

Whole Family Wellbeing Programme Highland

Partnership, Workforce Development and Locality Activity

Highlight Report

OUR VISION

Every family that needs support gets the right family support, at the right time, to fulfil children's rights to be raised safely in their own families, for as long as it is needed



Introduction

Since inception, the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme in Highland has continued to develop as a transformational programme supporting Highland's ambition to deliver preventative, relationship-based and whole-family support. The programme is aligned to national policy drivers including GIRFEC, The Promise, UNCRC and the Scottish Government's Route Map and National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support.

Through the establishment of Local Partnership Network Groups across all nine Community Partnership localities, Highland has developed a robust locality infrastructure which enables services, communities and families to influence priorities, identify local need and develop collaborative solutions.

A significant feature of the programme has been the emphasis on testing and learning through Quality Improvement methodology. This has enabled the development of locally owned solutions that reflect the assets, strengths and challenges within individual communities while contributing to wider system transformation.

The Programme continues to support transformational change across Highland by strengthening local partnerships, increasing community capacity and developing preventative, whole-family approaches to support.

Across Highland's nine Community Partnership localities:

- Inverness
- Nairn and Nairnshire
- Badenoch and Strathspey
- Lochaber
- Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross
- Caithness
- Sutherland
- Mid Ross
- Easter Ross

The Programme has focused on:

- Building and sustaining Local Partnership Network Groups (LPNGs)
- Strengthening collaboration between communities, third sector organisations and statutory partners
- Supporting the development of locally led Element 2 Collaborative Partnership tests of concept
- Investing in community-based preventative support through Element 1 small grants
- Developing workforce capacity and leadership through Pillar 4 activity
- Embedding the voices of children, young people and families within planning and decision making through Pillar 1 activity

Significant progress has been made in creating the infrastructure, relationships and culture required to support long-term whole family wellbeing across Highland.

The Whole Family Wellbeing Programme is designed to improve outcomes for children, young people and families through earlier intervention, prevention and whole-system transformation.

Delivery in Highland is informed by the four pillars of the Whole Family Wellbeing approach:

Pillar 1

Children, young people and families at the centre

Pillar 2

Improving access and availability of support

Pillar 3

Joined-up whole system support

Pillar 4

Leadership, workforce and culture

This report provides an overview of locality partnership development and programme activity to date.

Partnership Development Across Highland

Building Local Partnership Network Groups

A key achievement for the Programme has been the continued development of Local Partnership Network Groups across Highland.

The groups provide a mechanism for:

- Shared understanding of local need
- Collaborative planning
- Community voice and participation
- Development of locality-based solutions
- Cross-sector relationship building
- Element 2 Collaborative Partnership proposal developments

Across localities, participation has included:

Statutory Partners include:

- Highland Council
- NHS Highland
- Education Services
- Community Planning Partnership representatives

Third Sector Organisations include but are not exclusive to:

- Highland Third Sector Interface
- Home-Start East Highland
- Home-Start Caithness
- Thriving Families
- CALA
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Mikeysline
- Highland Hospice
- Connecting Carers

Community Groups and Volunteer Organisations include:

- Community hubs
- Parent groups
- Youth organisations
- Community trusts
- Community councils

The growth of these networks has strengthened local ownership and improved opportunities for collaborative approaches to supporting families.

Locality Activity

Lochaber

Partnership Development

The Lochaber Local Partnership Network Group was established to bring together organisations supporting children, young people and families across the locality.

The partnership undertook:

- Data workshops
- Family voice exercises
- Development sessions facilitated by The Promise Scotland
- Priority setting activities
- Element 2 Collaborative Partnership proposal development

Partners included:

- The Mama Tribe
- Mallaig Hub
- Kinlochlovin
- Ewen's Room
- Lochaber Hope
- Health Improvement Teams
- Education representatives
- Employability services
- Voluntary Action Lochaber (VAL)

The partnership identified key priorities relating to:

- Family wellbeing
- Additional support needs
- Early years support
- School engagement
- Poverty and rural deprivation
- Social isolation and peer support

Family feedback highlighted loneliness, mental health challenges, childcare pressures and the importance of welcoming community-based support.

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Five projects have been funded with total investment of £35,714.00 including:

- Ewen's Room Creative Therapies
- Kinlochleven Community Trust Family Hub
- Kinlochlovin Creative Therapies
- Mallaig High Duke of Edinburgh Expedition Project
- The Mama Tribe Fort William Expansion of Support for Mothers Project



Reported outcomes include:

- Improved school attendance
- Reduced family conflict
- Improved parental wellbeing
- Increased peer support
- Greater access to therapeutic interventions
- Development of family hub infrastructure

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

The Lochaber partnership has developed proposals focused on:

- Family support through community hubs
- Community-based peer support
- Targeted home-based family support
- Capacity building for local organisations

The partnership identified a need for holistic family support within both Fort William and Kinlochleven and is progressing tests of change to strengthen local delivery models.

Development of Community Hub Family Support Tests of Change

Building upon the priorities identified by the Local Partnership Network Group, Lochaber has agreed to progress two community-based tests of change in Kinlochleven and South Fort William. These projects will explore how existing community hubs can become sustainable locations for relationship-based family support through practice development, workforce mentoring and direct family support delivery.

The projects are designed to test:

- Strengths-based family support approaches
- Community hub models
- Outreach and home-based support
- Pathways into specialist services
- Community capacity building and sustainability

Nairn and Nairnshire

Partnership Development

The Nairnshire Community Action Team (NCAT) was established in November 2024 as a joint initiative between WFWP and Highland Third Sector Interface. The group functions as both the Local Partnership Network Group and Nairn Town Team.

Membership regularly includes 20-30 participants from:

- Community organisations
- Third sector partners
- NHS
- Highland Council
- Planet Youth
- Community Link Workers

Partners consistently report that NCAT provides:

- A valuable networking forum
- Improved collaboration
- Better understanding of local systems
- New opportunities for joint working
- Increased visibility of community sector activity

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Ten projects have been funded with total investment of £91,226.00 including:

- Bluespace Highland Project
- Cawdor Community Centre Association – Cawdor Relax Hub
- Cawdor Community Centre Association – Cawdor Connected Parenting Project
- Greenhive Zero Waste Fabrics Store Project
- Highland Mindfulness Group
- Home Ed Teen Group Project
- Nairn Hydrotherapy Trust – 3 B's Group Project
- Natural Connections Nairn – Nature 4 Health Project
- The National Autistic Society Project
- Wheels in Nairnshire – Reaching Further into the Community Project

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Two key developments include:

Nairn Family Greenway

A collaborative outdoor wellbeing project led by Green Hive.



Nairn Family Hub

A developing proposal supporting:

- Children, Young People and their families
- Families of neurodivergent children
- Peer support
- Family wellbeing

Impact

NCAT has strengthened partnership working and enabled funding access that had not previously been achieved, with all ten Element 1 applications emerging through relationships developed within the network.

Easter Ross

Partnership Development

Easter Ross has benefited from a Local Partnership Network Group aligned to the District Planning Group, under the People Sub-Group of the Community Planning Partnership.

Key achievements include:

- Strong multi-agency engagement
- Consistent third sector participation
- Focused Element 2 Collaborative Partnership proposal working groups
- Development of cradle-to-grave planning approaches

Shared priorities identified include:

- Youth wellbeing
- Emotional regulation
- Neurodevelopmental support
- Child exploitation
- Early years and family support
- Improved access to preventative support

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Five projects have been funded with total investment of £46,770.00 including:

- CCAST Highland Housing Support Project
- Fox & Friends Family Hub Project
- Seaboard Memorial Hall – Engaging Community Spirit Project
- Tain and North Highland YMCA Family Hub Project
- The Place Youth Club Drop-in Project

These projects provide support around:

- Poverty reduction
- Housing support
- Family hubs
- Youth wellbeing
- Early years intervention
- Community resilience

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

The locality is progressing towards submission of an Element 2 proposal focused on collaborative responses to identified need, with approximately £100,000 available for investment.

Inverness

Partnership Development

Given the size and diversity of Inverness, the programme initially aligned activity with established Community Action Group areas:

- Merkinch and South Kessock
- Ardersier
- Hilton
- Raigmore

More recently an Inverness-wide Local Partnership Network has been established following changes to Community Action Group arrangements.

The programme has continued to engage with:

- Community Planning structures
- District Partnership Groups
- Planet Youth
- Education settings
- Community organisations
- Youth participation initiatives

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Merkinch and South Kessock

The "Your Place Your Point" participatory budgeting project allocated £30,000 to youth-informed local initiatives following consultation with over 400 young people.

Ardersier

Partners have co-designed a locality proposal centred upon:

- Community capacity building
- Volunteer sustainability
- Development of local leadership

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Nine projects have been funded under the Inverness and Ardersier localities with a total investment of £82,440.00.

Projects include:

- Ardersier Parent and Youth Hub
- Brent Centre Highlands Psychoanalytic, Systemic Parent, Family Therapy Project
- Highland Therapeutic Animals Project
- Hilton Family Support Expansion of Provision of Holistic Whole Family Support Project
- Inverness Foodstuffs – Chill and Fill Project
- Inverness Orienteering Club
- Rokzkool Academy Youth Leadership Development Team Project
- Smithton Primary School Parent Council Cost of the School Day Project

Family Links 1.0 Test of Concept

One of the most significant developments within the Inverness locality has been the implementation of Family Links 1.0, a Whole Family Wellbeing Programme funded test of concept developed through partnership working across education, third sector organisations and statutory services.

Developed in response to concerns regarding school attendance and engagement across the Inverness High School Associated Schools Group, local partners recognised that attendance difficulties were often symptoms of wider family and systemic challenges, including poverty, trauma, mental health difficulties, housing instability and complex family relationships. This led to the development of Family Links as a preventative, whole-family support model focused on addressing root causes rather than symptoms.

Family Links is delivered through a partnership between the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), Home-Start East Highland and Thriving Families and is built around key principles of:

- Whole-family, holistic support
- Relationship-based practice
- Family-led decision making
- Multi-agency collaboration
- Addressing underlying causes of difficulty
- Flexible and responsive support tailored to family need

Impact to Date

Family Links 1.0 has demonstrated positive outcomes for children, young people and families experiencing complex and overlapping challenges affecting wellbeing, attendance and family functioning.

Outcomes include:

- 74 families referred
- 68 families actively engaged
- 73 adults supported
- 97 children and young people supported
- Approximately 65% of families demonstrating measurable improvements in school attendance and engagement
- Wellbeing improvements reported for 85-90% of children and young people
- Wellbeing improvements reported for 70-75% of parents and carers

Importantly, the evaluation found that the strongest impacts were not attendance alone, but improvements in the foundations that support attendance and engagement, including:

- Emotional wellbeing and confidence
- Trusting relationships between families and schools
- Improved communication with services
- Family participation and voice
- Increased parental confidence and capacity.

Improvements were evidenced across all SHANARRI indicators, with particularly strong outcomes relating to children and young people feeling:

- Nurtured
- Respected
- Included
- Achieving

Learning and Strategic Significance

A key finding from the Family Links 1.0 Evaluation is that poor attendance and disengagement are rarely isolated educational issues. Instead, they are often adaptive responses to unmet need, family stress, trauma, neurodevelopmental challenges and fragmented systems of support. Family Links has demonstrated the value of trusted relationships, flexible support and coordinated partnership working in helping families navigate these challenges.

The evaluation also highlights the importance of whole-system responses. Whilst Family Links has been successful in building trust and acting as a bridge between families, schools and services, sustainable outcomes require timely access to specialist support and stronger integration across systems. This learning is influencing the next phase of development through Family Links 2.0 and wider Whole Family Wellbeing Programme activity.

Developing Workforce Capability

Learning from Family Links 1.0 highlighted the need for practitioners to have access to evidence-informed therapeutic approaches that complement relationship-based whole-family support. This has directly informed investment in the Parents Under Pressure (PuP) Programme, strengthening practitioner confidence and providing staff across statutory and third-sector services with additional tools to support families experiencing complex and overlapping challenges.

Why Family Links works

"Attendance improves as a consequence of wider changes in wellbeing and relationships..."

Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross

Partnership Development

Work has progressed within a challenging rural context with increasing engagement through existing partnership structures.

Challenges include:

- Geography
- Workforce sustainability
- Access
- Capacity

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Four projects have been funded with total investment of £35,714.00 including:

- Broadford and Strath Community Company Broadford School Garden Project
- Create Lochalsh Scribble and Giggle/Families Creating Together Project
- Kyleakin Connections Project
- Viewfield Garden Collective Family Friendly Workshops Project

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Skye and Lochalsh Community Outreach Hub

A mobile outreach model bringing support directly into remote communities.

Lochbroom and Ullapool Stepping Stones Project

A community-led nature and wellbeing model designed to:

- Improve wellbeing
- Reduce isolation
- Increase early intervention
- Strengthen family support pathways

The approach takes a cradle-to-grave perspective and promotes whole-community wellbeing.

Badenoch and Strathspey

Partnership Development

The Badenoch and Strathspey Local Partnership Network Group has undertaken significant development work to identify local family support priorities through engagement with families, young people, community organisations and statutory partners. Local intelligence has highlighted issues relating to hidden rural poverty, increasing additional support needs, early years pressures and family wellbeing.

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Eight projects have been funded with total investment of £79,182.16 including:

- Able2Adventure – Young People’s Social Adventure Group Project
- Cairngorms Pride – Family Focussed Events – Highland Wildlife Park Project
- Enjoy-able Art
- Grantown YMCA Community Centre Youth Programme with Increased Accessibility Project
- IRL Education – Transition and Support Programme
- SuScotland – Growing Together Project
- Where the Wild Things Are - Wildlings – After School Forest Sessions Project
- Wild In Mind – Wild Minds Project

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Natural Connections Outdoor Family Hub

A nature-based family support model designed to provide accessible family wellbeing opportunities, strengthen social connection and improve mental wellbeing through outdoor learning and activity.

Lochaber Hope Family Hub (under development)

Development of welcoming community-based family hub offering relationship-based support, warm handovers between services and increased opportunities for families to engage with local support networks.

Across proposals, partners have identified desired outcomes including improved family wellbeing, strengthened parental confidence, reduced impacts of poverty and increased peer support opportunities.

Mid Ross

Partnership Development

The Mid Ross Local Partnership Network Group has focused on strengthening prevention and early intervention through school and community assets, bringing together partners to identify practical opportunities to improve family wellbeing and reduce stigma in accessing support.

Local Priorities Identified Through Partnership Engagement

Through engagement with local partners, schools, community organisations and families, the Mid Ross Local Partnership Network Group identified a number of priority themes including:

- Increasing awareness of services and support available to families
- Strengthening community spaces and support networks
- Improving mental health and wellbeing support
- Supporting vulnerable groups and key life transitions
- Strengthening partnership collaboration and information sharing
- Improving evaluation and understanding of impact.

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

One project has been funded with total investment of £10,000:

- Cromarty Youth Café Project

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Building upon these locally identified priorities, Mid Ross partners have developed a number of collaborative tests of change focused on prevention, inclusion and community-based support.

Key developments include:

Community Connector Project (Go Flourish)

A two-year project based around the North Kessock Primary School community garden, designed to increase family participation, strengthen links between schools, communities and health services, and support wellbeing through nature-based activity. The project builds upon an established community asset and seeks to improve access for families who may experience isolation or barriers to engagement.

Reach4Reality Mid Ross

Development work is underway to support young people with additional support needs, emotionally based school avoidance and those at risk of disengagement from education. The proposal seeks to provide outdoor-based therapeutic approaches and support families awaiting diagnostic assessments.

Caithness

Partnership Development

Partners across Caithness have worked collaboratively to develop a coherent locality-wide vision for preventative family support informed by community consultation, lived experience and existing strategic recommendations.

Local Priorities Identified Through Partnership Engagement

The Caithness Local Partnership Network Group undertook a locality priority-setting exercise which highlighted a range of issues affecting children, young people and families, including:

- Awareness and accessibility of local services
- Face-to-face and outreach provision
- Rural transport challenges
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Social isolation
- Childcare accessibility
- Support for unpaid carers
- Workforce development
- Multi-agency collaboration

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Three projects have been funded with total investment of £29,970.00 including:

- Caithness Klics: Older Young Carers Transition Project
- Home Start Caithness Ad-Hoc Childcare Project
- Lyth Arts Centre: Whole Family Wellbeing for Early Years and Young Families Project

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Partners have adopted a themed approach to proposal development, focusing on collaborative responses to the needs identified locally. Three broad themes have emerged:

Family Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

Partners are exploring a Family Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub model, drawing upon community assets and existing services to create more accessible routes into support for children, young people and families. The concept includes mental wellbeing support, practical advice, peer support, outreach activity and family connection opportunities.

A linked proposal is also being developed to support families affected by substance use through holistic whole-family approaches, incorporating advocacy, peer support and integrated responses to family need.

Poverty and Family Resilience

Development work is underway around a coordinated poverty and resilience programme aimed at supporting families experiencing financial pressure, poverty-related inequalities and wider wellbeing challenges through collaborative community support.



Family Connection and Community Participation

Partners have identified the importance of strengthening family relationships, reducing isolation and improving access to community support for families who often face barriers to engagement. Proposed activity includes inclusive family events, peer support models, intergenerational activity and opportunities for families to access support through non-stigmatising community approaches.

Alongside this work, proposals continue to be developed around:

- Wick Young Parents Peer Support and Community Participation Pilot
- Development of a Thurso Family Space
- Enhanced outreach support models through a locality partnership approach
- Reach4Reality support for young people with additional support needs and families awaiting assessment pathways

Sutherland

Partnership Development

Locality engagement has highlighted challenges relating to ASN provision, inclusive childcare opportunities and equitable access to support across geographically dispersed communities.

Local Priorities Identified Through Partnership Engagement

- Improved Communication and shared services
- Improved transitions between services
- Transport and accessibility in rural areas
- Sustainable long-term funding and collaboration
- Inclusive and wrap around childcare
- Parenting support and life skills education
- Support for families with Additional Support Need
- Mental Health and alcohol and drug use support for all ages
- Equity and local empowerment

Element 1 Small Grant Funding Activity

Four projects have been funded with total investment of £38,534.00 including:

- Lairg and District Community Initiative – Lairg Paddleboarding Project
- Lairg and District Learning Centre The Maker's Space Project
- Lochview Rural Training Family Pioneers Project
- Sutherland Adventure Company – Sutherland Boys on Board Project

Element 2 Collaborative Partnership Grant Development

Following engagement with families and partners, locality activity has focused on addressing identified gaps in childcare, support for children with additional support needs and equitable access to services across rural communities.

A significant milestone has been the approval of the East Sutherland Inclusive Childcare Pilot, led by Golspie Youth Action Project in partnership with a range of local agencies. The project responds directly to evidence gathered from local families and seeks to increase childcare availability, improve inclusion and support family wellbeing.

Partners continue to explore opportunities to support children, young people and families across Northwest Sutherland and to develop collaborative approaches that build upon existing wellbeing and community development activity through a Family Co-Ordinator role.

Pan-Highland Projects

Seven Element 1 small grant projects have been funded, who cover more than one locality or whose reach is Pan-Highland, with a total investment of £63,313.64:

- Highland Action for Little Ones Bright Futures Project – covering Inverness and Easter Ross
- Home Ed Teen Group Project – covering Inverness, Mid-Ross, Badenoch and Strathspey, Nairn/Nairnshire, Easter Ross
- Inspiring Young Voices Youth-Led Participation Project – covering Inverness and Caithness
- Mikeysline Nairn Bee the Change Project – covering Highland-wide
- Moniack Mhor - Creativity and Care Outdoor Family Contact Time Project – covering Highland-wide
- Moniack Mhor - Creativity and Care Quiet Sundays Safe Space Project – covering Highland-wide
- Moniack Mhor - Creativity and Care Rural Care Experienced Tasters Project – covering Highland-wide
- Moniack Mhor - Creativity and Care Transitions to Secondary School Project – covering Highland-wide
- SNAP Self-Funding Families Support Project – covering Highland-wide
- The National Autistic Society Project – covering Nairn/Nairnshire and Badenoch and Strathspey

Further information in relation to all funded activity referenced in this report can be found within the [Highland Whole Family Wellbeing Programme Overview and Analysis Report](#).

Pillar 4: Leadership, Workforce and Culture

Intergenerational Learning and Development

One of the most significant workforce development activities delivered during 2025-26 was the partnership between the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme and Generations Working Together (GWT).

Investment

An Element 2 Collaborative Partnership grant supported:

- Conference participation
- Practitioner training
- Networking opportunities
- Community of practice development

Reach

- 37 practitioners completed structured training
- 26 practitioners attended the national conference
- Participants represented all nine Highland localities
- Attendees came from Highland Council, third sector and community organisations

Outcomes

The programme has resulted in:

- Improved practitioner knowledge and confidence
- Increased intergenerational activity
- Stronger cross-sector relationships
- Development of new local projects
- Increased participation in national practice networks

Participants consistently reported increased confidence in developing and evaluating intergenerational projects and greater awareness of the benefits of intergenerational approaches for families and communities.

This work demonstrates how Pillar 4 investment can build capacity across communities and support a sustainable culture of prevention and connection.

Workforce Development Through Family Links

Alongside the Generations Working Together programme, Family Links has contributed significantly to leadership, workforce development and culture change across Highland. The co-design, implementation and evaluation of Family Links has brought together practitioners from education, social work, health and the third sector to develop a shared understanding of relationship-based, whole-family support.

The development of Family Links has supported:

- Improved multi-agency collaboration
- Greater confidence in delivering holistic whole-family support
- Strengthened family-led and relationship-based practice
- Increased understanding of the interaction between poverty, trauma, neurodevelopmental needs and wellbeing
- Shared ownership of outcomes across organisations
- Learning through Quality Improvement and test-of-change methodologies

A key learning from Family Links 1.0 has been the need for services to operate across a continuum of need. Whilst designed as a preventative model, Family Links workers have frequently supported families experiencing both emerging and complex challenges. This learning is helping shape wider workforce development and service design discussions across the Highland system.

Learning from Family Links 1.0 is now directly informing the development of Family Links 2.0, which will extend delivery into Badenoch and Strathspey, Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh while continuing within the Inverness High School Associated Schools Group. The expansion provides opportunities to strengthen workforce capability, locality learning and system integration across Highland.

Family Links represents one of the strongest examples within the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme of Pillar 2 (Availability and Access to Support), Pillar 3 (Joined-Up Whole System Support) and Pillar 4 (Leadership, Workforce and Culture) operating together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Parents Under Pressure (PuP) Workforce Development Programme

The Whole Family Wellbeing Programme has invested in the development of the Parents Under Pressure (PuP) Programme across Highland to strengthen practitioner confidence and capability in providing direct therapeutic support to families experiencing complex challenges. PuP is an accredited, evidence-informed programme which focuses on emotional regulation, parent-child relationships and strengthening parental capacity through relationship-based practice.

Why PuP was introduced

During the development of Family Links and wider Whole Family Wellbeing activity, practitioners identified a need for additional skills to support families in real-time situations where immediate therapeutic intervention was required. Whilst practitioners were effective in supporting families to navigate systems, access services and have their voices heard, there were occasions where direct interventions were required to support parenting, emotional regulation and family relationships. PuP was introduced to address this gap and strengthen the range of support available to families.

Workforce Development and Reach

The Whole Family Wellbeing Programme commissioned PuP training for 25 practitioners across Highland through two cohorts commencing in May and August 2025. All participants in the first cohort have achieved accreditation and the second cohort is nearing completion.

Participating organisations included:

- Thrive Families
- CALA
- Home-Start East Highland
- Home-Start Caithness
- Highland Council Social Work
- Highland Outreach Support Team (HOST)

This multi-agency model has supported the development of a shared approach to working with families across statutory and third-sector services.

Building a Highland Community of Practice

The programme has also supported the development of a Highland PuP Community of Practice, working alongside Action for Children and national PuP trainers. The first Highland PuP Practice Exchange event took place in March 2026 and brought together more than 20 managers and practitioners to share learning and practice experience. Two accredited PuP Supervisors have also been trained, providing ongoing support to practitioners implementing the model.

Impact and Learning

Feedback from practitioners and managers has been overwhelmingly positive. Participants consistently reported:

- Increased confidence in working with families experiencing complex challenges
- Access to a structured framework for intervention
- Improved ability to monitor and evidence progress
- Greater confidence in relationship-based and trauma-informed practice
- Enhanced collaboration across services

One Family Links practitioner reflected:

"PuP has given me a whole new model to use with a framework to follow for some of the most difficult situations I'm supporting families with. It has also given me a framework to monitor and record progress with families, so it keeps me on track with that too."

As Family Links 2.0 expands across Highland, PuP training has been identified as a core component of workforce development, with a strategic decision taken that all Family Links Workers and Family Links Leads will undertake PuP accreditation. This reflects the growing recognition that workforce capability, therapeutic skills and relationship-based practice are fundamental to achieving sustainable outcomes for children, young people and families.

Together, Parents Under Pressure, Family Links and the Generations Working Together create really strong developments in Highland under the Programme's Pillar 4, Leadership Workforce and Culture:

- **Generations Working Together** = community and intergenerational workforce development
- **Family Links** = whole-system learning and service transformation
- **Parents Under Pressure** = practitioner skills, therapeutic practice and workforce capability

What the wider system needs to learn

"Relationship-based, whole-family support is essential but must be embedded within a coordinated, responsive system..."

Key Themes Emerging Across Highland

Across localities several common themes have emerged:

What families tell us

- Need for earlier support
- Increased demand for emotional wellbeing services
- Loneliness and isolation
- Financial pressures
- Challenges accessing services in rural areas
- Need for peer support and community connections

What partners tell us

- Relationships are fundamental to system change
- Local ownership supports sustainability
- Flexible and preventative approaches are most effective
- Community-based support is increasingly valued
- Workforce development remains essential

What the Programme is achieving

- Stronger local partnerships
- Increased collaboration between sectors
- Improved understanding of local need
- Earlier intervention opportunities
- Greater community participation
- New models of family support
- Community based supports

What We Are Learning About Whole Family Support

- Relationships drive engagement and change
- Families value trusted, consistent support
- Community-based approaches reduce stigma
- Family support is most effective when integrated across services
- Early intervention reduces escalation of need
- Locality partnerships create the conditions for sustainable system change

Conclusion

The Whole Family Wellbeing Programme continues to play a significant role in strengthening partnership working, supporting community-led solutions and embedding preventative whole-family approaches across Highland. Through investment in local partnerships, community capacity, workforce development and innovative tests of change, the Programme is creating the conditions for sustainable improvement in outcomes for children, young people and families.

Across Highland's nine Community Partnership localities, Local Partnership Network Groups have become an important mechanism for understanding local need, strengthening relationships between statutory and third-sector partners, amplifying the voices of children, young people and families, and developing locally owned responses to complex challenges. This locality-based approach has enabled communities to identify priorities and co-design solutions that reflect local strengths, assets and opportunities.

The Programme has supported a diverse range of activity, from community-based family hubs and outdoor wellbeing initiatives to family resilience projects, inclusive childcare pilots, mental health and wellbeing developments and targeted support for families experiencing disadvantage. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate how local partnership working can create earlier intervention opportunities and improve access to support within communities.

Alongside locality developments, the Programme has invested in workforce capability and culture change through initiatives such as Generations Working Together, Parents Under Pressure (PuP) and Family Links. These initiatives have strengthened practitioner confidence, supported the development of relationship-based practice and created opportunities for learning and collaboration across organisations and sectors. They have also demonstrated the value of investing in the workforce alongside direct support for families.

Learning from Family Links 1.0 in particular has provided important insights into the realities of supporting families experiencing complex and interconnected challenges. The evaluation highlights that meaningful improvements in attendance, engagement and outcomes are achieved when families experience trusted relationships, coordinated support and a system that responds to the wider factors influencing wellbeing. This learning is now informing Family Links 2.0 and wider Whole Family Wellbeing Programme developments across Highland.

While localities remain at different stages of development, a clear and consistent picture is emerging across Highland. Partners are increasingly working together to develop preventive, strengths-based and family-centred approaches that build on community assets and reduce fragmentation across services. The Programme is helping to shift focus from responding to crisis towards creating the conditions that enable families to thrive.

The strongest theme emerging from the Programme to date is that sustainable change happens through relationships, collaboration and local ownership. By strengthening partnerships, developing workforce capability and investing in community-led solutions, the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme is not only supporting families today but helping to build a more connected, responsive and preventative system of support for the future.

Looking Ahead into 2027/2028

As the Programme enters its next phase, key areas of focus and priorities will include:

- Considering new policy agendas as outlined by Scottish Government
- Continuing to strengthen Local Partnerships across all localities
- Expanding evidence-informed approaches such as Family Links and Parents Under Pressure
- Supporting delivery and evaluation of Element 2 Collaborative Partnership tests of change
- Increasing opportunities for family participation and co-design
- Strengthening workforce development and communities of practice
- Using learning and evidence to inform longer-term system transformation across Highland.

The Whole Family Wellbeing Programme is demonstrating that when communities, families, practitioners and services work together around shared outcomes, it is possible to create the conditions for meaningful and lasting change.