



**south ayrshire**  
health & social care  
partnership

# Child Protection Trend Analysis

## South Ayrshire

**Date: November 2023**



## Child Protection Activity in South Ayrshire: An Overview

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers Group are asked to consider the attached analysis of Child Protection trends in South Ayrshire from November 2022 – November 2023. This being the third such trend report, is written to provide an assurance around Child Protection processes in South Ayrshire.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers Group are asked to consider the contents of this report and to assure themselves that the current Child Protection processes to protect children at risk of significant harm in South Ayrshire are robust and being utilised appropriately.

### 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This approach to “trend analysis” was initially instigated in 2020, due to South Ayrshire’s low numbers of Children who were subject to Child Protection Registration (CPR). This raised questions at the Child Protection Committee around whether this was an indication of positive cultural transformation, or a matter of concern, due to a greater appetite for risk.

There have now been two full Child Protection trend analysis reports presented to the Chief Officers Group and Child Protection Committee; “***Child Protection Trend Activity in South Ayrshire an Overview November 2021***” and “***Child Protection Trend Analysis South Ayrshire November 2022***”.

On both occasions the Chief Officers Group and Child Protection Committee expressed their confidence in the approach to Child Protection in South Ayrshire. The Chief Officers Group minutes from the 21 December 2021 stated; “***COG acknowledged the value of this piece of work which shows a confidence and assurance of where we are and suggested this be brought to COG on an annual basis to underpin the performance report.***”

The current report is written as a continuation of the annual quality assurance around Child Protection activity. This report should be read with a number of other reports in mind, namely; **The South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Annual Report 2022-23, The South Ayrshire Parenting Promise and the Children Services Planning Partnership Annual Report 2022-23 and the new South Ayrshire Children Services Plan 2023 - 2026.**

### 4. REPORT

- 4.1 The following report is an update on the number of children in South Ayrshire who have been placed on the Child Protection Register.

The following table is taken from the Childrens Social Work Statistic updated on 23 May 2023 and the Comparator Child Protection Dashboard 2021-2022.

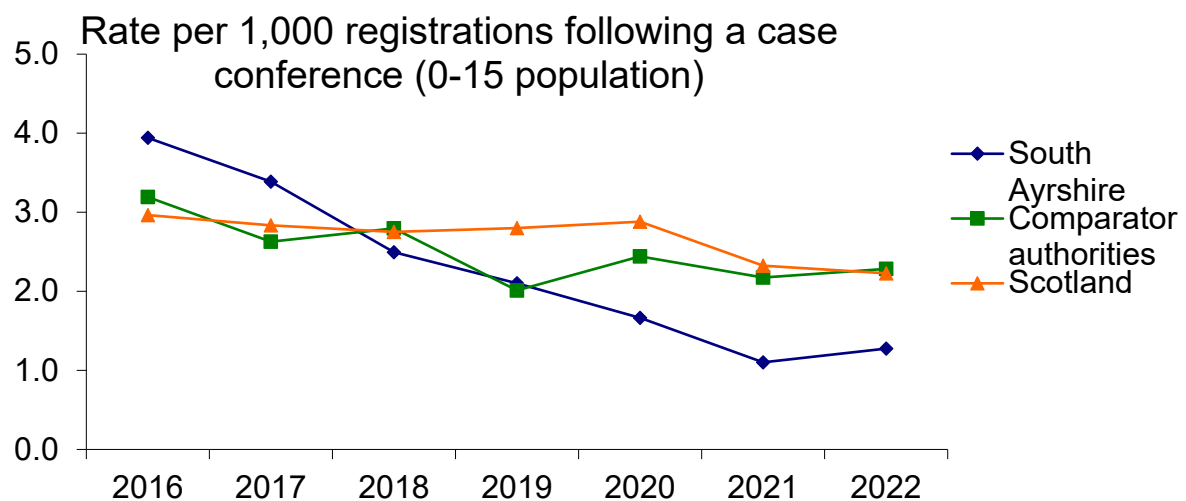
The chart below (1) reflects that South Ayrshire has 1.3 per 1000 Children aged between 0-15 who are on the Child Protection Register and how this compares with South Ayrshire’s Benchmark Authorities and the Scottish average.

**Table/Chart 1**

**Number of Children on Child Protection Register (per 1,000 of 0-15 population) - 2022**

<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Benchmark</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 children</u>
<b>comparators</b>		
<b>South Ayrshire</b>		<b>1.3</b>
Angus		3.2
Dumfries and Galloway		1.8
Scottish Borders		2.1
Highland		2.4
Argyll and Bute		1.7
Comparator average		2.3
Scottish average		2.2
<b>Local Comparators LA</b>		
East Ayrshire (for local context)		3.8
North Ayrshire (for local context)		4.2
<b>Signs of Safety Local Authorities</b>		
East Ren (Signs of Safety LA)		0.4
East Lothian (Signs of Safety LA)		2.1
D & G (Signs of Safety LA & LGBF)		1.8

**Chart 2**



**Analysis**

- The above chart reflects a consistent reduction in the number of children on the Child Protection register over the past five years, with the first slight increase noted 2021 – 2022.
- While it is clear that the number of South Ayrshire’s children on the Register remains low in comparison with her neighbouring Ayrshire authorities. In comparison with similar Benchmarking Local Authorities, South Ayrshire is not incompatible with the likes of Dumfries and Galloway and Argyll and Bute.
- Of note, in comparison with the other Scottish Local Authorities who have fully embraced the Signs of Safety approach like East Renfrewshire, East Lothian and Dumfries and Galloway. The ratio on children on the Child Protection Register in South Ayrshire appears within the

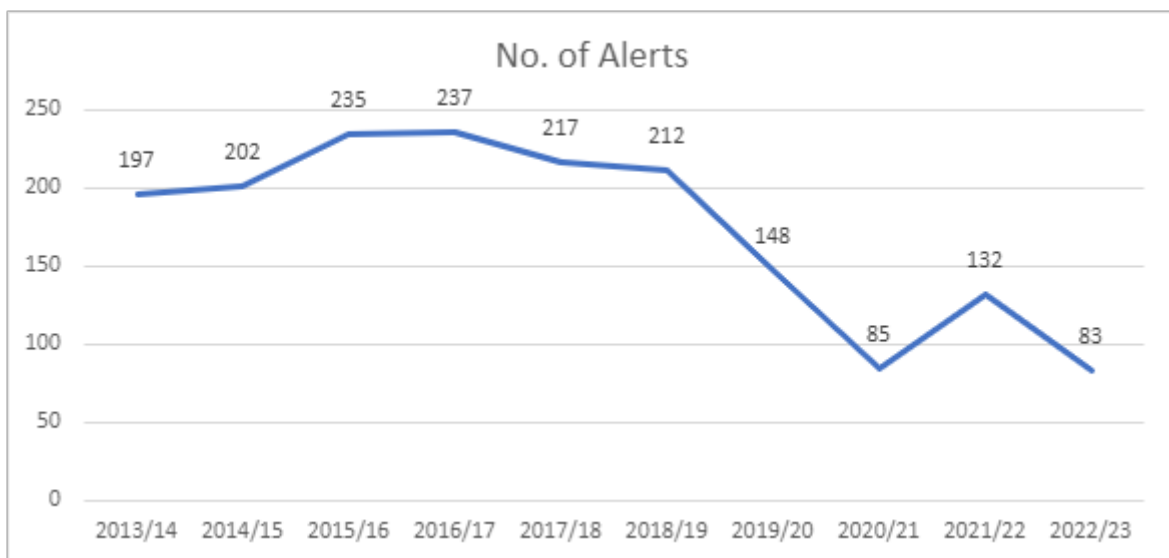
range of those localities, who have employed the Signs of Safety “risk sensible” and strength-based approaches.

**Child Protection Alerts**

A child protection ‘alert’ is raised when the decision is made to investigate under the auspice of child protection. It ensures core agencies (Health, Education and Police) and out of hours social work services are aware a child is subject to active investigation in relation to a child protection concern and can respond accordingly.

**Chart 3**

**Annual Child Protection Alerts New 2013/14 to 2022/23 in Q3**

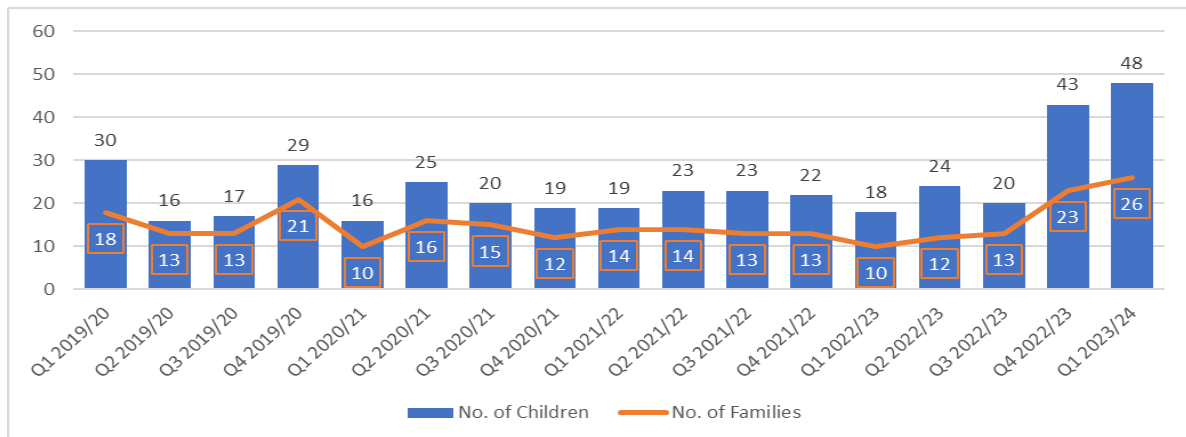


The above reflects that there has been a 37% decrease in Child Protection alerts over the past year. This continues the trend of reducing Child Protection alerts over the past six years, with the exception of last year, when it was believed that coming out of lockdown and children returning to School and being more “seen” in their communities was a significant factor in the increase.

There has also been more of a targeted approach through the Communication and Engagement, Child Protection Committee subgroup, to raising awareness of how to raise a child protection concern in South Ayrshire. There has also been much work to understand and promote the necessity and benefit of taking concerns through to Interagency Referral Discussions (IRDs). It is believed that all this had contributed to an increase in the number of Child Concern alerts last year. This year’s data reflects more of a return to the previous trend and could indicate a levelling off of this trend, but knowing that the Communication and Engagement subgroup have continued to consider creative and proactive means of raising the profile of Child Protection in South Ayrshire, brings assurance.

## Chart 4

### South Ayrshire Child Protection Registrations for children and by family group



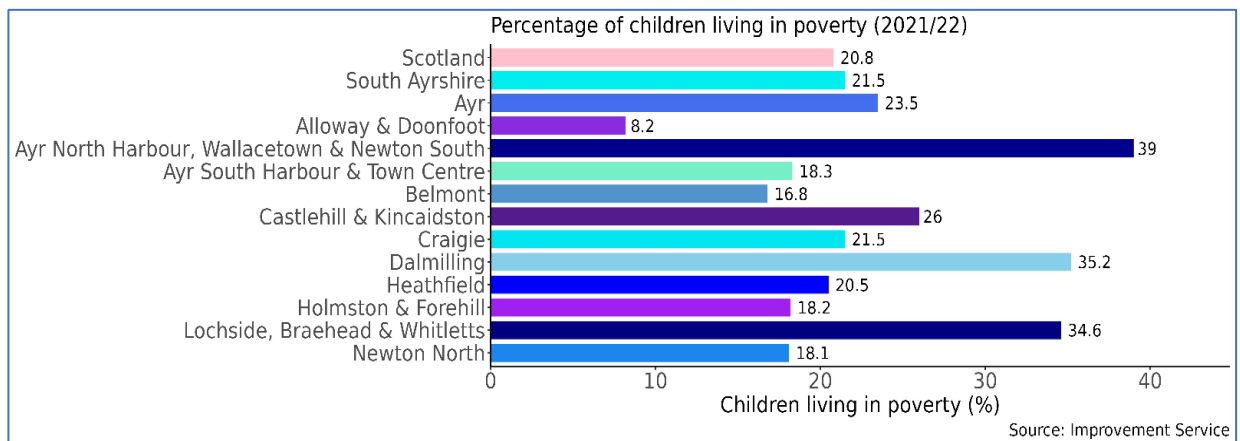
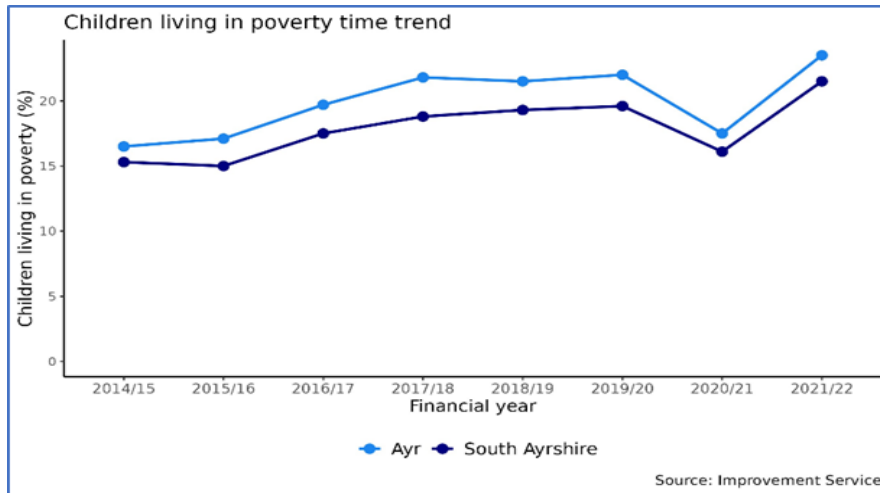
- The number of children placed on the Child Protection Register has been consistently low over the past four years. However, in the second half of 2023, there has been a notable increase to 48 Children subject to registration from 26 families. While this is still with the Scottish and our Benchmarking authorities average, it is a noteworthy spike for South Ayrshire (as of November 9<sup>th</sup> 2023).
- The consistent low numbers of Children and Families on the Child Protection Register, likely indicates that the investment in Signs of Safety and the commitment to implement the Promise, have contributed to cultural change in South Ayrshire. In the recent Signs of Safety Baseline Audit retest (October 2023), Signs of Safety consultation Leigh Taylor wrote;

***“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 approaches 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.”*** Signs of Safety Repeat Baseline report Oct 2023

**Child Poverty** (Most recent LIST analysis data available)

**45% of children newly registered in this past two quarters live in the KA8, Ayr North, Harbour, Town Centre area. Charts 5 & 6**



- The percentage of children living in poverty in Ayr is slightly higher than for South Ayrshire as a whole (23.5% and 20.8% respectively).
- Just over one-in-five children are living in poverty in Ayr.
- However, this figure varies across Ayr. It ranges from **nearly two-in-five children (39%)** in Ayr North Harbour/ Wallacetown / Newton South, to just over one-in-twenty children (8.2%) in Alloway & Doonfoot.
- Of those 48 children and their 26 families, newly registered;
  - **22% of the children lived in Band 1 (most deprived) postcodes.** (5% of the most deprived data zones in Scotland, based on **Vigintile** criteria);
  - **35% of the children lived in Band 1 (most deprived) postcodes** (10% of the most deprived data zones in Scotland, based on **Decile** criteria);
  - **52% of the children lived in Band 1 (most deprived) postcodes** (20% of the most deprived data zones in Scotland, based on **Quintile** criteria),
- It could be concluded, that the impact of the cost of living crisis and increasing poverty, is resulting in parents going from, “*just about struggling to cope*”, to now, no longer being able to cope. With increasing parental Mental Health difficulties, Substance Misuse and

Neglect, now impacting on Children, placing them at risk of significant harm, requiring state intervention and Child Protection Registration.

- **The Shaping Places for Wellbeing, Ayr Project Town Report, What we are hearing in our Communities, “A qualitative report on the findings from stakeholder conversations and a review of engagement documentation”,** September 2023, by Public Health Scotland and Improvement Service states;

**“Early mortality in North Ayr - According to The Health Foundation (2023) living in a deprived area, living in a low-income household and living in poor housing are some of the forms of disadvantage that lead to worse health outcomes and are associated with higher rates of mortality. Experiencing two or more of these factors creates an even greater risk to people’s health. Severe forms of disadvantage such as homelessness, opioid dependency, imprisonment and psychosis present an even greater risk to mortality.”**

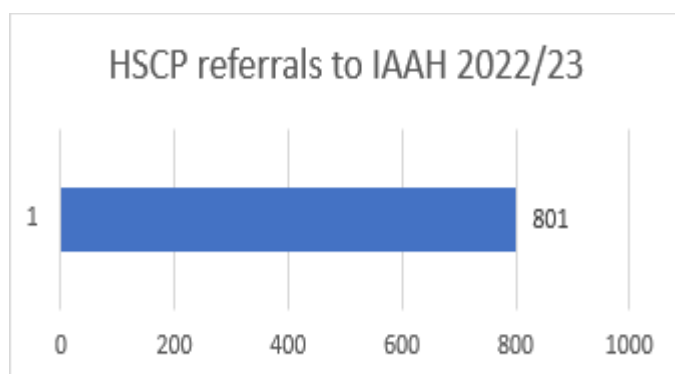
The impact of poverty is being felt more keenly than ever in our poorest communities and it is impacting upon children who would previously not have been considered as being at risk of significant harm.

**Chart 7**

	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary Concern	Parental Mental Health	23	21%
Secondary Joint Concern	Domestic Abuse	20	18%
Secondary Joint Concern	Neglect	20	18%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Joint Concern	Parental Drug Misuse	13	11%

**What are we doing to mitigate the effects of Poverty?**

**Chart 8 - (Referrals to the Information and Advice Hub)**



The Health and Social Care Partnership and the implementation of the Promise stated that we must;

***“Ensure that every family referred to the HSCP is provided with benefit maximisation and financial advice by referral to the Information and Advice Hub”***

- What we can see is that where was previous **£1.1 million provided for 357 referred families in 2021**
- The above reflects that there were **801 families referred** for benefit maximisation and financial advice **and £857,021 released for families**, so far.
- However due to the significant back log in the Department of Work and Pensions, they have not processed or released all the funding.
- On the basis that the HSCP have **referred 56% more families** for financial assessments than last year, we can be confident that this will result in **over £2 million pounds** being released to families in need, but this requires to be confirmed by the DWP.
- There has also been increasing funds given to Children and Families Social Work Locality teams to distribute to Families in Need, with Early Intervention and Preventative spending encouraged. There has also been more funding put within the Initial Response Team to enable them to support Families struggling to cope, where some funding could make a significant difference in keeping families together and out of state interventions.
- The Childrens Health Care and Justice Team continue to commission and fund various third sector partners to support families along with Thriving Communities this has enabled local communities to access Food pantries, Food Banks and access other essential family support.

**Breastfeeding**



***“Breastfeeding is a natural 'safety net' against the worst effects of poverty ... Exclusive breastfeeding goes a long way toward cancelling out the health difference between being born into poverty and being born into affluence ... It is almost as if breastfeeding takes the infant out of poverty for those first few months in order to give the child a fairer start in life and compensate for the injustice of the world into which it was born.”***

James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF (1980-1995)

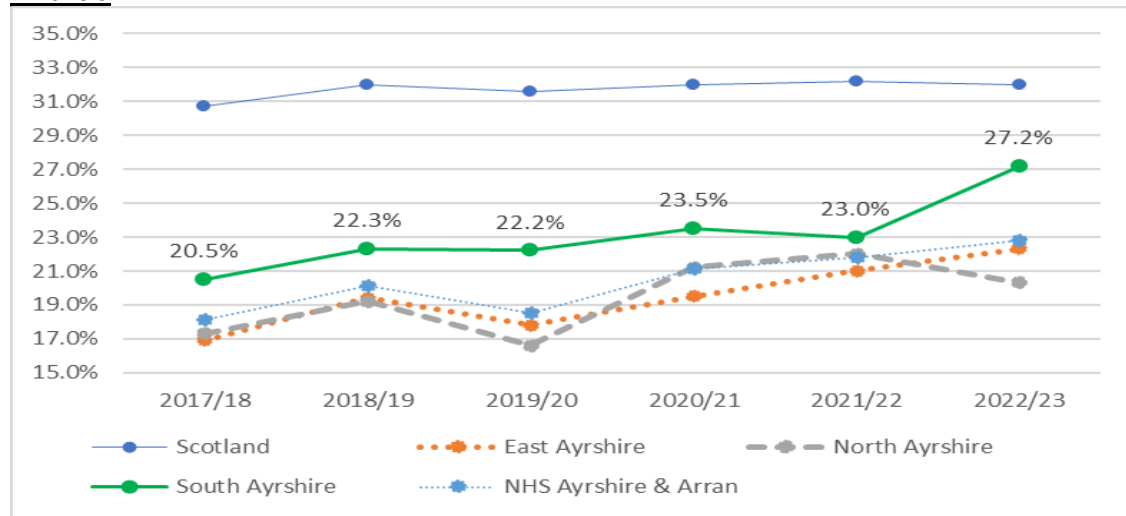
**Breast Feeding in South Ayrshire**

- The percentage of babies who are exclusively breast fed at 6-8 weeks in South Ayrshire has increased over the past year from 23.0% in 2021/22 to **27.2%** in 2022/23.
- South Ayrshire performance was the highest in Ayrshire and Arran.
- South Ayrshire = 27.2%
- North Ayrshire = 20.3%
- East Ayrshire = 22.3%
- The range across the Family Group was 23.7% in Clackmannanshire to 30.2% in West Lothian.
- Promotion of breastfeeding is a key focus of the Health Visitor antenatal contact in South Ayrshire. This enables early support to be provided in the post-natal period by the service where a woman chooses to breastfeed.
- During 2021/22, South Ayrshire HSCP has invested funding to appoint an Infant Feeding Support Nurse to offer specialist advice and expertise to the health visiting team, and directly to breastfeeding women with more complex feeding issues.
- From 2023/24, South Ayrshire HSCP will provide recurring funding to enable the peer support service to continue and be expanded to all women breastfeeding on discharge from Ayrshire Maternity Unit. This is a unique and well-established partnership with the Breastfeeding Network (a national charity).



## **Breast Feeding in Ayrshire as compared to Scotland**

**Chart 9**



## **Prioritising child Poverty: A data and systems approach in South Ayrshire**

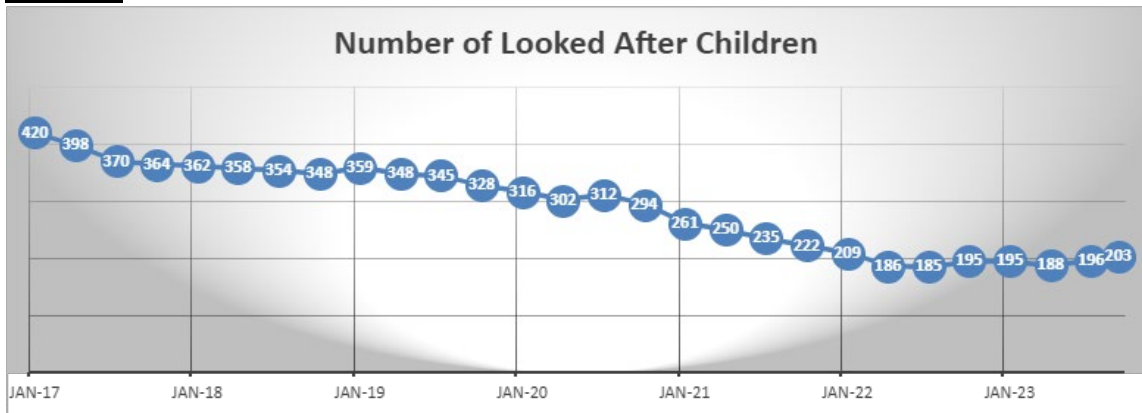


- Child Poverty is a public health issue with around 1 in 4 children in Scotland living in Poverty. Latest data estimates that 3,710 (21.5%) children in South Ayrshire are living in poverty using the relative income measure of children in low-income families<sup>1</sup>.
- Public Health Scotland (PHS) are working with the Community Planning Partnership in South Ayrshire to take a public health needs assessment approach to shape local child poverty priorities for a new child poverty strategy for South Ayrshire.
- Workshop October 2023: Understanding the system. The purpose of this workshop was to gather all the key services that support low-income families in South Ayrshire together, to map the local system, knowledge and data available within it.
- It provided a unique opportunity for all the services to come together, share insights, learn from each other, build relationships and help shape what the local priorities and action might look like.
- The outcomes from this session and other work with Public Health Scotland will help support South Ayrshire not just deliver a well informed Child Poverty Action Plan, but also a South Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy, which will be supported by the Community Planning Partnership.

<sup>1</sup> [Children in low income families: local area statistics 2014 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

**Looked After Children in South Ayrshire**

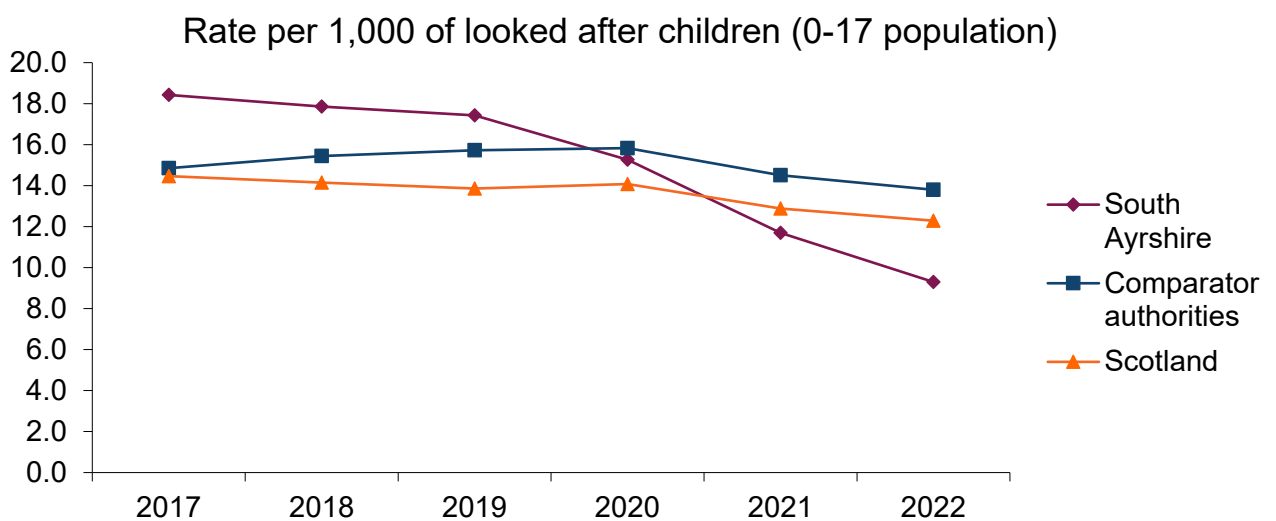
**Chart 10**



**South Ayrshire Looked After Data as October 2023**

- There are presently **203** Children who are looked after and accommodated in South Ayrshire as of October 2023 and a total of **1123** open cases of all kinds. Keeping more children at home with families while not being subject to statutory orders, reflects the “No Order Principle” of the Children Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, and is key in South Ayrshire’s approach to Prevention and Early Intervention.
- In South Ayrshire we have **21.2%** of our Looked After Children looked after at home, which is lower than the Scottish average. However, due to our approach of working with families without the necessity of a Statutory Supervision Order from the Children’s Hearing (when appropriate), we have far more children “living at home with parents” than ever with support from Social Work and partners. This is done through assessment process which is mindful of Children’s Rights, The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing, and our application of the Signs of Safety

**Chart 11**



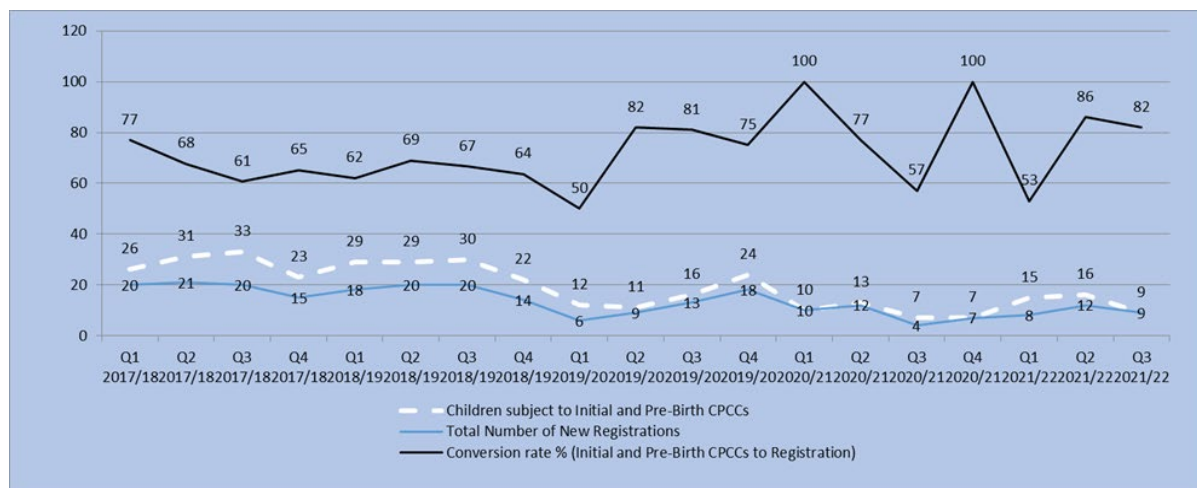
**Table 12 (Rate per 1,000 of Children who are Looked after and Accommodated)**

Local Authority Benchmark comparators	Rate per 1,000 children
<b>South Ayrshire</b>	<b>9.3</b>
Angus	10.0
Dumfries and Galloway	11.7
West Dunbartonshire	26.9
Argyll and Bute	10.1
<b>Comparator average</b>	<b>13.8</b>
<b>Scottish average</b>	<b>12.3</b>
<b>Local Comparators LA</b>	
East Ayrshire (for local context)	16.5
North Ayrshire (for local context)	18.0

- The approach to Prevention and Early Intervention means that **81.9%** of South Ayrshire Social Work caseloads are supported on a non-statutory basis and **18.1%** are Looked After and Accommodated.
- It is important to place the above changes alongside the Care Inspectorate Report of a joint inspection 2016 which reflects; ***“Reducing referral rates to the children’s reporter as a percentage of the population of young people aged 8-16 years provides a helpful indicator of the effectiveness of early intervention. In South Ayrshire, referral rates while also reducing, were significantly higher suggesting that more needed to be done at an earlier stage to prevent difficulties from arising or getting worse”***

**Chart 8**

**Conversion rate of CPPC’s to Registration quarterly trends**

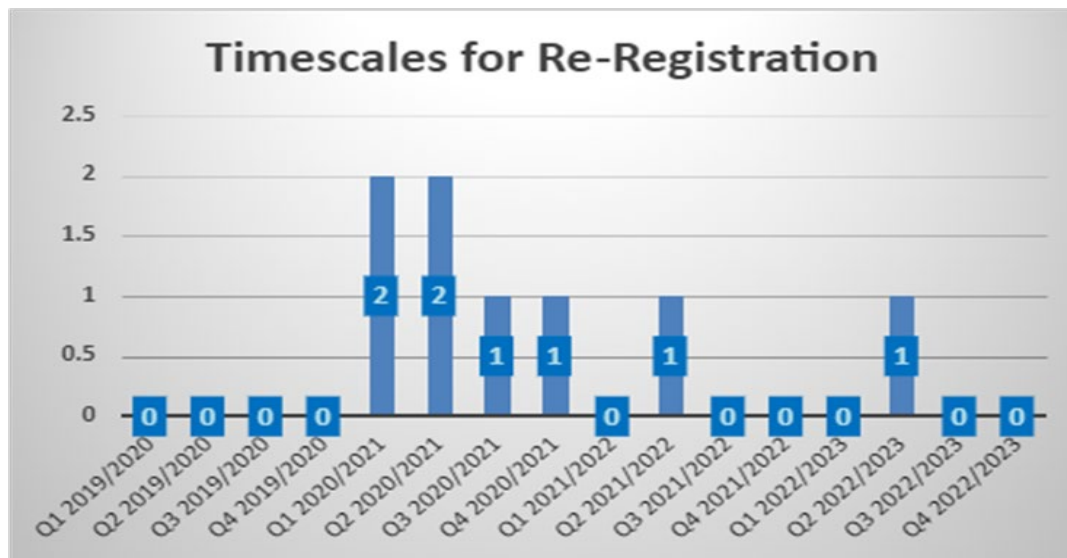


- The conversion rate of children being taken to Child Protection Case Conference and who then become registered remains high at 82%. This reflects that the vast majority of children who were taken to Case Conference were the correct children requiring the need of care and protection that being registered brings, due to being at risk of significant harm.

- This is important as it means that children and families not requiring this level of support or response are not being unnecessarily drawn into intrusive and statutory interventions if more proportionate and strengths-based approaches can be used instead.
- This aligns very much with the Christie Commission where there is a focus on People, Prevention, Partnership and Performance. The current data indicates a preventative approach is now evident in South Ayrshire through working with families and children in partnership with improved outcomes for children and families. The application of the findings of The Promise has also enabled this approach, with the views of children and families continually informing how we deliver care and supports.

### Timescales for re-registration

**Table/Chart 13**



- It is of note, that over the last eight Quarters only two children have been subject to re-registration after a 12-month period, suggesting that families are receiving the correct support and interventions in the most part, enabling and empowering them to improve their families wellbeing and safety without the need for further interventions.
- There are currently only two children from two families who have been on the Child Protection Register for more than 12 months. This has been subject to peer review and the reasons for Registration deemed to be still applicable.
- The Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers Group should be assured that there have been very few re-registrations following a child/children being de-registered and that peer review of Registration is in place as a check and balance of the decision making.
- De-registrations are also likely to increase with the impact of Signs of Safety practice. That said, it is important that the CPC understand the reasons for re-registration within an 18-month time frame and that learning and improvement activity is implemented as a result.

- In January 2023 there was a Self-Evaluation audit of South Ayrshire’s “Post de-registration from the Child Protection Register to the Team around the Child Responsibilities”. The report stated;

**“There is evidence that the de-registration policy is being implemented across Social Work, Health and Education when a child is de registered. There are areas of the policy that require further clarity as per the recommendations made. The evaluation found that in the main the assessment to de register a child from the child protection register was robust”**

- Leigh Taylor – Signs of Safety Consultant writes in the 2023 Repeat Baseline Audit report;

**“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.”**

#### Chart 10

#### From Registration to De-registration to Registration again – a reflection on the effectiveness of interventions

Dates	Duration between previous De-Registration and Re-Registration											
	Children	Family Groups	Children	Family Groups	Children	Family Groups	Children	Family Groups	Children	Family Groups	Children	Family Groups
	Under 12 Months		12-18 Months		19-24 Months		Over 2 Years		Transfer In / Temp Reg		TOTALS	
01/08/2021-31/07/2022	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	3	2
01/08/2020-31/07/2021	4	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	2	1	9	6
01/08/2019-31/07/2020	0	0	4	1	0	0	7	6	1	1	12	8
01/08/2018-31/07/2019	0	0	4	2	3	2	8	4	1	1	16	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>

The above chart on re-registration following de-registration over the past four years reflects an improving picture of a significant reduction in the number of children and family groups who are re-registered following previously being de-registered.

This has gone from a high in 2018/19 of 16 children re-registered from 9 families to a low in 2021/22 where only 3 children were re-registered from 2 families.

This could indicate that with the use of the Signs of Safety approach, that child protection interventions are more effective at enabling and empowering families and family networks at managing the identified risk factors. With families being more enabled to manage risk and promote child wellbeing, there are less children being identified as requiring to be placed on the Child Protection register for a further period within two years.

## **Scottish Child Interview Model/Joint Investigative Interview Pan Ayrshire Approach**

South Ayrshire has contributed equally to the establishment of the Ayrshire Joint Investigative Interview (JII) Team which went live in practice with the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) on 18 July 2022.

A joint investigative interview is undertaken by a police officer and social worker and is defined as:

***“...a formal, planned interview with a child, carried out by staff trained and competent to conduct it, for the purposes of eliciting the child’s account of events (if any) which require investigation.”***

***“... consideration is urgently given to the development of a new, structured scheme that treats child and vulnerable witnesses in an entirely different way... There must be sufficient investment in the quality of interviewing, questioning, and examination applying the highest international standards and requiring appropriate training and qualification (p37).”*** [The Evidence and Procedure Review \(2015\).](#)

**The national guidance for child protection in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2021) states that the purpose of an investigative interview is to:**

- Learn the child’s account of the circumstances that prompted the enquiry
- Gather information to permit decision-making on whether the child in question, or any other child, needs protection
- Gather sufficient evidence to suggest whether a crime may have been committed against the child or anyone else
- Secure best evidence as needed for court proceedings, such as a criminal trial or a children’s hearing proof

South Ayrshire along with the two other Ayrshires and Police Scotland have shown significant commitment to ensure that there is investment in the quality of interviewing and questioning of children who have been harmed.

It is important to reflect upon this, so that while there remains a focus and commitment in South Ayrshire to prevention and early intervention, when the need arises for children to be given the best possible child protection service to support them in a trauma informed way through the interview process, then the New Ayrshire Joint Investigative Interview team approach provides the best evidenced nurturing approach for children.

Team leader for the JII team in another Scottish Local Authority said about the approach;

***“The best thing about the new model is the depth of research and knowledge gained to ensure every child is afforded the most trauma free experience during the contact they have with the JII Team”***

As of the 28 September 2022 there have been 50 referrals received by the Ayrshire JII Team between 18 July 2022 and 23 September 2022. 30 joint interviews have been completed with 8 pending completion and 12 not being progressed to joint interview post referral.

To date there have been four referrals for South Ayrshire children and 2 children who had completed interviews from the new Pan Ayrshire Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM). These numbers are very low for South Ayrshire, however there were a further 37 children considered for Inter-agency Referral Discussions (IRD) in the same timeframe outwith of the SCIM model (see the below attachment of an audit on IRD completed in South Ayrshire).

### **IRD workshop**

There have been formal and informal questions raised about the “low” number of Inter Agency Discussions (IRD) taking place in South Ayrshire, particularly in comparison to North and East Ayrshire’s. These concerns have come primarily from the local Ayrshire and Arran NHS Child Protection team and management.

There have been various approaches to scrutinise and question this over the last three years, resulting in Annual Child Protection Trend Analysis reports (17/11/20, 10/11/21, 22/11/22) and various meetings and discussions.

It was agreed that there should be a multi-agency workshop to discuss and explore this further with a view to bringing it to a conclusion.

The aim of the workshop was to create an environment which enabled “Professional Curiosity” across the multi-agency team invited.

The ambition of the workshop was to either arrive at a necessary improvement action plan or to be assured at the current approach and bring this discussion to a conclusion, with further audit and scrutiny as part of the normal CPC and COG reporting cycle.

The Workshop was well attended, with representatives from Child Health, Health Child Protection, Associate Nurse Director for Child Health. Education including Child Protection and assistant Director. Police Scotland Detective Chief Inspector, the Chief Social Work Officer from South Ayrshire and Senior and Service Managers from the Health and Social Care Partnership. The workshop was arranged and chaired by the Health of Service for Children’s Health Care and Justice.

From a report that the Child Protection Lead Officer completed into IRD’s in South Ayrshire, the below areas were reflected in the workshop;

- South Ayrshire have historically had lower numbers of IRD’s, demographics, less children, less over all poverty
- South have far less IRD’s raised by Social Work compared to the other localities
- South appear to be more comfortable in managing risk on a single agency basis, where they would be IRD’s in the other two Ayrshires, could be due to SoS
- South don’t believe raising an IRD for a Child witness through the SCIM is proportionate or appropriate
- South Ayrshire more comfortable working with families with single agency safety plans than for CP route
- A belief from Health that South are less responsive, some feel SoS has gone too far in assessment and managing risk – compare with D&G (next slide)
- South Audits are very strong, and there is evidence that (in the most part when we don’t progress to an IRD that the decision was correct (most of the time)

### **Fostering Inspection**

***Young people had been kept safe and caregivers and staff had a good understanding of young people’s needs and any associated risks. Everyone had a good***

***understanding of their responsibility to keep young people safe. There was also good evidence of creative ways caregivers supported young people to manage and reduce risks without limiting their independence or opportunities.***

### **Functional Family Therapy and Intensive Family Support**

South Ayrshire has invested further in supporting children to remain at home with specialist support services which support families at a time of crisis. The Intensive Family Support Service and the Functional Family Therapy (FFT) team are two examples of this. These services engage with families at a point of crisis when the likelihood of escalation through the care system is moderate to high. Through direct evidence-based interventions which are family-centred and relational, the teams can support families to live together, through times of stress and dysfunction towards a more supportive and nurturing family experience. Functional Family Therapy is a family based intensive intervention programme that builds on the existing strengths within family relationships. The interventions range from 12 to 30 sessions in the family home over a three to five-month period. The intensity and duration are dependent on the levels of risk that the young person is deemed to be exposed to.

Out of the 26 families referred to the Functional Family Therapy team, 92% engaged and completed the programme. 97% of those who completed the programme remained at home, 95% of those still remain at home. 95% of young people have remained within their mainstream local school.

What parents have told us:

*“I feel FFT is helping myself and kids in a lot of ways. It has given me the tools to cope with arguments and it is helping us all without problems. I am a lot calmer in dealing with situations and the skills have really helped me and my family.”*

*“The feelings of failure as a parent on starting with this service are quickly put at ease. The relationship between myself and my daughter has improved dramatically, and we were left with coping mechanisms to deal with any issues that arise...”*

### **Initial Case Reviews, Significant Case Reviews and Learning Reviews - a comparison**

The below (Chart 11) reflects information from the Care Inspectorate in regards to Learning Reviews, which were historically called either Initial Case Reviews or Significant Case Reviews.

These are reviews which are instigated at the point where there has been a significant incident of harm or death to a child and where there is likely to be local and national learning as a result of the event.

### **Conclusion**

The number of children and families on the Child Protection Register has been consistent for the past two and a half years. It is important to acknowledge that the number of children on the Child Protection Register cannot be understood as either a positive or negative thing, however scrutiny of the Register and numbers on it is essential for assurance of processes and systems. In making sense of the numbers, the Child Protection Committee requires to fully understand the overall changing landscape in South Ayrshire and assure itself that the



right children requiring access to the correct support and protection are getting access to this when they need it.

The above data provides an overview of South Ayrshire's Child Protection registrations for the year 2021-2022 in comparison with her comparator local authority sites.

The data for this year reflects that South Ayrshire has the lowest ratio of Children on the Child Protection Register in the Local Government Bench Marking comparisons. However, this has not always been the case as was clear over a three-year period from 2015 to 2017 where South Ayrshire had a higher proportion of children per 1,000 on the Child Protection Register. When South Ayrshire are compared with other Scottish Local Authorities who have implemented the Signs of Safety framework, then South Ayrshire is in a similar range of children per 1,000 on the Child Protection Register.

While it is important that Child Protection figures are scrutinised and efforts are made to understand the reasons for the change in Child Protection figures over the past few years, particularly when they are an outlier within the LGBF data.

It is hypothesised that this change in data is as a direct result of a concerted effort among partners to apply more "Christie like" principles in building partnerships with people to be more preventative in our approach, and then using data to reflect whether this has been successful or not.

The implementation of the Promise and its findings and the application of the Signs of Safety, along with the continued investment in Family Function Therapy has significantly driven and contributed to cultural change in how we protect and care for Children in South Ayrshire. This has resulted in a more "risk sensible" approach to keeping Children safe from harm (Professor Eileen Munro used the term "risk sensible" opposed to risk taking behaviours or risk aversion).

The principles underpinning the New Child Protection Guidance state that; ***"The most effective protection of children involves early support within the family, before urgent action is needed and purposeful use of compulsory measures are necessary. If children do require placement away from home, real protection involves attuned, trauma informed and sufficiently sustained support towards reunification, or towards an alternative secure home base when this is not possible."***

There is a strong emphasis in South Ayrshire on prevention and early help approaches which stops families from being unnecessarily drawn into child protection processes. This is a positive and needs to be celebrated, at the same time, the Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers Group are asked to remain curious around the findings in this report and apply appropriate scrutiny to ensure that there is not an overly optimistic view of the change in Child protection figures.

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Other information to draw from;

- Signs of Safety report
- The recent CP analysis from May when CP data reflected an increase
- The IRD Audit work / workshop and feedback
- The case file audit work
- The Care Inspectorate reports, where CP and risk is mentioned.
- Pan Ayrshire CP Procedures
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**Social Work Interventions with Children under 5 in Scotland: Over a Quarter Referred and One in Seventeen Investigated with Wide Variations between Local Authorities Andy Bilson<sup>1,\*</sup> and Marion Macleod<sup>2</sup> 1 School of Social Work, Care and Community, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE, UK 2 Common Weal, Glasgow Collective, 15 East Campbell Street, Glasgow G1 5DT, UK \*Correspondence to Andy Bilson, School of Social Work, Care and Community, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE, UK. Email: [andy@bilson.org.uk](mailto:andy@bilson.org.uk)**

***In the UK, the work of the Child Welfare Inequalities Project (CWIP) showed that across the UK there is a social gradient with children in the most deprived areas many times more likely to be on the child protection register or its equivalent than those in the least deprived areas (Bywaters et al., 2020). CWIP found that, in the most deprived tenth of communities in Scotland, the rate of children looked after and placed away from home on their census date was almost twenty times higher and the rate of children on the child protection register was 18.5 times higher than in the least deprived areas (CWIP, 2017, p. 4).***