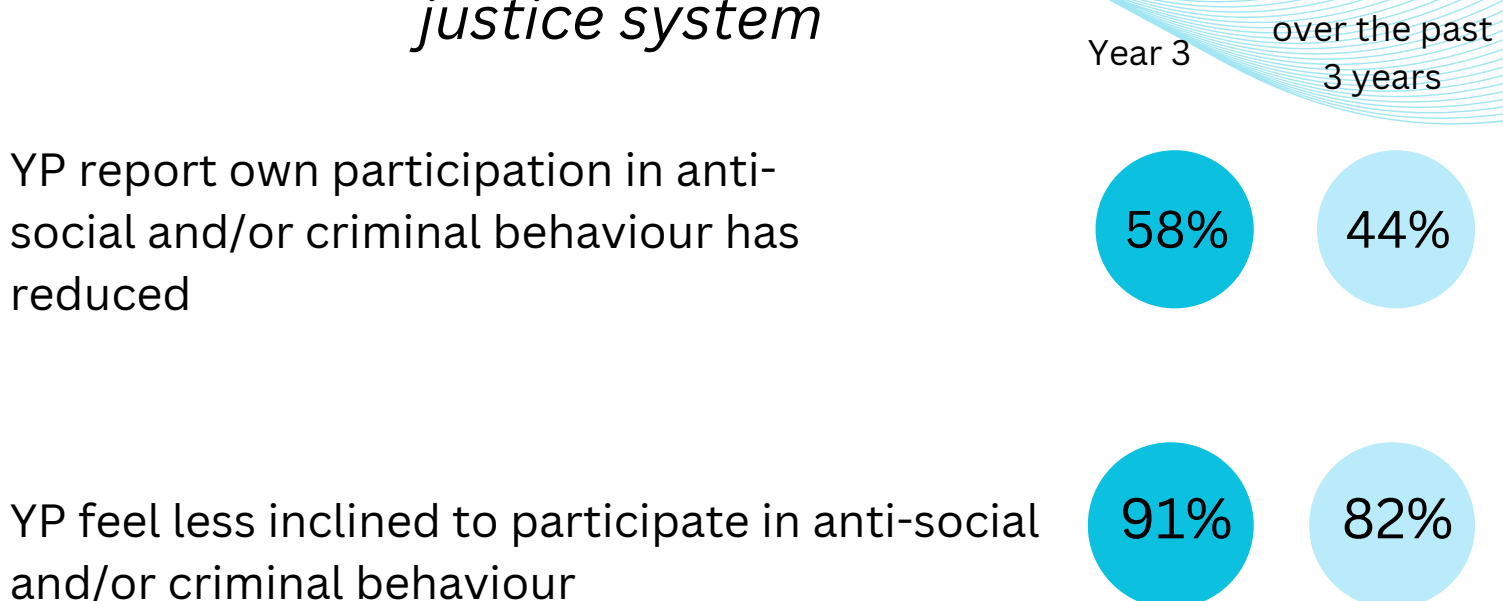
75%

Further Education  
(returning/remaining  
in school)

## *Outcome 5: Young people contribute positively to their communities.*



## *Outcome 6: YP are diverted from criminal behaviour or involvement with the criminal justice system*







*“She (the worker) helps my mum and makes her happier. I think she has a super power, she is able to change her mood and has done a lot for my family.”*

**Young person**

## **5- PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

We at Cyrenians recognise that without working closely with our secure centre partners, statutory services and our colleagues in the third sector, families will miss opportunities that they could benefit from. This year we have been proud to work alongside a diverse group of people and organisations learning about their systems and practice to ensure families get the best possible service.

Children and Young People's Centre for Justice – have been instrumental in including our team in important boards, forums and practitioners' groups, providing training and guidance, strengthening our links with the secure care centres and raising awareness of our work.

Who Cares Scotland – We worked closely with Who cares Scotland to ensure that young people we worked with had an available advocate to support them during YPPM, educational tribunals, meetings with lawyers and other high-level meetings that required specialist support.

Child Clan Law – who have provided us with training and guidance, which has resulted in young people getting the support they are promised and entitled to.

Secure care centres across Scotland – Good Shepherd, Kibble, Rossie, St Mary's and Howdenhall – staff and management have supported the implementation of Keeping Families Together referring families and cofacilitating workshops and welcoming the team, we are truly grateful for their support and partnership in this phase of the project.

# 6-SHARING THE LEARNING

In our effort to promote change across Scotland we are continually seeking out opportunities to share our learning and enter into dialogue with stakeholders to build a network of support amongst likeminded organisations who share our mission and values.

## 6.1 Blogs and Consultations

this year we have raised awareness of our work through contributing to the following :

- Care and Justice Bill
- CYCJ Newsletter
- National Care day Blog for the Promise
- Secure Care Pathway and Standards: implementation report
- Social Work Scotland Bulletin
- Children's Rights and Alternative Care: What next for Scotland? Learning from the UNCRC Day of General Discussion

## 6.2 Cashback learning sessions

We have been very grateful to receive this funding from Cashback for Communities; thus we have felt responsible for ensuring our learning supports other funded communities. This year we were given the honour of presenting our work to the Civil Recovery Unit to demonstrate the work being carried out with the monies that they collect, which was greatly received:

Thanks for all the work you and your team do. Our visit was the real highlight of the working year for many of us

**Staff member of the Civil Recovery Unit**

We also delivered a session on how we have implemented Trauma Informed Practice into our work, undertaking a trauma audit of the service, staff training and how we nurture our staff and the difference this makes for the people we work with.

Lastly, we were invited to deliver a session on The UNCRC which included a short training session on children's rights and how our organisation carried out our Children's rights and well-being impact assessment and how we as a service developed our children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment demonstrating the difference this has made to our practice.



# 7- CASE STUDY- BENJAMIN\*

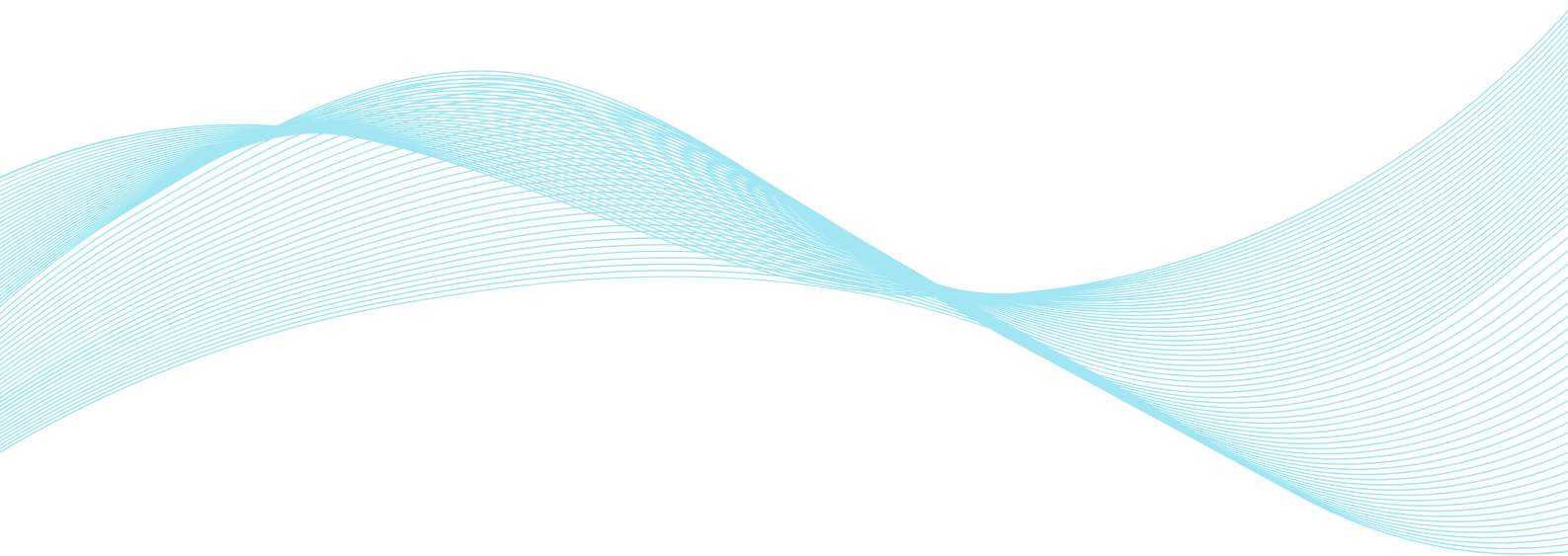
\*Name has been changed for confidentiality reasons

Benjamin was referred to us by social work as part of his wider support plan to return to the community after being in several different secure unit placements since 2018. Benjamin had been displaying aggressive and violent behaviour, at home and in the community. Prior to entering care Benjamin was suffering with low mood (he witnessed domestic violence as a child and has a diagnosis of autism) and chose to take excessive amounts of substances to make himself feel better. Sadly, this started to increase and was leading to hospitalisations and he needed to enter secure care to keep himself safe.



It was hoped that the referral would allow Benjamin and his Mum to focus on working on their relationship (as well as reconnecting with his two younger siblings) as he entered a new period in his life; although he would be moving into supported accommodation rather than returning to the family home it was felt that his family would be an important part of his support network and that our work would focus on re-establishing and strengthening their connections. It was clear that Benjamin has a close relationship with his Mum but that they do not always find it easy to communicate in a calm and supportive way; often Mum's anxieties about what might happen to her son and about some choices he has continued to make around alcohol/drugs whilst living independently would in turn cause anxiety for Benjamin and arguments would escalate from this.

Since making contact in October 2021 the family have engaged incredibly well with us and both elements of mediation and support have proved helpful in helping each party think about ways in which to improve their relationship and what their individual needs are. At first, Benjamin's Mum expressed that she wanted "nothing to do with her son" if he continued with substance misuse since leaving secure care as her focus was on protecting her two younger children. However, through pre-mediation and support meetings we have helped young person and Mum explore what they might do or say differently to have a conversation about these concerns in a calm way and to reflect on the impact of being supported to rebuild a nurturing relationship. Benjamin's younger sibling was also offered and engaged well with our art therapist.



At a joint mediation meeting with Benjamin and Mum we reflected to Mum that she seems increasingly able to support her son while regulating her own emotions and anxieties about some of his behaviours and choices. Mum offered, "I want you to know I'm trying hard not to judge but to be supportive and be there for you whatever you decide." We also continue to work with Benjamin in terms of feeling able to reach out to his family when he would like to spend time with them, when he needs support or simply letting them know he's 'doing okay'. They also let us know that they were now in touch more regularly and that Mum and young person's little sister had been to his flat a couple of times to help him out with shopping and cleaning.



In terms of support, we have worked with Mum who has frequently expressed finding it difficult to cope with anxiety, managing her emotions and finding time for herself to relax. We provided a 'self-care and wellbeing pack' which included a weighted blanket, self-help guides on emotional regulation and a book called, 'Overcoming Anxiety: self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques' (as she was already receiving counselling but wanted further strategies to work on herself). We also linked in with Home Start to collect and distribute gifts at Christmas as Mum expressed worries about affording things for her three children – she noted, "Thank you so much – I was very emotional. Thank you so much – you don't know how much I appreciate this."

Benjamin and his Mum had also spoken about wanting to spend quality time together but finding it difficult to arrange this and making this happen financially. During a joint mediation session we were able to help them agree on a date and logistics for this (we were able to support with transporting young person to his Mum's where they would travel together). We were also able to provide the family with £100 for a family day out where they (young person, Mum and his two younger siblings) went to the amusements, bowling and shared lunch together. They noted, "Thank you so much – we really appreciate all the help and support for our family. We loved every minute of it."



Initially Benjamin had a variety of support input from other agencies but he appeared to find it difficult to engage with them. However, his engagement with our Family Outreach Worker (support) has been positive and regular from the start.


We have supported by attending LAAC reviews and planning meetings with his social worker/other agencies involved and ensuring (with his permission) that his views on how things are progressing are shared (advocacy). He's also been supported to attend meetings with his solicitors and attending various court dates. More recently, he hasn't picked up any further charges and for ongoing cases he has been given a supervision order with a criminal justice social worker (with no further punitive measures) due to his 'good behaviour' and the fact that he is attending college, holding down a job and continues to engage with us to make positive and meaningful life choices (diversion from prosecution).

**“Thank you so much – we really appreciate all the help and support for our family. We loved every minute of it.”**

We have also supported his living independently by discussing budgeting/managing bills and rent and practical elements like how to top up his gas meter, food shopping, delivering food parcels from our Fare Share depot and offering to assist with building up independent travel skills for college. We also plan to assist him with his request to decorate and further furnish his flat to make it a comfortable space where he feels happy being in it.



In order to support his mental health and wellbeing we have also supported attendance to appointments with his local mental health team, empowered him to approach his GP on managing any health issues including his epilepsy and medication for this and there are ongoing conversations with him about potentially engaging with our counselling service. We also applied for a leisure card which allows him to access local sports centre facilities and activities/fitness classes free of charge (as care affected) – he even recently made the decision to go for a swim instead of going to the pub and reported enjoying it very much!



For his birthday we also sourced a personalised birthday cake from Free Cakes for Kids and put together a small package with materials for college (including a whiteboard to assist with time-keeping/planning), some sketchbooks and art materials (as expressed wanting to do some art again) and a football.

## 8– FINANCIAL INFORMATION 22/23

### 8.1–CORE ACTIVITY COSTS

Item	Spend
staff related	£168,727
Client related	£4,095
Total project activity	£172,823

### 8.2– MARKETING, MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION COSTS

Item	Spend
Marketing and management	£14,496
External evaluation	£15,515
Other project costs total	£30,011
Total expenditure	£202,834

## 8.3–SPEND BY LOCAL AUTHORITY

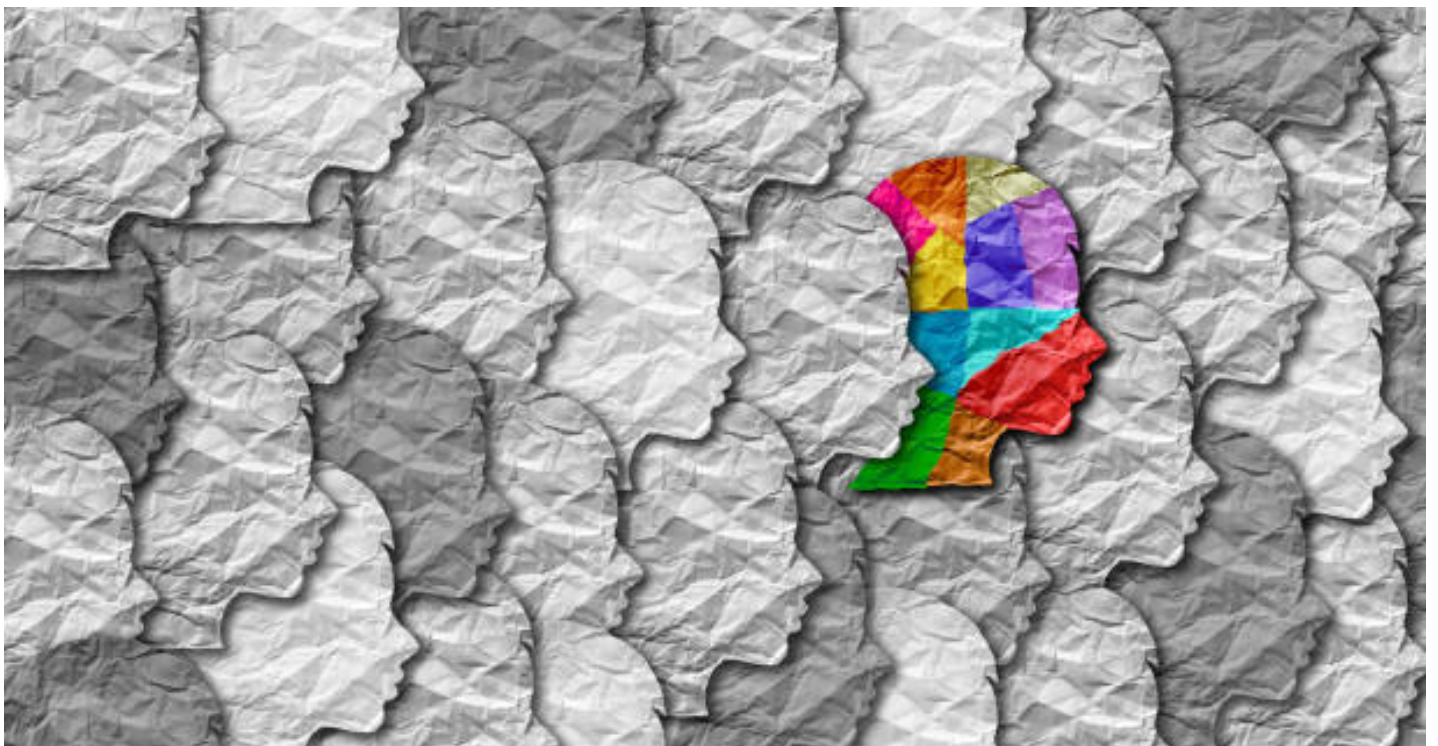
Local authority	Spend	Number of Young people
Angus	£31,556	7
Argyle and Bute	£4,507	1
Dumfries and Galloway	£4,507	1
East Lothian	£13,523	3
Edinburgh	£36,060	8
Falkirk	£9,014	2
Glasgow	£4,507	1
Highland	£9,014	2
Renfrewshire	£76,625	17
South Ayrshire	£4,507	1
West Lothian	£9,014	2

## 9- KEY FINDINGS AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

### **MORE SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND NEURODIVERSITY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAUMA**

Children who are neurodiverse or who have experienced early childhood trauma often have their behaviours interpreted as being disruptive. Interventions should be in place to look at what's going on for that child. Recognising the needs of children and making adjustments that are appropriate to their needs can be a simple process – for example, a school getting an early diagnosis.

In nearly all referrals that we have received for mediation and support, the young person had a diagnosis of neurodivergence or was in the process of being assessed for one, or the young person themselves, or family members, had suspicions that they (the young person) had additional support needs. As neurodiversity causes differences in an individual's behaviours and experiences, this can result in young people finding it difficult to understand what others around them are asking of them and can also have implications on how young people communicate their needs to others. As a team we will continue to expand our knowledge of neurodiversity and share our learning to improve support for young people.





In response to the emerging needs of young people and the training received, we adapted the way in which we describe our project and our approach to working with young people. For example;



The length  
of our  
workshops

How we  
communicate  
with young  
people based on  
their individual  
needs

How we  
present  
information

Connecting parents/carers  
to additional support and  
information so they can  
adapt their approaches  
and methods of  
communication with their  
children based on their  
individual differences.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE BEING ABLE TO ACCESS HOBBIES AND INTERESTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

The past three years have demonstrated that along with education, the ability to get involved in hobbies and interests within their local communities is vitally important in diverting young people away from getting involved in further criminal activity. Young people have a full schedule of schooling and extracurricular activities while within secure care. This is often missing when they return home and can become problematic, leading to risky behaviours. We have highlighted this as an area for improvement within the Secure Care Pathways and Standards Group.

## **PROMOTION OF CORE TRAINING FOR PEOPLE SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES AND FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS AND CARERS THEMSELVES.**

Everyone working with children, young people and families should be trained in Trauma Informed Practice, Children's rights, Neurodiversity and emotional regulation. Our training has been key to the success of our work over the past 3 years. Going forward we will continue to promote the value of training with our partners, help families access more support and information in these areas and continue to develop our knowledge and skills to provide the highest quality service.

## RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

Parents tell us they don't get support to attend formal meetings regarding their child's care and that they are often not made aware of their rights and entitlement when it comes to after care. We will continue to advocate for them to ensure that they receive the correct information at the appropriate time and so their voice is heard as well as their child's.

Case Study of advocating for young person and developing multi-agency plans

We attend support and review meetings to ensure adequate support is in place, working in a multi-agency way, contributing to care plans, to help those at risk of committing crime in the community. A Family Outreach Worker attended a 'back to school meeting' with Hailey, to support her integration to school and help school co-ordinate a timetable which would best meet her needs. For example access to a 'wellbeing hub' within school, if Hailey was feeling overwhelmed and discussions around coping strategies for emotional regulation and avoiding conflict with peers.

We recognise that parents and carers should have access to the training as much as the practitioners. Parents and carers we've supported and worked with have told us that in all the years they've been involved in the 'system' nobody has ever said to them that the child might be on the spectrum, that their brain might work differently and that it's not bad behaviour, it's behaviour that's distressed because things are not suiting their needs. They thought the child was trying to annoy them purposefully (for example, leaving cupboard doors open, not finishing tasks) which caused huge arguments in the home. After the training and awareness raising, the parent recognised that that was just the way the child operates and wasn't anything to cause conflict in the home. This led to a change in parenting styles and making small adaptations (for example, not raising a voice, not shouting because they don't shut the cupboard, making sure the child doesn't get distressed).

After parents and carers receive the support and information about neurodiversity, trauma, and children's rights (core training), they reported that they feel it would be beneficial for the residential care staff and teaching staff to receive the same level of information as they did so that they (care and teaching) can support the children and young people.

## 10-RECOMMENDATIONS



Raise awareness of the work amongst organisations, families and Local Authorities geographically nearer to Edinburgh and the Lothians, as we can provide more intensive support in these areas, additionally encourage the centres to make referrals for young people from these areas.

Encourage our partners to make referrals at an earlier stage i.e. when secure is being considered or soon after the young person arrives in the centres. This gives us more time to build trusted relationships with families.



Family Outreach Worker's will have a dual role in that they will now deliver our conflict resolution workshops, this will enable them to build relationships with not only the operational staff but more importantly the young people themselves. This has been a challenge in this phase of the project, however it is anticipated that this will increase referrals directly from young people themselves and their key workers.

To continue to nurture our staff team providing additional spaces for reflective practice and additional training ensuring staff feel supported in their roles



Improve the way in which we gather information directly from families at key points ensuring we listen and respond to the needs of families and capture this within our evaluation processes and service development



## **10.1- SHARING LESSONS WITH OTHER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES**

- Assessments to be carried out at the earliest possible stage on seeing so-called disruptive behaviour, and then a proper support package put in place. The package should include parental and practitioner training and awareness raising for everyone who's involved in the child's life (including teachers, siblings, parents, police).
- Provide training and awareness raising for everyone who comes into contact with children and young people, including schools, police, health visitors, social workers, medical staff, (referral agencies).
- Ensure that when a child leaves care, an after care plan is in place. This should include recreational and family activities that are supported financially. It should also provide support around 'diversion' to ensure the child doesn't return to the care and justice system and that they can reach their potential – whole-family support begins while the child is in care.

## 11-CONCLUSIONS

This report is intended to give an overview of the Keeping Families Together project. There are many areas of the project that are not reflected into the report, for brevity. We love to talk about our work, celebrate the successes and have honest discussions about our learnings. If you would like to discuss the project further, do not hesitate to contact us.

*"In five years I would like to be working, getting my head down in a nice wee job, my own wee flat and Just chilling.....I just want a normal life"*

**Young person**

