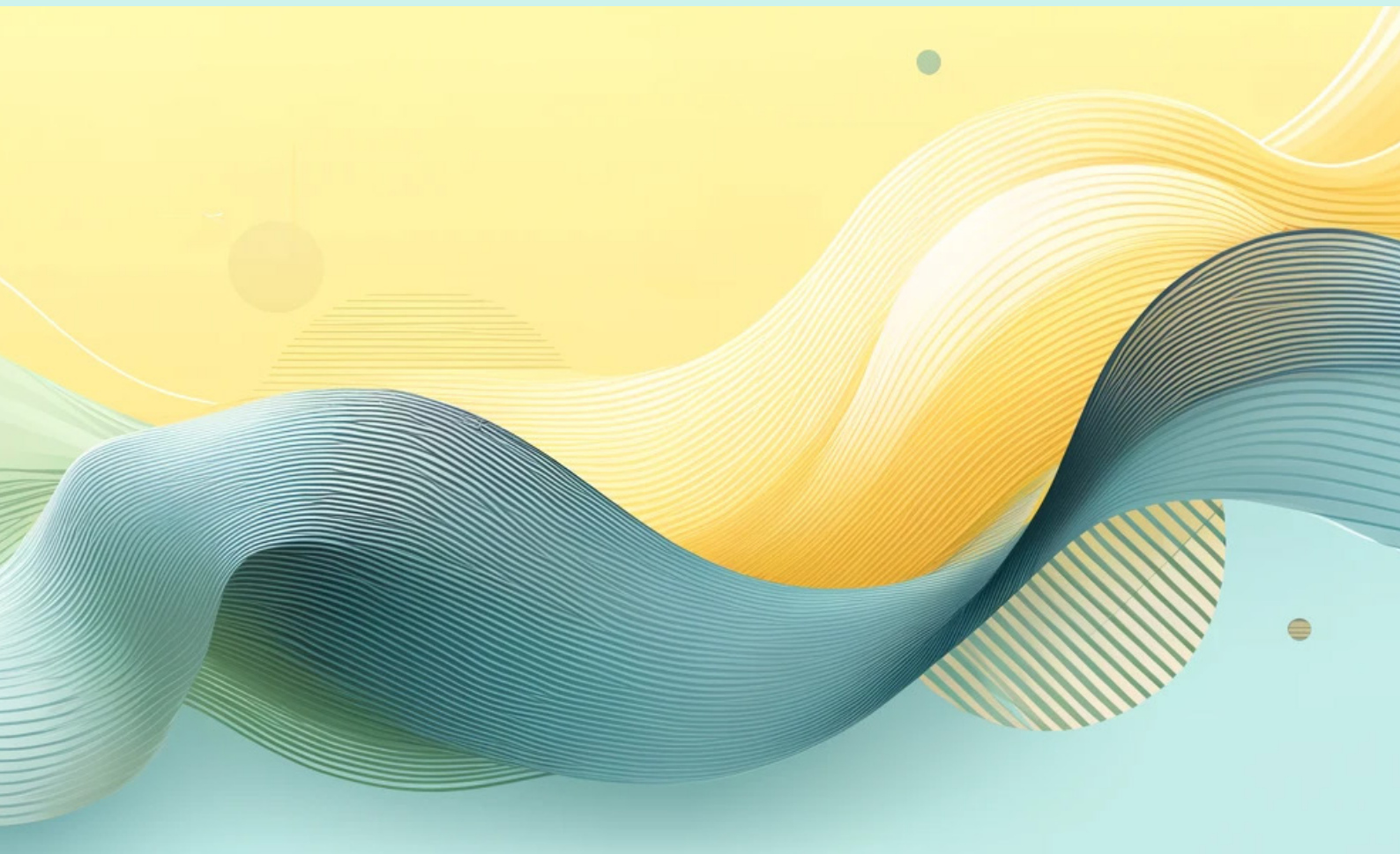


Thematic Learning from Fairer Futures Partnerships

2025/26, Q3 and Q4



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Thematic Learning from Fairer Futures Partnerships (2025/26, Q3 and Q4)

Summary of learning from 2025/26

Fairer Futures Partnerships (FFPs) currently provide reports to the Scottish Government every quarter, focusing on key progress, learning and challenges, drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence and intelligence. The Improvement Service (IS) is developing bi-annual reports to collate this learning on an iterative and ongoing basis. These are not designed to be exhaustive, but rather provide a snapshot of learning from the last few months. Below is a summary of learning from FFPs over 2025/26 (Q1-4).



Ingredients for success for FFPs in designing and delivering place-based, targeted tests of change to tackle child poverty.

- ✿ Using specific hooks and adapting support to engage families.
- ✿ Meaningful and robust power sharing with people with lived experience in service design and community-led solutions. This includes developing feedback loops with families and taking different approaches to co-design.
- ✿ Collaboration and partnership working across community planning partners, particularly the third sector. Strengthened partnership working has increased referrals and improved access to services. Developing tangible mechanisms to bring together colleagues and services helps strengthen understanding of the FFP work.
- ✿ Developing directories of local support.
- ✿ Welcoming, inclusive spaces make a difference.
- ✿ Supporting and training the workforce to strengthen resilience and empathy.
- ✿ Ensuring services can take a flexible, adaptable and proactive approach to supporting families, and strengthening referral pathways across statutory and third sector services.



System-wide strategic enablers for success for FFPs.

- ✿ Leaders' buy-in and commitment is crucial, as is leaders' willingness to adopt different leadership approaches and the development of clear governance approaches. Meaningful leadership commitment continues to be vital for maintaining momentum.
- ✿ Taking a joined-up approach across workstreams/policy areas that have alignment around the common goals of prevention, reform and systems change, highlighting that FFP work is supporting these existing, broader ambitions rather than being a standalone intervention/project.

- ✧ Sustained investment in change capacity and sense making of the current system, rather than adding on this work to people's day jobs, and a commitment to systematically embed a learning approach in this work.
- ✧ FFPs are increasingly reporting into wider local governance mechanisms, which provides opportunities for strategic collaboration, strengthening awareness of the FFP and influencing wider systems change.
- ✧ Clarity around the FFP's shared vision is crucial for ongoing development and buy-in.
- ✧ Sharing learning across FFPs and working with external/ independent learning partners brings a new lens and expertise to the FFP work.
- ✧ Using data to be more precise about where to prioritise activity and focus, and identifying better uses of existing data.
- ✧ Developing clear methodologies for approaching this work, including logic models, outcomes/evaluation frameworks, and identifying ways of sharing progress and impact.



Challenges and barriers for FFPs in designing and delivering place-based, targeted tests of change to tackle child poverty.

- ✧ Development of case management/ data sharing systems continues to create challenges.
- ✧ There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to co-design work. This requires time to progress, which can be challenging within short-term funding cycles.
- ✧ Practical, operational challenges, including recruitment delays and third sector constraints.
- ✧ The impact of stigma on families accessing support.



System-wide strategic barriers and challenges for FFPs.

- ✧ Developing a consistent approach to evidencing the impact of preventative work.
- ✧ Pace is vital for sustainability and meaningful change.
- ✧ The complexity of the funding, policy and reporting landscape creates silos, competition, duplication, and confusion.

- ∴ Balancing short-term national performance demands with the need for long-term transformational change, creating resource strain and conflicting priorities. Short-term priorities and targets can use a lot of management, project and information resource, leaving less available for the longer-term systems change work. Challenges around workforce capacity and wellbeing means it is often difficult to prioritise activity that supports prevention, systems change and reform work.
- ∴ The complexity of the data landscape can be challenging, in terms of gathering and coordinating data collection across services, along with gaps in the data. However, quantitative data also only tells part of the story.
- ∴ Articulating the aims and ambitions of the FFP work within the broader narrative of systems change and public service reform.



Key recommendations based on learning so far.

- ∴ Continued national support and momentum around data sharing work.
- ∴ Long-term sustainable funding to support long-term transformation, and sustainable change capacity.
- ∴ Support to share learning and approaches.
- ∴ Simplifying the strategic landscape.

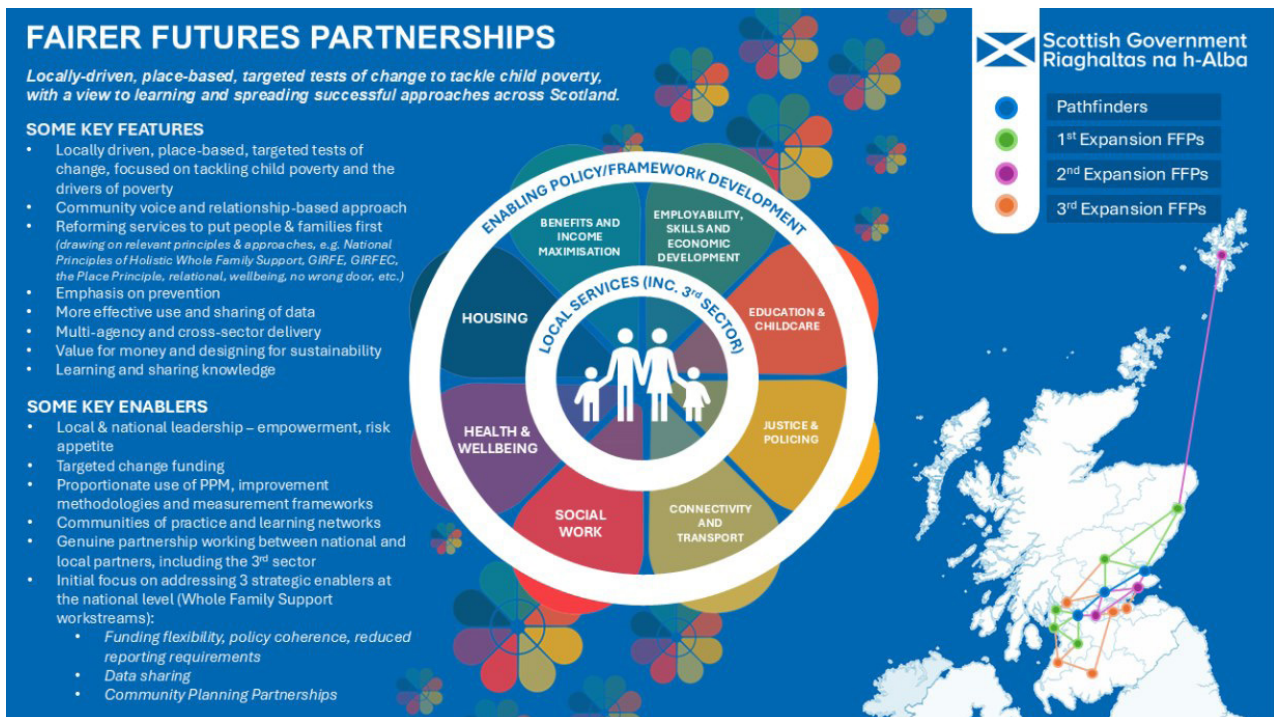
Read [further learning and insight from FFPs](#).

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Background and context

Fairer Futures Partnerships (FFPs) are locally driven, place-based, targeted tests of change to tackle child poverty, with a view to learning and spreading successful approaches across Scotland. There are now 16 FFPs across Scotland.



Aims of this report

FFPs currently provide reports to the Scottish Government every quarter, focusing on key progress, learning and challenges, drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence and intelligence. FFPs also meet regularly with the Scottish Government, working in partnership to share learning, focusing particularly on what is needed from national government to create the conditions for successful and sustainable work locally.

The Improvement Service (IS) provides a range of opportunities to bring together FFPs to [share learning](#) and provide peer support.

Working in partnership with FFPs and the Scottish Government, the IS is developing bi-annual reports to collate this learning on an iterative and ongoing basis. These are not designed to be exhaustive or provide a detailed overview of each FFP's activity, but rather provide a snapshot of learning from the last few months. These short reports are designed to:

- Share learning around what's working well, and the barriers and enablers in terms of designing and delivering place-based, targeted tests of change;
- Share learning around what's supporting broader systems change work, and the key enablers, areas of progress and barriers FFPs are identifying;
- Share examples of good practice and celebrate successes;
- Make recommendations from FFPs' learning around what's needed to support sustainably progressing and embedding place-based approaches to tackling child poverty, wider systems change and public service reform; and
- Contribute learning to inform relevant work, such as whole family support, public service reform and tackling child poverty, across the Scottish Government, key national stakeholders and the range of community planning partners.

View [learning from pervious quarters](#).

While the focus of all FFPs is to test place-based approaches to tackling child poverty, FFPs are taking different approaches based on local priorities, need and context. Some areas are focusing intensively on broader strategic systems change work; others are focusing on testing specific service delivery models that prioritise prevention, integrated support and community engagement; while others are progressing a mix of both. An [overview of each FFP approach](#) can be found here. Some FFPs will not have started to submit quarterly reports so their learning will be included in future synthesis reports.

FFPs are all at different stages with this work; some have been progressing for a number of years while others are just starting. The findings and learning in this report are not intended to compare local areas against each other, nor do we report here on quantitative progress (e.g., numbers of families supported) as this is unhelpful without local context. Instead, the

aim is to understand key learning, themes and priorities across FFPs in relation to advancing and embedding place-based tests of change that tackle child poverty, and progressing wider systems change and public service reform through the lens of child poverty.

Audience

- All FFPs across Scotland, Adopt & Adapt partners, and other key community planning partners, including the third sector, focused on tackling child poverty, prevention, whole systems change and public service reform.
- The Scottish Government and Scottish Ministers, COSLA and key national partners with a role to play in supporting FFPs sustainably embed their approaches and tackle child poverty.



Key learning

Fairer Futures Partnerships are increasingly being articulated as the work of doing public service reform in the context of tackling child poverty. This report takes this lens and focuses on the opportunities/ enablers and barriers/ challenges of systems change work that aims to prioritise prevention, whole family support and an evidence-driven place-based approach to tackling child poverty. The learning is intended to be broadly applicable across broader public service reform work. FFPs can be seen as blueprints for ways of approaching public service reform to tackle systemic inequalities. They are certainly not the only way and there is much still to achieve, but they provide a practical “in” to starting somewhere with an often complex and opaque ambition.



Ingredients for success for FFPs

- ⌘ Using specific hooks and adapting support to engage families.
- ⌘ Developing feedback loops with families and taking different approaches to co-design.
- ⌘ Developing directories of local support.
- ⌘ Strengthened partnership working has increased referrals and improved access to services.
- ⌘ Welcoming, inclusive spaces make a difference.
- ⌘ Meaningful leadership commitment continues to be vital for maintaining momentum.
- ⌘ Developing tangible mechanisms to bring together colleagues and services helps strengthen understanding of the FFP work.
- ⌘ FFPs are increasingly reporting into wider local governance mechanisms, which provides opportunities for strategic collaboration, strengthening awareness of the FFP and influencing wider systems change.
- ⌘ Clarity around the FFP’s shared vision is crucial for ongoing development and buy-in.
- ⌘ Sharing learning across FFPs and working with external/ independent learning partners brings a new lens and expertise to the FFP work.
- ⌘ Identifying better uses of data.



Challenges and barriers for FFPs

- ⌘ Development of case management/ data sharing systems continues to create challenges.
- ⌘ There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to co-design work. This requires time to progress, which can be challenging within short-term funding cycles.
- ⌘ Practical, operational challenges, including recruitment delays and third sector constraints.
- ⌘ The impact of stigma on families accessing support.
- ⌘ Developing a consistent approach to evidencing the impact of preventative work.
- ⌘ Pace is vital for sustainability and meaningful change.



Key recommendations based on learning so far

- ⌘ Continued national support and momentum around data sharing work.
- ⌘ Long-term sustainable funding to support long-term transformation.
- ⌘ Support to share learning and approaches.

The sections below provide more detail and insight into this thematic learning.

What's working well in terms of designing and delivering place-based, targeted tests of change, designed to tackle child poverty?



Using specific hooks and adapting support to engage families.

Developing feedback loops with families and taking different approaches to co-design.

Developing directories of local support.

Strengthened partnership working has increased referrals and improved access to services.

Welcoming, inclusive spaces make a difference.



Using specific hooks and adapting support to engage families.

- In Inverclyde, existing drop-in models “were not effective, with low uptake despite outreach, highlighting a need to redesign services around how communities engage”. The shift to a place-based, themed events model such as “Living Well in Port Glasgow” has “increased engagement by giving people a clear, relevant reason to attend in a welcoming, non-stigmatising environment”. Food-related initiatives including the Food Pantry and Warm Hands of Friendship, as well as a financial wellbeing event, have been effective in increasing family engagement, and in bringing together partners around a shared outcome, with the community and third sector taking a lead role. “Relationships and trust improved, with more natural, informal engagement enabling access to financial advice and wider support”. This has “increased footfall, improved the quality of engagement, and created more opportunities for meaningful conversations and access to support”, with a model that is now clear and scalable.
- In North Ayrshire, Saltcoats Link Up engaged with families through different events, a Wellness Group and a Christmas Gift Giving project. “They continue to build relationships and trust to develop a good foundation to allow families to feel confident in discussing financial matters”.
- East Ayrshire previously highlighted the “challenge of maintaining continuity of engagement with some families affected by addiction”. To address this, they “piloted virtual meetings via Zoom, which initially proved effective. However, [they] are now encountering barriers due to limited Wi-Fi access caused by financial constraints. With funding from the Digital Lifelines programme, [they] plan to purchase Wi-Fi dongles to ensure families can continue accessing online support. Particularly when their anxiety and depression are at a high. Alongside this, [they] have maintained regular well-being checks through home visits to provide consistent, face-to-face support”.

- West Dunbartonshire highlight that successful employability and wellbeing support was “underpinned by a trauma-informed approach, enabling participants to stabilise their circumstances, build confidence and engage safely with services”. This has supported improved attendance and sustained engagement. In one of their projects, they have adapted their service delivery model to take a more flexible and proactive approach to engagement. This included widening referral routes, strengthening partner relationships, and increasing direct outreach activity in order to build and sustain an appropriate caseload. This shift has been critical in improving both the volume and suitability of participants engaging with the service.
- Edinburgh have extended and mainstreamed “a programme of tests of change focused on cash first approaches to helping people in need, and encouraging engagement with prevention-focused support in the local community”.

North Ayrshire Case Study – “Breakfast and Banter” in Saltcoats

The Parent Wellbeing Group, Breakfast and Banter, has provided a relaxed, informal, and welcoming space for parents to come together, reduce social isolation, and access peer support.

The group has created opportunities for parents to build friendships, contributing to improved confidence and reduced stress. The provision of breakfast helped to remove barriers to attendance and supported those who may have been experiencing financial pressure or food insecurity, while creating a warm, inclusive atmosphere that strengthened peer connection and engagement in wellbeing activities.

This example highlights the importance of building relationships and trust. Investing time in these connections provides the foundations many parents and carers need to open up about their circumstances and allows workers to understand any support needs and help them navigate these.



Developing feedback loops with families and taking different approaches to co-design.

- Dumfries & Galloway have “co-designed a feedback system with keyworkers with lived experience that can be completed with families who are facing challenges accessing services. At the moment this data will be internally captured, but a [form] has also been created so that voices can be raised by families themselves, either supported by the whole family support keyworkers or while we are attending/hosting events and gathering user experience”.
- Dumfries & Galloway have also been working with The Service Design Academy: “We have...carried out community consultations, both resulting in the co-design of a Hub. In order to drive our agenda of our families in poverty leading on where and how they access services, with a focus on this being place based, this next phase of our work with them will see service design principles and ways

of working embedded into our day-to-day delivery. This will positively impact the experience of families supported through [Fairer Futures] and also people through our employability services”.

- Collation of data from lived experience panels and service mapping exercises, as well as stakeholder survey feedback, will further complement FFP activities. Service mapping of existing customer access channels will help “identify gaps, duplication, and opportunities to streamline pathways, improving ease of access and consistency of support for families”.



Developing directories of local support.

- North Ayrshire are working to develop a Community Directory of Support Services to provide a reference for frontline workers when supporting families, considering how to make this easily accessible for staff.
- Fife are working with Fife Voluntary Action to capture a database of third sector services.



Strengthened partnership working has increased referrals and improved access to services.

- East Ayrshire have strengthened links with SDS, NEST, CHAP and Home Energy Scotland to support progression, energy advice and employability, as well as strengthening ties with the Family Nurse Partnership and the Community Housing Association Partnership. East Ayrshire’s The Zone has seen a rise in new referrals due to strengthened partnership working with local schools, reflecting growing awareness and trust in the FFP work. The collaboration with schools is “supporting education re-engagement through The Zone, with teachers delivering in a community setting for school refusers, enabled by a holistic “village” model combining wellbeing, employability and education”.
- Dundee’s co-location of multiple third sector and statutory services in one venue supports attendees to “access multiple services during a single visit”.
- Inverclyde continue to develop their collaborative model, expanding their partnerships with third sector organisations (e.g., Morton in the Community, The Wise Group, Inverclyde Adult Services, Carer Gateway, Early Years Scotland) and statutory services, including housing and social work.

“ One family was able to receive support for income, employability and housing needs during one appointment”.

- Dundee.



Welcoming, inclusive spaces make a difference.

- Feedback from communities highlights that spaces that feel welcoming and accessible support both families and practitioners. In Dundee, Arthurstone Library was “consistently described as a welcoming and well-equipped venue, offering amenities such as light refreshments, free Wi-Fi, and ample space for service providers and attendees. Additionally, the drop-in has introduced the distribution of free items, including hygiene products and household essentials, subject to availability”. In Inverclyde, the Boglestone Hub has been renovated to create a more welcoming and inclusive space.

What are some of the barriers or challenges in designing and delivering place-based, targeted tests of change, designed to tackle child poverty?



Development of case management/ data sharing systems continues to create challenges.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to co-design work. This requires time to progress, which can be challenging within short-term funding cycles.

Practical, operational challenges, including recruitment delays and third sector constraints.

The impact of stigma on families accessing support.



Development of case management and digital solutions are promising but present many challenges.

- A number of FFPs are looking to develop Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRMs), including Dumfries & Galloway, North Ayrshire and Aberdeen City. Aims include consistent measuring and reporting (North Ayrshire), developing “one digital system that tracks individuals/ families’ referrals, the interventions they receive and the outcomes of the interventions. By having one system, the intention is to reduce repeated referrals and duplicated stories” (Aberdeen City), and ensuring a system that works “for the keyworkers inputting data but also for [FFP leads] so data could be easily pulled to demonstrate outcomes and milestones” (Dumfries & Galloway).
- However, FFPs highlight that innovative ideas about the possibilities of a CRM are often in stark contrast to what is possible, particularly in terms of shared systems across public and third sector partners, ways of recording data, and “who will manage the digital system, in particular which practitioners/ teams screen the referrals received and allocate them to services?”. Inverclyde highlight their efforts to improve data and insight as “it is still difficult to track journeys beyond initial engagement and to understand the communities who are not accessing support”.
- West Lothian, with support from the Improvement Service, are developing a proof of concept for how a digital Apply Once solution could operate, developed in partnership where appropriate, to enable channel shift and customers to apply for all financial entitlements and benefits administered by West Lothian Council at a time and place that suits the customer.



There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to co-design work.

Some FFPs highlight the complexity of doing co-design work safely and meaningfully. For example,

- “Community needs and challenges vary by area, with some communities needing higher levels of support than others”. “There are also differences between the existing third sector partners, access to community venues, strength of existing relationships, etc”. All of this means there is a “no one-size-fits-all approach. The third sector delivery partners all acknowledge the importance of engaging with communities to really understand their needs and expectations but also highlight that to do this well takes time and resource. Building relationships and trust is key, and this is not a quick process”.
- Barriers to accessing and participating in some of West Dunbartonshire’s work include financial hardship, where ongoing poverty-related pressures have impacted both attendance and stability. West Dunbartonshire sought to mitigate this through the provision of Cash First support, alongside practical assistance such as travel, clothing, and subsistence costs, helping to reduce immediate financial stress and enable continued participation in the programme.
- Community consultation fatigue continues to be a risk.



Practical, operational challenges, including recruitment delays and third sector constraints.

- Recruitment continues to be a challenge and some FFPs report that this is often created by delays in public sector recruitment processes, short-term funding commitments, and recent delays in the UK and Scottish budgets.
- Other FFPs highlight operational challenges for third sector partners, including capacity, recruitment, HR, governance and readiness. “While community organisations are best placed to provide the local place-based knowledge, have trusted relationships, and provide strong community links, we know that many of them are managed by volunteers or a very small employed workforce”. This means they are “often not set up in a way which allows for them to advertise, recruit, onboard, train, manage or supervise staff”.



The impact of stigma on families accessing support.

- A number of FFPs highlight the continued impact of stigma faced by families experiencing poverty. East Ayrshire note that “stigma remains a significant barrier for some families, making it harder for them to seek help openly and engage fully with available services. We did have a Stigma Workshop Session which we opened up to the community but very few attended. This is a difficult one to successfully address with the general public, however we remain committed to finding a way to alleviate stigma”.

What is working well for FFP's strategic systems change work?



Meaningful leadership commitment continues to be vital for maintaining momentum.

Developing tangible mechanisms to bring together colleagues and services helps strengthen understanding of the FFP work.

FFPs are increasingly reporting into wider local governance mechanisms, which provides opportunities for strategic collaboration, strengthening awareness of the FFP and influencing wider systems change.

Clarity around the FFP's shared vision is crucial for ongoing development and buy-in.

Sharing learning across FFPs and working with external/ independent learning partners brings a new lens and expertise to the FFP work.

Identifying better uses of data.



Meaningful leadership commitment continues to be vital for maintaining momentum.

- In Shetland, the FFP is now referenced in corporate chief executive objectives, while leadership's understanding of the FFP's work and what this means in practice for their staff continues to support engagement and development.
- South Ayrshire have developed a Radical Place Leadership handbook.
- Dumfries and Galloway's senior council leaders' willingness to embrace and take forward the test of change has been a key support, while Edinburgh's engagement with senior leaders responsible for services critical to the change programme has been essential.



Developing tangible mechanisms to bring together colleagues and services helps strengthen understanding of the FFP work.

- Inverclyde have created a local collaborative to align services and support family engagement. This includes DWP, the Communities Team, housing and social work. They have also made significant progress in strengthening partnership working across the Early Adopter Community and FFP.
- Shetland have established a monthly meeting with project and programme staff across the NHS, Children's services and the third sector. There is also ongoing engagement across partners, with increasing numbers of colleagues from different service areas, e.g., legal, community learning and development.

They highlight that they are “approaching learning in a thematic way so that it’s relevant - building in feedback loops so that bits of the system are understanding each other better”.

- North Ayrshire are planning to host a local event for wider third sector engagement with Arran CVS and TACT. Additionally, they brought together colleagues from North Ayrshire, the Scottish Government and CELCIS with differing roles around FFP and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund in preparation for whole family support developments, which proved beneficial.
- Perth & Kinross have been developing locality-based collaborative workshops for networking and mapping, alongside the formation of locality based multi-disciplinary teams to plan, deliver and operationalise their approach.
- South Ayrshire have been holding briefing sessions with frontline staff on a drop-in basis to keep everyone up to date with developments. These are complemented by a monthly bulletin that is shared between partners.
- West Dunbartonshire highlight that partners are actively contributing to shared learning and adapting practice in response to emerging insight, for example by aligning wellbeing, income maximisation and employability support more intentionally across services.
- North Lanarkshire are “seeing stronger alignment across agencies, with partners increasingly working to shared processes and expectations, improving consistency and the overall experience for families”.
- One FFP noted that it would be beneficial for FFP colleagues to be more directly involved with Community Justice Partnerships through regular attendance at meetings, participation in relevant training, and engagement in working groups to help “strengthen alignment across services, improve shared understanding of client pathways, and support more effective joint decision-making around complex cases”.



FFPs are increasingly reporting into wider local governance mechanisms and aligning with key local strategic priorities. This provides opportunities for strategic collaboration, strengthening awareness of the FFP and influencing wider systems change.

- Dumfries & Galloway’s FFP are now reporting into the Children’s Services Executive Group, to Committee and the Community Planning Partnership Board.
- Fife FFP has been moved into the Fife-wide No Wrong Door Board, which helps focus on how the Cowdenbeath work can influence wider system redesign and decision making.
- North Ayrshire highlight that their joint planning approach is gaining momentum and further buy-in across the organisation. The Children’s Services Strategic Partnership and the Community Planning Partnership Board are “supportive of this more integrated way of planning and working, and recognise the benefit

this will have for the outcomes of children and families”. North Ayrshire are also engaging with the Wellbeing Assurance and Oversight Group to draw links between the FFP work and the Wellbeing Economy priority.

- North Ayrshire established a new “Accessing Services” project board to improve cross-council coordination, including three workstreams around No Wrong Door, Single Shared Assessment and Data. This is through the Child Poverty Strategy Team working in partnership with the Transformation Team and Customer Services Team. This helps develop “senior buy-in and provides a structure to progress. This success has been enabled by...demonstrating the need and impact of the work to the Transformation Board and getting...senior leadership level support”.
- Perth & Kinross emphasise the importance of services/ organisations understanding the FFP and CPAF work in tackling child poverty as the golden thread running through all existing strategies and priorities.
- Shetland highlight that their FFP work sits alongside the broader work of their Community Planning Partnership’s focus on strategic alignment, which explores the most efficient ways of bringing people together to plan work, with the emphasis on joining up and making sure people don’t fall through cracks in services.
- South Ayrshire have been working across their CPP to ensure partners are still “bought in” to the FFP work. For example, one CPP meeting focused on how a “locality-based model can support prevention, early intervention, and more integrated public service delivery”.
- Inverclyde are working on shifting towards the Inverclyde Approach as part of their vision to eradicate child poverty. This includes aligning the FFP principles with the Inverclyde Approach, which is place-based, person-centred, values-based and rights-based. However, this takes time, consistency and meaningful engagement.



Clarity around the FFP’s shared vision is crucial for ongoing development and buy-in.

- Shetland highlight the need for the shared vision to state “what will we actually do differently and how”. This will be supported by a theory of change for the FFP work to support a “shared sense of direction”.
- Dumfries & Galloway recognise that the appetite for change from senior leaders has been strengthened through early engagement and raising the profile of the FFP, but also because the work has clear aims and objectives.
- Aberdeen City are aiming to co-produce a theory of change for the FFP as a whole and for each of the workstreams, with these to include rationale (i.e. picture of need), intended outcomes, activities, resourcing, governance and measurement arrangements.
- Inverclyde are focusing on developing their story to date, including articulating

the “shift from transactional service delivery towards transformational change”.

- North Ayrshire are reviewing what “No Wrong Door” means locally by engaging with key colleagues, partners and other local areas about their understanding and approaches.
- North Ayrshire created and delivered a short ‘lunchtime learning’ session focusing on the key components of the new national child poverty delivery plan.



Sharing learning across FFPs and working with external/ independent learning partners brings a new lens and expertise to the FFP work.

- Multiple areas highlighted the value of learning from other FFP areas, including site visits, online learning sessions and in-person sessions for networking.
- Multiple areas highlighted the value of external learning partners, including CELCIS, SPIRU, the Improvement Service, Glasgow Council’s Centre for Civic Innovation, the Service Design Academy, Edinburgh Futures Institute and New Local.
- South Ayrshire are working with Manchester Metropolitan University as their learning and evaluation partner.
- West Dunbartonshire are working with Poverty Alliance, the Lennox Partnership/ Thrive project, and Working 4U to develop three personas based on the lived experience of clients who are supported through the different interventions.



Identifying better uses of data.

- Perth & Kinross have developed locality profiles to support area-based gap analysis around need and referral patterns across and between services.
- North Ayrshire are exploring building on West Lothian’s CPAF dashboard to identify unmet need in relation to school benefits (clothing grant, free school meals, Education Maintenance Allowance) and uptake of two-year-old early years placements.

What are some of the key barriers and challenges that FFPs are identifying in progressing strategic systems change work?



Developing a consistent approach to evidencing the impact of preventative work.

Pace is vital for sustainability and meaningful change.



Developing a consistent approach to evidencing the impact of preventative work.

- All FFPs highlight the challenge in quantifying financial impact/ savings of preventative work. East Ayrshire have been linking in with the Scottish Government, CAD, economists, GC Insight and SPIRU for support to capture journey maps, touchpoints and savings.



Pace is vital for sustainability and meaningful change.

- Inverclyde highlight that “while service models can change quickly, trust, relationships and culture cannot—these require sustained investment, consistency, and time to translate into population-level impact”. They note that “Workforce capacity and consistency, and relationship-based practices, require time and continuity which can be constrained by staffing and competing demands. We have learned how challenging it is to get the systems moving towards change, services can sign up and agree to change, but when the needs of the community become difficult and challenging, the system rebounds on itself. This has an impact on relationships and trust both internally and externally with the community”.

Examples of the impact of FFP work for families and communities, the workforce and services/ systems.

East Ayrshire: There have been demonstrable outcomes for children and families through improvements in wellbeing and better school engagement and attainment via mentoring and reduced crisis demand through early, whole family support. This includes:

- ∴ Engagement of home educated young people via [Centrestage's](#) Creative Industries pathway is providing accredited progression and practical experience, enabled by cross partner links.
- ∴ [Yipworld](#) has seen improved participation of families and indications of preventative savings from intensive support, enabled by deep relational work and flexible funding.
- ∴ [The Zone](#) has seen increased engagement in peer recovery, improved school attendance and strengthened family resilience.

Inverclyde: “Some of the FFP work’s impact on families includes reduced isolation, improved wellbeing, increased financial stability, and greater confidence in navigating services. Parents report feeling more supported and better able to manage daily pressures, while children benefit from routine, social interaction, and safe, consistent care. There is a noticeable shift from one-off contact to sustained relationships, with families returning, building trust, and accessing a wider range of support over time”.

North Ayrshire: For the place-based tests of change, North Ayrshire are seeing good community impact. Beith Trust and Saltcoats Link-Up are both engaging with families, demonstrating strong community buy-in.

North Lanarkshire: Within the Neurodevelopmental Family Support Service, cross-agency collaboration has strengthened, with partners working more cohesively through shared processes and communication channels. Improvements in communication and workflow have further enhanced coordination, ensuring families experience a more joined-up and responsive service.

South Ayrshire: Through work undertaken to identify preventative spend, South Ayrshire have already identified posts/ contracts that duplicate work, helping take money out of the system and reinvest it elsewhere.

West Dunbartonshire: Five individuals successfully achieved sector-relevant qualifications, including CSCS, significantly improving their employment prospects. Others made positive progress into work experience, volunteering, or further training, representing important steps towards economic stability and reintegration. Participants also achieved a range of wider stabilisation outcomes that enabled continued engagement and progression, including: receiving photo ID, opening bank accounts, accessing permanent tenancies, registering with GPs and dentists, and increased confidence, resilience and readiness to re-engage with services and communities.

Inverclyde Case Study

Supporting a Parent into Employment Through Partnership Working.

A parent first engaged with the Family Wellbeing staff by attending a coffee and chat session held within a local primary school. Following this, the parent attended a community “market stall” information event organised by the EAC/FFP. At this stage, she expressed an interest in part-time employment that would align with her child’s nursery hours.

Through continued engagement, the parent registered with the Employability Service in late November 2025. As part of this holistic support, the parent was also linked in with an advice services worker. This step was key in ensuring that employment would be financially beneficial and sustainable for the household.

In March 2026, the parent progressed into an employability pathway, attending an information session focused on school-based catering roles. She successfully completed her application, safeguarding checks, and induction training, before starting a placement within a local primary school. She has received positive feedback from her supervisor and colleagues, and there is potential for longer-term employment within the school setting. This case highlights the value of a partnership approach, where services work together to provide a network of support tailored to the needs of the family.

Key recommendations based on learning so far



Data sharing.

- A wide range of work is progressing locally and nationally around better use of data and data sharing. However, FFPs highlight that data and information sharing issues continue to be some of the key challenges in delivering effective whole family support and tackling child poverty, particularly data sharing within and across public sector systems including the NHS. This requires national leadership and systemic solutions.



Evidencing outcomes and preventative spend savings.

- FFPs highlight that it remains challenging to evidence the impact of preventative spend at scale. A robust, shared measurement/ evaluation framework for demonstrating savings and outcomes is required. However, there is a need for “better coordination of evaluation activity across the system to avoid duplication and protect the capacity of families and practitioners” given this is resource intensive and adds additional demands.



Sustainable Funding.

- Short-term funding continues to be a challenge raised across multiple FFPs, impacting planning abilities for the short, medium and long term. Short-term funding creates risks for continuity/ scaling and potential workforce insecurity, in turn “creating a risk of implementing short-term initiatives which may not be sustainable, and which could be more damaging than supportive”. FFPs highlight that what is required to meaningfully progress sustainable place-based approaches to tackling child poverty and providing holistic, whole family support is confirmed, multi-year funding, integrated funding streams (e.g., FFP, WFWF, Early Intervention Fund) and mainstreamed commitments.



Supporting shared learning.

- Infrastructure to support FFPs to share learning is key. This supports spreading learning from different areas, better understanding enablers and challenges across systems and developing approaches to evidencing impact and outcomes.

Useful links and support for FFPs

- The IS provides a range of opportunities to share learning and good practice, and to come together for peer support. Reach out to us at psr@improvementservice.org.uk
- [Fairer Futures Partnerships: Learning, Engagement and Resources Space](#) – The IS and the Scottish Government have co-produced an online space for FFPs to share learning and resources. Spotlight Session Learning Reports can be found in the 'FFP Learning and Engagement Event Outputs' section.
- [Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory](#) – The Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory is managed by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) at Glasgow Caledonian University. The Directory profiles a wide range of local anti-poverty work being undertaken across Scotland and beyond.
- [PHS Prioritise Child Poverty Resource and Data Dashboard](#) – Public Health Scotland developed a Prioritise Child Poverty Resource for local authorities. They recently published the Child Poverty Data Dashboard within.
- [Collaborative Partnership East Lothian Case Study](#) – Whole Family Wellbeing Funding Programme East Lothian Collaborative Partnership Summary of Learning.
- IS-led Networks – The Improvement Service host national networks for local government practitioners and their partners, to come together and network, share learning and good practice. The Child Poverty Peer Support Network meet on a 6-weekly basis and share news items and meeting notes on Khub. See the [website](#) for more information.

Contact us

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