



Repeat Baseline Measures: South Ayrshire Council 2023

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Rationale for Baseline Measures

Thinking about key stakeholders in child welfare and protection was an important driver to developing and collating these measures as a recommend baseline for local authorities looking to implement the Signs of Safety approach. Local authorities generally collect data across Scotland, but this data has varied across each area until the most recent attempts at developing a Child Protection national data set (2019). However, as we know, there is more to child wellbeing and protection than those children that enter our child protection processes. This baseline is an attempt to look at what current research tells us about 'what works' in practice to improve outcomes and looks at ways to collate some of this data to help local authorities develop a greater understanding about the impact their organisation is having in terms of improving outcomes for children and their families.

The baseline measures have been split into 4 key areas providing a more holistic view of the organisation:

- Parents/ Caregivers and Children Surveys
- Leadership and Staff Culture Surveys
- Collaborative Case File Audits – Based on what works in effective safety planning.
- Core Data Set

Baseline/Repeat Audit

The baseline audit consists of six areas of audit activity:

1. Parent Survey (Professor E. Munro)
2. Child Survey (Dr Mary Salveron)
3. Staff Culture Survey (Mike Caslor & Profesor A Turnell)
4. Leadership Culture - Self Evaluation Survey (Mike Caslor & Professor A Turnell)
5. Effective Safety Planning Core Components Case Audits (Leigh Taylor MA, MSW)
6. Core Data – **To be completed and added at a later date.**

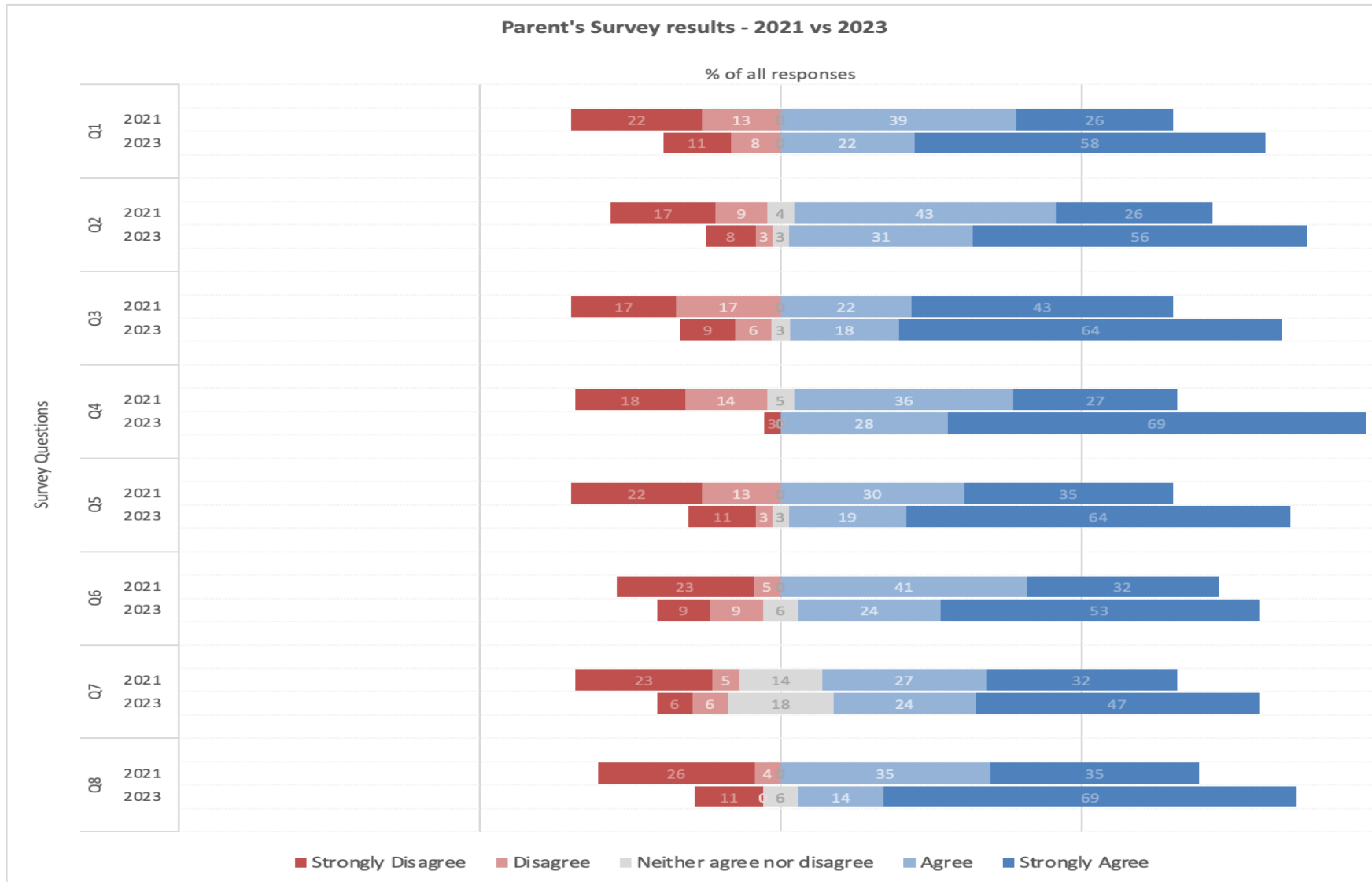
What are the Parent/Child Surveys attempting to measure?

The true arbiters of success in improving outcomes are arguably the children and their families and yet their voice is not consistently measured as part of core data. Many local authorities have developed ways of seeking families and children's feedback with a view to this influencing service development and delivery. In order to understand the rationale behind the children and family surveys it is first important to remind ourselves about the overall aims of social work intervention with a family. Social work as a profession is premised on a notion of promoting positive change in clients' situations as set out in the International Federation of Social Workers' (2014) definition. Beckett and Horner (2006) tell us that change comes about through relationships. Even in situations where programmed interventions are employed, their impact is secondary to the social worker–client relationship (Nicholson and Artze:2003). The interviews with children and their parents/caregivers in this context are aimed at gaining an understanding of the quality of relationship-based practice and how effective staff are at this. There is compelling philosophical, policy and practice reasons to put relationships at the heart of the work because effective relationships are central to successful outcomes (Ingrim & Smith:2018). Current policy directions in Scotland are rooted in the need for effective personal and professional relationships and are reflected in the following strategic approaches and reviews: 21st Century Social Work Review, GIRFEC and in the wider UK context, the Munro Review of Child Protection for England and Wales.

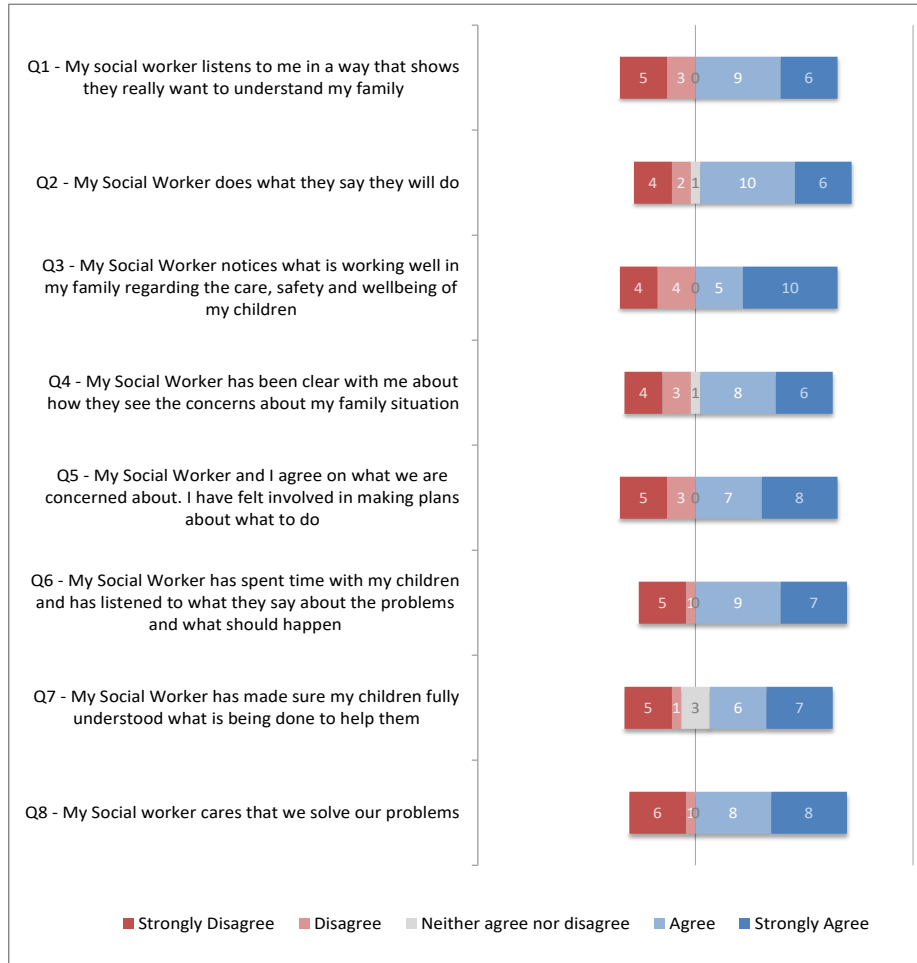
The Scottish national model Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is based upon the concepts of putting children and their families at the centre. Therefore, it is important to get a sense of how effective your staff teams are at developing and managing relationships with the children and families we work with. Professor E. Munro has developed questions as part of the Signs of Safety England's Innovation Project to assist in measuring relationship-based practice in your workforce. The same principles were applied to the questions for children and were developed by Dr Mary Salveron (Child Protection Research Centre Western Australia).

“Current practice cultures can make it difficult to practice in properly relational ways and require a radical shift in power, agency and status to be addressed” (Ingrim & Smith:2018)

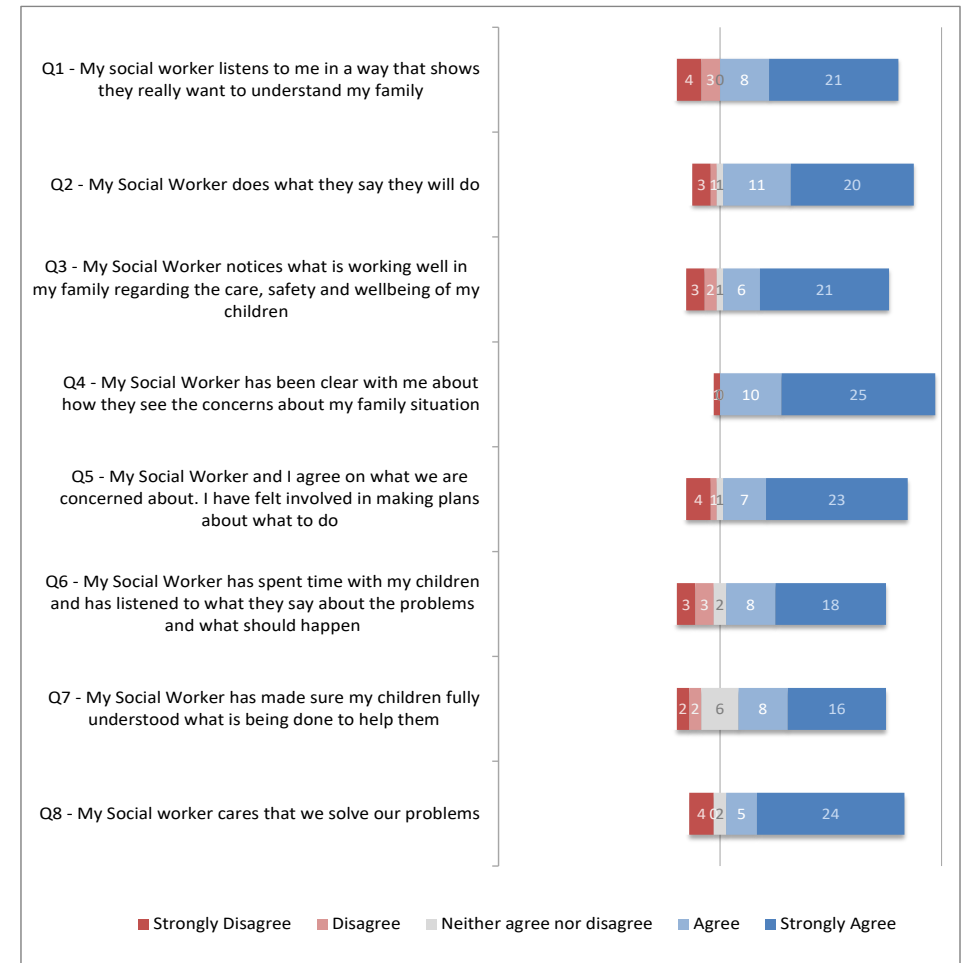
Parent/Carer Surveys 2021 v2 2023



2021



2023



Analysis: A total of 36 parents/carers were interviewed by staff. This is an increase in respondents from 2021 by over 56% which is a positive step towards hearing from more parents and carers. The challenges in collating parents/carers views must be acknowledged, issues such as out

of date contact details, not returning calls and refusal to partake in interviews are the most common barriers interviewers experienced. Overall, we still need to be mindful these numbers only represent a small percentage of cases open within South Ayrshire Council's children's services so it is recommended that they continue to find ways to tackle identified barriers so we can hear more voices of Parents/Carers.

The good news, the above graphs demonstrate a shift in feedback from parents and carers indicating the majority interviewed are experiencing positive working relationships with their social workers. For example, 64% of respondents state their social worker has been clear with them about how they see the concerns within the family, this is in contrast to 27% of respondents from 2021. In relation to families feeling that social workers care that their family resolves their problems this has improved from 35% in 2021 to 69% of respondents in 2023. With regards to social workers noticing what is working well within families, again this has increased from 43% in 2021 to 64% of all respondents strongly agreeing in 2023, evidencing the incorporation of strength-based practice. There is a solid correlation between strength-based approaches and improved outcomes for children and their families. Overall, this is great feedback and testament to the hard work of staff.

From the 8 questions asked there are significant improvements in all areas with parents/carers either agreeing or strongly agreeing that their social worker is practicing in a relationship-based manner with them and their family. This feedback arguably identifies improvements have been made and align with leaderships vision of embedding and growing relationship-based practice across South Ayrshire's Children's services. Relationship based practice is critical to evoking change and improving outcomes for families, hence this is important evidence that helps explain the shifts in quantitative data (reduction in number of child protection registrations and children's hearing referrals for example) towards reducing practices that are viewed and experienced by families as intrusive.

In addition to the surveys, two open ended questions were asked, and replies recorded. All replies can be found in **Appendix A**. Themes emerging from these questions are as follows:

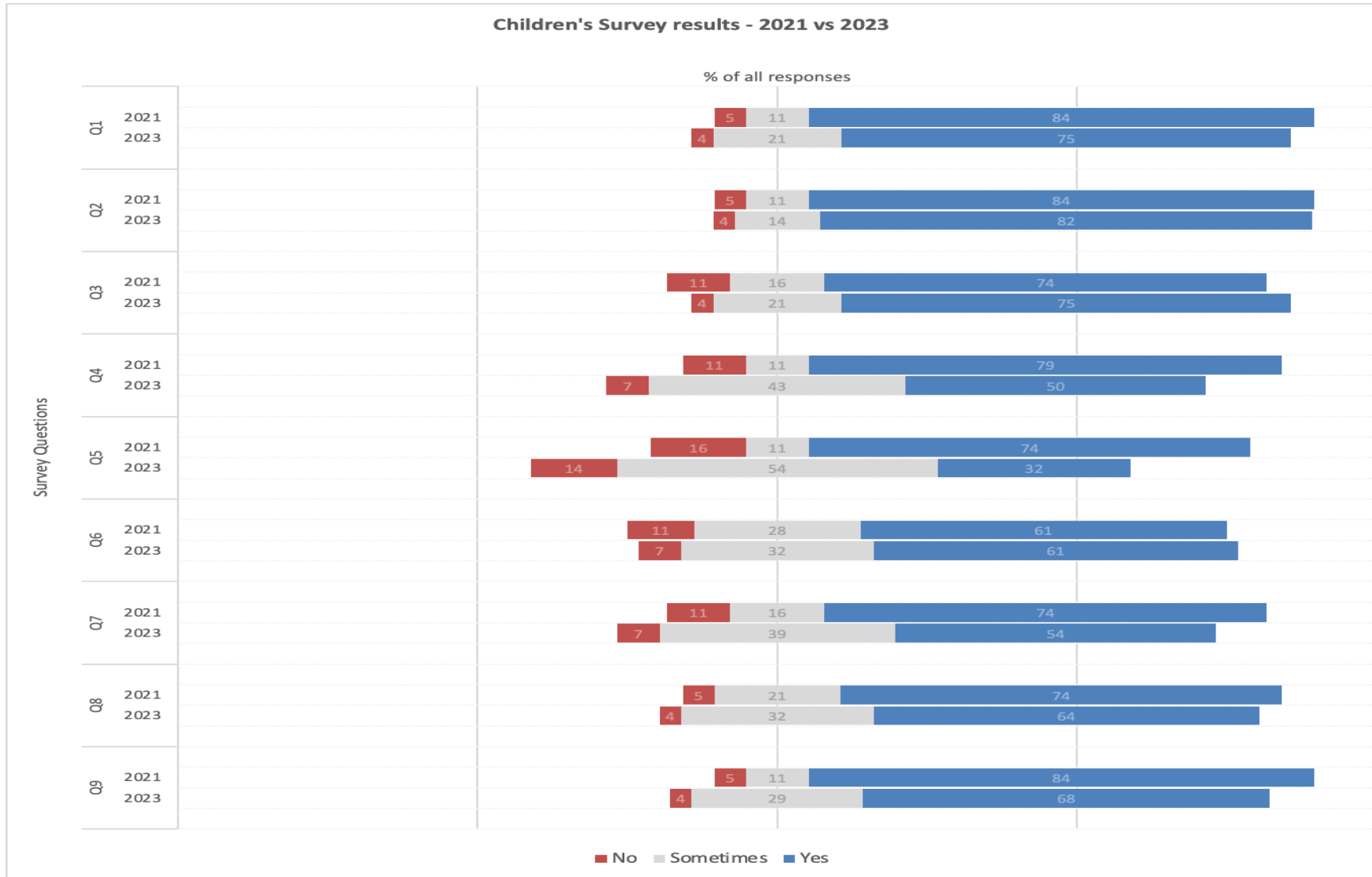
If you could change one thing about your worker, what would it be?

- Would Change Nothing, fantastic experience, Workers do everything they can. Would not change workers but processes are difficult and need changed.
- Would want better Communication, workers to really listen so parents/ carers feel heard and respond in a timelier way.

Finally, is there anything else you would like to tell us about how your worker worked with your family?

- Felt listened too, truly supported, spending time with children, getting to know them, going above and beyond, would change nothing!
- Better communication, desire for greater compassion/empathy from their worker, staff turnover and staff cover for holidays/sick

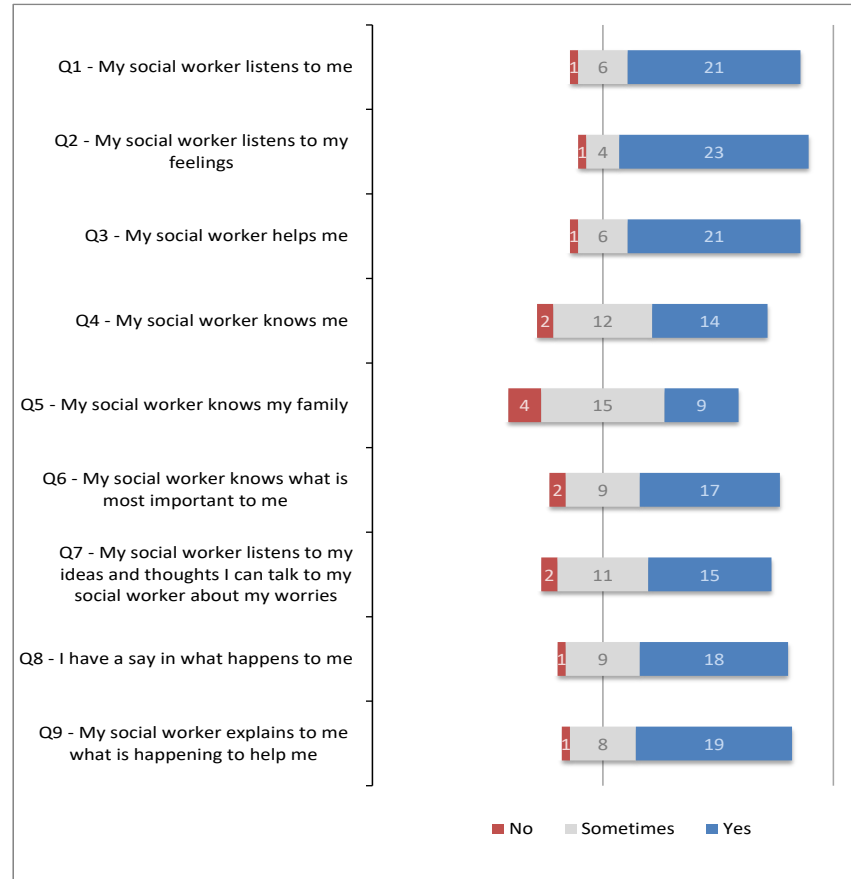
Children's Surveys 2021 vs 2023



2021



2023



Analysis: A total number of 28 children/young people (aged 8 years plus) were interviewed, again this represents a small proportion of the total number of cases open to Children's services but as with parents/ carers surveys there are barriers to undertaking interviews. 64 children and young people were contacted but 22 did not want to be interviewed, a further 8 could not be reached and social work colleagues identified

that 6 of this cohort should not be contacted at this time. However, it is important to note that overall, more children were interviewed in this cohort (an increase of 47%) when compared to 2021.

The interviews in 2021 indicated that the majority of children and young people had a positive working relationship with their worker. This remains the same with very few answering no, for example only 4% of children and young people interviewed said they felt like their worker does not explain what is happening to help them and only 4% stating they feel their social worker does not help them. Whereas 75% of respondents answered, yes, my social worker helps me. The most notable change is an increase in children and young people answering sometimes as opposed to yes, for example 54% of respondents said that their social worker only sometimes knows their family and 21% of respondents stated their social worker only listens to them sometimes. This could be explained by the 47% increase in overall respondents, but we need to consider this data alongside the open comments in Appendix B. A theme emerges of young people suggesting they do not always feel like active participants in their own safety planning, suggesting for some children decisions are made that they do not always understand. Increasing the use of words and pictures explanations with children and young people would help to address this area that requires ongoing attention and improvement. Overall, this highlights a need to tackle the identified barriers to hearing and collating children and young people's views so they can continue to shape and influence practice across South Ayrshire's Children's Services.

Please see **Appendix B** for a breakdown by question of the children and young people's response including some feedback.

Staff & Leadership Surveys

Rationale behind the Leadership & Staff Culture Surveys

Research tells us that applying models with theories of change are more likely to improve outcomes for children and their families (Gardner:2008). A key component of Signs of Safety's theory of change is the concept of whole system implementation. In order for this to happen it is important for any organisation to reflect upon their culture and climate and how this, impacts upon practice and therefore outcomes. Outcomes for children in the child welfare system may be improved by improving the organisations culture and climate of child welfare agencies. As much as 70% of the variation in youth outcomes across Child Welfare organisations can be explained by the organisation's culture and climate as assessed by their front-line practitioners (Williams & Glisson:2013). The staff and leadership surveys were developed in order to help the organisational leadership reflect on the culture and climate within the organisation, to consider how close leaders are to practice and how they can promote and manage a risk sensible culture that allow staff to feel supported and able to learn (Munro & Turnell:2017). Signs of Safety is a whole system reform. It is essential when implementing Signs of Safety that it is not just treated as a need to

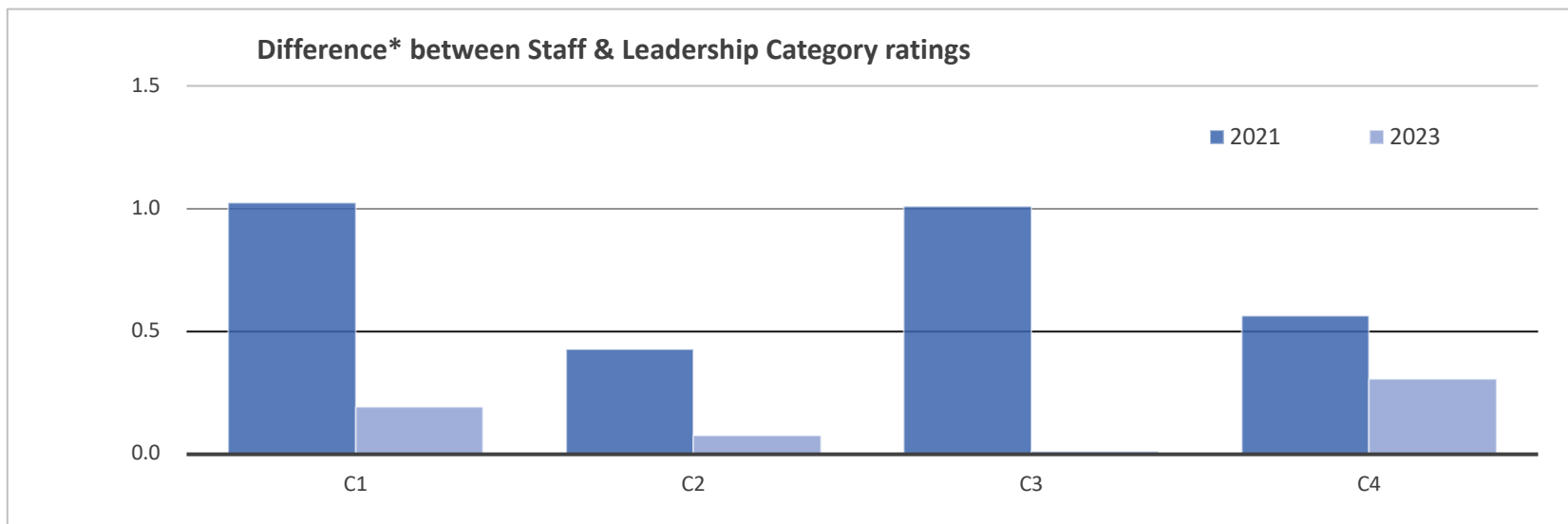
train frontline workers and their immediate supervisors. Every aspect of Children’s Services has some influence on the nature of the services experienced by the families with whom they work. If you want to help frontline staff engage differently with families, then you need to examine how other parts (of the organisation) may help or hinder this (Munro:2020).

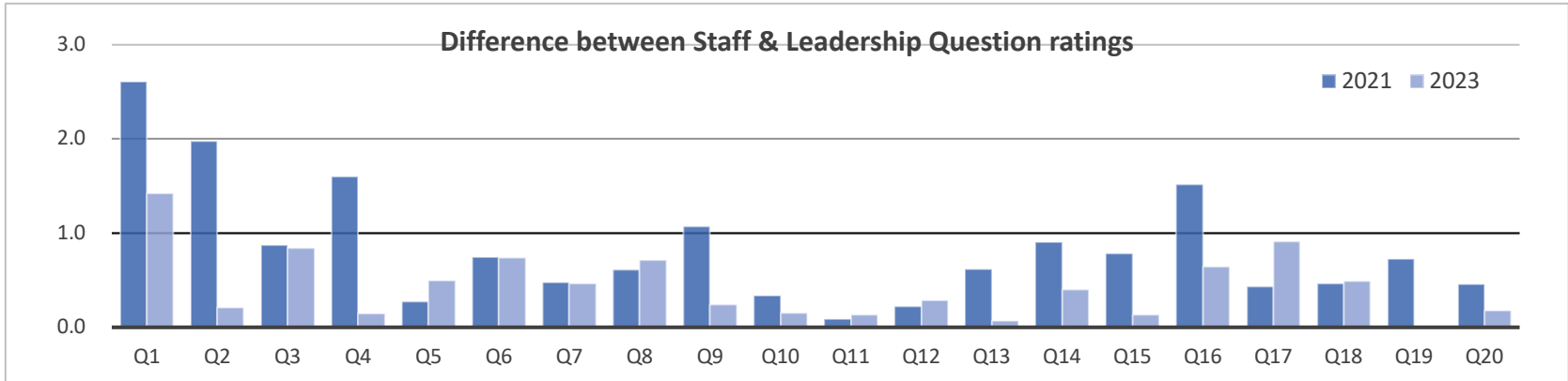
C1 - Listens to workers and families, understands and champions’ good practice.

C2- Is curious builds relationships and creates reflections.

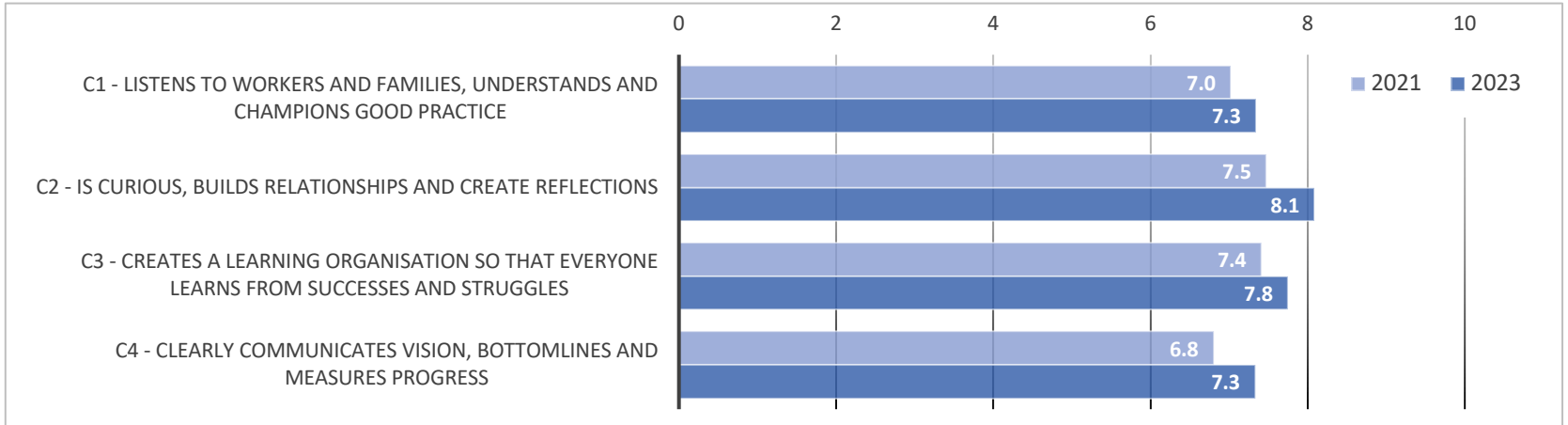
C3 -Creates a learning organisation so that everyone learns form success and struggles.

C4 -Clearly communicates bottom lines and measures progress.

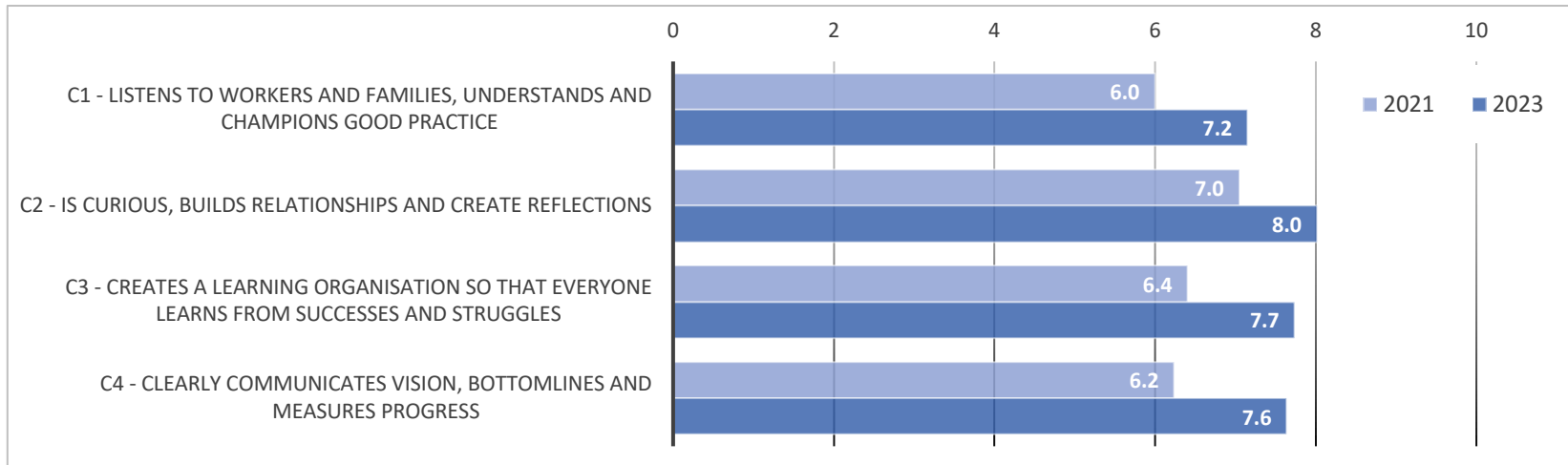




Leadership Surveys: Comparing Leadership responses in 2021 vs 2023



Staff Surveys: Comparing Staff Responses in 2021 vs 2023



Analysis:

A total of 50 staff members completed the staff survey and 11 members of the leadership group, the number of respondents is approximately half when compared to 2021 but arguably still represents a significantly relevant number of views to draw conclusions about the emerging trends. Essentially, we are looking for Leadership's self-evaluations and staff feedback to align closely, thereby evidencing that the organisational culture and climate as directed by leadership is received and experienced by staff in the way it is intended. The outcomes of this re-evaluation have shown a significant decrease in differing views between staff and leadership. This is hugely important in creating a positive climate and culture within the organisation that aligns with the values that are more likely to contribute to a successful implementation. For example, in C3 there is almost no notable difference between leadership and staff perspectives when compared to 2021 data. Once again this is evidence of an organisation with strong and clear leadership that staff value and can relate to in general. Of course, this is an ongoing journey and will require ongoing attention to sustain this progress and focus of lines of communication which appears to be the greatest differential between leadership and staff. Importantly it is fair to argue that organisationally South Ayrshire's climate and culture is aligned with the values that underpin the Signs of Safety approach and are vital in driving forward a successful implementation.

Collaborative Case File Audit

To effectively safety plan for children at risk of harm it is important firstly to understand and identify what those risks are using existing frameworks such as the National Risk Assessment Guidance (2012). Arguably practice has become overwhelmingly assessment focussed, often to the detriment of planning. Research would suggest that plans are or should be one of the most important parts of our work. The Signs of Safety approach offers a comprehensive risk assessment and planning framework that helps practitioners focus on improving safety planning for children and their families. In order to make successful plans existing harm must be identified but most importantly how it is impacting upon the individual child. Not all children are harmed or harmed in exactly the same way by their circumstances. This helps assessors think about the harm that is present, or likely to be present (in the case of unborn children) and how this is harming or likely to harm the child/children now or in the future, after all “the best predictor of future harm is past harm” (Munro:2008).

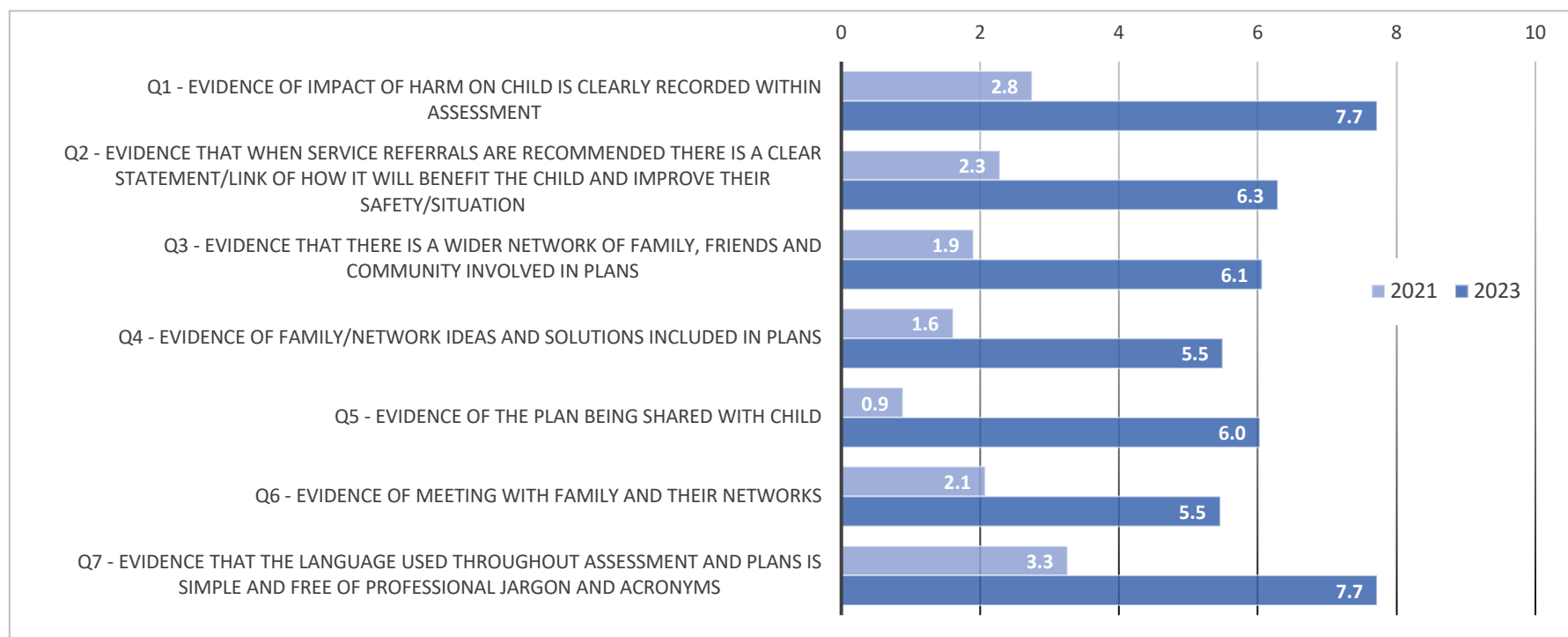
If we consider children as part of a wider system and apply a lifespan approach to protection, this recognises that anyone can come in and out of risk and the need for protection at any point during their life (Chinsell & Kelly: 2016). However, services are not always involved at these times, but family and community are. The rationale for involving wider family and community networks are; they are the people who will be around this child for a longer duration and they are more likely to be present or available during high risk periods such as school holidays, weekends and evenings. With any safety planning, the more protective eyes there are on a child the safer they are likely to be. This gives families the opportunity to identify and involve (with support and guidance) protective people from their family, friends, and communities to create a plan that include their ideas and solutions, rather than having professional plans imposed on them (arguably imposed plans increase the chances of forced and false compliance). This approach to practice has gathered momentum over the past few years and is widely recognised within various successful practice interventions such as Lifespan Approaches, Think Family, Signs of Safety, Family Finding (Kevin Campbell) and the Independent Care Review in Scotland.

It is arguable that for a child to feel safe they need to know who and what is being done to keep them safe, sharing plans with children in formats accessible to the child is a core practice component of Signs of Safety planning but more importantly it helps agencies align to GIRFEC principles, children rights and begins to take into account learning’s from the recently published Independent Care Review (2020). Finally using plain language free from professional jargon and acronyms is arguably good practice but again respects the rights of the child and their family in terms of understanding all the information being presented and shared about their family.

Child Assessment and plans are critical elements of practice, they are how we present/communicate our assessments and plans to families, our partner agencies and legal forums, but they are also a significant part of inspections. Most importantly it is their role in supporting relationship-

based practice that is often neglected. It is important that social work values and relationship-based practice are reinforced through written assessments and plan. Families retain copies of their assessment and plans and when written in ways that do not reflect practice values or behaviours, this can undermine the working relationship between families and workers. It is also extremely important that assessments and plans are inclusive and co-produced with the families because put simply they are more likely to have positive outcomes. It is all of these factors combined that formulate the basis for the collaborative case file audit.

2021 vs 2023 Collaborative Case File Audit (Graph A)



Analysis: Collaborative Case Audits took place looking at seven key areas outlined above (Q1-Q7). The auditors worked individually and then in pairs to agree what rating each assessment and plan should have based upon the evidence in the files. It is important to note the collaborative nature of this audit, the aim is to avoid audits only representing the perspective of one individual instead discussions are required to reach an

agreed scale for each case. I would suggest, having held reflective sessions throughout this process that this approach to audits was helpful in changing and challenging existing practice.

The audit team evaluated 129 open case files between March – July 2023, looking at the most recent assessment and plan for the child. There is approximately a total of 1200 cases open across South Ayrshire Children’s Services, so this sample represents 10 % of all open case files split equally across Child Protection, Looked After Children and Team Around the Child. Of the 129 identified cases, 16 team around the child cases could not be scored because they either did not have an assessment or plan or what was recorded was difficult to evaluate. This is an area identified for improvement.

The improvements across all 7 key audit areas are clear to see in Graph A. As part of the 2021 baseline audit, it highlighted that all 7 audit areas required improvement. South Ayrshire council has reviewed and aligned their Child Assessment and Plan to align with evidence-based practice and Signs of Safety. This has arguably been beneficial to practitioners and families in practice.

In 2021 33% of cases audited did not evidence impact of harm on the child in the assessment this reduced now to 5% in 2023. In 2021 71 % of assessment and plans audited did not have any evidence of the plan being shared with the child, this is in stark contrast to now when only 14% of assessments and plans audited had not been shared with the child. 88% of audited assessments and plans scored a 5 or higher, evidencing the language used through and assessment and plan was simple and free of professional jargon, thereby making them understandable and accessible to families. All of this contributes to better working relationships and most importantly is evidenced based practice, linked to improved outcomes for children and their families.

Below is a heat map demonstrating the trends and improvements from 2021 to 2023. The darker squares represent the highest numbers. Visually the changes are clear to see across all sectors. Of course, we do not want to become complacent, we must recognise that whilst the improvements have been significant, we are not at the stage whereby all assessments and plans are scoring highly. Involving family networks in assessment and planning has improved but not as much as the other areas of audited activity. Challenges and barriers to building effective networks are well known but it’s important to persevere on this area of improvement to ensure children are supported and scaffolded by people naturally connected to them, thereby aligning with the Promise.

All groups (113 respondents)

	No evidence...							Clear evidence...			
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2021 Q1	33%	3%	11%	21%	9%	6%	4%	7%	5%	0%	0%
2021 Q2	37%	6%	23%	8%	5%	5%	5%	7%	3%	0%	0%
2021 Q3	53%	6%	6%	11%	4%	6%	6%	4%	3%	0%	0%
2021 Q4	59%	7%	7%	4%	6%	5%	5%	5%	1%	0%	0%
2021 Q5	71%	3%	12%	5%	4%	4%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
2021 Q6	55%	4%	6%	4%	8%	5%	4%	7%	4%	1%	0%
2021 Q7	25%	3%	13%	17%	9%	8%	13%	7%	4%	2%	0%

2023 Q1	5%	0%	0%	0%	2%	3%	5%	22%	24%	15%	25%
2023 Q2	15%	1%	1%	2%	3%	5%	9%	16%	25%	9%	13%
2023 Q3	6%	1%	4%	7%	7%	12%	14%	12%	18%	10%	9%
2023 Q4	11%	3%	7%	8%	4%	12%	12%	12%	18%	7%	7%
2023 Q5	14%	1%	2%	5%	7%	9%	9%	10%	11%	18%	13%
2023 Q6	15%	2%	4%	5%	6%	9%	16%	14%	13%	8%	8%
2023 Q7	1%	0%	1%	2%	3%	5%	8%	15%	27%	23%	14%

See **Appendix C** for a breakdown of the assessment and plan collaborative case audit by Child Protection cases, Looked after cases and Team around the child cases. There have been improvements across all three categories of cases but most notable for team around the child cases. This is significant and suggest a more robust and effective working with families at an earlier stage of social work involvement.

Conclusions:

Signs of Safety is a strength and safety organised practice approach that supports balanced risk assessment and safety planning that aligns with national approaches such as The Promise and the Child Protection National Guidance. South Ayrshire embarked on a whole system implementation of Signs of Safety in 2020/21. They are now over 2 years into this journey and the aim of this audit alongside review of core data was to stop and reflect on evidence-based progress and areas requiring ongoing improvement.

There has been a positive change in the climate and culture across South Ayrshire's Children's Services. The shift towards a learning organisation that aims to practice in a risk sensible manner (Munro:2020) is strongly evidenced by the findings from staff and leadership surveys. Furthermore, a decrease in intrusive protective approaches such as a reduction in child protection registrations over this period, aligns with other local authorities implementing Signs of Safety across Scotland (Inglis: 2022). The shift to a strength and safety focussed model of practice grounded in relationship-based approach has arguably improved assessments and plans as evidenced by the collaborative case audit and corroborated by parent/ carers and children's surveys. In addition, core data confirms these findings noting the number of children being referred to the Children's Hearing has reduced, arguably as relationship-based practice improves. We are also seeing improvements in the quality of assessment and plans for team around the child cases, a strong indicator of improved early interventions.

Re-registrations of child protection remain low across South Ayrshire, arguably attributable to the shift to a risk sensible approach supported by the change and improved quality of assessments and safety planning. All of this is underpinned by strong relationship-based practice as evidenced by the interviews with parents/carers and children. All of these factors combined contribute towards improved practice and better outcomes for children and their families. Finally core data further suggests a reduction in external placements to foster care and the growth of kinship placements over the past two years, supported by the improved use of family networks and supports as evidenced by the collaborative case file audits.

Reflecting on the opening line of this evaluation, the true arbiters of success in improving outcomes are arguably the children and their families and the vast majority of (interviewed) families, both children and their parents and carers have positive working relationships with their workers. Most importantly noting that social workers are doing what they say they will, listening, noticing what is working well for families, openly discussing concerns and worries, getting to know children and showing families that they care. This is a fantastic step in the right direction and testament to the hard work of all staff across South Ayrshire who are consistently challenging themselves to do and be better practitioners to improve outcomes for children and their families.

Team Leaders and Managers reflections on what changes they are noticing in practice, whilst only anecdotal are arguably worth noting!

- Children returning home but feeling much more confident when closing cases because of the safety plans.
- The language of safety networks is being used across all services
- YPST- meeting formats have changed, starting on positives for the young person, as a result more young people are attending their meetings!
- Engaging better with families because we are not just focussed on the negatives.
- Front door- you can see people are using their plans and networks, sometimes all they need is this to be re-visited rather than re-opening a case.
- IRD process is better.
- Early help – all using a similar language, so if a case re-opens the approaches are more consistent for families.
- Fostering – gives a common language to foster carers attending meetings for children.
- QUAROs – seeing significantly reduced levels of conflict across all meetings, there are just better relationships between social work and the families.

Areas identified for ongoing improvements.

Parent/Carer Feedback- Aiming to increase the number of people surveyed would ensure that their voices are truly representative and influencing practice and policy decisions within South Ayrshire Children’s Services. In addition, listening to the themes identified in the open-ended questions such as the need for better communication, listening to parents and carers, timelier responses, staff showing greater compassion/empathy and reducing the impacts of staff turnover.

Children and Young People – Again aiming to increase the number of children and young people surveyed, will ensure their voices are central to service delivery. Young people overall have good working relationships but there are some themes emerging from the feedback which again suggest better communication around decision making is required and ensuring children and young people remain central to their plans.

Climate and Culture – continually improving communication around vision, bottom lines and how progress is measured across all services.

Collaborative Case File Audit – This audit identified some Team around the Child cases did not have assessments or plans, looking at how we assess and plan for all cases that are open to South Ayrshire Children’ Services is an area identified for improvement.

Whilst there has been a significant improvement across all assessment and plans evaluated, not all files are scoring highly. A need to keep working to improve the quality of written work and focussing on plans being family and child centred, including use of networks of people that are naturally connected to the child.

Core Data is still be analysed and will be added at a later stage to this report.

Please see **Appendix D** for reflections and learnings collated by auditors.

Appendix A Parent/Carer Surveys

If you could change one thing about how your worker is working with you, what would it be?

- Wouldn't change a thing.
- Nothing – very happy with it all
- I am quite happy with what is happening and what is going on. I wouldn't change a thing.
- I would not want to change anything.
- I would not change anything about the social worker.
- SW is brilliant with me and understands what we need.
- Nothing – workers has been really good and helpful.
- Nothing
- Wouldn't change anything, worker was amazing and flexible.
- nothing right now, worker does everything she can
- Nothing I would change.
- Nothing – she (SW) is fantastic.
- I wouldn't change anything. I was initially resistant to social work intervention and did not fully understand their role until this was explained to me. So, maybe I could have used some clearer explanations at the time.
- I don't think I would change anything about my current experience of social work.
- Nothing, she is brilliant.
- No, he's one of the better social workers I've ever dealt with. I've dealt with social workers before when I was in a kinship process. He was absolutely brilliant.
- "I wouldn't change anything about the social workers, I would change the processes as they take too long and have delayed us getting the supports, we needed.
- To be honest everything was done 100% the social worker visited me, phoned me, text me, I felt like she was next to me through the difficult time, and I wouldn't want to change anything.
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing

- Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing

Themes: Would Change Nothing, fantastic experience, does everything they can. Would not change workers but processes, these are difficult.

- I was seeking support to access support for my children, the social worker came out and met with us. We got another social worker and then we had to wait on a meeting taking place to agree supports. The time it took for all this to happen meant we didn't get the supports in time.
- I would like the social worker to actually communicate and to respond to calls, keep me informed. I feel that I was not communicated well with. I was provided with no information about my child or in relation to the situation as a whole.
- I feel I don't see the social worker much. I think this is because of their working pattern. I do get a response when I message or call for support.
- I have some issues with the communications from the place where my child resides. I would like things to be better from them in terms of seeking my consent for things about my child. I think some of the ways they communicate with my child are not appropriate and not reflective of my child's needs. I don't think social work get a good value from them at times. Sometimes it feels that things don't change. I have advised my social worker of these things but I don't believe social work are fully aware of what goes on at times.
- Listen to what we want as a family and realise I am trying my best.
- The worker I have lives in the local community, and I feel that they are biased about the situation as a result-I think there is a conflict of interest in my view. I feel I have been smeared in my local community. I think a worker who did not live locally would give a more balanced view.
- I would ask the social worker to listen more to me and to try to resolve differences more effectively. I listen to the views of social work, and of my child. It has felt that trying to identify the middle ground would be more helpful.
- She's not with my anymore but would never have got involved in the first place. I phoned social work for help and they berated me and I lost 4years of my life
- For everyone to be more open and honest about the future and what could and couldn't potentially happen for example when I was waiting to be discharged from hospital, I was told I was waiting for blood for a blood transfusion however I was later told that I hadn't been discharged because social work had to assess the house and make sure it was acceptable for my child.

- I feel that the times that the worker worked (ie 4 days on, 1 day off) led to some confusion in terms of my ex-partner being able to “play the system”. I feel that a bit more communication around this at the start of the process may have been more helpful. This became less challenging when other staff members were able to cover the allocated worker’s time off.
- I would like to change the worker.
- I would like the worker to be more accessible- I know that they are busy but at times I felt that I wanted a more immediate response.
- I didn’t find the SW very consistent, didn’t see her much. When we got IFSS input, she was fantastic, really got to know my family, took time to understand us and showed a genuine interest.

Themes: poor communication, not listen, respond in a timelier way, lack of consistency

Finally, is there anything else you’d like to tell us about how your worker worked with your family?

- My social worker cared that we solved any problems. My social worker also helped me a lot with household appliances and basic home essentials for example while I was in hospital waiting to be discharged with X my washing machine broke and social work helped me with funding for a new one, they also helped me with supplying food and baby milk.
- Just a letter of support
- Everything is great, everything is working well from my point of view. There is nothing I would change.
- The worker was great- they are fantastic at their job, and I have felt involved in decision making. The worker is clearly passionate about their job.
- I think my worker has done everything they can possibly do.
- No, nothing to add. I am completely happy with what the social worker has done.
- really understands us, doesn’t come across as judgemental, good people skills
- good to have to help us, has been really helpful.
- SW and FCW have done a fantastic job! Kids adore our FCW, he has been a god send.
- great experience with my SW, not as scary as I expected. Positive experience – feed that back to people I am now working with.
- everything great with current worker, she really listens. Know B gets on with her and that makes me happy.
- Really happy with the support I had, felt very listened too.
- My social worker was great. We were able to overcome initial difficulties in terms of me accepting the support, but we have ended up with a really good outcome. We are no longer open to social work because I was supported to make changes in my life.

- My worker went above and beyond her remit in my view. I am happy with the time taken to explain processes, I was pleased with the patience that the whole team showed as well as the scrutiny around evidence of concerns. My views and the views of my child were taken into account at every step, and we have an outcome that we feel is best. My worker did an excellent job during a very difficult time. I have changed my views of social work as a result of my experiences.
- The social worker has been very supportive and has done a good job. It took a long time to get the right, safe option for my child. I feel this was related to reluctance to fund the right option. Where she is now is as a result of crisis events where there was no option but to place my child where she is now. It took around a year of my child living at home in a dangerous situation before the right option was provided.
- No, nothing else to say. If there are problems, I know I will get a response.
- My child has a good relationship with their worker. “
- She was an absolute angel; I had never had social work involvement before and was worried but she has been brilliant supporting me and the kids. Now and again, you come across people who make a difference, and she was one of these people. She was so supportive and really listened to me and my children and knew that not everything is cut and dry.
- He was really down to earth. He spoke to you, rather than treating you like another number he dealt with. None of the bullshit with him. He was the only one who ever considered the needs of my older child who is an adult and offered to speak to him as well to help him with the situation. He did this when nobody else did.
- No
- The social worker was an absolutely amazing person – I always heard bad things about social work and the social worker changed my mind, it made me feel safe having her. Everything changed for me in a good way when this social worker came.
- Happy with his work
- X helped my confidence. Helped me and my family build trust and I had lost trust in SW before she came along. She is brilliant!
- They both have helped me and the boys.
- X is great. I scored Agree on Q4 spent time with my children. X usually sees me when kids are at school. My daughter did ask if she was a family member. It might be good if he could tell them he is there to help them.
- Nothing
- Absolutely amazing.
- They have helped us so much as a family to get to where we are now
- I want to begin by saying that south Ayrshire social work has been a god send to me. They have supported me both practically and emotionally through the hardest time in my life. I found myself homeless due to domestic abuse and X from the service has been there during my darkest times. I moved an hour and a half drive from where I used to live when I was heavily pregnant leaving behind my

close friends, I knew no one here. This service, particularly X, has been a god send to me. When I felt alone and scared I knew X was at the end of the phone and she gave me hope for the future when I had none. Before being involved this service I was in a very dark place where I'd made an attempt on my life before becoming pregnant with my son. I have never felt that way since having the support of X. I have a diagnosis of PTSD and X has been extremely supportive and understanding of my triggers and symptoms and has supported me without judgement. I lost everything due to domestic abuse, my home, my dogs and worse of all my child aged 9 at the time (his father kept him from me using Scotland's 50/50 rights law) I began speaking with X after this time and she listened while I cried as my heart broke every day my son, who was my entire heart and soul was kept from me by his father who has plead guilty to domestic abuse three times. X made me feel that we were in this together and I wasn't alone. In all honesty it's a scary thought as to where my life would be if it wasn't for the service she provided, the emotional and practical support. I was so low back then. X has kept me positive and focused and with this I felt hope for the first time in a very long time. X has the ability to understand people and their situations, emotions and needs in a way 90% of agencies couldn't/haven't. My baby is now almost 4 months old and I am the best place I have been mentally in years. I feel that this is a direct result of having that understanding and empathy. I can't thank south Ayrshire social work enough for this essential support that has allowed to me to live again when I was barely surviving before. This has had a direct impact on my ability to be a good mother and enjoy every second with my baby and has therefore also has had a direct impact on the emotional well-being of my baby. He is the happiest, calmest and most affectionate baby you could ever meet. I attribute this to my greatly improved mental state through X's support. I don't have any family other than one cousin who lives in England. X has bridged that gap making me feel not only supported but empowered. I have been able to become and stay focused and feel strong enough to look and find myself a suitable flat which will hopefully be our forever home (I view this next week) X has pointed me in the right direction liaising with other agencies and has empowered me to the point I feel I can make decisions on my own again. She has gone above and beyond. With domestic abuse you are left feeling powerless, not good enough, scared and alone. I was by my ex-partner told and made feel incapable and unworthy of kindness and care. X has been able to give me the confidence to trust in my own judgement again. I struggled to make decisions alone before because these decisions were always made for me by my abusive ex. I couldn't so much as choose a colour of paint as my ability to make choices had been taken from me for so long. I am right now rebuilding my life and have not only chosen paint colours but have chosen and bought a new sofa, cot, tv, clothes and toys for my baby, wall paper to keep for my new home. I cry as I write this, happy tears of where I am now in comparison to when I first came here. I'm excited about the future now not terrified as my confidence has grown by X's validation support kindness and her belief in me. She's made me believe in me. That's something that not any words can describe. I want to thank SAC social work, in particularly X for all that the service has done for me and my baby. Thank you X, you are an amazing person who I have been blessed with. How do you thank someone for giving you your life back? There are no words. I feel like a person again. A person worthy of time compassion and practical help. I feel I have a future to be excited about. Thank you so much X. I will be forever grateful.

Themes: Felt listened too, supported, spending time with children, getting to know them, going above and beyond, change nothing!

- I totally didn't understand it at all, she said things to me and when I took these to a manager, I felt I was made out to be a liar, that the SW would never say this. The Social Worker told me she would take my kids into care. She did say this and said it Infront of my children. I felt berated and made to feel like a bad parent when all I have tried to be is the bet for my children.
- The worker did not work well with me. They did not provide me with any info and I have employed lawyers in order take this further. I feel that I have been through a terrible situation. I recorded workers while they were in my home, I recorded telephone calls, I recorded CP meetings to document my experience. I have documented my experience as a felt that I was getting nowhere in relation to the situation as a whole- info on my child, to hold workers to account about their practice with me and my family. I was not provided with support that was promised from social work.
- I felt we would have benefitted from an older, more experience SW. The SW also shared information about my child to their sibling's school which wasn't necessary and caused a lot of embarrassment and upset for my child.
- I'm not having a good experience at this time.
- I think the worker listened to some things, but I also feel that things were not professional at times and the worker was biased against me and was not taking into account the actions of the child's father when compared to my actions. I do not feel that the child's father has been held accountable for his actions and in terms of the plan of support around his alcohol use.
- Overall, the experience was very intense initially, over a longer period of time, things may have been a more positive experience. The period of intensity led to stress for me and it was frustrating for me when there were lots of people in my home.
- I have felt that the turnover of social workers was frustrating in terms of going over the past again and building new relationships.
- "The worker had a fair and accurate understanding of my child and situation. I don't feel that all outcomes were positive. I feel outcomes could have been more positive.
- I feel that more care should have been taken when delivering difficult information to my partner in terms of her reaction to this. I feel that workers could demonstrate more respect and be more conscious of the power they hold.
- I feel that arrangement of family time with my child could have been organised better, especially when the social worker was on holiday. Also, I have asked for family time to take place in the evening and my worker did not respond to this request. I feel that communication of when I can see my child as part of organised family time could have been communicated better among the child's networks.

Themes: better communication, desire for greater compassion/empathy, staff turnover and staff cover for holidays/sick.

Appendix B Child/Young Person Surveys

My social worker listens to me.

- “Whenever I put in a suggestion for something it got thrown the other way”
- “I don’t really know her that well.”
- “We don’t really get along” “she was supposed to help me get a care leaver grant and now I can’t get it till next Monday” “thank God other placement is buying food because I shouldn’t have to go to a food bank.”
- “He is a brand new, best social worker I’ve had; he has actually stayed with me for 5 years and we were his first case.”
- “Is S my social worker?” “I don’t know the difference between support worker and social worker.”
- She listens most of the time to me but feel like she maybe sometimes doesn’t listen to my mum.
- “I canny slag her, I speak to her all the time.”
- if I ever need her, I just phone her and she’s always there.
- Only seen them on one occasion so it’s a bit difficult to answer the questions.
- “Not all the plans I want.”
- responded by mum on behalf of C “her favourite worker is D”
- “don’t really speak to my social worker.”

My social worker listens to my feelings.

- “When I was talking about how I felt it wasn’t being listened to and was being ignored”
- “We meet every 2 weeks and I think I only got her a month ago, but I picked that.”
- “She rants on too much and doesn’t let me rant.”
- “100%”
- “Had no support when leaving care.”
- “I message her all the time.”
- she just listens to be honest.
- “They are very kind about it.”
- [name of young person] suggested his stepdad coming back in the picture however, he was told no, and it took about three years but was originally told it would only take a month.
- “she’s helped me sometimes, but I’ve spoke to her boss about getting a new social worker, she does help me but sometimes she doesn’t.”

- “When he first started, he was really slow, but now he is dead fast when I need his help like getting to appointments.”
- “She’s Brilliant”
- “Hasn’t helped at all before but now I’m moving house they are starting to help.”
- “I like Joanne, very good.”
- “She’s always there for the family, if we ever need her, she’s just a phone call away. If we need her, she just drives up.”

My social worker knows me.

- [name of young person] felt like he couldn’t be his true self. The reason for this was because he felt like if he was honest, something would happen that he didn’t want to.
- “Just a wee bit”
- “She only knows certain stuff about me, there’s stuff I don’t want her to ken.”
- “Only had her 5 months but she’s funny and it’s good to have social workers that are normal.”
- don’t really talk about myself much.
- they know that I can’t do much hard stuff because I get over confused.

My social worker knows my family.

- Play fighting with stepdad, which led to bruising caused social work to think he was hitting me and resulted in him being taken away for three years.
- “she’s spoke to my mum before.”
- “She knows my mum and that.”
- “Great support helping me through getting to know my family, I respect that with X. X supported me ever since things went wrong with my family and fought my corner.”
- “She was my sister’s social worker for a while.”
- “She has spoke to them before.”
- mum just tells her everything.
- mix between well and a little
- because they haven’t met all of my family

My social worker knows what is most important to me.

- Whenever [name of young person] made suggestions for activities with stepdad and his little brother, he says he was told someone could get hurt. He was suggesting that they play fight.
- “X doesn’t understand a lot of addiction and never will because he hasn’t been through it, but we speak a lot about it, and I help educate him.”
- “She knows I like McDonalds.”
- “They always know I love my mum.”

My social worker listens to my ideas and thoughts I can talk to my social worker about my worries.

- “She’s alright”
- “I don’t talk to her about my worries, so I keep them to myself.”
- “Don’t have much contact with them.”
- “I just tell her everything, even if it’s totally unreasonable.”
- “Would rather talk to my pals if I had any worries.”
- “Sometimes because sometimes I don’t feel like sharing my feelings or stuff.”

I have a say in what happens to me.

- “I got taken away from my parents when I was supposed to stay at my grans. I was told by social work; my mum had no choice but to send my stepdad away because if not we would go into care.”
- “Really depends on the situation.”
- “I can fight my own corner now; I used to sit and just listen as a wean but now I can speak up for myself.”
- “Only if its reasonable- sometimes social workers might make decisions that you don’t like but it’s for your safety and always for a reason.”

My social worker explains to me what is happening to help me.

- “Whenever asked why stepdad was taken away/why staying at grans was told ‘it’s to keep you safe’ this was never explained”
- “Aye she has before”
- “She helped me when I went to court and that, but I had to help myself and my liar helped as well.”
- “He really helped me understand family problems when I had no idea what was going on and he would help by telling me the best thing to do.”

- “I was refused any financial help for college and I’m still waiting on a letter being sent to explain why I’m not getting help.”
- “She tells me everything” “She knows I wouldn’t be happy if I found something out before she has told me.”

Appendix C – Collaborative Case File Audits by Category

LAC (51 respondents)												
	No evidence...						Clear evidence...					
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
2021	Q1	10	3	4	13	1	5	1	0	3	0	0
	Q2	13	2	11	5	1	1	2	3	2	0	0
	Q3	23	3	2	5	1	1	3	1	1	0	0
	Q4	29	4	1	1	2	0	0	3	0	0	0
	Q5	28	2	5	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0
	Q6	22	1	2	3	3	0	2	5	2	0	0
	Q7	6	3	6	7	6	4	3	2	2	1	0
2023	Q1	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	8	14	8	14
	Q2	7	1	0	0	1	2	3	6	14	2	7
	Q3	0	1	3	5	3	5	8	8	9	4	4
	Q4	6	2	3	6	2	7	5	3	11	4	2
	Q5	4	1	0	2	6	5	3	3	6	8	7
	Q6	6	1	2	2	2	5	8	8	6	5	6
	Q7	0	0	0	0	1	4	5	10	12	14	5

TAC (52 respondents)

2021

	No evidence...						Clear evidence...				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Q1	27	0	8	10	7	2	0	1	3	0	0
Q2	28	5	12	3	3	1	2	3	1	0	0
Q3	36	3	5	7	1	2	0	2	2	0	0
Q4	37	3	7	3	2	2	1	2	1	0	0
Q5	46	1	4	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
Q6	40	0	5	1	1	2	2	3	3	1	0
Q7	22	0	9	12	4	3	2	3	2	1	0

2023

Q1	6	0	0	0	1	1	4	13	8	6	12
Q2	8	0	1	2	2	2	6	7	7	6	6
Q3	6	0	2	3	5	8	4	6	8	4	6
Q4	6	1	5	3	2	5	7	10	5	2	6
Q5	10	0	2	3	1	4	4	4	3	8	6
Q6	11	1	2	4	5	5	7	7	5	2	3
Q7	1	0	1	2	2	2	3	6	14	8	11

CP (10 respondents)

2021

	No evidence...							Clear evidence...				
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Q1	0	0	0	1	2	0	4	7	0	0	0	
Q2	0	0	3	1	2	4	2	2	0	0	0	
Q3	0	1	0	0	3	4	4	2	0	0	0	
Q4	0	1	0	0	3	4	5	1	0	0	0	
Q5	6	0	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Q6	0	4	0	0	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	
Q7	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	3	0	0	0	

2023

Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	2	1
Q2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4	1	0
Q3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	3	0
Q4	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	4	2	0
Q5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	2	0
Q6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	4	2	0
Q7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	4	0

Appendix D – Reflections from Auditors

Key Strengths:

- Auditors felt the new CP1/CAP templates overall were much clearer and concise to the worries/harm and plans with families.
- Assessment gives a much clearer and richer understanding about what day to day life looks like, what their views/hopes/fears etc are.
- Commonality of language throughout assessments not only prompts and encourages, but helps more clearly evidence participation with young people and families (*i.e. what do they think about the worries, what do they want to happen much clearly evidenced etc*)
- Clearer evidence in assessment of family ideas, solutions to manage worries and responsibility being shared with them for this.
- Key strengths in language being much clearer, less use of professional jargon.
- Key strengths in the harm/worry being clearly articulated in assessments.
- Some lovely feedback from parents
- Within parents' surveys – there is a noted trend that even for those parents who are not in agreement with the plan for their child, the vast majority of respondents were able to say '*my social worker has been clear with me about how they see the concerns about my family situation*' (*Question 4 of Parents Surveys*) Good evidence of open, honest discussions with parents about the worries and why.
- Timelines of work being used in assessments.
- Increasing use of Words and Pictures explanations.

Areas for Development

- Although getting better, children who are not LAC/CP at times still lack assessments/plans as to what we are doing and why. Query having a clear TAC process?
- YPST paperwork needs aligned to SOS framework (we know this is in progress)
- Child's Plan template needs to move away from generic GIRFEC format and have a SW plan specific to worry/harm/danger/triggers/stressors etc. (again we have this ready to launch on and findings of 2023 Baseline Audit will be the natural prompt to do this).
- Clearer evidence in assessments to say explicitly how the Plan was shared with young person required. In some instances, you could read between the lines and know this had been done, but there is a lack of a specific way of knowing this has happened (how do we grab this as data?)

- Can still be a tendency to make referrals to other services without making specific link to how this improves safety.
- Query a section for views of people in the network? We have this for children and parents but would be good to capture this also for any relevant members of the network i.e. their worries and what action they will take to help reduce these.
- Continue to develop use of Words and Pictures and Timelines.
- Challenges arising within other areas of the Service i.e Legal Services stating that CAP's require more history to support Permanence Proceedings (*I'm not sure this is relevant to the Baseline and more us working alongside Legal Services to ensure what they need is clearly drawn out in a CAP where Permanence out with family is being recommended*)



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