

All our Children minutes 18th August 2026

Present: Tanya MacDougall (Chair & Family Mediation), Sharon Erskine (Vice Chair & Let's Grow Kids, Takki Sulaiman ABTSI, Kirsten Johnston ABTSI, Libby Dobbie ABCAB, Mags Todd Child Poverty for Argyll and Bute, Alison Williams Help LTD, Megan McGarrigle SFAD, Arlene Colewell AB Befrienders, Jackie Buchanan Oban Youth Café, Laura Campbell MCR Pathways, Jennie Marriot Fun first,

Minutes from last meeting and action points accepted and approved by Takki and Libby

SFAD training for those working with young people – Megan McGarrigle

The training is free and designed for professionals who work with or may encounter young people affected by another person's alcohol or drug use, including a parent, sibling, grandparent, friend, or other significant person. The training has been co-designed by young people with lived experience. It includes video contributions from young people and, where possible, young people attend sessions to participate in Q&A discussions and help facilitate the training

The course can be delivered in a 1 hour, half day or full day session and aims to help participants:

- Understand the impact of another person's substance use on young people.
- Recognise that every young person's experiences and support needs are unique.
- Identify barriers young people may face when accessing support.
- Develop trauma-informed and relationship-based approaches to practice.
- Reflect on their own practice and identify ways to improve support for affected young people.

Presentation sent to the group with Megans contact details for further information/booking.

Updates from meetings attended

Takki provided an update on several key developments affecting the third sector and public services in Argyll and Bute.

Strategic Alliance Between Third Sector and Public Services

Work is underway to create an alliance between third sector organisations and statutory partners, including the NHS and local authority. The aim is to improve partnership working, build trust, and encourage long-term investment in community and preventative services. A consultancy, funded by the NHS, is conducting interviews with stakeholders to identify barriers to collaboration and findings will be discussed at a workshop on 22nd October, with the goal of developing practical solutions and prioritising service areas for change.

Financial Pressures and Funding Cuts

The Integration Joint Board (IJB) previously made £26 million in cuts, which significantly affected third sector organisations. A further £28 million of savings is required for the next financial year. Concerns were raised that cutting preventative and community support services may increase demand for expensive crisis interventions, hospital admissions, and care placements. Short-term funding arrangements continue to create uncertainty for third sector organisations and their workforce planning.

Commissioning and Rural Service Delivery

Concerns were expressed about how services are commissioned, particularly in rural and island communities. An example was given of an island-based social enterprise that was unable to bid for care services because contracts were packaged in a way that excluded smaller local providers. Discussions relating to the Rural Renewal Bill highlighted the need for more flexible commissioning arrangements that support community wealth building, local employment, and better outcomes for residents.

Corporate Parenting Board

Takki is stepping down as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board and handing over to Councillor Dougie McFadden. A significant achievement has been securing council resources to support the board, including a full-time officer and Takki confirmed he will remain involved as a third sector representative.

Increased Representation and Voting Rights on the IJB

New legislation has enabled greater representation within IJBs. With the board is proposing four voting representatives from non-statutory groups:

- Third sector representative
- Carers' representative
- Patient/public representative
- Young person's representative (new role)

This change is intended to give lived experience and community voices real influence over decision-making and budgets. Discussions are underway about election processes, governance arrangements, and training requirements for representatives. The TSI Scotland Network and Health and Social Care Alliance have applied for funding to provide training and support for these representatives.

Sharon shared updates relating to The Promise, child protection, GIRFEC refresh work, and workforce development across Argyll and Bute.

The Promise Visit

A visit linked to **The Promise** is planned for the autumn. Organisations will be contacted to provide information and examples of projects and activities that support the aims of The Promise. The aim is to highlight the valuable work being carried out across the third sector in Argyll and Bute and bring together examples of good practice for presentation during the visit.

Research on Parents Affected by Substance Use

Funding has been secured to undertake research with parents affected by substance use who are involved in child protection processes. Interviews will be conducted over the coming weeks, with findings expected to be published around October/November. The purpose is to better understand inequality and lived experiences, helping to inform future service design, child planning processes, and support for vulnerable families.

GIRFEC Refresh Programme

The Refresh Programme is progressing through four multi-agency subgroups focusing on key themes, including:

- The child's journey.
- Children's plans and planning processes.
- Multi-agency working.
- Training and communications.

Early findings suggest there is room for improvement in how agencies work together and implement GIRFEC principles, particularly around children's planning and coordinated support for families. Work is underway to strengthen a "team around the child" and "team around the family" approach.

Training and Communications

A new multi-agency training calendar is being developed, bringing together safeguarding and child protection training from various partnerships, including Violence Against Women and Girls services.

A key priority identified is Chronology Training, as audits highlighted weaknesses in the use of chronologies within child protection work. This training has been identified as essential for practitioners.

Child Protection and Contextual Safeguarding

Sharon was on annual leave when the recent Child Protection Committee meeting took place however Sharon updated that ongoing priorities continue to include contextual safeguarding.

Furthermore, it was recognised that while many staff complete standard child protection training, fewer have accessed contextual safeguarding training, which is particularly relevant for those working with young people in communities. Training opportunities are being developed, including support for organisations participating in a planned pilot project in Campbeltown, followed by wider availability for the third sector.

Tanya updated that The UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) report for Argyll and Bute has been completed and is expected to go for final approval this month. Once approved, the final document will be circulated, with a copy being sent to Kirsten for distribution.

Following the meeting, Kirsten will also circulate UNICEF reports and resources, which were highlighted as useful information for staff to improve their understanding of children's rights and the UNCRC.

The next meeting of the Violence Against Women Partnership group will be held on Monday 24th August, it is expected that activity and updates in this area will continue in due course.

Mags The Child Poverty Action Group meetings will be restarting soon, with Evan leading the group. Mags is working alongside Fergus Walker on child poverty work across Argyll and Bute. Requests have been sent to partners seeking contributions for the Child Poverty Action Report 2025-2026. However, anyone who has not received the request, or who would like to contribute, should contact Mags so the template document can be forwarded to them. The deadline for submissions being the 28th August. This year's approach includes clearer guidance on the type of information being sought, with the aim being to capture the full range of activities that help address child poverty, including services such as roads, catering, community groups, and activities supporting children and young people. The report will focus on demonstrating the breadth of work being undertaken and the impact those activities have on individuals and families experiencing poverty.

Takki updated that he had been sent information on Trauma informed training and will send on the Information for Kirsten to share with the group

Service updates

Jackie - Oban Youth Club has successfully secured renewal funding for a further 12 months to continue delivering the ADP (Alcohol and Drug Partnership) school support service. The service supports young people affected by drug and alcohol issues, whether through their own experiences or those of family members, including parents. Referrals are made through schools, and support is provided through one-to-one sessions, small group work and activities based in the youth café usually over a 6-to-12-week period and is designed to be informal and supportive rather than focused heavily on alcohol and drug education. The aim is to give young people a break from the school environment and provide a safe space to talk and receive support. Anyone working with a young person who may benefit from the service should contact the school's guidance staff, who can then make a referral.

Libby – ABCAB While there are no new developments for children and young people at present, significant progress has been made in securing long-term support for older adults, and efforts continue to sustain and grow advice services for carers.

Laura MCR Pathways delivers a school-based mentoring programme for young people in secondary schools across Argyll and Bute. Volunteer mentors are recruited and matched with a young person, meeting them for one hour each week in school. The programme provides young people with a consistent, trusted adult relationship, which has a positive impact on their wellbeing, confidence, and support network. The charity was originally established to support care-experienced young people, but now also works with young people experiencing other forms of instability in their lives. This includes young people affected by family addiction issues, caring responsibilities, Kinship care, residential care and other challenging home or life circumstances

The programme currently operates in nine secondary schools across Argyll and Bute. Oban High School, Dunoon Grammar School, Hermitage Academy, Islay High School, Tobermory High School, Lochgilphead Joint Campus, Tarbert Academy Campbeltown Grammar School and Rothesay Academy. As the new academic year begins, there is an increasing number of young people joining the programme, creating a need for more volunteer mentors across all participating schools. Referrals can be made for eligible young people attending these schools who are experiencing instability in their lives and each school has an MCR Pathways Coordinator who manages referrals, mentor matching, and ongoing support.

Takki shared that the draft Third Sector and TSI Strategy, developed through extensive consultation and evidence gathering, is close to completion. Stakeholders are encouraged to review the document and provide any final feedback to ensure it accurately reflects the needs and aspirations of the sector.

Sharon - Let's Grow Kids has successfully recruited new Drugs and Alcohol Worker who is now supporting families. Let's Go Kids UK is also exploring expansion into West Dunbartonshire.

A Recovery Family Day is being organised by the ROSC team for families is being planned for the autumn, to be held in the Burgh Hall, Dunoon featuring activities, information stalls, and a celebratory Ceilidh.

AOCB - Date of next online meeting 20th October 10am

