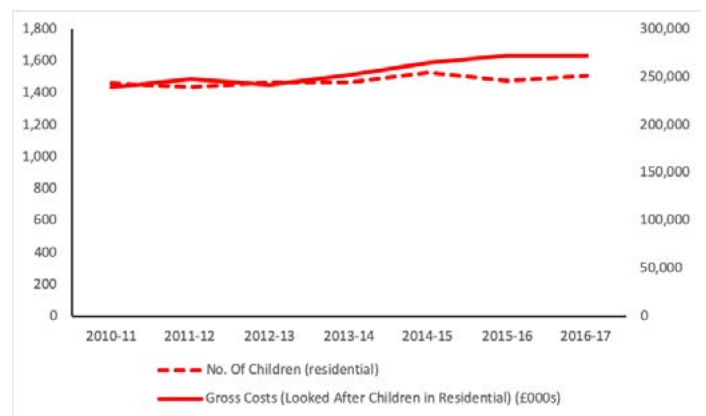
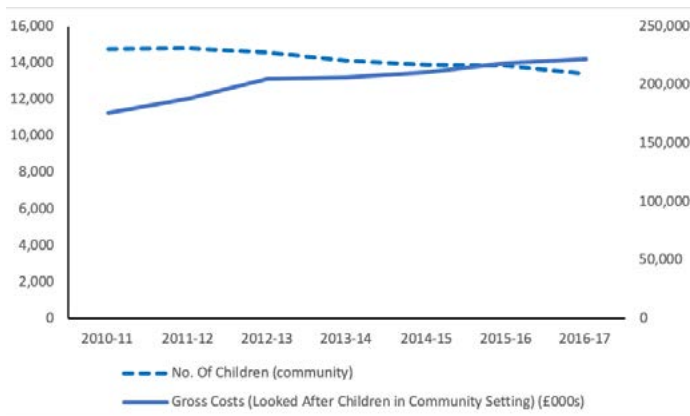
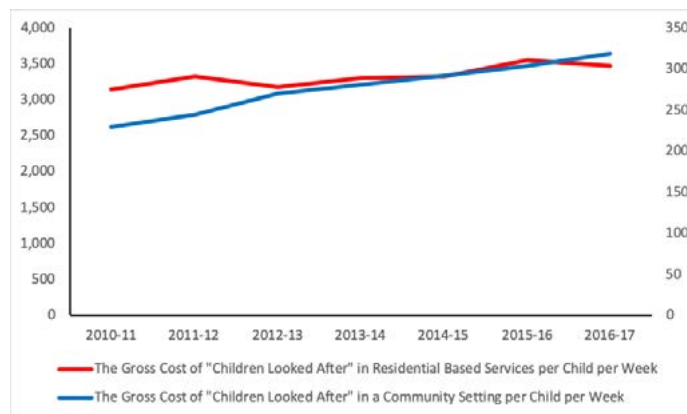


Looked After Children Briefing 2019

Councils' corporate parenting role in relation to children who are looked after is a critical one. As a group, care leavers have some of the poorest outcomes in society and better information on the effectiveness of service delivery for care leavers and the outcomes experienced is essential in order to drive improvement.

The LGBF includes measures on the cost of looking after children in the community and in residential settings, and the balance of care between those looked after in the community and in residential settings.

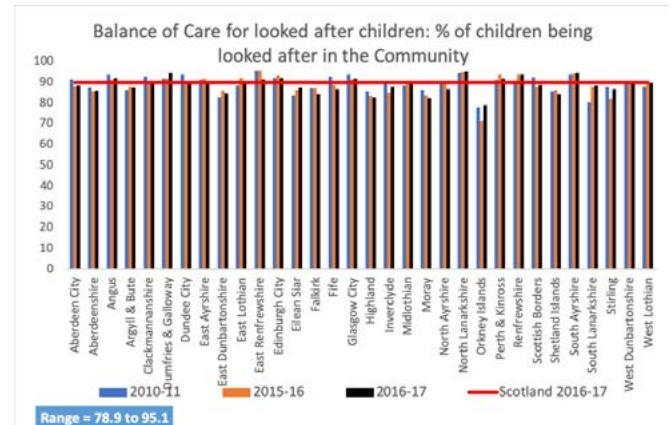
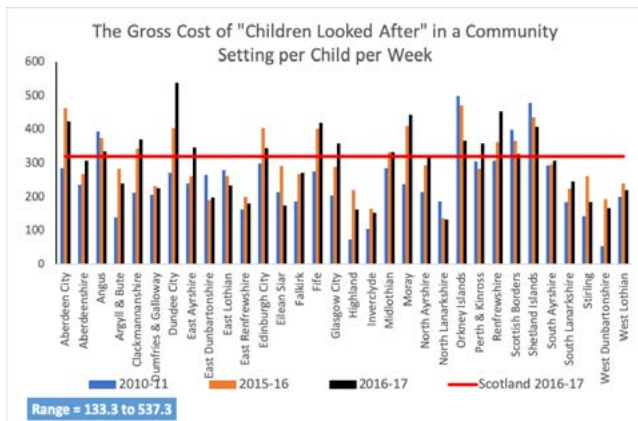
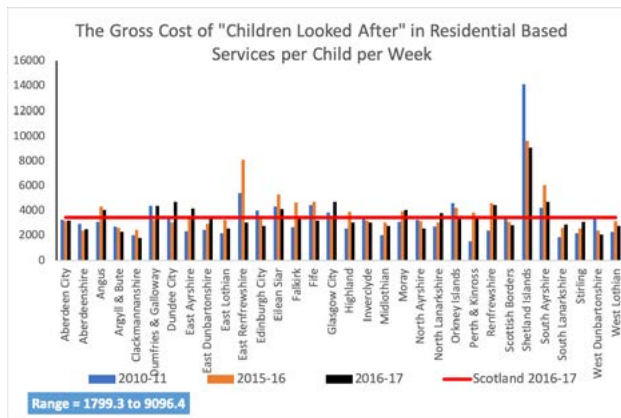
At a national level, the cost per child looked after in community settings has increased since 2010/11. This reflects increasing gross expenditure, while the total number of children being looked after in the community has reduced. In residential settings, the national trend indicates cost per child has reduced, reflecting the slight increase in number of children looked after in residential care.



This increase in costs should be considered against the balance achieved between residential and community based care. The proportion (%) of all children who are in the care of their local authority who are being looked after in a community rather than a residential setting has remained around 90-91% since 2010/11, falling to 89.9% in 2016/17. This has decreased slightly in the past 12 months due the slight increase in the number of children in residential care in this period (1,477 to 1,509).

Variation

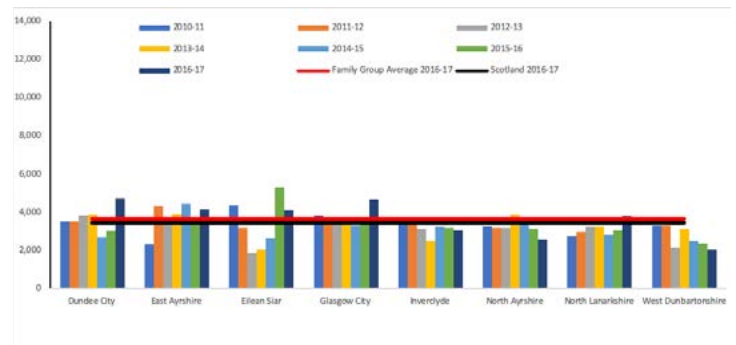
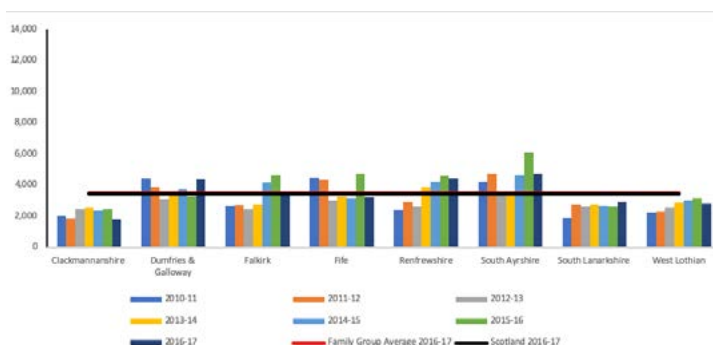
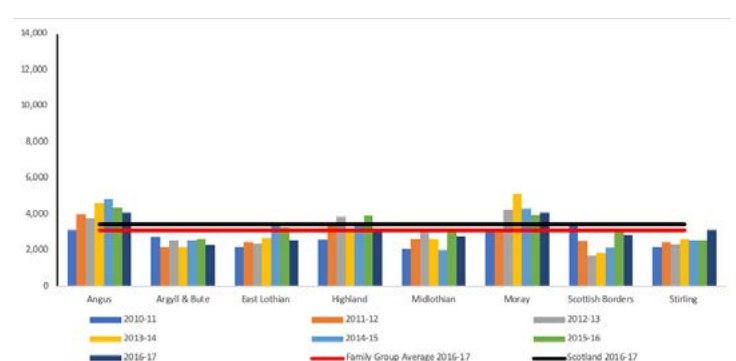
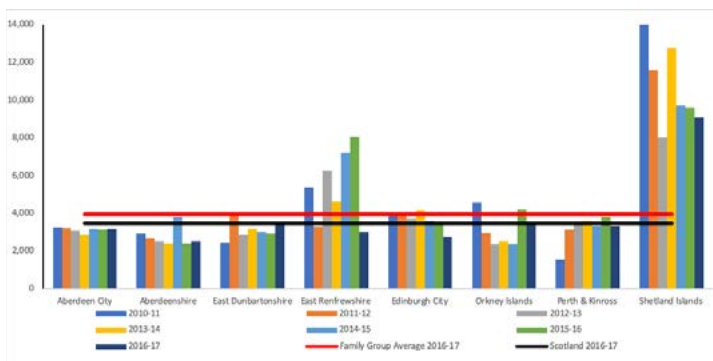
Both costs per place and the overall balance of care vary between councils. Costs range from around £2000 - £9000 per child looked after in a residential setting, and £130 to £450 in a community setting. The balance of care ranges from 71% to 95%. Variation is presented below by Family Group (grouped by level of deprivation). Family Groups with higher levels of deprivation tend to have slightly lower costs per child, particularly in a community setting, and a higher balance of children cared for in the community.



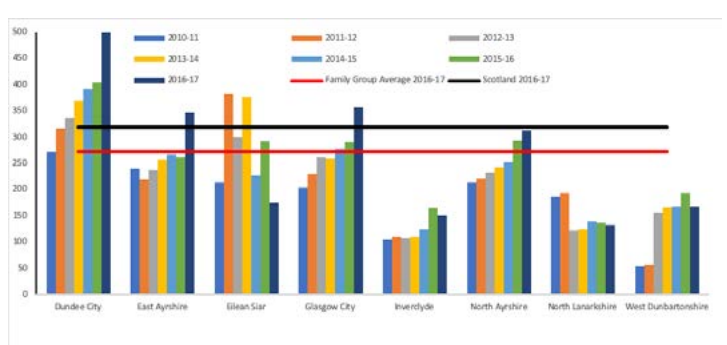
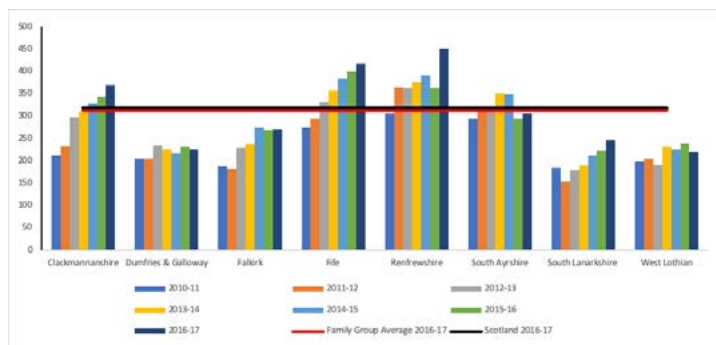
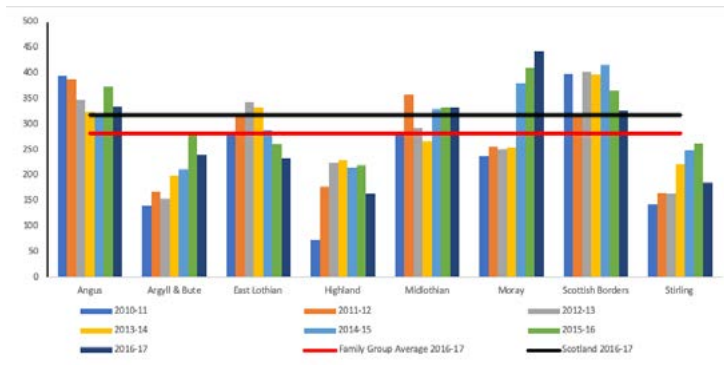
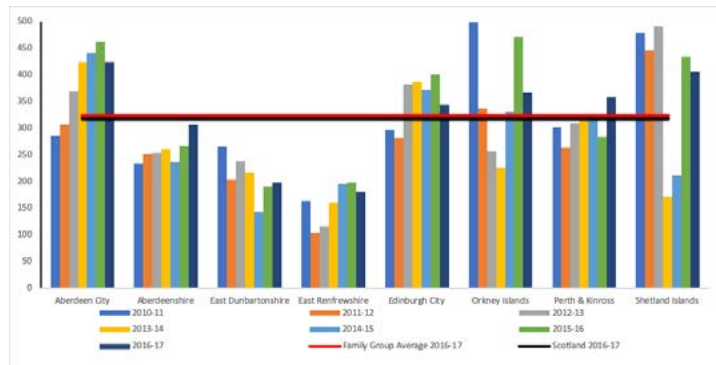
Both costs per place and the overall balance of care vary between councils. Costs range from £1800 - £9096 (per week) per child looked after in a residential setting (£1800 - £4722 excluding outliers), and £133 to £537 weekly in a community setting. The balance of care ranges from 78% to 95%.

Variation is presented below by Family Group (grouped by level of deprivation). Family Groups with higher levels of deprivation tend to have slightly lower costs per child, particularly in a community setting, and a higher balance of children cared for in the community.

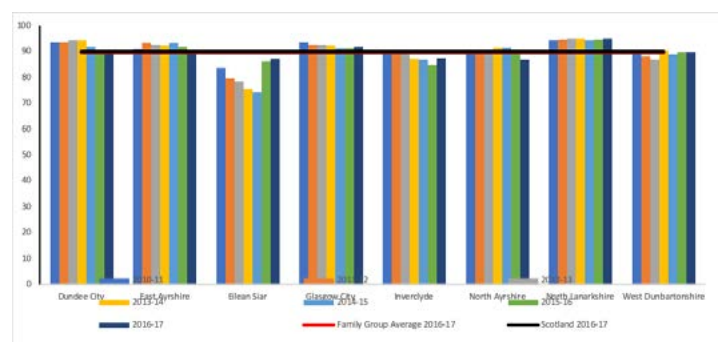
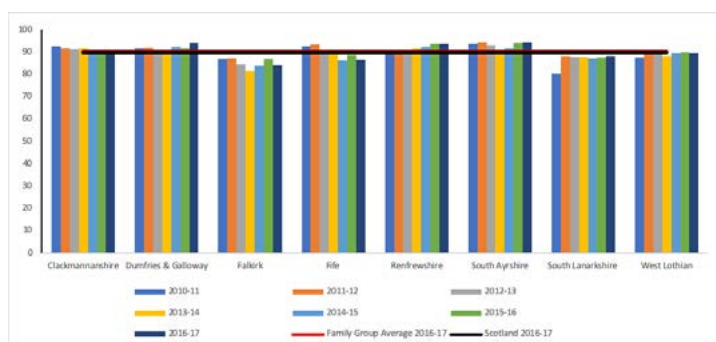
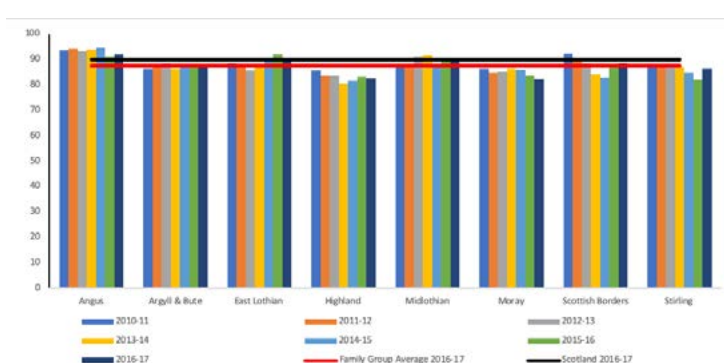
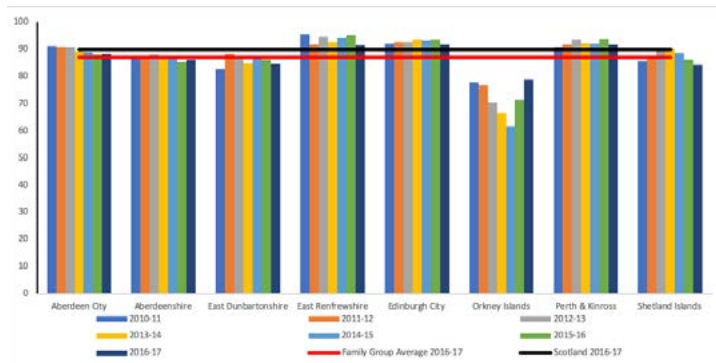
Cost per child in a community setting – variation by Family Group



Cost per child in a community setting – variation by Family Group



Balance of Care - Percentage of all LAC who are looked after in a community setting



Work within Family Groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the local variation between authorities in expenditure for looked after children:

- Capacity in relation to local fostering provision
- Commissioning approaches and reliance on external placements
- Strategic priority and investment in early intervention programmes, such as Family Group Decision making, intensive wrap around and community support
- Voluntary/informal provision for children at the edges of care

Reduce usage of external provision

There are different fees and rates for adoption and fostering carers and the rates of the fees relate to the carers' level of skill and registration. Also, the rates of allowance vary according to the child's age. The fee refers to the carer's income for fostering and does not need to be spent on the child. The allowance covers the cost of providing for the child in order to meet his or her everyday needs.

East Lothian council has recently reorganised its fee structure in order to match that of their primary peer group, with the aim to bring back children who are currently placed with a private provider or another Local authority as this is expensive. At East Lothian there are currently two fee structures, one for children aged 0-12 and one for those beyond 12 years of age.

Dundee City is considering uptaking the same approach however, questions have been raised about the criteria for fostering carers, about what is reasonable and what is above and beyond. In some cases, children can have extreme violent behaviour or autism.

Education and universal services

East Lothian is committed to ensuring that all care experienced children and young people receive vital support to improve their life experiences and educational outcomes. Recently, the council has appointed a virtual headteacher to head a virtual school championing the needs of care experienced pupils across the sectors and through close working with schools, agencies, parents and carers. The virtual headteacher is responsible for the development and implementation of an authority-wide programme to bring about improvements in the educational attainment and achievement of care experienced pupils. Additionally, the role of the headteacher will be to develop processes to improve the means of gathering and scrutinising educational data and put in place strategies to use the data to inform effective interventions.

East Lothian have been working with the private provider called Love Learning to raise attainment and encourage children who are not attending school to go. Love Learning teach kids numeracy and literacy skills and as well as that they can help children build soft skills e.g. going shopping.

It is said that children that do not like school either because they have been out of school for too long and haven't formed any relationships or because of their parents had a negative experience with school and are now passing it on to their children. To address this at **Dundee** parents are actively involved with social work and are made to feel a part of a community. In **East Ayrshire** parents are also involved in things such as homework club, social club etc.

In **East Lothian** there has been a shift in the management structure. Children's Services had been placed with the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) however, it was later decided that this option is not feasible and that children's services will go back to being council led. A similar thing has happened at **Dumfries and Galloway** where children's services were placed together with social work however, the two are not going through decoupling.

Dumfries and Galloway council have an attainment team for their Looked After Children (LAC). The attainment team is based within the Education department. There are also champions deployed within schools, their purpose is to raise the profile of the attainment team.

Education and universal services & edge of care

Agreement from all council representatives at table two that literacy and numeracy levels for LAC are very low. In addition, some youngsters do not get an assessment until they are about 16 years of age. Overall frustration that issues are not picked up earlier on in the process.

At **Perth and Kinross** two speech and language therapists have been recruited, they carry out speech and language screening for all kids who are at the edge of care.

Edge of care

Dundee have found that a tiny majority have had 300 children take in to care. From June 2019, Dundee will start delivering the Pause programme. The programme, which started in London, offers intensive counselling and support if they go on long-term contraception. Pause has been shown to be effective in England and Wales. Elected Members in Dundee were concerned at first that this would be seen as enforced contraception but the programme is voluntary. Dundee is working on this with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the programme has 3-year funding. Dundee have committed that if Pause is successful they will find further funding from the core budget. This will give the programme more long-term security.

www.pause.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-48366337

www.dundeeecity.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=3338

Edinburgh have found their early intervention work, including work around vulnerable pregnancies, drug use in pregnancies, and young mothers, has led to more children being able to stay with their mothers.

Edinburgh used the Early Intervention Change Fund to invest in family group decision making, where a coordinator meets with the family and gives them private time together to talk about concerns and come up with a plan to help children to remain at home or within the family. There has been continued investment in this programme because there is evidence that shows it makes a difference.

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20100/support_for_families/217/family_meetings

End of Journey/Continuing Care

East Lothian and **North Ayrshire** both work with Blue Triangle. Blue Triangle was established in 1975 by the office bearers of YWCA to become their housing arm of the YWCA and manage their hostel properties. The Association eventually split from YWCA and became its own legal identity in around 1991. Up until 1992 Blue Triangle was only available in Glasgow however, it then started to expand into other local authority areas. Blue Triangle run community cafés, provide literacy and numeracy support, and provide access to training, employment, health and housing.

Dumfries and Galloway use supported lodgings schemes. Supported lodgings schemes offer one kind of supported accommodation option for young people, including those leaving care, at risk of or experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. Some schemes also cater for young parents with babies. Supported lodgings schemes tend to accommodate 16-25 year olds, though many focus on 'younger young people' (16-18 years or 16-21 years). Schemes are run directly by local authorities or by independent third sector organisations.

Other

At **East Lothian** there are more kids than ever in residential care. The council is aware that this needs to be prevented and are working towards this. There are linkages between the number of kids in residential care and the level of crime in the areas. The council have reported a spike in the number of children in residential care, following this the police have reported a reduction in crimes such as robbery.

The council commented on the cost of keeping a child in secure accommodation and spoke of a case where a child had been involved in a trial at court. Getting them transported, for a 10-day trial has cost over £200,000 while at the same time the budget was only £150,000. This means the council has already overspent.

Dumfries and Galloway make use of a centralised referral and matching system which was developed over the last few years. If someone needs a placement then they are matched and placement planning and introductory meetings take place.

At **Perth and Kinross** there is a fostering team with a high number of senior practitioners – placement matches for carers are carefully planned and a lot of consideration goes into them. For long term fostering placement, this involved a degree of resource planning which can be challenging.

Dumfries and Galloway employ intensive family support to reduce LAC, formed with anti-poverty money. Currently working with 4/5 families in total. This has worked well so far however, there are questions about the sustainability of this approach.

East Lothian has had a long-standing working relationship with Children First. Children First is Scotland's National Children's charity which helps families put children first. It provides practical advice and supports survivors of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic events in childhood to recover. More information about Children First is available here - <https://www.children1st.org.uk/who-we-are/about-children-1st/>.

Foster care is proving to be a challenge, especially as people leave the organisation. To address this challenge, a senior practitioner has been appointed. The focus of the senior practitioner will be on recruitment. Several campaigns such as advertising on public transport have been organised. In addition, the radio and the press have also been used as another method of communication.

East Dunbartonshire's Children and Families service is now part of the Health and Social Care Partnership but all of its support services are now under Corporate.

Data sharing agreements were highlighted by the group. They acknowledged that data sharing agreements have been difficult to get signed off by their legal teams. **West Lothian** highlighted that data sharing is important and that fears of data protection should not stop the sharing of necessary information.

Dundee are working to train primary teachers to talk to young people and are aware of issues raised by teachers, including that teachers may not be aware of all the relevant services and departments because of restructuring, and that teachers don't feel they have the time to talk and take action from conversations they have with pupils.

Dundee has also agreed to bring all education resources workers into one single team so that they can move around and work in different schools where there is need.

Edinburgh has recognised unaccompanied refugee asylum seekers as an unexpected cost.

West Lothian acknowledged that they have had to overcome conflicting cases in the same spaces, for example girls that have experienced sexual exploitation and boys that have been sexually violent cannot be in the same space, so West Lothian has had to build their capacity and resilience.

Dundee have a triage approach where a coordinator works with third sector to help provide capacity. Over time they hope to move to a digital triage which will monitor early intervention.

Quantifying impact of early intervention

West Lothian highlighted that their work around domestic abuse early intervention had been working well but acknowledged that it is difficult to quantify the impact of early years intervention. **Edinburgh** agreed with this and felt that a lot of early intervention services had been cut because it is difficult to maintain support when impact is hard to quantitate. Edinburgh feel that their GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child) approach is working well but it is difficult to evidence.

West Lothian are closing family centres and have brought several teams together to be one Early Intervention Team.

West Lothian acknowledged Scottish Government's investment in early intervention, including funding in mental health and the Pupil Equity Fund. Dundee agreed and added the importance of the Early Learning and Childcare expansion.