



Strategic Priorities 2018 – 2023



Safer children,
stronger families,
resilient communities.

Introduction

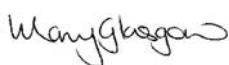
Welcome to Children 1st's strategic plan for 2018 to 2023. Since 1884 our dedicated staff and volunteers have been working to improve the lives of children across Scotland. Through our local and national services we have provided emotional and practical support to children and families, preventing neglect, abuse and harm and helping families and communities to keep children safe. In line with our original and core purpose, we have supported survivors of abuse and trauma to recover and have worked tirelessly to influence public policy so that the rights of children in Scotland are protected. But thousands more children across Scotland still face childhood adversity alone – with potentially devastating consequences. So from our strong foundation we plan to reach, support and protect even more children from the trauma caused by adverse childhood experiences.

This plan describes our strategic priorities over the next five years. We believe it is ambitious, courageous and innovative. We have set out our goals; to reach even more children to prevent harm in the first place, find new ways of helping more children, parents and carers to recover from trauma and work with a wide range of partners to help us do this.

We intend to work alongside families, communities and partners to design, develop and deliver accessible, early help and recovery services and resources across Scotland and will continue to work to amplify the voices of the children we support to influence and change public policy. We will work with compassion to increase our impact on the lives of as many children and families who need us, so they can develop the warm, supportive relationships that they need to help them lead safe, happy and fulfilling lives.

As well as building the resilience of families we want to build the resilience of our organisation so we are fit to meet the challenges ahead. We will be streamlined, flexible, responsive and financially secure, responsibly increasing our own income to help us reach the children and families who need support.

During the process of developing our new strategy we asked the children and families we support what life is like for them, how it might be better and what support they need to get through difficult times. We also asked our staff and volunteers, our partners, trusted experts and many others to inform how, together, we can improve the lives of children and families. This plan is the result. We are grateful for the views of everyone who has helped shape this strategic plan and we look forward to delivering on it.



Mary Glasgow
Interim CEO



Ken Cunningham
Chairman



Image: Annie Spratt

The vision

By 2023, our vision is that children in Scotland will be safer, will grow up in strong, resilient families and will have access to early help and support when they need it. They will have their rights protected in all areas of their lives. Prevention of harm to children, stronger, more resilient families and communities, greater respect for children's rights and strong partnerships and community engagement will be our measures of success.

The challenge

We believe that childhood adversity, and the resulting trauma that it causes, is the single biggest health and social care issue affecting children and families in Scotland today. Research studies identify Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs as including: being the victim of abuse (physical, emotional or sexual), living with domestic abuse and violence, neglect, living with a parent who has a problem with drugs or alcohol use, having a parent in prison, parental separation, experiencing poverty or the bereavement of a parent or carer.¹

From a number of research reports and our own experience of over 130 years working alongside children and families we know that what happens in childhood affects us in later life and the way to prevent the ongoing cycle of trauma is through providing strong, supportive relationships to help children and families to recover.

In 2017 we reached 11,000 children and their families, but we know that many more suffer in silence, unnoticed and unsupported for far too long. We simply cannot afford to ignore the problem or fail to invest in early help and support for families any longer. The scale of the challenge facing us in 2018 is unprecedented. Violence, neglect, sexual abuse, emotional trauma and poverty blight the lives of too many of our children.

The most recent prevalence research in the UK shows that: 1 in 20 children report experience of sexual abuse (from an adult or peer) at some time during childhood and 12% of children under 11 and 23.7% of young people aged 17-24 reported being exposed to domestic violence at some point during childhood.²

Researchers have begun to explore how common ACEs are in Scotland. A recent review of Growing Up in Scotland data – a long term study which tracks the lives of children and their families suggests that of the 3,500 children they looked at, two-thirds had experienced at least one ACE with 10% experiencing 3 or more.³

The stories of the many children and families we work alongside tell us that, in the absence of early help and support, the childhood adversity outlined in these statistics can devastate lives, lead to poor health outcomes in adulthood and cost us all in the long term.

We know that there is a shocking lack of help for families to prevent harm and a heart-breaking gap in support to help children recover from trauma and distress. Although the evidence tells us that over half of all mental ill health starts before the age of 14 years and 75% has developed by the age of 18 thousands of children in distress or experiencing emotional health problems in Scotland are on waiting lists for mental health support or are declined support because they don't meet set criteria.⁴

A Scotland wide mapping study of post-sexual abuse recovery services conducted in 2008 found there was no consistent or coordinated approach to provision in Scotland and the services which existed were unable to meet demand.⁵ Meanwhile, a 2016 report looking into recovery services for children who have experienced sexual abuse in the West of Scotland found that services with staff dedicated to the work of supporting children at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual exploitation, do not exist in most areas. Just 6 out of 17 local authority areas have provision of sexual abuse services for the primary school age group and only 2 out of 17 local authority areas can provide services for children aged 5 and under.⁶

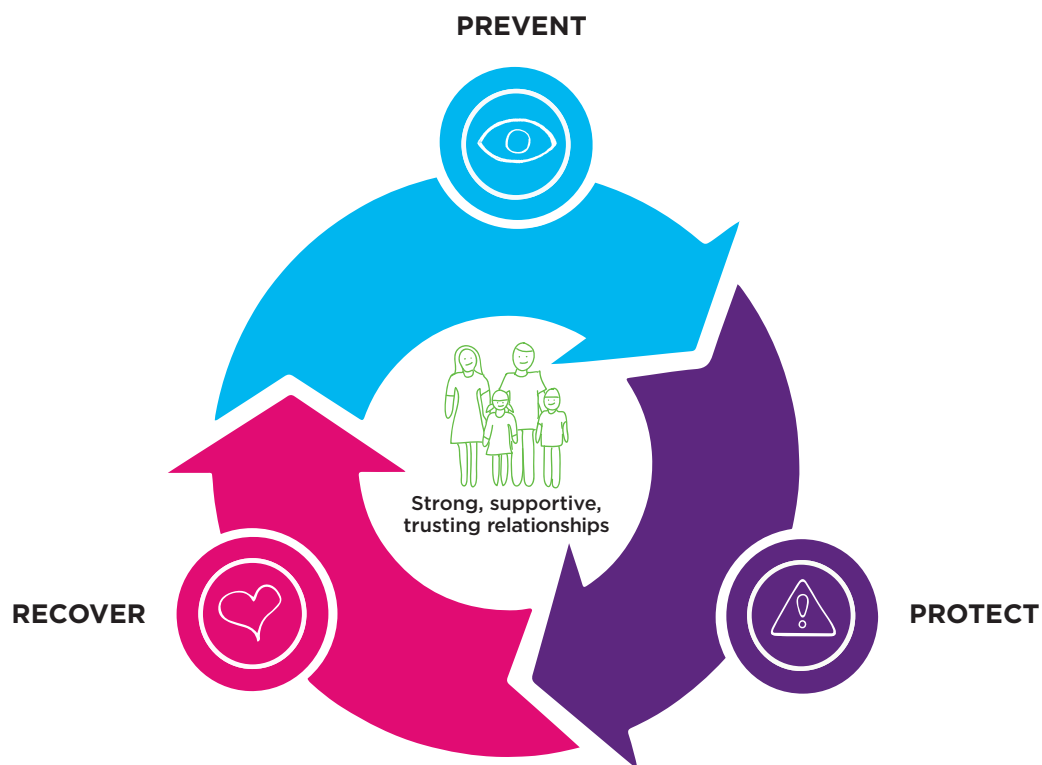
We predict that the context and environment in which we operate will continue to be uncertain and challenging, with increasing need, alongside reducing capacity and resources in the public sector to meet it.

It is this story of need, challenge and change that we are determined to address in the next five years. This strategic plan is about reach, influence, inclusion and resilience. By working with families to prevent and protect children from adversities and to support the whole family to recover we will halt the devastating impact of intergenerational cycles of trauma and create new cycles of resilience. By using our expertise, our relationships with families, partners and supporters and by maximising and modernising our resources, we are determined to reach all the children and families in Scotland who need us, wherever they may be.

How we treat our children is a measure of our society. For Scotland to achieve our ambition to be the best place in the world to grow up, we must do all we can to eradicate the biggest barriers to that achievement. We must ensure that all children in Scotland live in safe, happy, loving families, in strong communities and have an equal chance to fulfil their potential.

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1. For example, Fellitti, V.J. et al. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 14(4), pp. 245-58.
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 3. Marryat, L. and Frank, J., (2017). The Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the General Population of Scottish Children in the first 8 years of life. In: Society for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies Conference (2017). University of Stirling. Available at: <http://www.scphrp.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/The-Prevalence-of-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences-in-the-General-Population-of-Scottish-Children-in-the-first-8-years-of-life-.pdf> [Accessed 15/01/2018].
 4. Murphy, M. and Fonagy, P., (2012). Mental health problems in children and young people. In: Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2012. London: Department of Health.
 5. NSPCC, (2017). The Right to Recover: Therapeutic Services for Children & Young People Following Sexual Abuse. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/right-to-recover-sexual-abuse-west-scotland.pdf> [Accessed 15/01/2018].
 6. NSPCC, (2017). The Right to Recover: Therapeutic Services for Children & Young People Following Sexual Abuse. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/right-to-recover-sexual-abuse-west-scotland.pdf> [Accessed 15/01/2018].

The cycle of resilience



Our work with children and families tell us that prevention and recovery are not two ends of a continuum. Rather they are a cycle. By offering trauma informed support to help parents understand and recover from their own difficulties we can prevent and protect the next generation of children from experiences that are harmful.

Goals for 2018 - 2023

Prevention | Protection | Recovery | Resilience

Over the next five years we will increase the number of children and families we reach annually. We will:

1. **Prevent** abuse, neglect and trauma by offering support, information and advice to families and communities to strengthen relationships and build resilience.
2. Ensure children's rights are **protected** in legislation, policy and practice through direct participation and engagement.
3. Develop accessible trauma **recovery** and resilience hubs.
4. Modernise and maximise our resources and partnerships in order to be more agile, responsive and **resilient**.

How we will reach our goals

Prevention

- We will develop and launch a free, nationwide, digital, family support and early help service available to parents and carers across Scotland.
- We will expand our work in schools to grow the resilience of children so they are informed of their rights and able to speak up when they have worries or concerns.
- We will increase the number of family support workers in schools to link home, family and child more effectively to school and learning to help reduce the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged children.
- We will continue our work in communities to raise awareness of the impact of adverse childhood experiences and work with them to keep children safe.
- We will develop and expand our direct work with families in their homes and local community settings. Through building strong relationships our staff will work with families to address their practical and emotional needs to ensure children are safe and secure and families are connected and resilient.





Protection

- We will work with our partners to ensure that children have the same rights to protection from assault as adults, enshrined in law and effective in practice.
- We will work to protect children's rights. Our services will be rights based, we will develop our engagement and participation work so that the voice of children and families are heard in all decisions that affect them.
- We will grow our advocacy and restorative family work in the child protection system.
- We will work with communities and partners across Scotland to raise awareness of the impact of neglect and abuse to ensure the protection of children is the highest priority for everyone.

Recovery

- We will develop directly accessible trauma recovery services for children based in community resilience hubs across Scotland.
- We will work with partners to ensure the research evidence on adverse childhood experiences is shared, understood and that services are trauma informed.
- We will work to transform the experience of child victims and witnesses through the development of a "child's house" so that justice and care is child centred, rights based and recovery focused.

Resilience

- We will increase our income to ensure we can design, develop and sustain innovative, accessible services alongside families, communities and partners that have a real impact.
- We will develop our knowledge, skills and approaches based on the latest research evidence on the most effective ways to achieve and sustain long term change.
- We will invest in the learning and development of our staff.
- We will maximise our partnerships with others to ensure we make an impact across the whole of Scotland reaching as many children as possible.
- We will invest in our infrastructure to help us with our goal to reach more children and families.

The way we do things at Children 1st

Relationships are at the heart of everything we do

We believe in the innate capacity, strength and resilience of the human spirit to respond to connection, and to overcome challenges and thrive through supportive and trusting relationships.

We are courageous

Standing with children to protect their rights
Challenging others to do the same
Working inclusively to develop solutions with communities
Being real and doing the right thing

We are compassionate

Listening so that we can understand
Doing with, not to or for
Respecting and treating people with dignity
Believing in the capacity of people and communities to address their own challenges

We are making things happen

Being clear, straightforward and practical
Working in partnership with others
Being agile and responsive

We are leading

Spreading our learning, skills and expertise
Sharing, innovating and partnering
Informed by the latest research
Improving the quality of everything we do





Making it happen

We will capture the lived experience of the children and families we support and help share their stories to campaign for improvements in care and justice for children affected by abuse and neglect.

We will use our knowledge and expertise to increase our role in influencing the policy environment across Scotland to make sure children's rights are protected and their best interests inform all policy that affects them.

We will recruit, train and develop more staff and volunteers to help us reach more children and families and deliver the highest quality care and support we can to be the best at what we do.

We will innovate in how we design our services and in the partnerships we form, drawing on experts and supports from all areas of civic society and business.

We will value the rights of the children and families we support and our staff will have kindness, respect, and belief in relationships at their hearts and will take this into every aspect of their work with children, families and communities.

We will invest in our fundraising to make sure our resources match our ambitions for children and families. We will work to strengthen existing support, engage new supporters and develop new ways of raising our income.

This strategic plan is about being ambitious for children, aspiring to reach every child who needs us, in every corner of Scotland, to protect them from harm, and to support them to recover from trauma.

We cannot do this alone. Join us, support us and work with us - together we will break the cycle of intergenerational trauma so that children are safer, families stronger and communities more resilient.

Protection,
Prevention,
Recovery,
Resilience



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Back cover image: Janine Warwick

Children and families pictured are volunteers and models.

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