

Tackling Inequalities, Trauma and Adversity across the Lifespan: Mapping Cross-Cutting Agendas



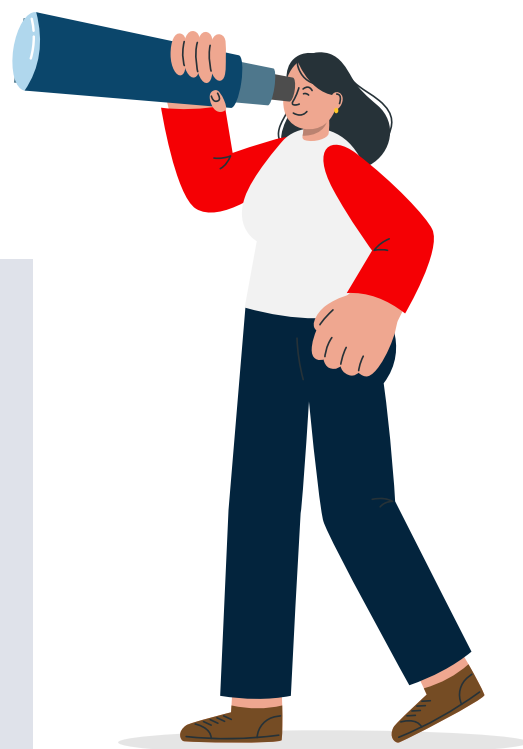
Introduction

Scotland's vision for the future is centred on improving outcomes for people who are more likely to experience poorer outcomes because of experiences of inequalities, trauma and adversity. The Scottish Government and COSLA have made clear commitments to embedding and promoting equalities and human rights. National strategies and commitments to change are set out in a number of strategies and approaches, including the Equally Safe strategy, the intention to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law, the Promise and the National Trauma Training Programme (NTTP), and wider Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty legislation. These key strategic priorities seek to improve equalities, uphold the human rights of children, young people and adults, and tackle the impacts of and, ultimately, eradicate violence, abuse, adversity and trauma across the lifespan.

Local authorities and the range of community planning partners have a key role to play in embedding these strategic priorities to support improved outcomes for individuals, families and local communities. At the local level, local authorities and planning partners are at the front and centre of delivering services to ensure those who need it can access support and have positive experiences of services and systems, and ultimately experience improved outcomes across education, health, employment, justice and wellbeing, among others. While many examples of positive joined-up working exist, it can be easy for policy siloes to appear, which run the risk of losing opportunities to maximise resources, skills and capacity.

This short paper explores how a small number of key cross-cutting agendas to tackle inequality, trauma and adversity can be aligned at the local level to maximise commitment and resources available. The paper aims to:

- ▶ Highlight how the strategic priorities noted above strengthen and support one another in improving outcomes for individuals, families and local communities and in tackling inequalities, adversity and trauma;
- ▶ Illustrate common approaches/activities across these strategic priorities that can strengthen and support local delivery and implementation of each of the priorities; and
- ▶ Strengthen understanding of what good will look like locally if these strategic priorities are embedded in key community planning priority areas.



Underpinning approaches and shared values

All of these national strategic priorities are deeply interlinked and should be considered together as part of a broader ambition to improve the outcomes of individuals and communities across Scotland, and to tackle inequalities, adversity and trauma in all of their forms. A children’s rights-based approach (UNCRC), a gendered approach (Equally Safe), a trauma-informed approach (NTTP), and “building a country that cares” around children in and on the edges of care (The Promise) all provide vital and complementary ways and expertise of understanding the gaps, challenges and strengths of current systems and what is required to improve outcomes for various populations (e.g., children and young people, women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence, people who have experienced psychological trauma, people with care experience). These are set within a broader policy and legislative landscape that includes priorities to reduce poverty, reduce inequality (in respect of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act (2010)) and a just transition in our efforts to mitigate and tackle climate change.¹ These strategic priorities cannot be implemented or realised without the others. The key principles and objectives of each strategic priority are outlined in Appendix 2.



KEY EXAMPLE

The UNCRC seeks to embed a child rights-based approach across all public services to ensure that children’s rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in Scotland. A children’s rights approach places real value on the voice of the child in decisions that affect them, reflecting trauma-informed principles of choice and empowerment. A child rights-based approach empowers children to know and understand their rights and places obligations on local government to ensure they are accountable for the integration of children’s rights into policy and practice. It is also built on the premise of non-discrimination. Therefore professionals need to have a sound understanding of how, for example, gender inequality might impact on the realisation of children’s rights or how a child with an experience of care may face additional barriers to accessing services to meet their needs in different contexts.

When considering these cross-cutting agendas, it is important that we do not lose sight of the evidence, expertise and specifics of these different approaches. This

1. Taken from East Lothian Council paper

is because they focus on particular experiences and contexts of people's lives, such as inequalities caused by gender, race, and other protected characteristics, as well as particular experiences of trauma and adversity, like poverty or domestic abuse.

However, underpinning all of these strategies are common principles that aim to help improve outcomes for people across the lifespan affected by inequalities, trauma and adversity, including:

- ▶ Empowering adults and children to understand their rights and to ensure that they have a voice in decisions that affect them;
- ▶ Developing trusting and empowering relationships with professionals, informal support networks and community support, that foster feelings of safety, choice and collaboration;
- ▶ Working with rather than “doing to” children, young people and adults, and recognising the importance of people's voices and participation in decisions that impact their lives;
- ▶ Recognising, children, young people and adults' individual and unique needs, circumstances and experiences, including protected characteristics; and
- ▶ Recognising the impact of those needs, circumstances and experiences on accessing support and life chances, ensuring support is centred around people's needs and developing proactive approaches to removing barriers to support and life chances.



KEY EXAMPLE

A family impacted by domestic abuse might encounter a number of local services and professionals. They may interact with specialist violence against women services, social work services, health teams, housing services, education and benefits services, among many others. In order to respond effectively to the support needs of that family, services will require understandings which cut across all four of the strategic priorities mapped here. For example, they will need to be informed by the various ways that domestic abuse can be perpetrated and affect family functioning; be able to respond in ways which recognise how, for the survivor, their experiences of trauma might create feelings of powerlessness, uncertainty and lack of trust in services and professionals; and understand and accommodate the impact that domestic abuse and unstable home environments can have on children, their safety and wellbeing, and their ability to have their voice heard and considered in decision making about their care.

Core to all of these strategic priorities is the need to ensure that the workforce is safe, supported and well. It is recognised that in order for these strategic priorities to be effectively and sustainably implemented, staff need to feel that they are equipped with the emotional, physical and professional resiliency required to work to the best of their abilities. Services and teams require cultures of compassion, safety and consistency. Leaders need to feel authorised and empowered to create safe and supportive working environments that are built first and foremost upon positive staff wellbeing.



What can help facilitate change?

The ambition to support children, young people and adults affected by inequalities, trauma and adversity in Scotland to reach their potential and experience improved outcomes is at the heart of services delivered by local authorities and their community planning partners. To fully realise the changes identified by the UNCRC, Equally Safe, The Promise and the National Trauma Training Programme requires leadership and a coordinated approach across services and partners and a commitment to meaningful empowerment and participation of adults, children and young people. The following are core elements that can facilitate the long-term change that is needed to support the ambitions of these agendas:

- ▶ The **leadership** required at all levels, across all services and sectors, to drive forward this culture change and create an authorising environment to build on what works and, where needed, to do things differently;
- ▶ A focus on **longer term culture change that embeds relational and values-based ways of working**;
- ▶ Strengthening workforce and leaders' understanding of the **prevalence and impact of inequalities, adversity and trauma**, and how these issues intersect;
- ▶ Messaging about the key role that **everyone across all sectors and services has to play** in supporting these strategic ambitions, at both strategic and operational levels;
- ▶ The **centrality of lived experience and participation** in terms of shaping strategic decisions, ongoing service design and feedback loops, and the importance of ensuring that children, young people and adults have a voice in decisions that affect them;
- ▶ Clear communication that these **strategic priorities build on existing good practice**, rather than “new” ways of working;
- ▶ The need to understand **what data and information** we are collecting, why we are collecting it, how it is used to inform decision making and identifying gaps in our knowledge;
- ▶ The **development and training** opportunities needed by the workforce to ensure they feel they have the **skills, knowledge and confidence** to understand their role in delivering these strategic ambitions; and
- ▶ Robust and meaningful approaches to **workforce wellbeing** to ensure staff feel well, safe and supported.

Taking it forward locally

Each local authority and their partners will develop their own unique approach to taking these strategic agendas forward. The following questions may help to align agendas and find a coherent approach across your work:

- ▶ Do leaders understand and articulate the commonalities across the agendas?
- ▶ Are local strategies/implementation plans linked and aligned, e.g., by showing common objectives or outcomes?
- ▶ Do overarching local strategies, such as the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), have explicit commitments to the overarching outcomes desired and then directly link to these specific strategic agendas?
- ▶ What opportunities are there for local leads for each of the agendas to work together to support a joined-up approach? How might leads be able to collaborate on similar activities that support these strategic agendas; for example, workforce mapping/ training needs, joint awareness raising sessions, joint reviews of policies/ procedures, considerations around power sharing with people with lived experience?
- ▶ How might taking the lens of one approach support the other? E.g., taking a trauma-informed lens to children's services? What tools and mechanisms can support this work, e.g., Equality Impact Assessments, Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessments?
- ▶ What operational and strategic forums might be helpful for discussing these agendas together locally?
- ▶ What communication mechanisms are in place to share learning and updates on local work for these strategic agendas? Do the leads for each of the strategic agendas have a shared understanding of respective roles?
- ▶ Are there opportunities to pool resources to support shared activities and objectives across these agendas?



What will 'good' look like?

The following table offers a high-level overview of what good will look like if the UNCRC, Equally Safe, The Promise and a trauma-informed approach are embedded in key community planning priority areas in every local area in Scotland. It is intended to offer a shared vision that leaders within these areas can work towards achieving, both individually and collectively, contributing to partners' overall vision of creating more equal, safe and prosperous local areas.

Education and Early Years

National Outcome: We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

- Education settings promote a strong understanding of positive gender roles and healthy equal relationships from an early age
- Boys and girls supported to engage in educational pathways and careers where their gender is currently under-represented
- Children's rights are integrated into learning environments, staff are knowledgeable about those rights, and children have opportunities to learn about their rights
- Education settings promote children's emotional and mental wellbeing
- We all have a clear understanding of how trauma and adversity can impact children's development, education and relationships
- Recognising that experiences of care may impact attainment, every child in care has appropriate support for educational needs
- The cost of the school day is reduced and parents are supported to know where financial support is available, e.g. access to free school meals

Children's Services

National Outcome: We grow up safe, loved and respected so that we reach our full potential

- Where children have experienced gender-based violence, trauma and adversity, identification and interventions are early and effective, preventing further harm and maximising their safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- Children are able to live free of abuse physical or mental violence, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation

- Children have the ability and space to express their views, and the decision-making process takes into account their views, respecting the individuality and best interests of the child
- Families are supported stay together when safe, and where living with their family is not possible, children stay with their brothers and sisters when it is safe
- Children have a standard of living that is adequate for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development, and they have access to rest and play, and can participate freely in cultural life
- Children seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee receives appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance

Adult Protection

National Outcomes:

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

- Where people have experienced trauma and adversity, including women experiencing gender-based violence, identification and interventions are early and effective and joined up, preventing further harm and maximising their safety and wellbeing

Physical Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

National Outcome: We are healthy and active

- All women, children and young people benefit from positive mental health and wellbeing, and physical health, and are supported to understand basic health care, including family planning
- Women and girls with mental health and wellbeing needs, including those caused and compounded by gender-based violence, receive the right support, at the right time and in the right setting
- People who have experienced trauma and adversity have access to support as early as possible, recognising that those experiences may lead to poorer mental and physical health outcomes
- Children are supported to be able to access play, rest and food
- Decisions made about children's physical and mental health always account for the child's views
- Children with care experience are supported to have positive overall health across dental, physical, mental and sexual health
- Children with care experience have access to timely and flexible mental health support if they need it

- Disabled children enjoy a full life and are treated with dignity, self reliance is promoted and full participation in their community is supported. Access to education, training and health care are designed to allow the child to achieve the fullest possible integration and individual development

Alcohol and Drug Use

National Outcome: We are healthy and active

- Women and girls affected by drug and alcohol use, which may be caused or compounded by experiences of gender-based violence, receive the right support, at the right time and in the right setting
- Children are protected from substance use and there is a recognition that substance use can negatively impact children's rights. For children affected by substance use, there can be additional barriers to being heard and participating in decision-making and there are proactive measures in place to address this
- A trauma-informed approach is taken to engaging with and supporting people who may be using alcohol and drugs as a coping strategy for recent, historic or ongoing experiences of trauma and adversity
- For families where there is alcohol and drug use, there is support to help them stay together where it is safe to do so

Housing and Homelessness

National Outcome: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

- All women and girls benefit from a safe and warm place they can call home
- Experiences of trauma, adversity and gender-based violence, such as domestic abuse, are recognised as a key driver of homelessness in Scotland
- All children have access to proper housing and are not made homeless, and parents and carers have access to financial and other support to ensure children have an adequate standard of living
- All children with care experience have access to appropriate housing pathways and access to stable housing

Employability and Economic Outcomes

National Outcomes:

We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone

We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

- All women are supported to achieve their full economic potential
- Employability strategies recognise and respond to additional barriers that women may experience in engaging with employment opportunities, including caring responsibilities
- Employability strategies recognise and respond to additional barriers that people who have experienced trauma and adversity may experience in engaging with employment opportunities
- All children and young people, including those with care experience, have access to education and training in order to improve their future employability and economic prospects
- Children and young people are protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work which interferes with their education or is harmful to their health

Community Justice and Safety

National Outcome: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

- Women and girls feel safe in their communities
- Community Justice strategies and interventions recognise that a high number of people in the criminal justice system have experienced trauma, adversity and gender-based violence, and support is in place to meet their recovery needs
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse and other forms of gender-based violence are identified at an early stage and are held to account for, and supported to change, their behaviours.
- Children live free from violence and abuse
- Children involved with offending and/or antisocial behaviour are supported in a way which is informed by a children's rights based approach with their dignity, needs and views being central to this support

Poverty and Inequality

National Outcome: We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally

- Strategies to tackle poverty and inequality recognise how women are disproportionately affected by these issues and identify clear actions to improve outcomes for women
- Children have access to adequate food, clothing and housing
- Strategies to tackle child poverty recognise the six priority groups who are most likely to experience child poverty and identify actions to improve outcomes for these groups²
- Universal, non-stigmatising services for families are available in order to support and assist families sensitively where poverty is an underlying problem, to help provide the right support at the right time

Corporate

National Outcomes:

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone

- Everyone across the workforce feel safe, supported and able to achieve their full potential.
- Sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence are not tolerated by employers and there are robust processes in place to prevent and address violence against women in the work environment.
- Employers recognise the prevalence and potential impact of trauma on their staff, and there are proactive and reactive responses in place to support workforce wellbeing
- Human rights, including children's rights, are understood across the organisation and explicit commitments are made to use maximum resources available to uphold and advance rights
- Organisations are, or are working to, close any gender pay gaps and be Living Wage employers

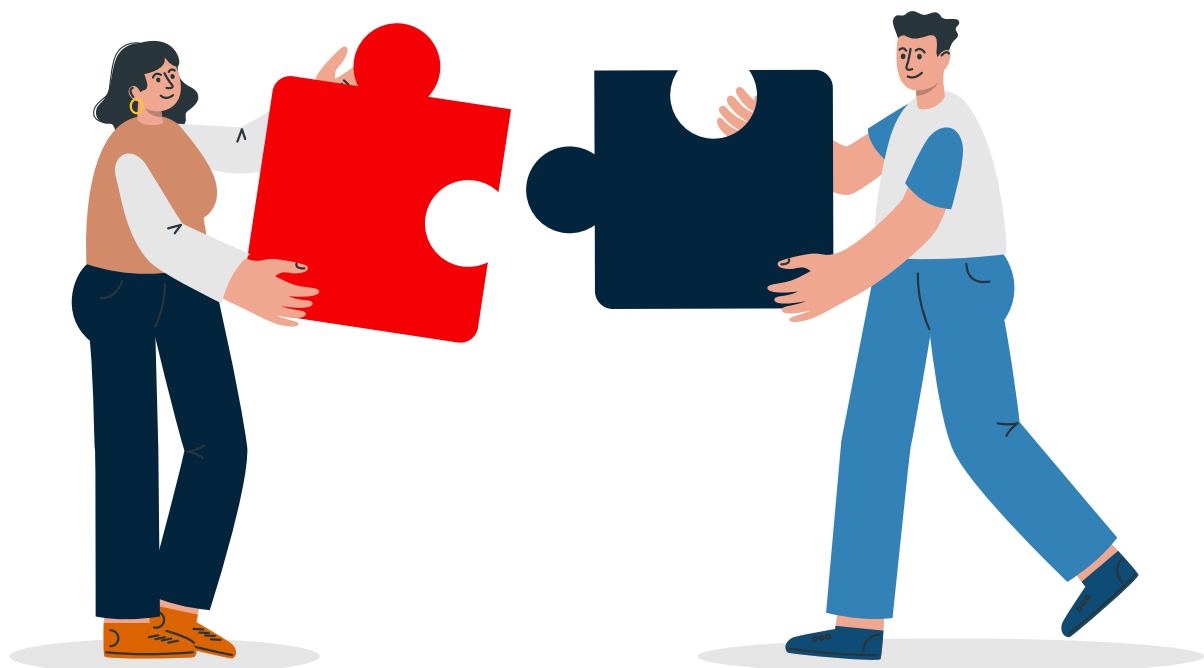
1. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-poverty-priority-families-overview/>

Help and support

The Improvement Service provides a range of support, tools and resources that can support you in your work on these agendas.

For more information and support please contact:

- ▶ **Adopting trauma-informed approaches:** laura.james@improvementservice.org.uk
- ▶ **UNCRC Implementation Project:** rebecca.spillane@improvementservice.org.uk
- ▶ **Equally Safe:** joanna.mclaughlin@improvementservice.org.uk
- ▶ **Equalities and the Fairer Scotland Duty:** miriam.mckenna@improvementservice.org.uk



Appendix 1: The national context

The [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all and they address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, peace and justice. The goals are interdependent and no one goal is more important than another. Importantly these goals can inform policy development and ensure a balanced and sustainable recovery out of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In Scotland, the [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#) articulates how the SDGs are taken forward. The NPF is Scotland's way to localise the SDGs. The NPF sets out 11 National Outcomes to which relevant SDGs are mapped. Each National Outcome has associated indicators which are tracked and publicly reported on. Key indicators in the context of this paper include:

- ▶ We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- ▶ We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- ▶ We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- ▶ We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- ▶ We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- ▶ We are healthy and active
- ▶ We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

The four strategic priorities included in this paper are:

[Equally Safe](#) (2016, refreshed 2018), a joint Scottish Government and COSLA strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls in Scotland. Multi-agency Violence Against Women Partnerships are the local engine for implementing and delivering Equally Safe.

[The National Trauma Training Programme](#), led by NHS Education for Scotland, supports the Scottish Government and COSLA's ambition to develop a trauma-informed and responsive workforce and services across Scotland to improve outcomes for people affected by psychological trauma and adversity.

[The Promise](#), Scotland's route map to developing transformational change across

Scotland's care system for children and young people, based on the findings of the Independent Care Review in 2020.

[The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) is the internationally mandated children's rights treaty that informs our strategies and programmes. It sets out the rights that all children and young people in the UK have and outlines what children need to give them the best chance of growing up happy, healthy and safe. The Scottish Government has committed to the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law and the UNCRC Implementation (Scotland) Bill is currently going through the reconsideration stage of the Scottish Parliament and is anticipated to come into force in 2023.

Appendix 2: Key principles and objectives of each strategic priority

The Promise – Anyone with experience of the care system	NTTP – Anyone affected by psychological trauma and adversity	Equally Safe – All women, children and young people	The UNCRC – All children
<p>Voice - Children and young people must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need.</p> <p>Family - Where children are safe in their families and feel love they must stay. Families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.</p> <p>Care - Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their siblings where safe to do so, and belong</p>	<p>Realising how common the experience of trauma and adversity is</p> <p>Recognising the different ways that trauma can affect people</p> <p>Responding by taking account of the ways that people can be affected by trauma to support recovery</p> <p>Opportunities to resist re-traumatisation and offer a greater sense of choice and trust, empowerment, collaboration and safety with everyone that you have contact with</p> <p>Recognising the central importance of Relationships.</p>	<p>Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls</p> <p>Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically</p> <p>Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people</p> <p>Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response</p>	<p>The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children’s rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children. The UNCRC set out children’s rights in a way which recognises that children are more vulnerable and need special protection.</p> <p>Under the terms of the convention, governments are required to meet children’s basic needs and help them reach their full potential. Central to this is the acknowledgment that every child has basic fundamental rights. These are called the general principles and include the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Not to be discriminated against (Article 2)

The Promise – Anyone with experience of the care system	NTTP – Anyone affected by psychological trauma and adversity	Equally Safe – All women, children and young people	The UNCRC – All children
<p>to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.</p> <p>People - Children must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ have their best interests accounted for as a primary consideration (Article 3) ▶ have the right to survive and develop (Article 6) ▶ have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously (Article 12)

