

South Ayrshire Community Learning & Development Partnership 3 Year Plan 2024-2027

Mid - Point Summary Report
September 2024 - March 2026



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Cross-cutting priorities

The following cross-cutting priorities are considered across the work of the CLD Partnership. Their relevance may vary across different areas of delivery, but they remain important themes that support our commitment to improving outcomes for individuals, families and communities.

<p>Mental Health & Wellbeing</p> 	<p>Volunteering</p> 	<p>Ageing Well</p> 
<p>The Promise</p> 	<p>Young Carers</p> 	

Introduction

In September 2024, the CLD Partnership launched its new Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan for 2024–2027, setting out a refreshed set of priorities designed to strengthen learning, participation and community empowerment across South Ayrshire. The plan focuses on four core priorities: Adult & Family Learning, Financial Inclusion, Youth Work and Community Development. These priorities reflect the Partnership’s commitment to improving outcomes for individuals, families and communities through high quality, collaborative CLD practice.

CLD continues to play a vital role in reducing barriers, widening access to learning and supporting people to reach their full potential. This work is delivered through a wide range of approaches including youth work, adult and family learning, ESOL provision, community development, community engagement and community empowerment. The CLD Partnership Plan represents the collective contribution of the local authority, voluntary sector and community organisations working together to support positive change across South Ayrshire.

The Partnership has also identified a number of cross cutting priorities that inform and influence the planning and delivery of CLD activity where relevant. While these themes do not have standalone actions within the plan, they remain important considerations across the Partnership’s work. These cross cutting priorities are: Mental Health & Wellbeing, Volunteering, Ageing Well, The Promise and Young Carers.

Since the launch of the 2024–2027 Plan, the CLD Partnership has continued to build on the strong foundations established in previous years. The Thriving Communities service remains central to this work, bringing together CLD, Employability, Community Safety, Community Engagement and Health and Wellbeing to deliver a coordinated and community focused approach. This integrated model has strengthened collaboration, enhanced capacity and enabled more responsive support for local communities.

This mid term report highlights progress made during the first 18 months of the plan. It showcases examples of effective practice, outlines areas of development and demonstrates the ongoing commitment of partners to delivering meaningful and sustainable outcomes for the people of South Ayrshire.



Priority 1 Adult & Family Learning

Adult learning in South Ayrshire takes place in many different settings, through a wide range of approaches, and for a variety of personal, social and economic reasons. Our aim is to ensure that learning opportunities are relevant, accessible and responsive to the needs of our communities. We remain committed to promoting learning that is lifelong, life wide and firmly centred around the learner.

Recognising the vital role of family learning, the Partnership continues to prioritise approaches that involve whole families in the learning process. This strengthens relationships, improves educational outcomes and helps to build a culture of learning within communities. Our ambition is to deliver high quality adult and family learning provision at times, locations and formats that best suit the people we support.

The actions within the CLD Partnership Action Plan reflect this commitment. Over the course of the plan, we aim to:

- Deliver a range of meaningful adult and family learning opportunities tailored to identified community needs, encouraging individuals and families to learn, work and support one another
- Provide literacies provision for adults across South Ayrshire to enhance skills, confidence and participation
- Deliver ESOL support to learners and their families to promote social integration and strengthen community connections

The following section outlines the progress made to date in delivering these actions and highlights the impact of our work with adults, families and communities.

Participation 2024/25



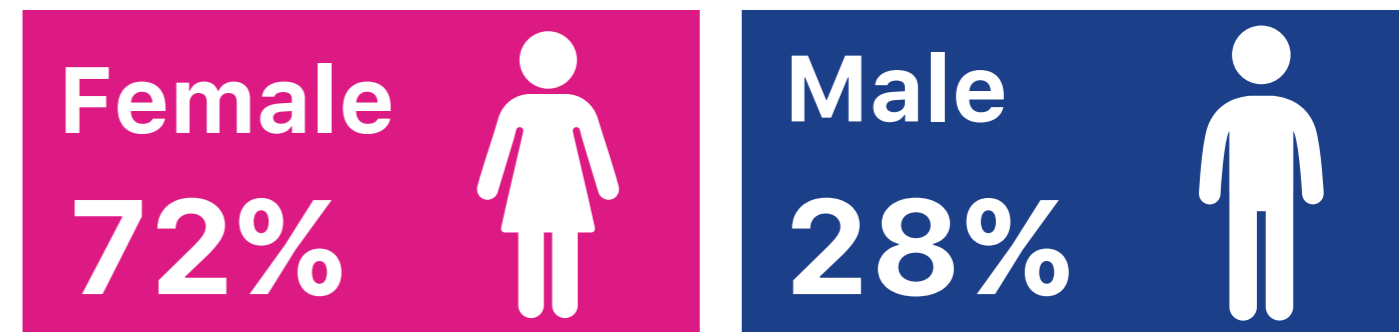
From 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025 there were 990 learning places accessed across CLD Community Based Adult and Family Learning provision.

Family Learning	38%
Literacies	34%
Community Based Adult Learning	28%

Learner Profile

Gender

In 2024/25, significantly more females than males participated in adult and family learning programmes:



Male participation was strongest within ESOL and literacies provision, where 54% of all male learners were engaged. Male learners also took part in family learning opportunities, particularly through holiday programmes, and engaged well in practical skills based courses such as driving theory, first aid and food hygiene

Age Range

In 2024/2025, the majority of adult learners engaged in CLD provision were aged between 31 and 40 years old. This reflects the strong participation in family learning programmes, where many parents taking part fall within the 25–40 age range. The continued demand for family learning opportunities has contributed to sustained engagement from this age group across the year.

Retention Rates

Of the 990 learning places, 898 learners completed their course, resulting in a strong retention rate of 91%.

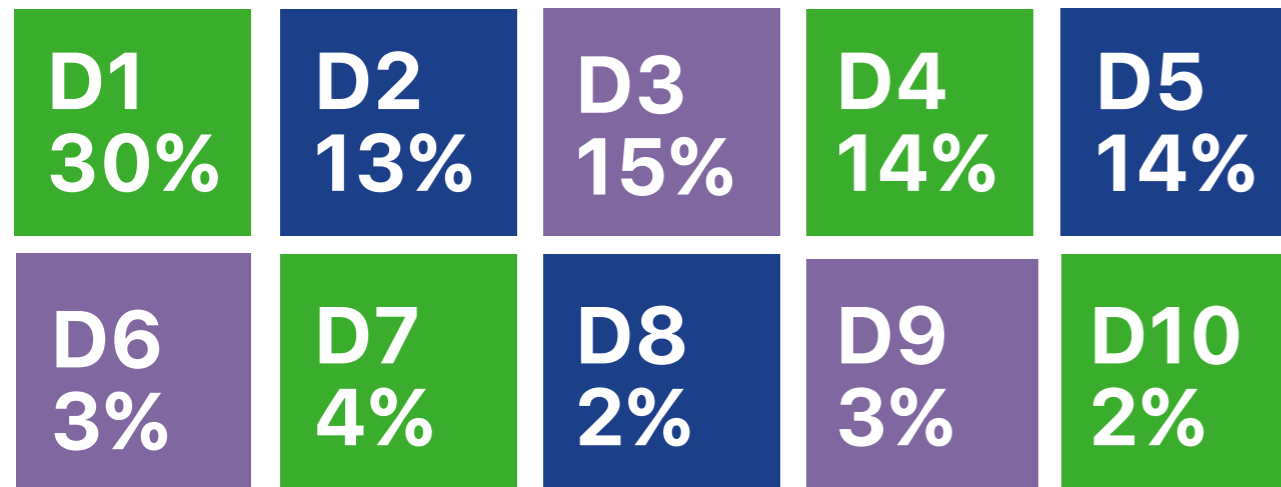
Accreditation Completion Rates

In 2024/25, 16% of all participation involved accredited learning. This reflects ongoing efforts within the CLD Partnership Plan to expand access to accredited opportunities where appropriate. The availability of accredited programmes varies depending on staffing, resources and the suitability of accreditation for different learner groups.



SIMD Deciles

In 2024/2025, 30% of learners lived in SIMD Decile 1, the most deprived areas in South Ayrshire. A further 42% were from Deciles 2–5. This demonstrates that the majority of CLD learners continue to come from communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation, reflecting the Partnership’s commitment to supporting those who face the greatest barriers to learning.



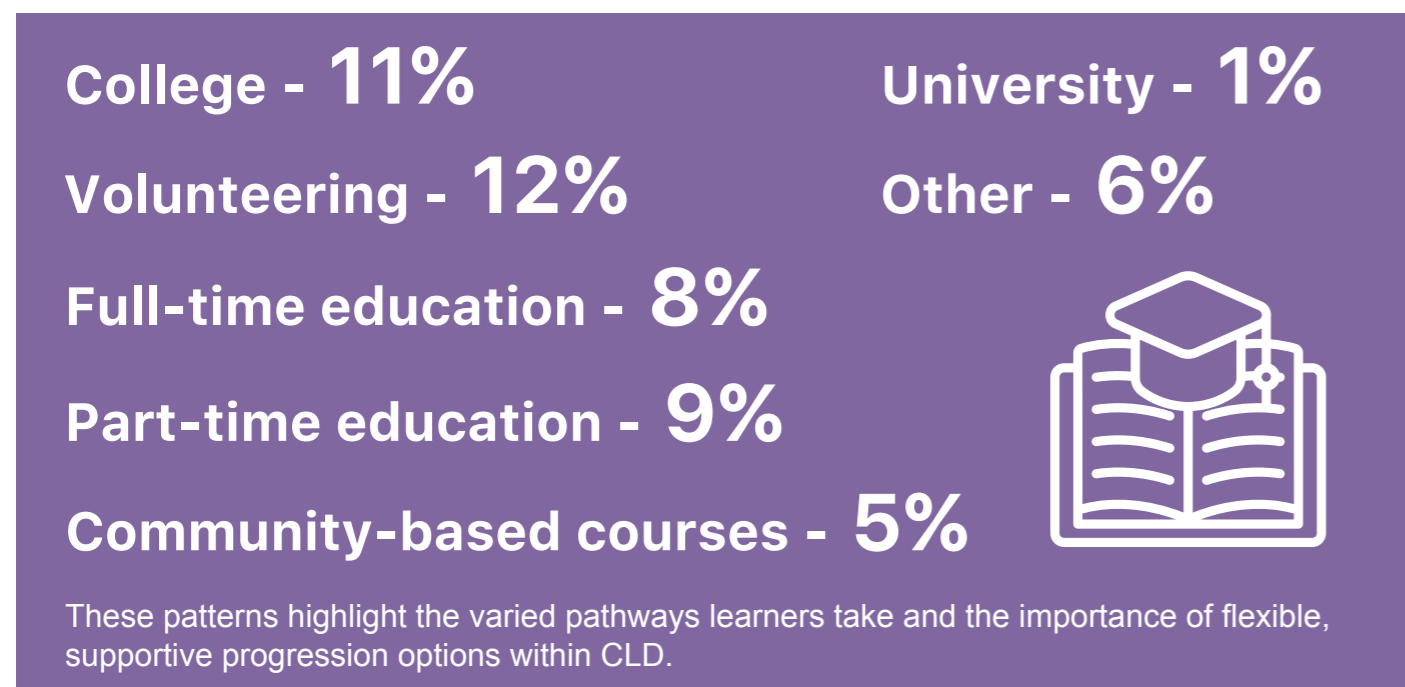
Learning Outcomes

In 2024/25, 92% of learners completing community based adult learning programmes achieved more than 75% of their learning outcomes, demonstrating strong engagement and meaningful progress across the year

Progression Routes

In 2024/25, the most common progression route identified by learners was continued engagement in CLD provision, with 52% choosing to progress into further CLD learning or activity. This reflects the nature of much of our work, where learners often require first steps opportunities that build confidence, resilience and wellbeing before moving on to wider learning or employment pathways.

Other progression routes included:



Impact of Learning on Participants

Three months after completing their learning programme, learners were contacted and asked how their learning had benefited them as individuals, within their families, in their communities or in other aspects of their lives.

In 2024/25, learners reported a wide range of positive outcomes:



These findings highlight the breadth of impact that CLD programmes have on individuals and families across South Ayrshire, particularly in building confidence, strengthening family relationships and improving wellbeing.

Literacies and ESOL Provision

Literacies and ESOL provision continued to be a core element of Adult and Family Learning delivery during 2024/25, supporting learners to develop reading, writing, numeracy, digital skills and communication. ESOL programmes in particular played a vital role in helping individuals and families build confidence, strengthen language skills and participate more fully in their communities.

Between 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025, Literacy Development Officers worked with:

- 128 ESOL learners
- 64 adult literacies learners

ESOL and literacies provision have continued to support learner progression, strengthen social integration, and increase participation in community life across South Ayrshire.



UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Young People) Hub

Thriving Communities Literacy Development Workers are delivering targeted ESOL support and accreditation for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People (UASC), funded by the Health and Social Care Partnership. The programme supports newly arrived, care experienced young people to develop English language skills, achieve accreditation and integrate into their local communities. Currently, 11 care experienced young people are being supported through ESOL delivery and a range of accredited learning pathways.

Delivery takes place over three full days per week at Ayrshire College (Riverside Building), with additional employability support provided one day per week to assist with future transitions. Learners are working towards qualifications including National 2 ESOL (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking), National 5 Applied Mathematics, ICT Core Skills (Levels 2 and 3) and other relevant awards.

Each young person receives tailored support, including access to community interpreters, regular progress reviews and a named Literacies Development Worker who provides continuity and represents them within settlement hub meetings, planning discussions and statutory reviews. This coordinated approach ensures individual needs are met while supporting positive learning and progression outcomes

Adult & Family Learning Awards

On Wednesday 29th October 2025, we hosted the Adult and Family Learning Awards to celebrate the achievements of local learners, volunteers and community groups. The event brought together learners, tutors, partners and third sector organisations from across South Ayrshire, showcasing the progress made through community based adult and family learning. This celebration directly reflects the CLD Partnership Plan's commitment to delivering meaningful learning opportunities that build skills, confidence and stronger families.

Awards were presented across a range of categories, recognising excellence in areas such as digital skills, literacies, ESOL, arts and culture, mental health and wellbeing, volunteering and community contribution.



2025 Award Winners

- **Environmental Award** – The Micah Project
- **Digital Skills** – Jess Leng
- **Arts and Culture Award** – Ayr North Time Team
- **Literacy Learner** – Laura Logan
- **ESOL Learner** – Anastasiia Skipalska
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing** – Dionne Barr
- **Skills and Development** – Wilma Steele
- **Partnership Award** – Friends of Dundonald Castle
- **Volunteer Award** – Jamie Anthony Lane
- **Learner of the Year** – Sharon Munro
- **Family Learning Award** – North Carrick Parent and Child Cluster Group
- **Group of the Year** – EmpowerHer Women's Group



These awards shine a light on individuals and groups who have shown exceptional dedication to learning, strengthened their confidence and skills, and made a positive difference within their families and communities. Many of the award categories directly reflect the actions within the CLD Partnership Plan, including the delivery of literacies, ESOL, and family learning opportunities.

The event also highlighted the vital role of partnership working. Recognition was given to the many third sector organisations who collaborate with Thriving Communities to deliver inclusive, accessible and community led learning across South Ayrshire. Their contribution is central to achieving the Partnership's priorities and ensuring that learning remains responsive to local needs.



Digital Support



Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) continues to offer support through its Digital Support service, now in its fifth year. The service provides free, accessible digital learning support to adults across South Ayrshire through a digital helpline, one to one appointments and regular community drop ins held in libraries, sheltered housing and community venues. Support includes device use, online safety, accessibility features and the development of bespoke learning plans tailored to individual needs. During 2025, the service averaged 11 drop in sessions per month, with 36 attendances monthly.

Quotes

“The support and patience gives me the confidence to try and get better with my phone. I can now video call my family instead of turning my phone off and people not being able to reach me.”

“The digital support service is great and always has a fantastic turnout. The teacher has a great way of talking with her clients, making them feel comfortable so that they understand without being talked down to.”

Priority 2 Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion remains a core priority for the CLD Partnership, reflecting our shared commitment to reducing social and economic inequalities across South Ayrshire. Many individuals and families continue to face financial pressures that impact their wellbeing, opportunities and ability to participate fully in community life. Through targeted learning, employability support and strengthened referral pathways, the Partnership aims to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to access the right support at the right time.

The Local Employability Partnership plays a central role in this work, supporting the creation of a fair, inclusive and sustainable local economy. By designing services around the needs and aspirations of individuals, we aim to remove barriers, build confidence and create clear pathways into learning, volunteering and employment. Community spaces continue to be key access points for this support, offering welcoming environments where people can develop skills, improve financial resilience and build the foundations for positive progression.

The actions within the CLD Partnership Plan reflect this commitment. Over the course of the plan, we aim to:

- Deliver a range of experiences that equip individuals with the skills for learning, life and work
- Prioritise Youth Work and Adult Learning programmes for individuals residing in SIMD 1–3 areas
- Increase referrals from Thriving Communities for individuals and families requiring financial support

This section outlines the progress made to date in delivering these actions and highlights the impact of our work in supporting financial wellbeing, employability and improved life chances across South Ayrshire.

Support for Young Carers



Health & Social Care Partnership, working with Skills Development Scotland, delivered co design sessions with young carers to improve how their skills and experiences are captured in their My World of Work learner profiles. Fourteen young carers took part, using videos, visual templates and dedicated time in school to help them identify both caring and non caring skills. The approach increased their confidence, reduced stigma and supported more accurate, meaningful profiles. This was a pilot programme that will be rolled out across local schools and carer services, with plans for wider national implementation.

The project showed that young carers bring a wide range of practical, emotional and organisational skills that are highly relevant to future employment, apprenticeships and further education. By helping young carers articulate these strengths in a recognised format, the work supports fairer access to positive destinations and ensures their achievements are visible to employers, colleges and training providers. Staff also gained a better understanding of the pressures young carers face, reinforcing the need for tailored resources and young carer specific examples within MyWoW so their abilities are fully recognised as they plan for their next steps.

Progression and Employability Support

The initial School Leaver Destination Results published in February 2025 confirmed that 98.7% of young people who left school between September 2023 and September 2024 entered a positive destination three months after leaving school. South Ayrshire was ranked 1st in Scotland for these results.

Follow up destinations published in June 2025 showed that 96.8% of these young people remained in a positive destination nine months after leaving school, exceeding the national average of 93.1%.

The initial School Leaver Destination Results published in February 2026 confirmed that 97.3% of young people who left school between September 2024 and September 2025 entered a positive destination three months after leaving school. This is above the national average of 95.7%.

The interim participation measure published in January 2025 confirmed that 93.8% of 16–19 year olds in South Ayrshire were participating in education, employment or training between April 2024 and December 2024. This was above the national figure of 92.8%.

The annual participation results, published in August 2025, showed that 95.6% of 16–19 year olds had sustained a positive destination between April 2024 and March 2025. This exceeded the national average of 93.3% and placed South Ayrshire 5th highest in Scotland.

Skills Development Scotland have confirmed that they no longer produce an interim participation measure.

From 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025 Thriving Communities, Employability Team have provided 996 participants employability support. 103 of these participants have been care experienced and 150 with caring responsibilities. 221 of these participants have been parents.

177 participants have achieved accredited qualifications as of 31st December 2025.

Case Study - GK

GK joined Thriving Communities in September 2023 experiencing severe mental health challenges, social isolation, and with no qualifications or work history. His goals were to improve his wellbeing, build confidence, and eventually secure employment to support his young family.

GK first engaged with SALUS for mental health support before progressing to the Thriving Communities Town Centre Programme. Despite initial anxiety, he adapted well, built positive relationships, and developed essential employability and outdoor working skills. He also completed Emergency First Aid at Work and Manual Handling training.

He then completed a 6-month paid placement with Bereavement Services. During this period he faced some challenges, but he remained committed and continued to engage with support.

GK went on to complete a 4 week placement at SAC's Waste Management Recycling Centre, where his strong work ethic which led to him securing a 23 month Tailored Jobs contract. This programme supports individuals with barriers such as ASN and health conditions into sustainable employment.

Over the last six months, GK has shown exceptional progress in confidence, stability, and workplace ability. He has settled well into his new role and is now planning to begin driving lessons, aiming to become a Refuse Driver in the future. He continues to receive support from his Employability Keyworker.

Participant Quote:

“ I can't thank the Thriving Communities Employability Team enough for what they have done for me. I love my new job and have settled in really quickly; I can't wait to see what the future holds. ”



Volunteering/Employment

An event focused on volunteering and employment opportunities for residents aged 50+ was held at the Cutty Sark Centre on 2nd October 2024, during International Day of Older People week. The event highlighted the wide range of local volunteering roles available and showcased employment options for those wishing to re enter the workforce or explore new pathways. Participants were also introduced to the latest Volunteering Newsletter, which included a dedicated focus on older volunteers. Feedback was positive, with attendees noting increased awareness of the opportunities available locally and greater confidence in taking the next steps towards volunteering or employment.



Evolve Programme

Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) continues to support employability activity within the 3rd sector. In partnership with Thriving Communities and through funding from the Local Employability Partnership, VASA administered a programme providing paid 26 week placements for unemployed individuals within local charities. Seven months into the 2025 programme, 25 unemployed people have been placed within 18 charities across South Ayrshire. Over the past 19 months, 42 individuals have been supported through the programme, with approximately 75% progressing into permanent employment within the sector following completion of their placement. This approach supports income stability, skills development and sustainable employment outcomes while also strengthening the local third sector workforce

Quotes:-

“ Being out of work was tough, but the support and encouragement I received through the Evolve Placement made all the difference. The one-to-one guidance helped me get back on track, and now I've not only found a job I enjoy, but I've also been able to take my family on our first holiday abroad, fix my car, and keep caring for my Gran. It's completely changed things for us. ”
- MB, Seascape

“ I have had such a positive experience and really enjoyed my journey on the programme. Would definitely highly recommend to other people who were in my situation. - WB - Vics In The Community ”

“ Amazed at my journey to date and now always look forward not backwards to our next chapter.” – MC Micah Project ”

Holiday Programme

Thriving Communities' Summer 2025 Holiday Programmes provided meaningful, engaging and accessible experiences for families across South Ayrshire. Supported through UK Shared Prosperity Funding, a wide range of activities were delivered free of charge, ensuring that cost was never a barrier to participation. The programmes were targeted towards families who would benefit most from additional support, enrichment and opportunities during the holidays.

Across South Ayrshire, the holiday programmes offered something for everyone—workshops, youth sessions, outdoor learning, wellbeing activities and family experiences. These opportunities supported confidence building, strengthened relationships and created lasting memories for children, young people and their parents. 553 parents and children participated,

reflecting strong engagement and highlighting the continued need for accessible holiday provision.

A key feature of the programme was the provision of free food, ensuring families could attend and enjoy activities without additional financial pressure which is particularly important during the school holidays when household costs can rise. The combination of free food, transport and local delivery created a welcoming, inclusive environment where families could fully engage.

Alongside the locality based programmes, two major festivals were delivered as part of the summer offer, providing large scale, free community events for children, young people and families from across South Ayrshire.




Bounce Festival



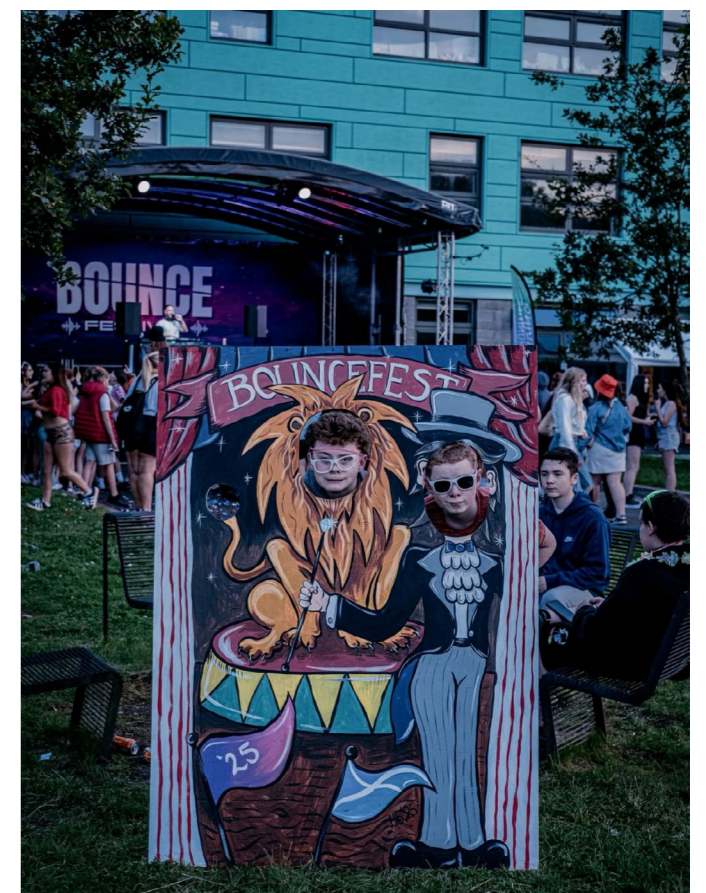
In August 2025 Thriving Communities hosted its fourth Youth Work Festival for young people in South Ayrshire, 'Bounce Festival 25'. The main aim of the event was to provide local young people aged 12 to 18 with an opportunity to engage in and enjoy a wide range of positive activities. 456 young people attended Bounce on Friday 15th August 2025 which offered live music from well known DJ's, various activities including fun fair rides, inflatables and workshops. Youth Volunteers supported the organisation of the event along with the Youth Council providing Financial Inclusion Funding. The event was free to attend and transport was also organised across the various localities within South Ayrshire to ensure there were no barriers for young people to be able to participate. There was a reduction of 30% in anti-social behaviour incidents on the night of the Festival.



Please scan the QR code to watch Bounce video!



SCAN HERE



FAMILY FESTIVAL

Building on the success of last year's event, the Thriving Communities Family Learning Festival took place on Wednesday 13th August 2025 and provided families across South Ayrshire with an opportunity to engage in and enjoy a wide range of positive activities, including; live music, children's entertainment, food, outdoor learning, STEM, sensory play, health and wellbeing workshops and much more! We targeted areas in South Ayrshire where families are experiencing challenging situations in their everyday lives. Thriving Communities staff supported 380 parents and children who predominately live in neighbourhoods recognised as statistically deprived within the health and wellbeing summary and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to attend. This event was completely free of charge and families will be supported to attend by their Thriving Communities Officer.



“
We had a great day, thank you!
 ”

“
We had a fantastic time!
 ”

“
Great wee day, well fed, watered and entertained!
 ”

Family Festival video below

Glendoune

Thriving Communities, Senior Communities Officer has continued to provide targeted support within Glendoune, helping to reduce the financial pressures experienced by local residents. The centre now plays a key role in supporting individuals and families through food provision, school holiday campaigns, cost free community events, and the distribution of fuel vouchers, helping to ease immediate hardship while creating pathways towards longer term financial stability. Working closely with local partners, including schools, health services, charities and other council teams, Glendoune also addresses related challenges such as poor mental health, substance misuse and community safety issues, ensuring residents receive coordinated and timely support. Since 2021, this approach has led to an 83.3% increase in weekly groups delivered within the centre, alongside a 92.2% rise in young people volunteering, strengthening community resilience, connection and confidence. Glendoune is now recognised as a trusted community hub, providing safe spaces, essential support and opportunities that enable residents to thrive.



Driving Lessons - North Carrick

DRIVING Theory

Start Date: TBC September 2025

Are you looking to start your driving journey?

How we can help:

- 8 week driving theory
- Funding opportunities - Provisional Licence & Theory Test
- Budgeting support - Driving Lessons

To register your interest please email: ainsley.mccrindle@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

The North Carrick Driving theory programme was put together to help support people living in the North Carrick area to access the driving theory test, as transport can be a barrier for many people and that can make looking for employment or moving into further education a challenge.

Putting the programme together offered support and confidence building, preparing the learners for their theory test and helping them to then progress on to taking driving lessons and passing their driving test.

Thriving Communities CLD worked in partnership with Multiply and North Carrick Community Benevolent Company to fund the programme. NCCBC provided funding for driving lessons and the driving test. This was a fantastic opportunity

for the people of North Carrick helping to remove further barriers for people to learn to drive as this can be an impossible expectation for some people with the financial cost.

The course ran over 8 weeks covering lots of different topics of driving theory for example, rules of the road, hazard awareness, road signs, motorway rules, and many more, The Multiply team also offered advice on budgeting, car insurance costs, and the daily cost of owning and running a vehicle.

Outcomes to date include:-

14

learners have passed the driving theory test

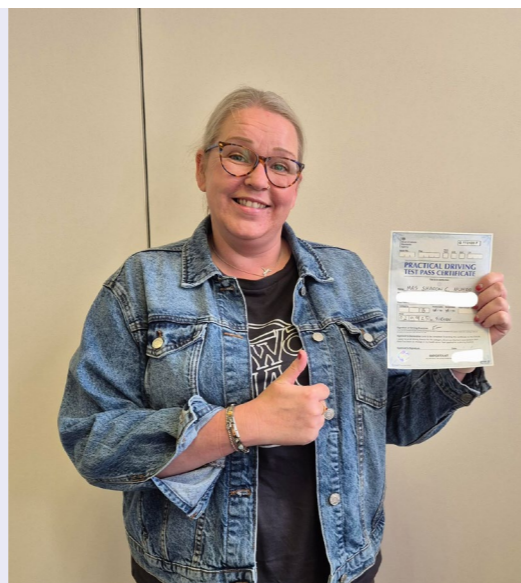
7

further tests are booked

7

have passed their practical driving test (funded by NCCBC)

One of the learners said, “ I’ve always wanted to learn to drive as this would make a huge difference to my family life being able to take the children out but also to help me look after other family members and attending appointments with them. I could never see me being able to afford the cost or pass the tests. By attending the group I’ve gained knowledge and confidence with the driving theory which helped me to pass the test and I’m now currently taking driving lessons funded by the NCCBC. If someone had told me this time last year that I would be learning to drive and passed my theory test I would never have believed them! and that’s thanks to Thriving Communities, I am very grateful for the opportunity I was given I hope more people do this course as it’s a brilliant chance for people”.



Driving Lessons – Ayr North

The Ayr North Driving Theory group was introduced to support local residents who face transport barriers that impact their ability to access employment, training, and further education. Thriving Communities received £18,040 in Financial Inclusion funding to provide structured support to help learners prepare for and pass their driving theory test, and for several participants, to progress into driving lessons and their practical test.

The programme offered confidence building, guidance on the theory exam, and support to help learners take the next steps toward gaining their licence. This approach has created meaningful opportunities for individuals in Ayr North to improve long term financial independence.

Outcomes to date include:-

- 10 learners have passed the driving theory test
- 3 learners are currently taking driving lessons with practical tests booked
- 1 learner has passed both the theory and practical driving test
- 1 learner is completing an intensive programme of lessons and is expected to sit the practical test before March 2026

This programme demonstrates strong engagement and highlights the impact that Financial Inclusion funding can have in reducing barriers, supporting employability, and improving financial wellbeing for residents in Ayr North.



INFORMATION AND ADVICE TEAM

The team provide a free, confidential and impartial welfare rights and money advice service across South Ayrshire. From 1st September 2024 and 25th January 2026, Thriving Communities made 151 referrals to the Information and Advice Team for individuals and families requiring financial support. These referrals resulted in £45,150.39 in confirmed financial gains, directly boosting household income for local residents. In addition, the Team provided advice and support on £31,383.13 worth of debt, helping families to stabilise their financial situation and access appropriate guidance. This demonstrates a strong and growing referral pathway, ensuring that families engaged through Thriving Communities are connected to timely, high impact financial inclusion support.

Case Study 1

A working age male was referred to the Information and Advice Team by Thriving Communities for a benefit check. The advisor identified a missed entitlement to Carer Support Payment and the Carer's Supplement, resulting in an annual financial gain of £4,918.60.

Case Study 2

A working age male with disabilities was referred to the Information and Advice Team by Thriving Communities for support with an Adult Disability Payment re determination. Following advice, he was awarded the standard rate for daily living and mobility, receiving £2,000 backdated and £5,361.20 annually, totalling £7,361.20.

Your Money, Your Future Events



There were five “Your Money, Your Future” events held by the Information and Advice Team during July and August 2025, within Ayr, Girvan, Maybole, Prestwick and Troon. These events were designed to raise awareness of the financial support available to South Ayrshire residents and provided information on income boosting opportunities, grants and ways to reduce household costs, including energy bills. Thriving Communities supported the events and raised awareness with individuals and families. Around 100 people attended across the five towns, increasing visibility of local financial inclusion support and encouraging early engagement from individuals and families.

Voluntary Action South Ayrshire

Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) continues to play an important role in supporting financial inclusion across South Ayrshire through advice, signposting and community based provision. During the reporting period, VASA's Connect Team made a significant number of referrals to benefits advice services, supporting individuals and families to access income maximisation support. Between January and November 2025, the team referred 216 individuals through walk-ins and telephone contacts to benefits advice services, including the Information and Advice Team and Social Security Scotland, helping ensure timely access to financial support.



Food Pantries

Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) operates food pantries in Ayr and Girvan, providing affordable access to nutritious food while promoting dignity, choice and independence. As of November 2025, the Ayr Food Pantry, supporting residents in KA8, Annbank, Mossblown and Tarbolton, had 535 member households, supporting 851 adults and 239 children. Membership included a high proportion of people experiencing financial vulnerability, including single parent households, families with three or more children, individuals who are unemployed or unable to work, and older people. While demand remains high, some members have exited the service during the year as they moved out of food insecurity.

The Girvan Food Pantry, operating for around 18 months, has seen a significant increase in demand. As of November 2025, it supported 155 member households, comprising 245 adults and 74 children, including single parent families and households affected by unemployment, ill health or retirement. Together, the pantries help reduce household food costs, support financial stability during periods of hardship, and contribute to wider outcomes linked to wellbeing and community connection.

Priority 3 Youth Work

Youth work is a vital part of Community Learning and Development in South Ayrshire, supporting young people to build the skills, confidence and resilience they need to thrive. The CLD Partnership is committed to ensuring that every young person—regardless of their background, circumstances or challenges—has the opportunity to realise their potential and plan for a positive future. Through high quality, relationship based practice, youth work provides safe, supportive spaces where young people can learn, grow and feel valued.

Youth work in South Ayrshire is delivered in a range of settings, including schools, community venues and outdoor environments, ensuring that support is available at times and places that suit young people. The Partnership recognises the importance of targeted youth work, early intervention and meaningful participation, and continues to prioritise approaches that strengthen wellbeing, promote inclusion and create opportunities for young people to influence decisions that affect their lives.

The actions within the CLD Partnership Plan reflect this commitment. Over the course of the plan, we aim to:

- promote and deliver targeted community based opportunities for young people aged 10 and above that support their overall wellbeing and development
- deliver a range of experiences that equip young people with learning, accreditation, leadership and employability skills to support school attendance and positive destinations
- provide opportunities for young people to have a voice and influence their groups, services and wider youth voice structures
- support young people to develop a new Youth Voice Charter for South Ayrshire Community Planning Partners
- develop a programme of events where young people's rights are promoted and discussed with key decision makers
- support the delivery of detached youth work and develop positive diversionary experiences at targeted times



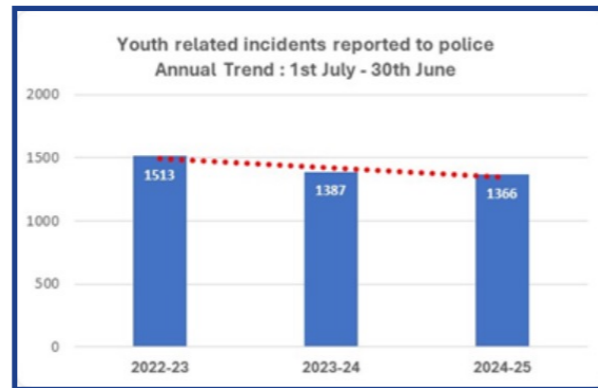
YOUTH WORK PARTICIPATION

2024/25

In 2024/25, 2,136 young people engaged in regular CLD youth work (4+ weeks). Youth work was delivered across four main areas:

- **Community based youth work:** 1,280 young people
- **Holiday programmes:** 293 young people
- **School based youth work:** 469 young people
- **Youth voice groups:** 94 young people

This reflects strong engagement across a broad range of settings, with community based youth work remaining the largest area of delivery.



Targeted Youth Work

In 2024/25, **1,244 young people** were identified as belonging to targeted groups, representing **58%** of all youth work participants. These included:

- young people living in **SIMD 1-3**
- **care experienced** young people
- **young carers**
- young people referred from other priority groups

This demonstrates strong alignment with the Partnership's commitment to prioritising support for those facing the greatest barriers.

Detached Youth Work

A data informed deployment model was used, drawing on:

- community intelligence
- referrals
- partnership reports
- direct feedback from young people

Detached youth work contributed to:

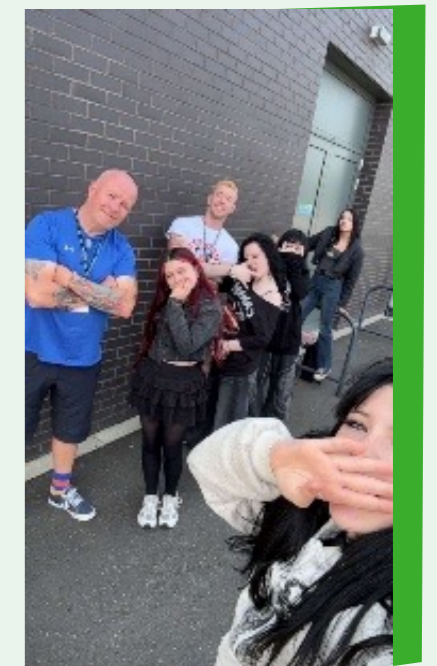
- improved awareness of support pathways
- reductions in antisocial behaviour in identified areas
- strengthened partnership working
- increased youth participation in local decision making

This directly supports the action to deliver targeted and diversionary youth work at key times and as supported a reduction in youth related anti-social behaviour.



TAYP - Targeted Approach to Young People

The Targeted Approach to Young People (TAYP) programme, delivered by South Ayrshire Council Thriving Communities, supports young people who are involved in or at risk of antisocial behaviour, or who are not engaging with school as expected. Between January and June 2025, a targeted girls group took part in an animal care and horse-riding programme delivered in partnership with Fossil Fields Stables. The programme provided consistent, positive experiences that supported improvements in attendance, behaviour, wellbeing and peer relationships. Several participants demonstrated significant improvements in school attendance and engagement, with some attending school primarily on the days the group ran. Young people reported feeling happier and more confident, with improved communication skills, reduced incidents in school and the community, and stronger connections with peers. The partnership with Fossil Fields created a nurturing, structured environment that supported meaningful and sustained positive change for some of the school's most vulnerable young people.



Learner Hours and Programme Delivery

In 2024/25, young people participated in 72 youth work programmes, contributing a total of 42,036 hours of learning and engagement.

Breakdown of hours:

- Community based youth work: 25,936 hours
- Holiday programmes: 6,602 hours
- School based youth work: 7,141 hours
- Youth voice programmes: 2,357 hours

On average, each young person engaged in 19.6 hours of youth work over the year.

Youth work delivery continues to evolve, with a growing emphasis on:

- diversionary activity
- events and festivals
- residential experiences
- longer, more intensive sessions

This reflects increasing complexity in young people's needs and the Partnership's commitment to deeper, more meaningful engagement.



Volunteer Contribution

Adult and youth volunteers contributed 2,580

hours to youth work programmes in 2024/25. This significant level of involvement has strengthened community capacity, supported emerging youth workers and enhanced the sustainability of youth work provision.

Learner Outcomes

Using the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework, 550 young people completed a Learner Journey form in 2024/25.

Young people identified improvements in:

<p>Positive relationships</p>	<p>Feeling safe and welcome</p>	<p>Having a say</p>
<p>New experiences</p>	<p>Skills and Knowledge</p>	<p>Better informed decisions</p>
<p>Positive futures</p>	<p>These outcomes demonstrate the breadth of impact youth work has on wellbeing, confidence and personal development.</p>	

Youth Work Accreditation

In 2024/25:

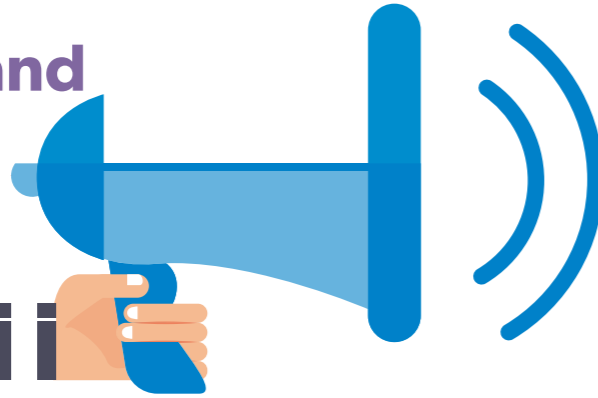
- 406 young people registered for youth awards
- 319 achieved an award (79% completion rate)
- 57 young people are continuing their award into 2025/26

Most popular awards included:

- Hi5! Awards
- Dynamic Youth Awards
- Saltire Awards

Accreditation was embedded across targeted school based provision to support wider achievement and ensure young people could gain recognition for their learning.

Youth Voice and Participation



Youth voice remained a central focus of youth work in 2024/25.

South Ayrshire Youth Council

Elected in June 2024, the Youth Council represents all secondary schools, the ASN school, the Virtual School and young people aged 16+. Their priorities include:

- cost of living
- mental health and wellbeing
- youth voice and influence
- support for young people with additional needs

Over the year, members engaged in meetings with elected members, contributed to policy discussions, delivered presentations and led a cost of living survey reaching over 600 young people. They also launched the Body Essentials Project, supporting 31 schools and multiple youth groups to provide free toiletries to young people.



Youth Voice Engagements

Through rights based approaches, 366 young people took part in one off youth voice engagements, contributing to focus groups, consultations and service design.

Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament

South Ayrshire MSYPs played an active role in national and local youth democracy, including:

- consulting over 200 young people on racism and xenophobia
- presenting a successful motion to the Scottish Youth Parliament
- developing a pilot lesson plan with the Scottish Refugee Council
- hosting a regional MSYP gathering
- supporting increased youth involvement in Community Councils



This work directly supports the action to strengthen youth voice and influence.

YOUTH AWARDS EVENT

The South Ayrshire Youth Awards took place on 3 April 2025, celebrating the achievements of young people aged 11–25. The event was entirely youth led, with young people shaping the theme, categories, entertainment and design. A total of 107 nominations were received, with 27 finalists recognised across nine categories.

This event demonstrates the Partnership’s commitment to promoting young people’s rights, celebrating achievement and strengthening youth participation.



Keeping Our Promise



Over the past year, care experienced young people in South Ayrshire have taken part in a range of targeted, confidence building activities delivered through partnership working between Thriving Communities, local support teams and third sector partners. Activity included curriculum and extra curricular sessions, outdoor learning, leadership opportunities, holiday provision and mental health workshops, all designed to promote wellbeing, inclusion and a sense of belonging.

In partnership with Scottish Rowing, a Learn to Row project was delivered on the River Ayr, providing a safe and supportive environment where young people could build confidence, social skills and physical ability at their own pace. The project ensured participants felt included, empowered and able to engage in new experiences in a way that suited their individual needs.



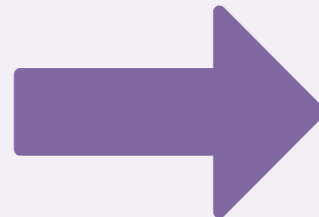
Champions Board Groups

Thriving Communities have worked in partnership with the Champions Board to create regular, supportive opportunities for care experienced young people to come together. Fortnightly groups operate in both Ayr and Girvan, providing safe and welcoming spaces where young people can connect, share experiences and build positive relationships with peers who have similar lived experience.

The groups offer a wide range of activities designed to promote confidence, wellbeing and life skills. Young people take part in activities such as mountain biking, swimming, music and creative sessions, alongside practical opportunities including cooking and developing basic life skills. This varied programme ensures there is something for everyone, encourages participation at individual pace, and supports young people to build skills, friendships and a sense of belonging.



You can find out more in the video:-



Saltire Awards

Between September 2024 and January 2026, Voluntary Action South Ayrshire supported strong engagement in youth volunteering across South Ayrshire, with 243 new Saltire Awards users, 17 new group administrators, and 9,412 volunteering hours logged. Young people achieved 1,784 Saltire Awards, including five Summit Awards recognised at the annual ceremony in April 2025. VASA launched the first Young Volunteers Newsletter in January 2026, now available across libraries, schools, youth organisations and online, promoting local volunteering opportunities for young people.

VASA supported young people through school events, college and university engagement, and one to one guidance, with over 100 young people receiving individual support across in person and online contact. Since September 2024, 713 young people completed a Saltire Challenge Award, developing teamwork and leadership skills through school and community based activities. Monthly development sessions for Saltire Ambassadors further strengthened young people's confidence, leadership and wellbeing skills, supported by external inputs such as SAMH.

There are currently 14 Saltire Ambassadors representing seven schools and local education settings. Ambassadors play an active role in shaping youth volunteering, supporting events, and voting on Summit Award nominations, with several reporting increased confidence, belonging and enjoyment through their role. Young people with additional support needs were also assisted to access volunteering placements, demonstrating VASA's inclusive youth work approach.

Family First

Family First, South Ayrshire's whole family, early intervention model, provides integrated multi agency support through locality teams linked to school clusters, ensuring families receive timely, preventative help that strengthens wellbeing and improves outcomes for children and young people. As part of this approach, Thriving Communities continues to play a key role by supporting referrals across all clusters.



Family First Referrals to Thriving Communities:-

Dates	Ayr Academy	Belmont Academy	Carrick Academy	Girvan Academy	Kyle Academy	Marr College	Prestwick Academy	Queen Margaret Academy
Aug 24- June 25	5	0	2	3	3	2	3	1

Priority 4 Community Development

Community Development is a core function of Community Learning and Development and plays a vital role in strengthening the capacity, resilience and influence of communities across South Ayrshire. It involves a deliberate and collaborative approach to working with groups connected by place, interest, identity or shared experience, enabling them to participate meaningfully in local decision making and shape the services and opportunities that affect their lives.

The CLD Partnership is committed to supporting communities to identify their priorities, articulate their needs and take forward actions that matter to them. By raising awareness of funding opportunities, connecting groups with relevant partners and providing access to specialist support, we aim to ensure that communities have the financial, organisational and strategic resources required to thrive. Our ambition is to empower communities to take ownership of local assets, strengthen local leadership and increase their ability to influence change.

The actions within the CLD Partnership Plan reflect this commitment. Over the course of the plan, we aim to:

- Support and empower communities to take on assets within their local area
- Provide support to communities to access internal and external funding
- Support communities to develop community led action plans and Local Place Plans across South Ayrshire
- Build community capacity by providing assistance to community groups, associations and Community Councils
- Empower existing Thriving Communities groups, where appropriate, to become independent of internal support by enabling them to use their own assets to improve community life

This section outlines the progress made in 2024/25 in delivering these actions and highlights the impact of community development work across South Ayrshire.



External Funding Support Funding support to community Groups

From 1st July 2024 – 30th June 2025 the External Funding Officer has provided advice and information to a wide range of community groups and organisations to help identify both external and internal funding opportunities.

- 72 dedicated funding reports were prepared and issued to groups.
- 24 bi-weekly funding alerts have been circulated to community groups across South Ayrshire since August 2024.
- Thriving Communities CLD Facebook page shared funding information through an average of 18 posts per week.

Additional support has been provided to groups requiring help with applications, alongside information and advice sessions on how to prepare strong submissions to funders.

As part of the Council's commitment to supporting community and voluntary groups, charities, and social enterprises in accessing external funding, a free online resource — South Ayrshire 4 Funding is available:-



This resource provides a cohesive approach to external funding and enables groups to identify the best funders for their projects.

- 1,391 searches have been carried out in the past year.
- 279 groups are currently registered as users.

To date, the service has helped generate over £700,000 in funding for the region, delivering a return of £20.39 for every £1 invested.

These searches cover a wide range of community funding needs, as illustrated by the accompanying keyword word cloud.

INTERNAL FUNDING INVESTED



Alongside external funding support, Thriving Communities has also invested directly in communities through a range of funding opportunities since August 2024.



Financial Inclusion Funding

Thriving Communities is committed to supporting Financial Inclusion Projects that aim to reduce poverty and improve quality of life for communities.

Name of group	Amount awarded
Daily Community Development Trust	£1000
Carrick Rugby Football Club	£750
Ayr & Prestwick Mens Shed	£1000
Mossblown Matters	£1000
Girvan Town Team	£600
Vasa pantry	£1000

Following approval by Councillors at Cabinet, additional funding was allocated for 2025/26, allowing a second Financial Inclusion Fund to be launched.

Name of group	Amount awarded
Ayr Gaiety Partnership	£2500
The Honeypot Childrens Charity	£4142
The Ballantrae Trust	£1000
Ayr United Football Academy	£3000
Vics in the Community	£4142
SeAscape	£4142
Recovery Ayr	£2000
Broken Chains	£3642
The Carrick Centre	£4142
Glendoune Community Association	£3250

A total of £60,000 was also distributed to support the work of food pantries:-

Name of group	Amount awarded
VASA - Ayr	£35,000
VASA - Girvan	£12,500
The Carrick Centre	£12,500

Community Empowerment Funding

The Community Empowerment Fund (CEF) is part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and supports community groups in taking ownership of land or assets, completing capital or development projects, and achieving priorities identified within their Place Plans or Community Action Plans. Applicants can apply for:-

- Small Grant: up to £4,950 – to address barriers to sustaining a group or to fund smaller development projects.
- Development Grant: up to £15,000 – for groups taking ownership of land/assets, going through a Community Asset Transfer (CAT), or taking the lease of an asset.

2024/25 Awards

- Budget: £105,000 (Capital £55,000, Revenue £50,000)
- Applications received: 22
- Successful applications: 12, with grants ranging from £2,600 to £15,000

Name of group	Amount awarded
Friends of Dundonald Castle	£4,950
ACE	£4,588
Ballantrae Trust	£15,000
Carrick Rugby Football Club	£2,600
Vics in the Community	£15,000
Friends of Broadway Prestwick	£4,950
Biosphere Bikes	£15,000
Overmills Allotment Assoc	£4,950
Girvan & District Attractions	£4,950
Kincaidston Action Group	£9,200
Peter Boyle Bowling Club	£14,030
The Ayr Ark	£8,585.13

2025/26 Awards

- Budget: £100,000 (Capital £80,000, Revenue £20,000)
- Fund Launched – 10th April 2025
- Closing Date – 1st May 2025
- Applications received: 27
- Successful applications: 16, with grants ranging from £608 to £15,000
- Conditions: All awarded funds must be spent by 28 February 2026

Name of group	Amount awarded
Annbank Comm Association	£8,600
Ayr Sea Cadets	£6,500
Ayr United Football Academy	£3,300
Dailly Comm Dev Trust	£2,400
Forehill Bowling Club	£15,000
Friends of the Broadway Prestwick	£12,000
Harbour Ayrshire	£1,794
Maybole Womens Group	£950
Peter Boyle Bowling Club	£14,958
Pinwherry & Pinmore Comm Dev Trust	£3,758
Prestwick Cricket Club	£608
Prestwick St Cuthbert Archery Club	£997
South Ayrshire Access Panel	£1,240
The Iris Ayr	£9,765
Troon Men's Shed	£10,276
Vics in the Community	£7,827

Good News Story/Quote

“ The purpose of the club is to provide a sporting and social space for members and the public to participate in activities and enhance their physical health and mental wellbeing. ”

 **Michelle - Peter Boyle Bowling Club**

“ This grant has enabled the club to enhance the social space and reach out to members and the wider community to make a valued difference to their health and wellbeing. ”

Participatory Budgeting Funding

The Participatory Budgeting Fund (PB) is also supported through UKSPF and aims to empower local communities to influence how funding is allocated to projects that meet local health, wellbeing, and community priorities.

2024/25 Awards

Budget: £90,000, in partnership with the Health and Social Care Partnership

Local allocation: £15,000 to each of the six localities:

- Ayr North
- Ayr South & Villages
- Girvan & South Carrick
- Maybole & North Carrick
- Prestwick & Villages
- Troon & Villages
- Grant range: £500–£3,000 per group
- Groups funded: 66

Name of group	Amount awarded
Ukrainian Community Group	£3,000 UKSPF
Carers Gateway South Ayrshire	£3,000 UKSPF
The IRIS	£3,000 UKSPF
Peter Boyle Bowling Club	£2,400
Ayr ARK	£2,800 UKSPF
Harbour AYRSHIRE	£1,800 UKSPF
Riverside Community Trust	£3,000
Overmills User Group	£2,100
Ayr North Exc Womens Group	£3,000
RecycleAyr	£3,000
Overmills Allotments	£2,000 UKSPF
Lochside Gardening Group	£900
Honeypot Childrens Charity	£2,789 UKSPF
Ayrshire Hospice	£3,000 UKSPF
Spotty Zebras	£2,000
RecoveryAyr	£3,000 UKSPF

Carers Gateway	£3,000 UKSPF
Annbank Comm Assoc	£3,000 UKSPF
Broken Chains	£3,000
Mossblown Matters	£2,850
NLADYS	£3,000
Mindfully Present	£2,060
Tarbolton Community Council	£1,500
Kincaidston Action Group	£801
Girvan Youth Football Club	£3,000 UKSPF
Girvan & District Attractions SCIO	£3,000 UKSPF
Girvan Development Group	£3,000 UKSPF
Carrick Resilience Team	£3,000 UKSPF
Girvan Youth Trust	£1,900 UKSPF
Sacred Heart Primary School Parent Council	£1,000 UKSPF
Girvan Community Garden	£2,994
Stumpy Corner Steering Group	£3,000
Girvan Opportunities Planning Committee	£3,000
Biosphere Bikes	£631
Z1 Girls Group	£500
Ballantrae Scouts (2nd Ayrshire)	£3,000
Colmonell Parent Council	£2,100
Colmonell Community Association	£1,950
Girvan & District Mens Shed	£500
Barrhill Events Group	£500
Carrick Resilience Team	£3,000 UKSPF
Maybole Youth Club	£3,000 UKSPF
Carrick Tots Playgroup	£1,700
Maybole Events Committee	£3,000 UKSPF
Carrick Rugby Football Club	£3,000 UKSPF

The Carrick Centre	£2,100 UKSPF
McCandlish Hall - Straiton Club	£3,000
Community Wellbeing Hub	£3,000
Growing Together Kirkmichael	£750 UKSPF
Carrick Walking Football Club	£2,450
Dementia Friendly Prestwick	£3,000 UKSPF
Ayr & Prestwick Men's Shed	£1,500 UKSPF
Age Concern Prestwick (65Club)	£1,500 UKSPF
Symington Bowling Club	£2,548 UKSPF
Glenburn miners Football club 2015's	£785
Friends of the Broadway Prestwick (FotBP)	£750
Glenburn Miners Welfare FC	£1,500
Domino Playgroup	£1,224
Monkton Community Council	£586
Carers Gateway - South Ayrshire (Carers Centre)	£3,000 UKSPF
Diamonds (New Life Trust)	£3,000 UKSPF
Ukrainian Community Group (UCG) South Ayrshire	£606
Keeping the wheels turning	£3,000 UKSPF
Start Up Funding	£1,000 UKSPF
Dementia Cafe and Staying Ahead of the Curve	£3,000 UKSPF
Chocolate - More Than Just A Sweet; International Badgework culminating in a trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park	£1,830 UKSPF
Wellness for Carers in Employment - Troon, Loans & Dundonald	£3,000 UKSPF
G.C.SCHEDULE 24/25	£3,000 UKSPF
Health and Fitness Group	£1,470
More Than A Journey	£3,000
Ukrainian Community Centre	£700

2025/26 Awards

- Fund Launched:- 19th May 2025
- Fund Closed:- 12th June 2025
- Budget: £70,000, divided by population across four Thriving Communities Localities:
- Ayr North
- Ayr South & Villages
- North & South Carrick
- Prestwick, Troon & Villages
- Grant range: £500–£2,000 per group
- Focus areas:
 1. Adult and Family Learning
 2. Financial Inclusion (Cost of Living Support)
 3. Youth Work
 4. Community Development
- Groups funded: 42

Name of group	Amount awarded
Alloway Tunnel	£2,000
Annbank Community Association	£1,982
Annbank United FC	£2,000
Carers Gateway	£1,783
Community Gift Exchange - Ayr South	£2,000
Coylton Family Fun Day	£2,000
Doonfoot After School Services	£500
Mossblown Matters	£2,000
Newmarket Street Dev Trust	£2,000
Night Before Christmas Campaign	£2,000
Oshay's Brain Domain's	£1,025
Recycle Ayr	£2,000
The Ayr Ark	£970
Ayr Academy Parent Council	£2,000
Carers Gateway	£600
Community Gift Exchange - Ayr North	£2,000

Morrison Gardens Residents	£1,350
Dalmilling Primary Parent Council	£570
Overmill Allotment	£2,000
Sea Cadets	£2,000
The Iris Arts	£1,410
Vics in the Community	£2,000
Ballantrae PS Parent Council	£2,000
Carrick Centre	£520
Carrick Rygby Football Club	£1,900
Community Wellbeing Hub	£830
Kirckmichael Village Renaissance	£1,965
McCandlish Hall	£2,000
Maybole Charity Shop	£2,000
Stinchar Connections	£2,000
BSL Sign Language	£900
Carers Gateway	£1,220
Friends of the Broadway Prestwick	£1,430
Friends of Dundonald Castle	£2,000
Loans Gala Committee	£1,630
Loans Village Hall	£2,000
Prestwick Community Cafe	£379
Prestwick Tennis & Fitness	£2,000
Symington Community Projects	£1,596
Troon Development Trust	£2,000
Troon Men's Shed	£2,000
Troon Scouts	£1,600
Troon Water Sports	£2,000

South Ayrshire Charitable Trust

The South Ayrshire Charitable Trust was set up to assist and improve the lives of South Ayrshire residents who are in need because of poverty, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage. The available funding is split geographically.

In November 2024 the Ayr Fund councillors agreed to split the remaining £3500 by a donation system. The following groups were awarded:-

Name of group	Amount awarded
Ayrshire Cancer Support	£1,500
Newton Primary School	£1,000
Wallacetown EYC	£500
Compass Drop In Centre	£500

In March 2025 the Girvan Fund Councillors agreed to split the remaining £2000 by a donation system. The following groups were awarded:

Name of group	Amount awarded
C.A.N	£500
Ayrshire Hospice Shop	£500
O.I.R	£250
Cosy Spaces	£250
Girvan Mens Shed	£250
Duff Street Kitchen	£250

In November 2024 the Prestwick Fund Councillors agreed to split the remaining £2500 by a donation system. The following groups were awarded:

Name of group	Amount awarded
Monkton Community Council	£500
VASA	£190
Age Concern (65 club)	£500
Dementia Friendly Prestwick	£500
Diamonds Lunch Club	£500
Night Before Christmas Campaign	£310

Partnership Working (Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) & The National Lottery Community Fund)

Close partnership working between VASA, the local Third Sector Interface (TSI), and the Council's External Funding Officer has strengthened support for South Ayrshire's 3rd Sector. By sharing knowledge of local groups and funding opportunities, partners have improved signposting, reduced duplication, and provided more rounded support to organisations.

“ Closer partnership working between VASA, the local TSI, and SAC External Funding Officer has led to better intelligence overall of the 3rd Sector in South Ayrshire. Shared knowledge of the remit of partners as well as shared knowledge of groups in the community has led to a more rounded support for these groups when signposting and identifying duplication. By working in partnership we can also offer more support to the sector by sharing resources and taking that support out to the communities across SA. ”

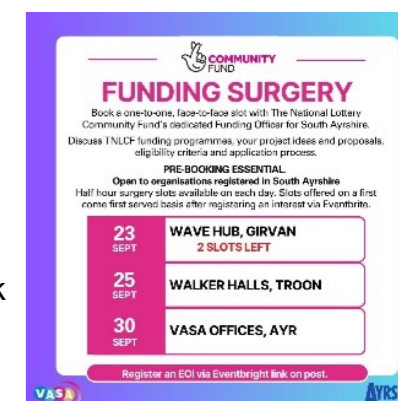
Angela McWhinnie, Depute Chief Officer, VASA

Locality Based Funding Surgeries

Thriving Communities and VASA has developed a strong working relationship with the National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) in Scotland. Working with TNLCF's South Ayrshire officer, Lauren Farquharson, and in partnership with VASA, a series of local funding surgeries were introduced.

These surgeries provide community groups with the opportunity to book 30-minute face-to-face appointments with the funding officer to discuss project ideas and receive direct feedback.

- 5 surgeries have been held since August 2024.
- 54 community groups have participated.
- As a result, £1,499,090 has been distributed to groups in South Ayrshire since August 2024.



“ Funding surgeries enable me to provide face-to-face support and advice about TNLCF's programmes, while also giving groups the chance to receive honest feedback on their project ideas. The involvement of Thriving Communities and VASA has strengthened this model, ensuring groups can access specialist local support alongside National Lottery advice. ”

Lauren Farquharson, National Lottery Funding Officer for South Ayrshire



Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA)

Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA), as the Third Sector Interface for South Ayrshire, plays a central role in building the capacity, resilience and sustainability of voluntary and community organisations across the area. Capacity building is a core function of VASA's remit and is offered to organisations of all sizes, from small volunteer led groups to large national and regional charities delivering locally. During the reporting period, VASA provided direct and indirect support to approximately 240 organisations through a combination of events, information sessions, networking opportunities, structured programmes and bespoke one to one support.

This support has included assistance with charity and voluntary group set up, legal status options, governance and trustee development, funding advice, training, employability, social enterprise development, mediation and signposting, enabling organisations to strengthen leadership, improve compliance, increase sustainability and respond effectively to local need. A wide range of information sessions were delivered throughout the year, covering topics such as funding opportunities (including The National Lottery Community Fund and Children in Need), outcome setting and evaluation, EVOLVE paid placements, and the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults. These sessions supported groups to build skills, improve impact measurement and access external funding.

VASA also delivered and promoted a comprehensive programme of training opportunities to strengthen the third sector workforce. Training topics included adult and child protection, financial harm, child sexual exploitation, gender based violence, stigma awareness, professional curiosity, self neglect and hoarding, parental mental health and its impact on children, child mental health, working with families in challenging times,

neurodiversity, first aid, nutrition, suicide prevention, Scottish Mental Health First Aid, leadership development, recruiting with convictions and healthy workplaces for managers. This programme has helped ensure community organisations are well equipped to deliver safe, inclusive and trauma informed services.

As part of its role as a fund administrator, VASA continues to manage the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults, supporting grassroots, community led approaches to improving mental health and wellbeing. VASA has been awarded Years 5 and 6 funding, with £330,786.77 allocated per year, resulting in over £660,000 being invested into South Ayrshire communities between April 2026 and March 2028. Over the lifetime of the programme, VASA will have administered approximately £2 million to the third sector. Funding streams include Chatty Space grants, small grants, and large multi year grants, supporting a wide range of locally designed projects that reduce isolation, strengthen community connections and improve wellbeing. Year 4 funded projects, delivered between April 2025 and March 2026, have already demonstrated the breadth and value of community led responses to mental health and wellbeing needs across South Ayrshire.

Through this integrated approach to capacity building, funding, training and representation, VASA continues to strengthen the third sector's ability to support communities, respond to emerging challenges and contribute meaningfully to local priorities. This work aligns strongly with the CLD Partnership Plan's Community Development priority and its cross cutting focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing, supporting empowered, resilient and sustainable communities across South Ayrshire.



Community Development – Building Capacity and Empowering Communities

Thriving Communities balances empowering groups to operate independently with providing targeted support where needed, ensuring sustainable community-led activity, strong networks, and ongoing engagement in local initiatives.



- Ayr North Time Team – Supported to become self-sufficient from June 2025.
- Wallacetoun Women's Group – Progressing towards self-sufficiency, aiming for independence by 2026.
- Kincaidston Women's Group – Supported to become a constituted group, linking with other groups and staff for guidance; expected to operate independently in 2026.
- Ayr North Exclusively Women's Group – Running independently, requesting support as needed and engaging with campaigns.
- Violence Against Women Joint Action Group (JAG) – Carried out a scoping exercise led by Thriving Communities. This exercise identified groups and support for women with long term wider local networks. This resource supports groups who are not ready to make the steps to become independent.



Thriving Communities has been leading the review and update of the Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils to ensure it remains fit for purpose and continues to strengthen local democracy across South Ayrshire.

There are currently 23 active Community Councils across South Ayrshire, representing 218 members.

The revised scheme will provide a stronger framework to support Community Councils role in giving local people a voice in decision making.

The consultation process has been designed to maximise participation and transparency:-

- February 2025 – Report presented to Cabinet to gain approval to start the consultation process.
- March 2025 – Stage 1 Consultation – Online survey launched via [Your Area Your Voice Your Choice](#), with additional opportunities to provide feedback on paper at local libraries.
- May 2025 – Working group established, supported by Thriving Communities to collate consultation responses and draft the revised scheme.
- August 2025 – Draft scheme will be presented to Cabinet, approval sought to begin Stage 2 of the consultation.
- September 2025 – Stage 2 Consultation – Online survey will be launched on Draft Scheme via [Your Area Your Voice Your Choice](#), with opportunities to provide feedback on paper at local libraries. Locality drop-in sessions will also be available and promoted across South Ayrshire.
- December 2025 – Scheme of Establishment to be presented to full Council. The new scheme is due to be launched in April 2026.

Volunteering Strategy South Ayrshire

In September 2025, we launched our new Volunteering Strategy 2025 - 2030, published by Voluntary Action South Ayrshire (VASA) on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). This strategy reinforces our shared commitment to ensuring that volunteers across South Ayrshire have the best possible experience, and that local organisations are supported through a strong and effective best practice infrastructure.

The strategy reflects our ongoing ambition to strengthen the community planning process, improve outcomes for local people, and reduce inequalities across our communities.

The new Volunteering Strategy sets out clear ambitions for how volunteering will be supported and valued across South Ayrshire. Through the enactment of this strategy, we will seek to ensure:

1. That volunteering is embedded in the work of all CPP partners, recognising that volunteering plays a vital role in supporting strategic priorities and community outcomes.
2. That volunteering is purposeful for everyone involved, ensuring that opportunities are meaningful and mutually beneficial for volunteers and organisations.
3. That volunteering is inclusive and accessible, with barriers identified and addressed by Volunteer Involving Organisations wherever possible.
4. That volunteers are celebrated for their exceptional contribution, recognising the important role they play in supporting individuals and communities throughout South Ayrshire.
5. That Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) are empowered, supported to provide high quality volunteer experiences and strengthened through strong networks and shared learning.

This refreshed approach highlights the CPP's commitment to building a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient volunteering culture that continues to contribute positively to local wellbeing and community capacity.



Over the past year, South Ayrshire has delivered an extensive programme of Ageing Well activity aligned to the launch of the Ageing Well Strategy and Action Plan in September 2024. The launch event at the Gaiety Theatre brought together key partners and community members and featured a community produced performance celebrating positive ageing. Since the launch, a wide range of initiatives has supported older adults to stay active, informed and connected.

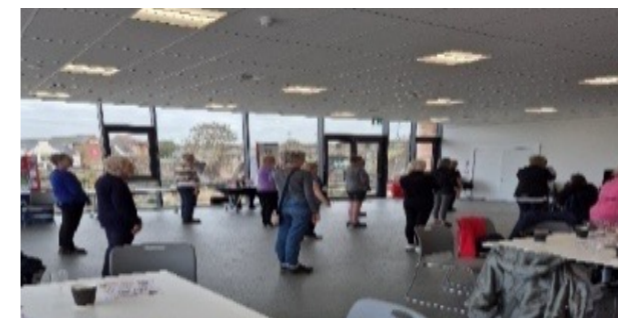
A series of Social Fit events were delivered across Colmonell, Barr, Prestwick, Barrhill and Troon, with over 100 attendees receiving a Function Fitness MOT alongside access to advice on wellbeing, benefits, community activities and independent living. Engagement continued through Age Without Limits 2025, where more than 150 people contributed their views on ageing, helping challenge ageism and celebrate later life experiences. In May, the Big Cheerio event attracted over 60 attendees, offering practical guidance on planning for later life and launching updated resources including the All About Me and My Final Wishes booklets.

South Ayrshire also delivered a programme of events for International Day of Older People (1st – 4th October 2024), including arts and crafts sessions, volunteering information, and the launch of food parcels for older adults returning home from hospital. An intergenerational day at Girvan Academy and an Over 50s afternoon disco further strengthened connections across generations and communities.



In addition, the innovative Take A Seat initiative was launched in Ayr, giving older people greater confidence to move around their community by providing rest points in local businesses, with plans now in place for wider roll out. The annual Ageing Well Review in Troon showcased progress under the first Action Plan and highlighted opportunities in volunteering, self employment and digital inclusion

through Connect South Ayrshire. The Ageing Well Champions Board, now with over 100 registered members, continues to ensure the voices of older adults shape South Ayrshire's ambition to be the best place in Scotland to live and age well.





Workforce Development

Over the reporting period, the CLD workforce continued to strengthen skills, knowledge and professional practice through a wide range of training and development opportunities. Staff engaged in sector relevant learning spanning community development, trauma informed practice, child and adult protection, employability support, ESOL delivery, mental health, welfare benefits and youth work.

Two notable professional qualifications were achieved or progressed during this period. One staff member progressed to the final year of the BA in Community Development and received the UWS Court Medal (2024/25) in recognition of outstanding academic achievement. In addition, one staff member successfully completed the CELTA qualification, supporting the continued development of ESOL delivery capacity across the Partnership.

Alongside formal qualifications, a substantial programme of continuing professional development (CPD) was delivered to ensure staff are well equipped to meet community needs, uphold professional standards and respond to emerging priorities. Key training opportunities included management development, trauma informed practice, child and adult protection, financial wellbeing, welfare systems, neurodiversity, supported employment, first aid and mental health improvement. Specialist training was also delivered to support staff working with individuals with complex needs, including those affected by MAPPA, forced displacement, the justice system or custody.

Partnership led workforce development has also played an important role, with NHS Ayrshire and Arran Public Health contributing to training focused on child poverty, financial inclusion and mental health and wellbeing. This has strengthened shared understanding across services and supported more consistent, informed and preventative responses for individuals, families and communities across South Ayrshire.

TRAINING



Training Delivered (2024-2026)

Training	Details	Date(s)
MBTI Management Training	Delivered by SAC OD for Managers	Jan-Sept 2024 (monthly)
GIRFEC & Children's Rights Awareness	Delivered by Gillian Carroll	1 Oct 2024
Supporting Financial Wellbeing	Delivered by IAAH - overview of Better Off calculations & available supports	Nov 2024
Scottish Welfare Fund & Discretionary Housing Payment Awareness	Delivered by South Ayrshire Council, Revenue and Benefits Team	Nov 2024
CLD South West Development Day	UNCRC, CLD Standards Council, Practice Sharing - Improvement Service, Education Scotland & CLD SW Network	28 Nov 2024
Mental Health Improvement	Delivered by Public Health	4 Feb 2025
Trauma-Informed Practice	SAC Trauma-Informed Practice Team	Various dates
Suicide Prevention Training	Delivered by Papyrus	2 Sept 2024
Stigma Awareness Training	SAC Drug & Alcohol Partnership	26 Nov 2024
Families Outside	Training for staff supporting families affected by a loved one in custody	9 Dec 2024
Adult Support Protection	SAC Practice Development Team	Various dates
Child Support Protection	SAC Protection Development Team	Various dates
Case Study Writing	Delivered by Thriving Communities - Senior Literacies Development Officer	6 Dec 2024
CPI Training	Delivered by Education	Various dates
Managing Anxiety	Delivered by SAMH	7 Mar 2024
Youth Work Training	Aberlour - working with young people with Additional Support Needs	20 May 2025

Refugee Training	Scottish Refugee Council - supporting asylum seekers, forcibly displaced people and refugees	29 July & 28 Aug 2024
Heartstart	Emergency life-saving skills	3 & 9 Sept 2024
Introduction to Neurodiversity	Delivered by NEST	21 Jan 2025
Commercial Sexual Exploitation Training	Delivered by Thriving Communities & Women's Aid	Various dates
Child Poverty & Financial Inclusion Workshop	Developed and delivered by NHS Ayrshire & Arran Public Health to South Ayrshire Information and Advice Team	2024-2025
Supporting Financial Wellbeing (Workplace)	Delivered by NHS Workplace Health Team with MoneyHelper; focus on income maximisation, budgeting and debt	Nov 2025
Mental Health Improvement - A Practical Approach	Delivered by NHS Ayrshire & Arran Public Health to staff and community groups, including resettlement services and third sector organisations	Various dates
Stress Awareness	Delivered by NHS Workplace Health Team to individuals completing Community Payback Orders and partner staff	Various dates
Healthy Eating While Out of Work	Delivered by NHS Workplace Health Team to individuals completing Community Payback Orders	Various dates
Staying Healthy While Out of Work	Delivered to Department for Work and Pensions and Skills Development Scotland staff	Various dates
Introduction to Mindfulness	Delivered to partner staff to support wellbeing and resilience	Various dates
Mentally Healthy Workplace (Managers)	Workplace Health Team training to support employer capacity and staff wellbeing	Various dates
Menopause in the Workplace	Delivered by NHS Workplace Health Team	Various dates

Looking Ahead

This mid point review, informed by HGIOCLD self evaluation and partnership evidence, confirms that the CLD Partnership is on track to deliver the priorities set out in the CLD Partnership Plan 2024–2027. The following areas of focus highlight where effort will be concentrated over the remaining period of the Plan.

Adult and Family Learning

- Deliver responsive adult and family learning aligned to identified community need.
- Continue literacies and ESOL provision, supporting skills development and social integration.
- Prioritise SIMD 1–3 communities and increase access to accredited learning, where appropriate.

Financial Inclusion

- Maintain a whole system partnership approach to financial inclusion through early intervention and effective referral pathways.
- Target support towards SIMD 1–3 communities and individuals facing multiple barriers.
- Embed financial inclusion across CLD delivery to support improved resilience and progression.

Youth Work

- Maintain a targeted focus on young people aged 10+, particularly those facing the greatest barriers.
- Strengthen evidence of impact using the YouthLink Scotland Youth Work Skills Framework.
- Ensure access to positive, diversionary activity at targeted evening and weekend times.
- Continue to embed the South Ayrshire Youth Voice Pledge and support learning, achievement and accreditation pathways.

Community Development

- Strengthen community empowerment and participation through engagement, consultation and funding opportunities.
- Support Community Councils through training, digital resources and implementation of the revised Scheme of Establishment (2026).
- Continue to build community capacity, collaboration and sustainability.

Cross Cutting Themes

The cross cutting themes of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Volunteering, Ageing Well, The Promise and Young Carers will continue to be embedded across all CLD activity, informing planning, delivery and partnership working.

Moving Forward

These areas of focus provide a clear and proportionate framework for delivery and improvement through to 2027. The CLD Partnership will continue to use evidence, participation and strong partnership working to improve outcomes for individuals, families and communities across South Ayrshire.

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