

COMMITTEE:	Education & Children's Services Committee
MEETING DATE:	18 November 2025
BY:	Depute Chief Executive Children and Communities
REPORT TITLE:	Belonging to East Lothian: An Overview
REPORT STATUS:	Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the latest phase of Belonging to East Lothian, an East Lothian approach which focuses on prevention and early intervention for children, young people and families.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note the report.

3 BACKGROUND

Belonging to East Lothian Phase 1

- 3.1 Over recent years, considerable work has been undertaken to support the needs of East Lothian's children, young people, families and communities. This has included the work of the Transforming Services for Children Board, the Redesign of Children's Services and work undertaken across Education and Children's Services to ensure better integrated working that provides the right support at the right time.
- 3.2 The first phase of 'Belonging to East Lothian' began in early 2023. The Transforming Services for Children Board approved a renewed focus on Early Intervention and Prevention as a result of continued concern about the complexity of needs of our children and young people, the continued rising demand in both education settings and for statutory social work and reports that parents and communities were struggling to provide support.

- 3.3 As a result of learning from a number of other local authorities it was agreed that the focus needed to be on supporting our children and young people to remain in their own communities and to look to the existing supports that were available and that could help with the rising demand.
- 3.4 This has led to a wide range of supports and services being developed within the Council and with partners, along with a stronger focus on bringing young people placed in external residential care, back to East Lothian when this is in their best interests. This requires a joint approach from social work, education and housing to ensure that the right resources are available locally to meet individual need.
- 3.5 As a result of the work to date there has been a reduction in the number of children and young people who are looked after and accommodated and a reduction in the number of young people in external residential care.

Current Position

- 3.6 Prevention and early intervention continue to be prioritised nationally including in the 2025-26 Programme for Government, Scotland's Population Health Framework and Scotland's Public Sector Reform Strategy, which notes that "prevention can dramatically cut demand for expensive acute or crisis services with a median return on investment of more than 14:1. Focussing on prevention can make services easier to plan and afford."
- 3.7 Locally, rising levels of demand, particularly in relation to complex needs continue to put pressure on Council services. While there are a wide range of services available aligned to early intervention and prevention, there is a need to continue to transform services, processes and practice in the interests of East Lothian's families and communities, to ensure provision is fit for purpose and meeting current need.
- 3.8 With the development of new strategic plans including the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (East Lothian Plan) and the Children's Strategic Partnership Plan there is also an opportunity to try to simplify and better align the large number of policies, plans and frameworks the Council and East Lothian Partnership is required to produce, in order to streamline governance and reporting and reduce the risks of duplication and/or gaps.

Belonging to East Lothian Phase 2

- 3.9 In order to drive forward a whole system redesign of prevention and early intervention services, a temporary 'Strategic Lead – Prevention' post has been created, for an initial period of 12 months, funded from the Council's Transformation Fund.
- 3.10 The post will lead on delivering the cultural transformation required to deliver an effective model of prevention and early intervention as part of the Council's Prevention and Early Intervention agenda 'Belonging to

East Lothian', incorporating and sustaining the work undertaken to date on Whole Family Wellbeing.

- 3.11 The post will also lead on the development, implementation, and on-going evaluation of whole system change which focusses on prevention, early intervention and long-term sustainability. This will include empowering multi-disciplinary teams to develop, implement, and take account of learning from a range of improvement projects designed to help find more preventative and person-centred ways of addressing the challenges facing our residents, families and communities.
- 3.12 It is intended that this work will lead to the development of a target operating model for prevention and early intervention in East Lothian.
- 3.13 The work is at a very early stage and updates will be brought to members on a regular basis along with the plan for delivery which will include measurable outcomes.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Finance: Funding has been approved from the Transformation Fund to enable the creation of the temporary post. Further funding may be required to enable development of new resources or services. External funding will be sought wherever possible.
- 5.2 Human Resources: The post has been created through a service review and an existing Service Manager seconded to the post. Backfill arrangements have been put in place.
- 5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): None.
- 5.4 Risk: None.

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 ***Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.***

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken, and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a

X

corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

Should any changes to existing services or structures be proposed as a result of this work, those would be subject to completion of an integrated impact assessment.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Programme for Government 2025 – 26:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/programme-government-2025-26/>
- 8.2 Scotland's Population Health Framework:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-population-health-framework/>
- 8.3 Scotland's Public Reform Strategy:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-public-service-reform-strategy-delivering-scotland/>

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

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Date	07 October 2025

Head of Service Approval

Name	Nicola McDowell
Designation	Head of Education
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Yes
Approval Date	24 October 2025