

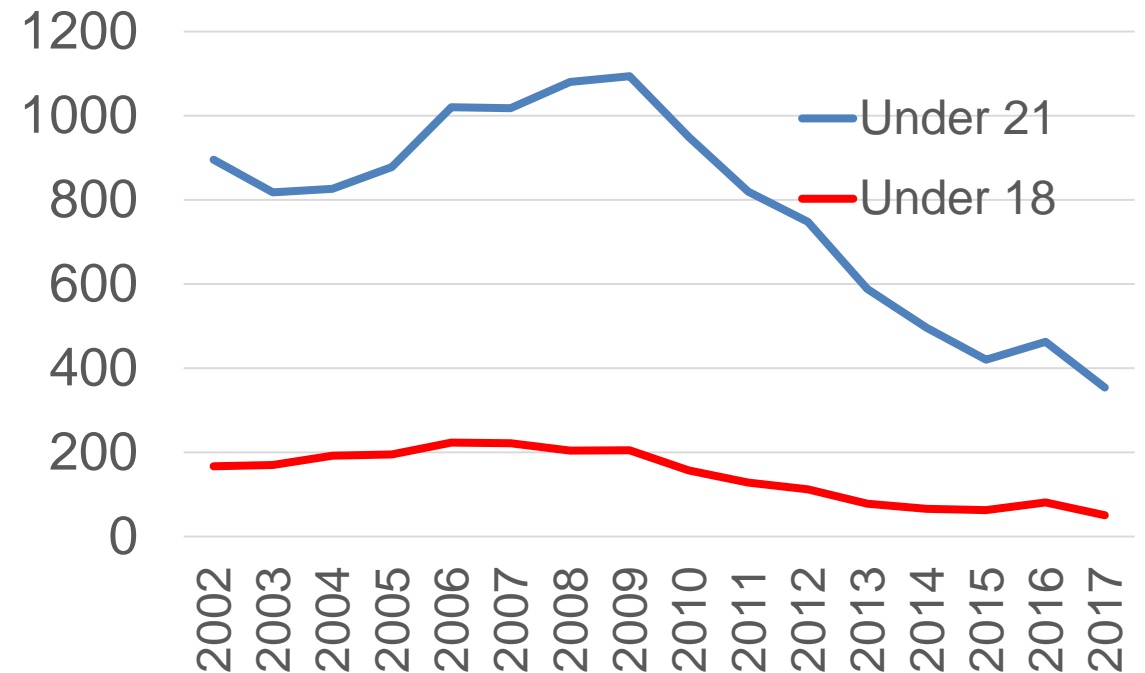
# Unlocking Potential and Transforming Lives Through Learning

## The impact of school exclusions : Creating an inclusive environment

**IEI2 Events :Spring 2018**  
**Sue Brookes**

# Whole systems approach or whole systems change ?

‘It is important to acknowledge at the outset the very significant progress that has already been made and the substantial contribution of many disciplines across Scotland, including those in the education sector, to reducing the numbers of young men and women admitted to custody. As a result of these endeavours there has been a marked fall in numbers in custody, to around 350 in June 2017. It is particularly satisfying to note that the number of 16/17 year olds has also decreased since 2006 and is currently at the lowest level since 2002’.



# Increasingly acute issues faced by young people in custody

Alcohol/NPS

Looked After  
Status

Bereavement

Trauma /  
PTSD

Brain Injury

School  
Exclusion

Foetal  
Alcohol  
Syndrome

Violence/  
Domestic  
abuse

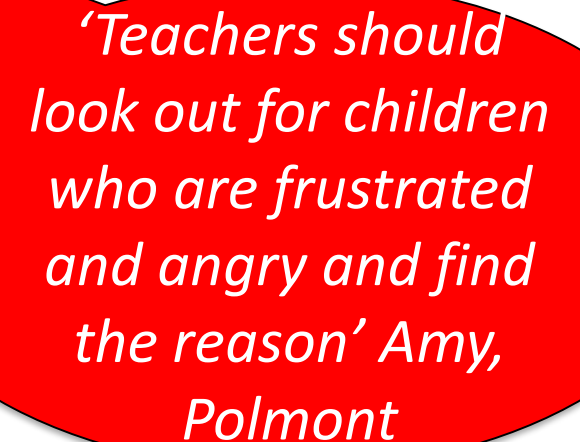
Learning  
Differences

Compared with people with no ACEs, those with 4+ ACEs are:

- 4 times more likely to be a high-risk drinker
- 6 times more likely to have had or caused unintended teenage pregnancy
- 6 times more likely to smoke e-cigarettes or tobacco
- 6 times more likely to have had sex under the age of 16 years
- 11 times more likely to have smoked cannabis
- 14 times more likely to have been a victim of violence over the last 12 months
- 15 times more likely to have committed violence against another person in the last 12 months
- 16 times more likely to have used crack cocaine or heroin
- 20 times more likely to have been incarcerated at any point in their lifetime

# Learning from evidence: some headlines

Involvement in Children's Hearing system <sup>a</sup>	Almost 60% of 103 young men
Removed from family of origin <sup>a</sup>	33%
In care at age 16 <sup>b</sup>	24%
Reported physical abuse <sup>a</sup>	15%
Reported sexual abuse <sup>a</sup>	10%
Witness violent arguments between parents <sup>a</sup>	28%
<b>Excluded from school<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>90%; 42% four + times</b>
Learning disability or difficulty	39%
<b>Speech, language, communication needs</b>	<b>60%</b>



*'Teachers should look out for children who are frustrated and angry and find the reason' Amy, Polmont*

Sources: <sup>a</sup>Carla Cesaroni (unpublished) Comparative study between young offenders institutions in Scotland and Canada;

<sup>b</sup>SPS Prisoner Survey 2013; <sup>c</sup>SPS

# Learning from evidence: some headlines

## Beyond ACES: bereavement, trauma, predictors of PTSD

Experienced traumatic bereavement	> 75% of 33
Experienced four or more bereavements	66%
Witness serious violence in neighbourhood (fighting, attempt to kill, murder, gang violence, kidnap)	74% of 103
Fearing they or someone close to them might be badly hurt	58%
Physically assaulted/badly beaten in community	64%
Threatened with a weapon	76%
Upset by seeing dead body	36%
Head injury	36%

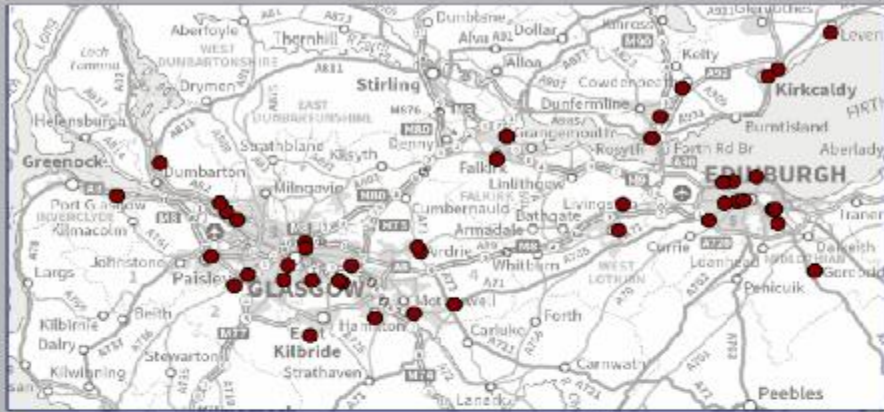
*'There was a lot  
mair going on but  
they didnae ask'  
Jamie, Polmont*



Sources: Vaswani, N. (2014) *The ripples of death: Exploring the bereavement experiences and mental health of young men in custody*. CYCJ Factsheet 25; Carla Caesaroni (2017), *Forthcoming*

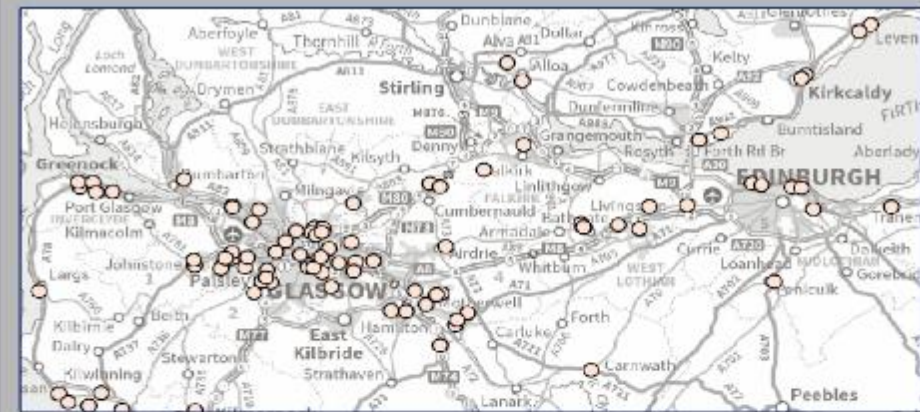


## Residences of Polmont Young Offenders



Age under 18

## Residences of Polmont Young Offenders



Age 20

62 % of 16 and 17 year olds and 55% of 18 to 21 year olds come from the 20% most deprived communities in Scotland

### Age Group of Offender

- <18
- 18
- 19
- 20

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Scale: 1:2,400,000

Scottish Government GIS Service & Analysis

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# Preventing offending ...not reoffending

‘Children should be seen not as the problem, but as *facing* problems to which society should respond. Increasing evidence demonstrates that approaches which support relationship building and attitude change *around* the child can be more impactful than interventions which focus solely on the child direct. So as system leaders from all disciplines we might wish to assume an obligation to create *inclusive learning environments for all* with the strategic investment needed to reduce future harm and the further spend that might otherwise be incurred.’



## ‘My Life With Others’ concept and style of delivery:

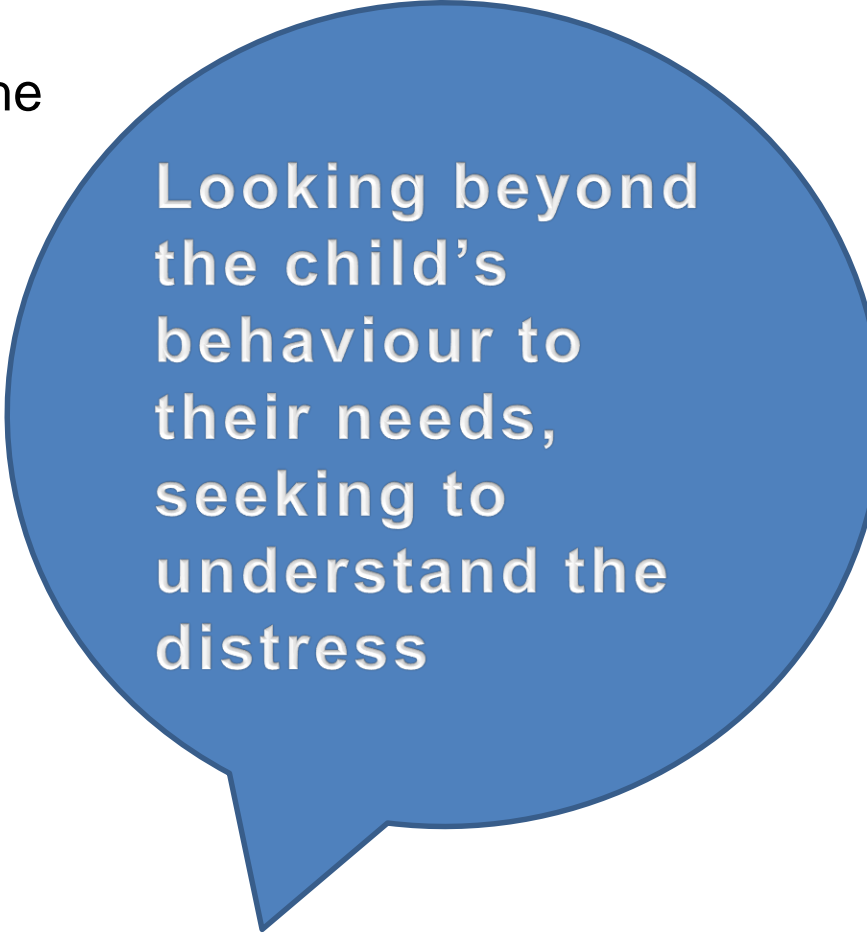
- Bereavement counselling; Seasons for Growth
- Domestic abuse group work and counselling
- Open secret , sexual abuse counselling
- Mental health resources and CBT
- **Inclusion officers area and in-reach**
- Speech and Language and Art therapy
- Offence related programmes
- Mindfulness
- Health and Wellbeing area
- Positive Future Plans
- Identified First Line manager accountabilities
- Building hope and celebrating success





# Exclusion ... or Inclusion ...?

- Building a **relationship** with the child or young person
- All practitioners adopting a **holistic** approach when working with the child **and family**
- Focusing on developing solutions and **resilience**
- Recognising the crucial role of education staff and utilising all available **multi disciplinary** services
- Recognising that the **transition** between primary and secondary school can be a particularly challenging time
- Tailoring options to the **individual** with clear planning and review
- **Empowering** children and young people and enabling them to develop agency
- **Perseverance** in the face of setbacks



Looking beyond  
the child's  
behaviour to  
their needs,  
seeking to  
understand the  
distress

*Educational exclusion and inclusion - Common themes from the Improving Life Chances Group : Gill Robinson (NI Hub)*

# School experience

Positives	Negatives
70% enjoyed school some or all of the time (Primary easier to cope with)	Intermittent attendance through truanting and exclusion (most had missed half or more of secondary school)
Memories of achievements, outings, treats	Hardly any had returned to high school having been placed in a behaviour unit or service
Relationships: teachers who talked to them in an ordinary way	90% had been excluded, 42% four or more times

*'I wish I'd stayed at school' Jamie, Polmont*

*'Some of my teachers were brand new' Amy, Polmont*

Incarcerated Prisoner Survey, YJIB

## Young people talking about their experience of exclusion also refer to :

- The impact of moving from primary school, where 'someone really knew me' to secondary school, where it was difficult to form relationships with a large number of new adults whose expectations and styles of interacting were often very different;
- The powerful effect of peers, especially the influence of older young people while excluded, and the sometimes rapid escalation of substance abuse, violence and offending;
- Broken connections with school but also with out-of school activities and the role models and pro-social pastimes such as football which that wider community can provide.



*'I just wanted  
someone to love and  
care about me'*

# Relationships, relationships, relationships...

When talking to young people, are they able to talk about their worries and concerns with people in the school?

Happy relaxed children, in a calm relaxed atmosphere.

How are pupils who are challenged in managing their behaviour treated and how much support is offered to the pupils who are perceived to be 'difficult'.

The main question that will tell a lot about a school is – if pupils think it is a fair place to learn.

The ethos, behaviours and relationships from the office staff to the teachers ; how the staff relate to learners – even as they walk past in corridors ; how 'happy' is the atmosphere .

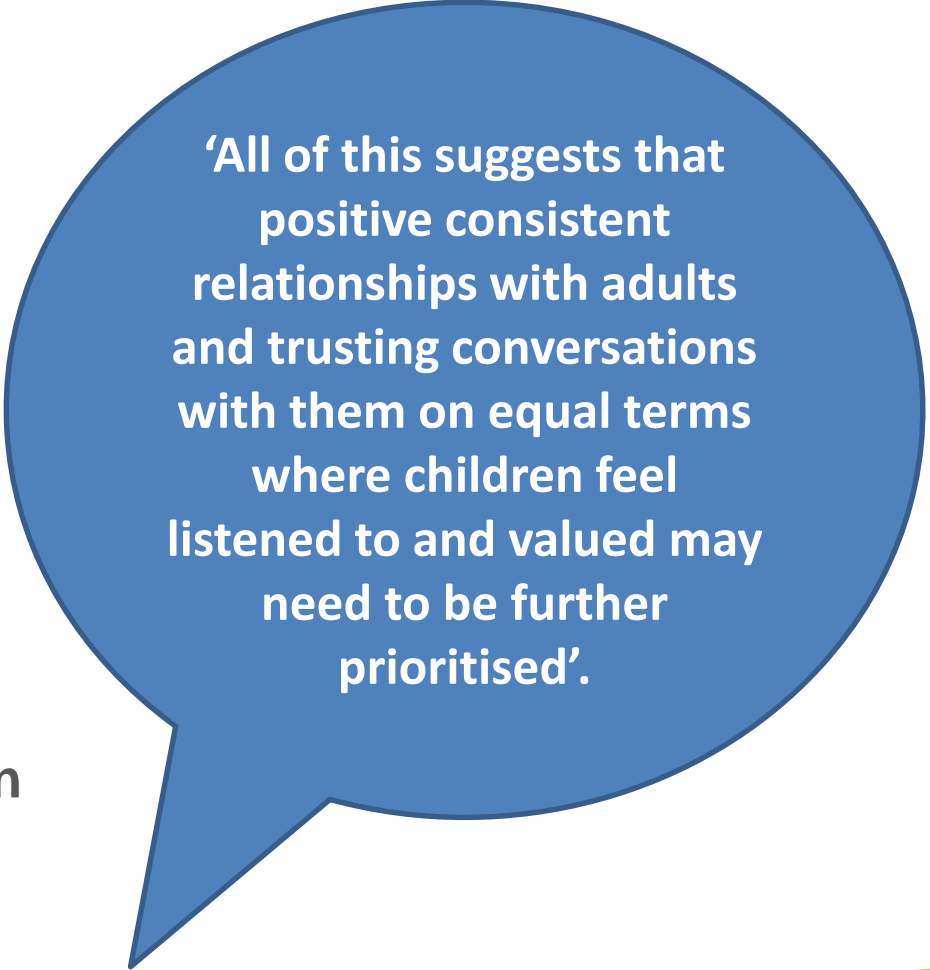
Are staff interested in the young people? Do they take time to find out about how they are? Do they treat them with courtesy and respect ,are they listened to?

How informal are relationships ,how in touch are school leaders.



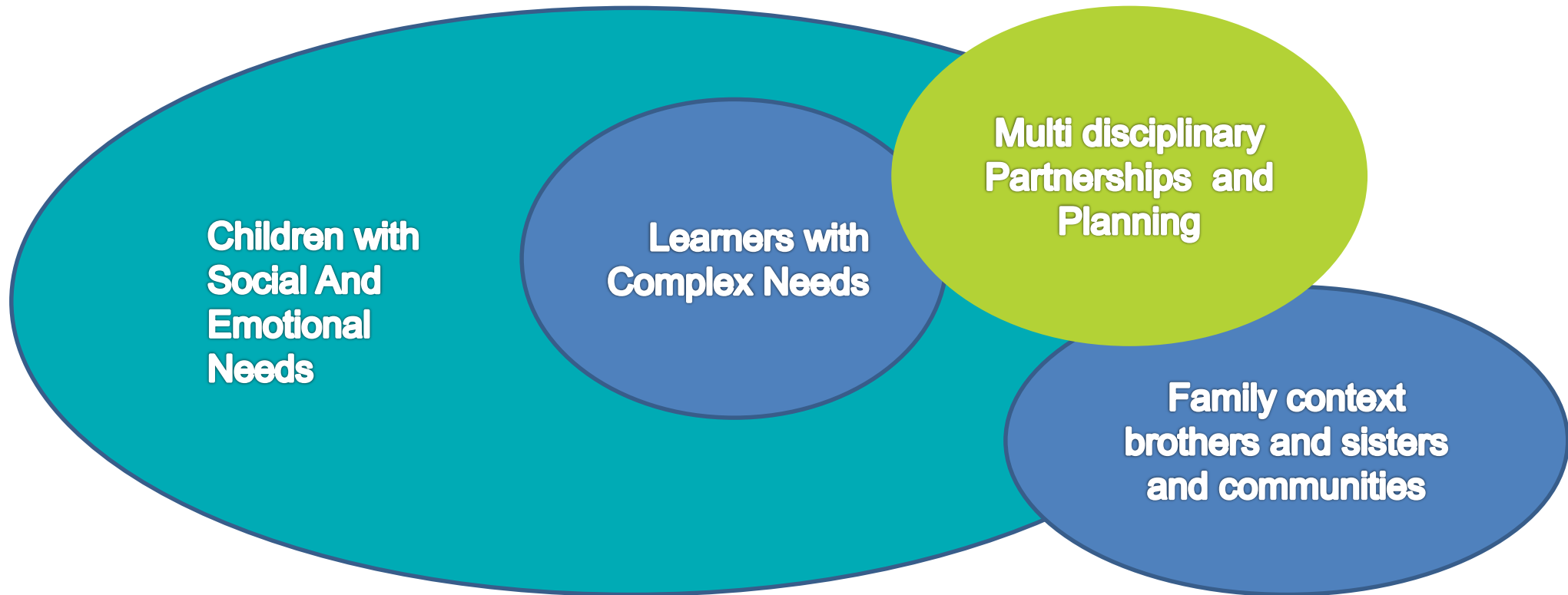
# Are relationships at the heart of learning ?

- What are the implications of this for **guidance/ casework co-ordination roles**?
- Do we recognise the links between meaningful conversations and rights based approaches?
- **Are the most vulnerable children spending most time outside of the classroom, potentially with the least qualified person ?**
- **Do we actively encourage participation rather than a 'volunteering' culture?**
- Are we **reducing isolation and improving peer understanding**?
- Do we create alternative **opportunities for self expression** , using animals and the arts ?
- Does the quality of relationships create hope for a positive future identity?



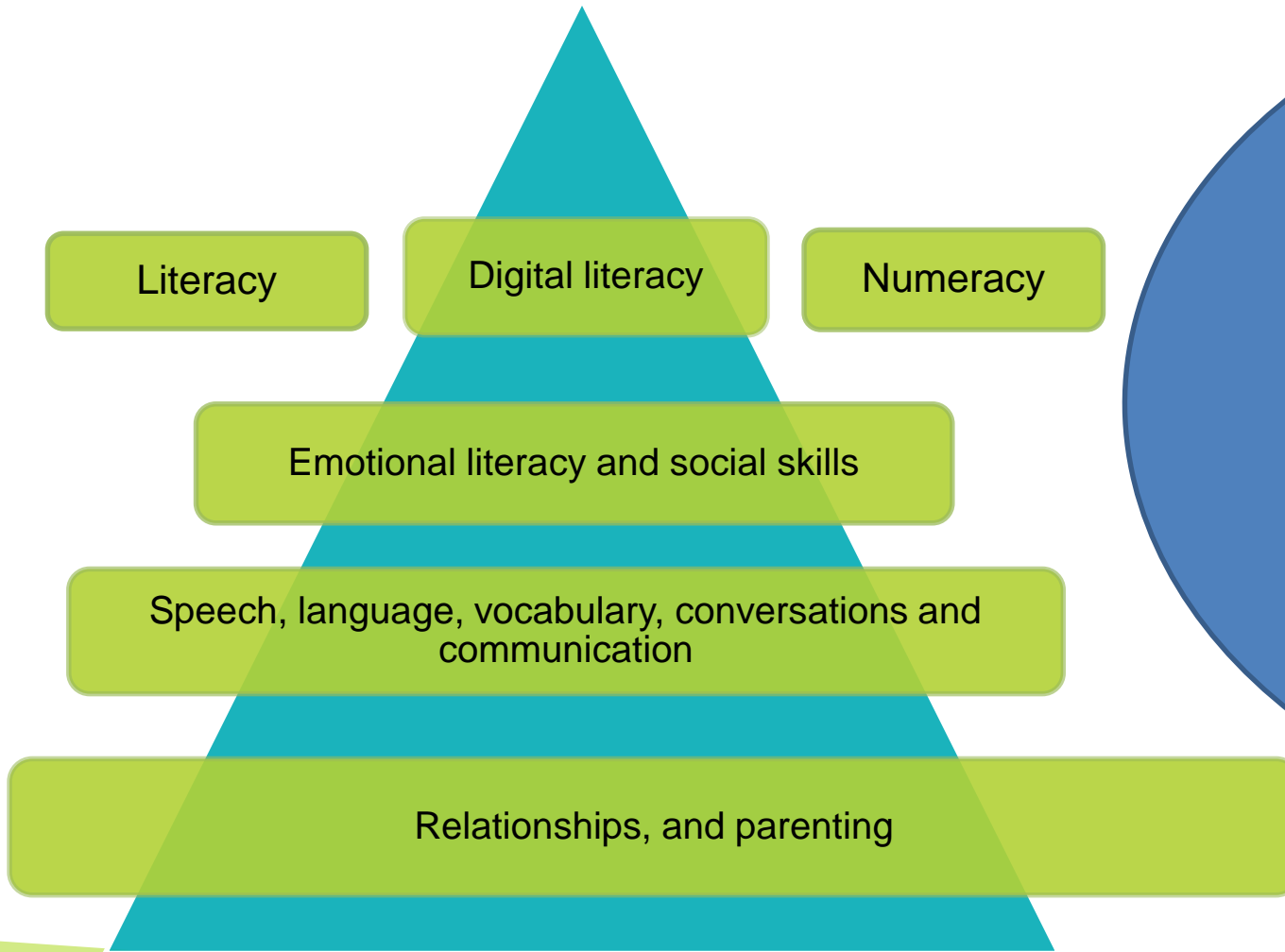
**'All of this suggests that positive consistent relationships with adults and trusting conversations with them on equal terms where children feel listened to and valued may need to be further prioritised'.**

# Equity as a foundation for Excellence : Collaboration



Resolve the underpinning issues, don't just deal with the behaviours or presenting problems

# Relationships, Language and Emotions



It is of note that over 70% of children coming into contact with the justice system have a significant speech and language or communication need. Those young people who are admitted to HMP & YOI Polmont often have difficulty in finding the words to express themselves or engage in conversation. This may lead to frustration about being misunderstood or being unable to express emotions, and ultimately challenging behaviour or violence.

# Partnership working

‘Joint working across sector boundaries impacts positively on staff attitudes, values and beliefs and multi-disciplinary work ideally needs to be the norm at individual child, tactical and strategic levels with genuine partnerships based on joint:

- Training ,exchange or mentoring opportunities;
- Planning;
- Service or curriculum design;
- Delivery;
- Evaluation of shared broader outcomes; and
- Co-location’.





# Transitions

- **Consistent relationships** across transition points
- **Moving to secondary and offending trajectories**
- **Not just survival during primary**
- Impact of all through schools/ community campuses ?
- **‘Trauma of liberation’**
- Possible opportunities for through care parallels



## Case management planning ( Positive Futures) and through care support

- Individualised
- Asset based
- Story telling and emotional connection
- A plan for custody and community
- Through care support officers as culture change champions



Inclusion is being actively promoted through learning , social activities and relevant decision-making processes which will be different according to the needs of individuals.

# Families and communities

- Do Head teachers act as community leaders and what are the implications for their senior teams?
- **Do the right staff have the knowledge** they need about the hinterland of children in their care ?
- What opportunities are there for schools to function as community hubs?
- Should we create **asset based plans for children ( at home , at school ,and in the community) ?**
- Do we recognise **the importance of community learning and youth work as a protective factor?**
- What is the comparable family learning experience for looked after children?
- How can family learning better assist parents to understand and support gender differences?

How welcome are families made to feel ?



# What activities were developed to promote Inclusion ?

- More diverse and regular sports activity
- Dogs Trust
- Youth work and rights in-reach
- Performance arts area
- Community safety approaches
- Life Skills and the life skills tool box
- Parenting
- Arts and Crafts
- Hair and beauty
- **Peer support hub**





**‘We need insights from children now : not just as citizens to be’**

*‘If teachers are prepared to stick by you, believe in you, it makes a huge difference. You can turn your whole life around’.*

*MCP Children’s Parliament What kind of Scotland? :  
Children influencing Scotland’s future*



# Evidence from young people in custody: Impact of bereavement

Symptoms such as dissociation, worry,  
inability to concentrate, anger

Avoidant coping strategies – blocking out sad,  
unwelcome, intrusive thoughts

Use of substances, expressions of anger,  
offending behavior

Many displaying symptoms associated with  
complex PTSD

*“How many more people do I have to  
see die? I’m only 19 and that’s five  
people died already and I keep  
thinking to myself ‘are the rest of  
them gonna die?’ And then I’ll grow  
up alone”*

Sources: Vaswani, N. (2014) *The ripples of death: Exploring the bereavement experiences and mental health of young men in custody*. CYCJ Factsheet 25;

# Joint staff development : Feeling as well as doing

Learning  
Difficulties

Bereavement,  
Trauma and  
Loss

Mental  
health first  
aid

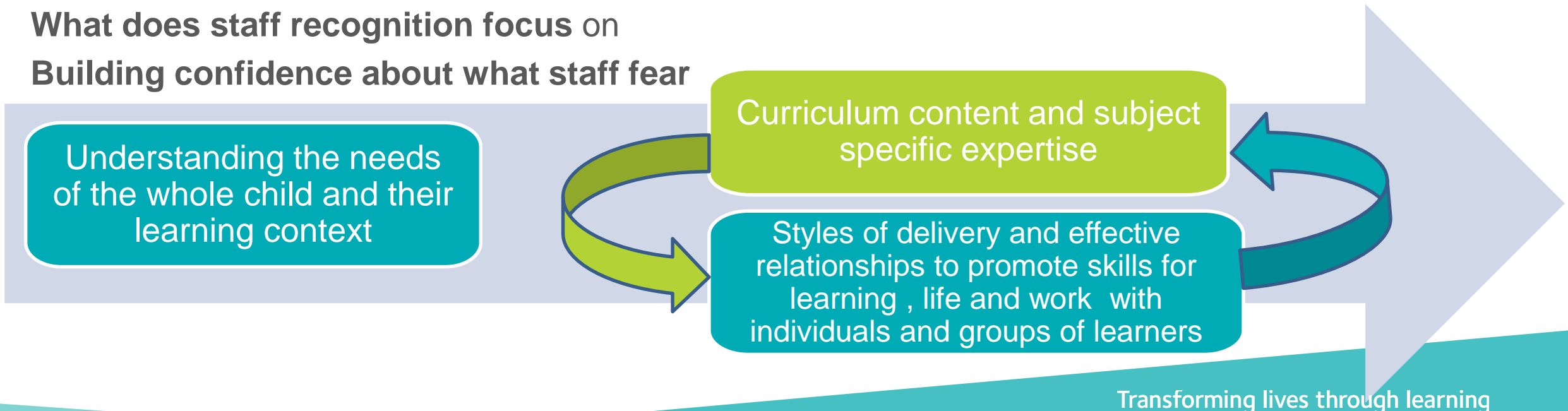
Child  
Development  
and  
Adolescent  
Brain

A nurturing  
environment for  
staff

Reflective  
Practice

# Staff and leadership development

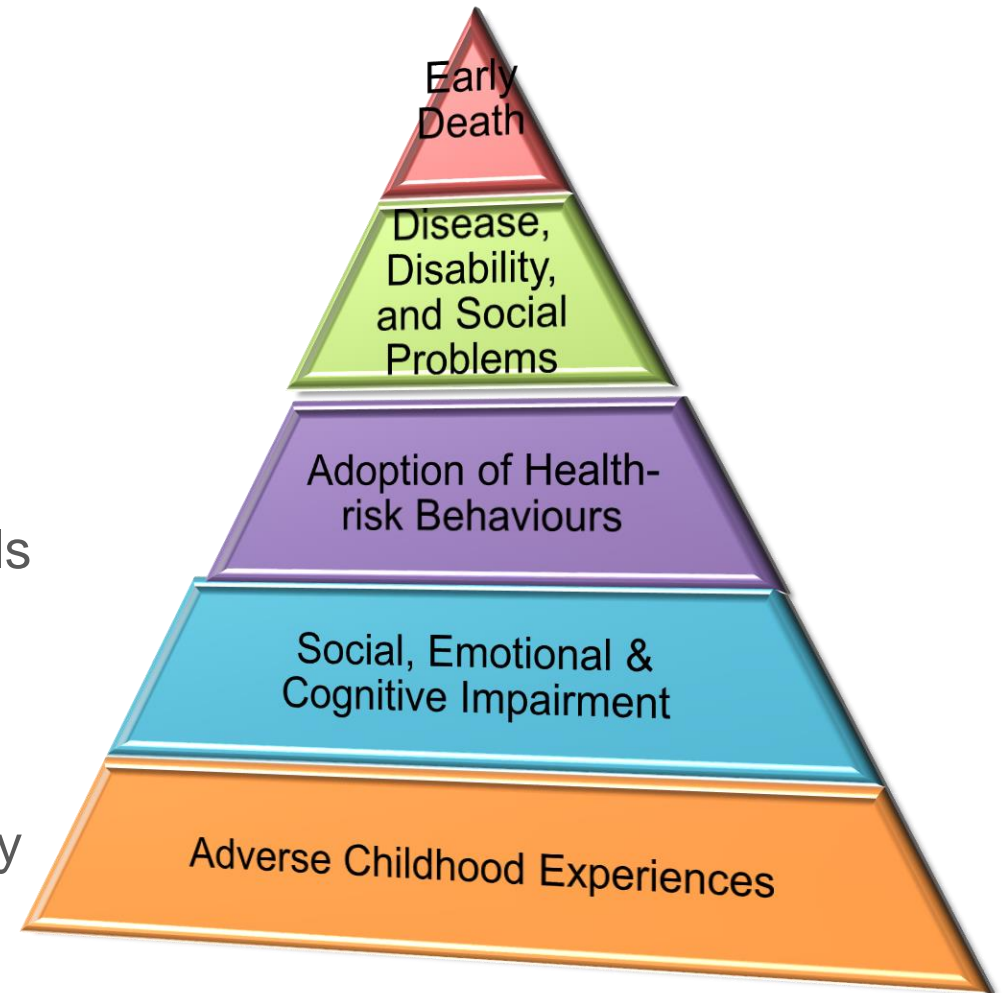
- Common core skills and **consistent content on equity** issues
- **Placement opportunities** in schools and communities and quality assurance
- Electives or mandatory , and course duration
- **Youth work styles** start from ‘ where the child is ‘
- **Emotional impact of change** for staff/ reflective practice and supervision
- Dealing with resourcing pressures to support change and consistency
- Who leads on key thematics like equity/ transitions/ families
- **What does staff recognition focus** on
- **Building confidence about what staff fear**





# A whole child approach

- The importance of attachment
- **Proactive identification before problems emerge**
- **Do our systems exacerbate adverse childhood experiences**
- Common language ... its a continuum
- Individualised asset based assessment and tracking tools that support relationship building
- **Recognise stage as well as age**
- **Tool box for co-regulation of behaviour**
- Adverse childhood experience more relevant than poverty alone
- **Safe non judgemental spaces for emotional expression**



# Relationship continuity , attachment and readiness to learn

- Complex , dynamic and on-going
- **Focus not just on learning , but on growth and maturity**
- **Creating a sense of belonging**
- Impact of familial transitions
- Extended throughout the learner journey
- Importance of attachment and a strategic focus on transitions
- **Readiness to learn**
- **On-going needs assessment**
- Relapse and identifying those who struggle later



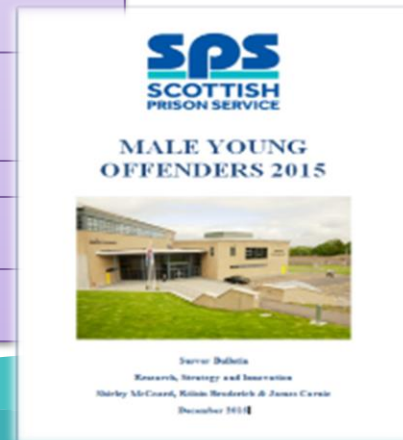
# Health and Wellbeing improvement (2015 SPS survey)

	Young People	Adults
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	71	69
I've been feeling useful	65	62
I've been feeling relaxed	72	67
I've been feeling interested in other people	44	55
I've had energy to spare	74	67
I've been dealing with problems well	78	75
I've been thinking clearly	75	77
I've been feeling good about myself	67	68
I've been feeling close to other people	55	51
I've been feeling confident	75	68
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	88	84
I've been feeling loved	58	53
I've been interested in new things	75	65
I've been feeling cheerful	63	66

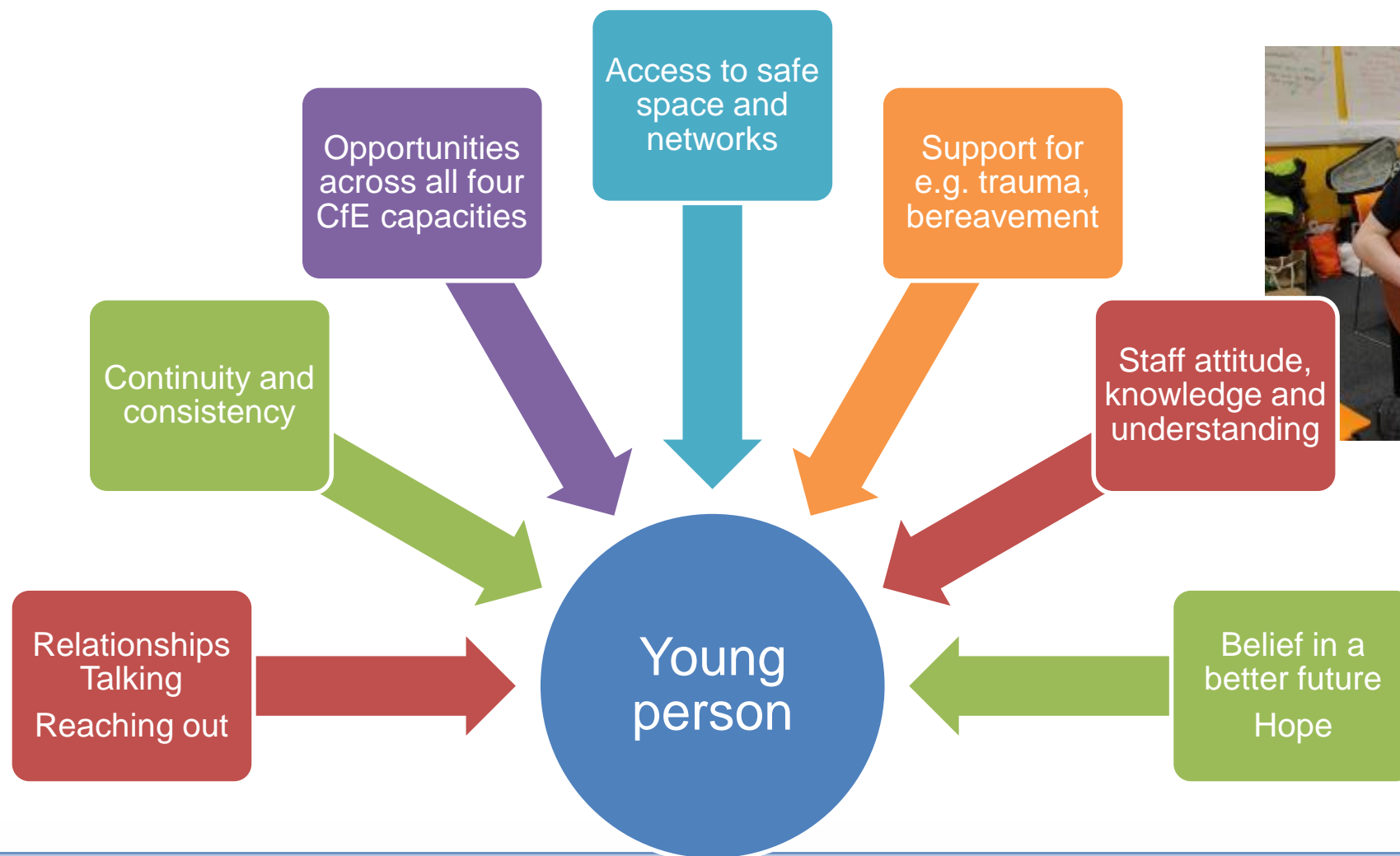
Young people were asked questions on mental health by way of an instrument known as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS).

Nine in ten young people (88%) reported that they had 'been able to make up my own mind about things' (88%), an increase of 9% from the 2013 survey (79%).

Three quarters of those reporting had 'been thinking clearly' (75%), 'feeling confident' (75%), had 'been interested in new things' (75%) and had 'energy to spare' (74%).



# What matters most for the young people?



# Curriculum for Excellence for young people in custody

## Confident Individual

Mental, emotional and social health and wellbeing  
Addressing separation and trauma  
Sustaining and building positive family relationships  
Addressing needs such as alcohol and substance misuse, relationships and attitudes  
Improving physical health and fitness  
Developing skills for living independently  
Building resilience and motivation

## Responsible citizen

Participating in decision making  
Issues-based work such as anti-violence programmes  
Developing skills to change and apply these skills to make positive choices  
Understanding consequences; empathy, victim awareness  
Addressing ethical, social and environmental matters

## Successful learner

Gaining and applying skills such as communication and language, literacy, numeracy, IT, problem solving  
Extending knowledge and understanding  
Increasing motivation for further learning  
Gaining qualifications and building a CV  
Having experience of a workplace

## Effective contributor

Parenting  
Mentoring  
Fundraising; contributing to others' wellbeing  
Engaging in restorative practices  
Volunteering, working with animals  
Repairing things  
Working in partnership and as part of a team



# What are the next step changes to improve wellbeing and reduce the numbers of young people in custody ?

If the first steps were Curriculum for Excellence, reducing levels of exclusion , Getting it Right For Every Child and the Whole Systems Approach then ....

- **Parenting** and family education (the next generation)
- Positive relationships ( **especially the impact on boys** of inter parental conflict)
- **Individualised bereavement and trauma supports**

Exploring your own experience of having been parented and the importance of attachment



Examining the values and behaviours needed to parent or interact with children ( including those with additional support needs) effectively



Practical skills for parenting/ childcare at all ages / stages of development including links to employability

# Conclusions and discussion ?

*'If I ruled Scotland I'd invest in our schools  
To ensure rich or poor, our kids had all the tools  
To pursue their own dream, regardless of class  
And make Scotland a nation where no one comes last'*

**Mila Stricevic**





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Transforming lives through learning