

Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland: The journey of implementation

Debbie Nolan, Dr Ruby Whitelaw and Ross Gibson

April 2023

Acknowledgements

The Children and Young People's Centre for Justice would like to thank all the children and young people, past and present, who have contributed to the development and discussions relating to the Secure Care Pathway and Standards work that resulted in their formulation and implementation. We would like to thank the STARR group who were instrumental in the Standards, from the idea's inception to the ongoing work around implementation, impact, and outcome evidence gathering. We would also like to thank the five secure care centres their children and staff, the Scottish Government, Local Authorities, and partner agencies who have committed time and resources to ensure that the Standards work continues to progress and develop. Their efforts help to ensure that children in or on the edges of secure care experience a rights-based, trauma-informed and compassionate approach to their care, which contributes to improved outcomes. Finally, to the members of the Secure Care Champions group, we are grateful for your ongoing commitment to ensuring that the Standards become embedded and reflected in the care that Scotland provides for its children who may be in or on the edges of secure care.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
The journey of implementation.....	6
Introduction to implementation science.....	6
Phase One: Self-evaluation, learning and improvement.....	6
Secure Care Centres.....	10
Phase One: Activity to support implementation.....	15
Raising awareness of the Standards.....	16
Local authority and partner engagement.....	16
The Standards Champions Group.....	21
STARR.....	22
The Pathway and Standards website.....	23
The Secure Care Group.....	24
The Secure Practitioners Forum.....	25
What has worked.....	25
Multi-agency approaches.....	25
The co-production of the Standards.....	25
Proactive Standards Champions.....	25
Openness and willingness to collaborate, co-create and share.....	26
Contextualising the Standards in the broader context.....	26
Secure Care Group.....	26

Flexibility of approaches.....	26
Starting to make change immediately.....	26
Dedicated support.....	27
Areas of learning and improvement.....	27
Time and resources.....	27
Involvement of all partners.....	27
Quality co-production.....	28
The scale of change.....	28
Genuine implementation.....	28
Measuring impact and ensuring this leads to change.....	28
Reviewing the Standards.....	28
Emerging Themes.....	28
Next steps.....	30
Continuing to support areas and agencies who are currently undertaking or are still to undertake phase one self-evaluation, learning and improvement.....	30
Planning, testing and implementation.....	31
Capturing and sharing learning and modelling.....	31
Collectively working to address the challenges and barriers to implementation.....	31
Responding to the changing landscape.....	31
Evidencing impact.....	31
Reviewing the Standards.....	32
Conclusion	32
References.....	33

Executive Summary

This report illustrates the progress made in the implementation of the co-produced Secure Care Pathway and Standards, two years after their launch in October 2020.

Through practice examples it provides insight into how agencies have approached the implementation process. Supportive workshops have enabled agencies to take both a single agency and multi-disciplinary approach, with the latter found to be the most effective. Implementation science provided a framework to help support and bridge the gap between theory and its application to practice. Successful implementation required targeted strategies which included knowledge exchange, practice reviews and revision and the development of policies, procedures, and mechanisms.

A phased approach to implementation provided focus; phase one supported self-evaluation, learning and improvement. Aligning the Standards with other transformational developments in Scotland helped to cement their significance to practice nationally. Providing dedicated support through CYCJ assisted the implementation process. Stakeholder engagement has been critical to the effectiveness of implementation with the Champions group playing a lead role.

Information contained within this report pertains to 21 of the 32 local authority areas within Scotland. A targeted approach to agencies and LAs where there has been limited engagement will be incorporated in the next phase of the implementation process. The co-designed Standards website provides a mechanism for the sharing of information and good practice examples that are consistently accessed locally, nationally, and internationally.

It is recognised that achieving the Secure Care Pathway and Standards may require a single, multi-agency and national approach. Secure care centres, other stakeholders, the Secure Care Group and STARR have a crucial role in ongoing Secure Care Pathway and Standards implementation work. Barriers to meeting the Standards are evident at a time of scarce resources and limited capacity. Gaps in alternatives to secure care services have been identified as a challenge for all agencies. The Care Inspectorate's appreciative inquiry has provided increased impetus for agencies to continue to engage with the Standards.

Introduction

The [Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland](#) were launched on 5 October 2020 (Scottish Government, 2020). These Standards set out for the first time what all children in or on the edges of secure care should expect from the continuum of intensive supports and services involved in their journey before, during and after a stay in secure care. The development of the Pathway and Standards was one of the key recommendations from the [Secure Care National Project](#) (Gough, 2017), committed to in the [2017-18 Programme for Government](#) (Scottish Government, 2017). Developed via a multi-agency Pathway and Standards [work stream](#) (Scottish Government, 2019), the work was established under the [Secure Care Strategic Board](#). The Standards were fully co-produced with children and young people with experience, past or present, of being in or around secure care, and a range of other stakeholders. They were based on the Calls for Action from children and young people as detailed during the Secure Care National Project (Gough, 2017) developed through an extensive co-production programme with children in secure care known as 'From me, for me, with me'; they were then continually analysed, scrutinised and refined by the [STARR group](#) (See Scottish Government, 2019; [Sullivan and Logan, 2020](#)). The Pathway is made up of 44 Standards focused on the areas that children and young people identified as most important to them, where they felt the Standards could have had the greatest impact on their experiences. The Pathway and Standards are not service-led; instead they are designed to be applied wherever children experience extreme vulnerabilities, needs and risk in their lives. The Standards are rights-based, individualised and outcome-focused, and they are written from the child's perspective. They are rooted in the existing regulatory requirements, ethos and principles set out in the relevant legislation, policy and guidance. However, the experiences shared by children and young people in the development of the Standards - and subsequently - illustrate that children are not benefitting consistently or fully from these. The Standards are what we should expect for children, young people, and their families from staff and professionals supporting children in or on the edges of secure care.

At the launch of the Standards it was recognised that collectively agreeing a set of standards for the evolution of Scotland's approach to children in, or on the periphery of, secure care was a significant achievement. It was a critical moment. It was also highlighted however that if the Standards were to achieve their aim of improving the experiences of, and providing better outcomes for, children and young people, they had to be successfully implemented. It was recognised that people, rather than the Standards themselves would achieve this, requiring all individuals and agencies supporting children in, or on the edges of, secure care to work collectively.

The purpose of this paper is to showcase the journey of implementing the Pathway and Standards two years post-launch. It will detail: the activity that has taken place to support the implementation illustrating achievements; what we have learnt from this journey; what has helped; areas for improvement; and next steps. The conclusions presented were developed with individuals who have key roles and responsibilities for implementing the Standards. This included individual and collective discussions with the Secure Care Pathway and Standards Champions Group, the Secure Care Group, the Secure Practitioner forum, and members of other forums where practitioners have played a role in Standards implementation. In the writing of this report we have reached out to agencies who have been involved in the implementation journey to gather insight into their experience of the process and evidence of

what this looks like in practice. Practice examples will be provided throughout this report. Further information on work being carried out nationally is available on the Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland [website](#). This continues to be updated on an ongoing basis and evidence available on the site is at various stages of development.

The Journey of Implementation

Introduction to implementation science

Implementation research recognises that successful implementation requires targeted training, and organisational infrastructure. There should also be inclusive developmental involvement to ensure multi-disciplinary adoption. Any change should be resourced, regulated and policy driven (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman and Wallace, 2005). While implementation research focusses on evidence-based programmes it is also applied to activities. Fixsen et. al. (2005) identify degrees of implementation which include paper, process and performance, recognising that there can be a theory-to-practice gap that needs to be overcome. They also identify six stages to implementation: exploration and adoption; program installation; initial implementation; full operation; innovation; and sustainability. It was recognised that a tried and tested approach was crucial to minimising the risk of a potential gap in the Standards' application within practice.

The Secure Care Pathway and Standards should be based on the individual child's assessed strengths, needs, vulnerabilities, risks, and circumstances; just as each child's journey is different, their experience of the Standards should be unique to them. There was similar variety across agencies in relation to the Standards and what worked well, areas to improve, current delivery, and roles and responsibilities. Agencies may have different starting points; while parts of the Standards may already be in place and working well, others could be improved upon quickly and easily, or form part of existing plans for, or journeys of, improvement. However, other areas may be more challenging, requiring more momentous change and a longer implementation period. As the approaches and supports to children in, or on the edge of, secure care vary across local authority areas in Scotland, change may happen at a different pace. The stages of successful implementation are iterative, as opposed to linear. As a result, it was agreed that the first stage of implementing the standards would be focused on self-evaluation, learning and improvement.

The phased approach taken to the Standards was agreed as the work evolved. This was influenced by Education Scotland's approach to implementation science, which recognises that individuals and organisations face challenges when managing change (Education Scotland, 2020). The agreed phases of the implementation process were therefore: phase one, self-evaluation, learning and improvement; phase two, monitoring, assurance, and accountability; and phase three, a full review and audit. This report's primary focus is on phase one of this process.

Phase One: Self-evaluation, learning and improvement

Self-evaluation is a tool to help services understand what is working well, areas for improvement and how improvement can be achieved ([Care Inspectorate, 2019](#)). Phase one aimed to encourage and support all corporate parents and other agencies to reflect on their roles and responsibilities for implementing the Standards. Decision-makers across health, social care, education and the police force were invited to consider, discuss and review the Secure Care Pathway and Standards. They were supported to :



- Self-assess and evaluate their current practice and activities against the Standards as part of continuous improvement and learning.
- Identify areas of good practice to be developed, celebrated, and built upon and areas where improvements could be made.
- Provide a baseline plan for change, testing and implementing ideas for improvement
- Embed self-evaluation as an ongoing, partnership activity.
- Ensure that coproduction continues with children and young people, making current or previous experiences of being in, or on the edges of, secure care central to the implementation journey.
- Use the Standards in a range of ways; they could be a tool for staff supervision and reflection or a learning resource for critical incidents. Equally they could be seen an asset in part of a broader cultural and attitudinal shift within the workplace.
- Identify opportunities, themes, challenges and barriers, and develop an understanding of the support that they required to implement the Pathway and Standards.
- Gather information about the journey of implementation of the Pathway and Standards.

In the example below one local authority illustrates how they prepared to implement the Standards:

B

EAST AYRSHIRE

Health & Social Care Partnership

To help us prepare for the introduction of the standards we asked our colleagues from CYCJ to host a Secure Care Workshop in January 2020. This was well received by a range of partner agencies within East Ayrshire including Children's Panel Members, Housing, Voluntary Services, Social Work, Education, Health and Police. Also in attendance were care experienced young people who helped provide insight into what improvements need to be made to best support our young people.

Some feedback we received from this workshop was that practitioners/agencies who had limited experience of secure care recognised that they play a vital role around secure care, and the importance of early and effective intervention. Reviewing the standards allowed practitioners and individuals to recognise that we all play a role in supporting young people prior to secure care and highlighted the importance of looking at creative ways to reduce the likelihood of a child/young person experiencing secure care.

Since the implementation of the Pathways and Standards, we have formed a short-life working group with a selection of participants who attended the Secure Care Workshop from various agencies. The intention of this was to form a multi-agency discussion, reviewing the feedback we received in order to identify what we need to put in place to ensure that the standards are being implemented effectively and that our children/young people are being fully supported and involved in the process. We have included young people with life experience within this group and it has generated positive discussion around what the barriers are to effectively implementing each standard, and what works well.

The developments and ideas generated through this working group will allow us to make changes and improvements within our service to ensure that we are fully incorporating the standards within our practice across East Ayrshire. The next step in relation to this is to develop briefing sessions for our multi-agency colleagues, to ensure that the Standards and Pathways are being upheld and respected.

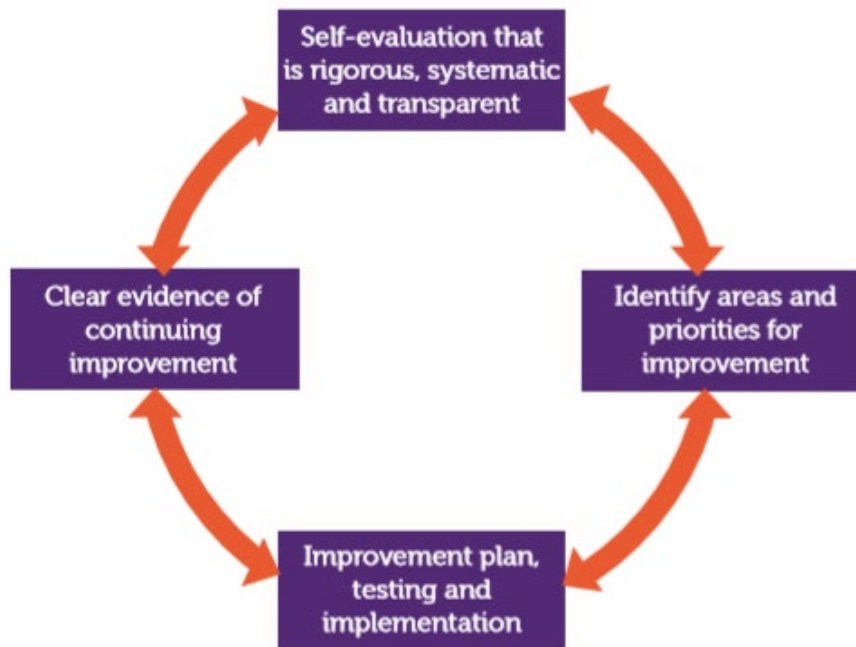
East Ayrshire have also been involved in the development of the Secure Care Pathways and Standards at a national level by attending and contributing to the Secure Care Champions Group which is hosted on a 6-weekly basis. This has been a positive group, allowing us to reflect on how other authorities have been committing to and implementing the standards.

Working in partnership and having commitment from all agencies has helped us progress the implementation of the Secure Care Pathways and Standards. This has generated positive discussion and ideas to help us effectively meet the Standards. Having the support from the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) has also been advantageous in progressing the standards within East Ayrshire.

In order for the Pathways and Standards to be implemented effectively there needs to be a shared understanding of the importance of these across agencies/services. It needs to be a focused and standing agenda which is reflected upon regularly. We are also looking to reflect upon a child's experience of Secure Care by reviewing the standards alongside their journey, and recognising areas of strength and areas of improvement.

By encouraging corporate parents to align the Standards with their practice, we consciously sought to avoid cluttering the existing landscape and approaches even further. We recognised that agencies already have approaches to self-evaluation, learning and improvement and utilise a variety of evidence sources that the Standards could be incorporated within. However, in discussions with local authorities and other agencies, many determined that the Standards warranted additional consideration and self-evaluation. To support this, CYCJ developed a series of half-day workshop sessions to raise awareness and understanding of the Standards, and to enable participants to contribute to the baseline self-evaluations taking place within Local Authorities or agencies. We encouraged these to be multi-agency sessions, involving a breadth of partners and people with experience of being in or on the edges of secure care. CYCJ offered support by either facilitating or sharing materials for these events. In doing so, we referenced [Care Inspectorate](#) (2019) materials which we knew those supporting children in, or on the edges of, secure care would be familiar with. This included a basic template which was developed in keeping with other approaches to self-evaluation. It encourages agencies to focus on three key questions in respect of the Secure Care Pathway and Standards:

1. How good are we now? Agencies are encouraged to assess, analyse and evaluate how good they currently are, individually and in partnership, in respect of the Pathway and Standards. What are their strengths, and areas for further development or improvement? In this exercise they are encouraged to pay particular attention to:
what children say matters to them; children's outcomes; how positive and nurturing relationships can be developed and sustained; and the upholding of children's rights.
2. How do we know? Agencies are encouraged to use a range of sources to illustrate how well the lives of children in or on the edges of secure care are improving. Again, children's voice is promoted as a core element of this.
3. What do we plan to do next? Agencies are encouraged to take forward the learning from the self-evaluation and develop a set of clear priorities. These should be achievable, realistic and measurable, and should positively improve outcomes for children. These can then inform the formulation of improvement plans, testing and implementation and evidence gathering re. continual improvement. This is an iterative cycle, as demonstrated below (Page 10) ([Care Inspectorate](#), 2019)



We also recognise that there are multiple plans, frameworks and reporting mechanisms that impact on children’s services across sectors, as well as methods whereby services evidence the meeting of legislative responsibilities and the upholding of children’s rights. It is not our intention for the Standards to add additional layers to this already complex picture; however, based on completed baseline self-evaluations and improvement planning, agencies were encouraged to consider where and how the Standards and their associated activity could be included and evidenced through existing mechanisms, such as:

- [Children’s Services Plans](#)
- [Corporate parenting plans](#) and reporting
- [Community Planning Partnerships Local Outcomes Improvement plans](#) and reporting
- [How Good is Our School](#) and School Improvement Plans.

Secure Care Centres

Scotland’s secure care centres have been at the heart of the design and development of the Pathway and Standards from the outset. They have played a pivotal and leading role in their implementation. In the initial stages this was particularly related to the “during” section of the Standards, but this has evolved significantly over time. Implementing the Standards within the five secure care centres started prior to their launch; organisations introduced innovative practices and mapped the Standards onto their existing quality frameworks to support the implementation process. The following examples show how the independent secure care centres have developed their admissions processes, their assessment and formulation processes and transition planning, embedding the Standards in this work.



At Kibble we have successfully been embedding the Secure Care Pathways and Standards when welcoming young people to our Safe Centre and throughout the admission process. Since implementing the Standards several months ago, we have found this to be very useful in informing good practice, ensuring that young people's needs are being met from the moment they arrive at the Safe Centre.

In line with Standard 15: *I am welcomed at the main entrance unless it is unsafe for me or others. This is based on my individual circumstances and needs.* In accordance with this, we have made a significant effort to welcome young people through our main Safe Centre reception area, where possible, and this is reflected in the increased number of young people that have arrived at Kibble in this way. In line with our therapeutic, trauma-informed practice model, we have also re-designed and decorated our reception area to create a welcoming and calming environment which recognises the significance of first impressions.

Only young people who are recognised as being of significant risk by partner agencies will come into the Safe Centre via the garage entrance. The garage has been decorated in collaboration with young people with warm, bright colours to make it as youth-friendly and welcoming as possible. This is in keeping with Standard 16: *When I arrive, the decoration and style of any entrance and reception area is welcoming and feels safe, comfortable and friendly.*

Through experience, Safe Centre managers have found that engaging young people in the admission process using a relaxed, informal manner allows them to feel more at ease. This has also been a successful approach in initiating open, transparent conversations. Arriving at a new place for the first time can be daunting for children and young people, therefore we are working collectively to ensure that young people are made to feel at ease as quickly as possible. This also ensures they are provided with a safe space where they can talk freely about any concerns that they may have. This approach to our practice has been shared across the wider management team and promotes a child-centred, trauma-informed approach.

Upon reflection and after some valuable input from CYCJ at a team development day, we have been building on this work by looking at how we can effectively embed the Standards into our processes. In particular, prior to a young person's arrival at secure care, where significant gaps in the process were identified. In recognition of this, one of our managers developed a Pre-Admission questionnaire to be discussed with the placing Local Authority and Social Worker via telephone or online, prior to the young person's arrival.

Standards 1 - 14 are noted within this document and there are two options where the professional responsible is encouraged to either record whether the Standard is met or unmet. We are hopeful that, through the use of Quality Improvement processes and monitoring, we can review and resolve any known gaps in the system and work collectively to ensure we are getting it right for every young person.



Standards 3, 4 and 29: I am offered specialist support which helps me, and people looking after me, make sense of the difficulties I have experienced. I get the mental and physical health care I need, as and when I need it; The professionals supporting me understand the impact of my trauma and difficulties I have experienced, and they respond to my needs and behaviours sensitively; My physical, mental, emotional and wellbeing needs are understood by the people looking after me, when I need it.

Within SMK we utilise a multi-disciplinary and multiple modality formulation process for every young person that we care for. The formulation process identifies further areas of need that could require additional assessment as well as areas of strength and the need for intervention and support. These holistic plans provide a comprehensive overview of a young person's life including a comprehensive psychological assessment as well as the impact of wider systems. This model involves a high level of engagement, collaboration, and co-production with young people. This formulation provides a shared understanding of need that is often of benefit to the family, staff and wider social work teams involved in the planning and delivery of care for children.

Standards 40 - 42: My plans for moving on meet all my needs. They involve everyone who has responsibility to care for and support me; I am fully prepared for making the transition from the service and this is taken at a pace which means I am completely ready; I have confidence that people I know well and have trust in will continue to be involved in supporting me after I leave the service.

Transition planning is integral when supporting a young person from secure care. Adopting this trauma informed model of care helps to ensure the child's needs can be met and understood and their wishes are considered in future planning.

Five young people who were cared for within SMK engaged in the formulation process supported by care staff and members of the Specialist Interventions Team (SIT). All the young people worked collaboratively with services in St Mary's and their community-based social workers who remained actively involved in their care and planning. Four young people were aware of their varied future placements. The fifth young person was unaware where they were moving on to until the week prior to their transition.

Adopting the model of assessment and developing a level of shared understanding allowed for involvement from SIT in the planning of transitions, assisting other agencies to develop a shared understanding of each young person. All local authorities provided positive feedback with regards to the process of engagement from SIT from the assessment stage to moving on to the community. SMK was able to influence care by presenting a child-friendly formulation to each of the new care providers.

In two transitions there was a need for ongoing intervention from SIT. This involved collaborating with staff from social work and residential care to continue a shared language using the zones of regulation programme. We considered learning, and the strategies one young person had developed to manage and regulate their emotions. On other occasions there was a continuation of intervention into the community with SIT providing outreach support. Young people were supported to visit their new placement in advance; one child had maintained relationships. Everyone had opportunities to spend supported time in the community; the scope and scale of this was determined by careful risk assessment and management processes.



At the Good Shepherd Centre, we continue to embed the Secure Care Standards through our practice and processes. We have had the opportunity to connect the standards across all of the stages (before, during and after) to a young person's transitional journey from Secure to our Semi-Independent Services.

Following a referral from the young person's local authority, our matching process (linked to Secure Care Standards) was carried out and it was agreed that we could offer a safe, nurturing, therapeutic environment to provide them with the support they needed at this time. As part of our planned welcome process telephone calls between the young person and the staff team took place; this allowed the young person to ask questions, and staff to offer information to reduce their anxieties. This linked to Standard 13, *'I know the details of where I will stay and I have access to information which explains daily life there. Every effort is made to enable me to visit before going to stay.'* Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, restrictions prevented any pre-arrival visits taking place. However, we were able to provide a virtual tour for the young person.

From the arrival process a planning meeting took place including discussions around exit strategies. Our Semi-Independent Service was highlighted as an option when moving on from Secure Care due to the consistency and supports it could continue to offer. As the young person moved on with their care plan and through multi-agency working and listening to the young person's views and wishes, it was felt that a move to the Semi-Independent Service would be beneficial for the young person. This linked to Standard 38, *'I am fully involved and influence all decisions and plans about my future, in a way that works for me, from an early stage.'*

Visits were then incorporated into the young person's plan. Initially planned visits were supported by staff they knew, moving onto longer visits allowing time to build relationships with the newer staff team and young people. This was done at a pace that was individual to the young person. Linked to Standard 41, *'I am fully prepared for making the transition from the service and this is taken at a pace which means I am completely ready.'*

At the Good Shepherd Centre we create an environment of nurture, love and respect which replicates a healthy family home. Some of our young people can struggle to identify Secure Care as their home due to the limited time they usually stay. Therefore, being able to offer services following on from secure provides the young people with a sense of belonging. Our staff group build and maintain relationships with the young people and include them in all parts of decisions about their life.

Working in partnership across Secure Care and our Semi-Independent Services we have found standards 38 through to 44 particularly helpful in supporting the young people who are transitioning through the centre. We continue to monitor all of the Secure Care Standards through regular meetings with staff and young people, and more recently the appointment of the Care and Pathway Development Lead supports the implementation further.



Rossie actively engaged in the working group creating the Secure Care Pathway and Standards, leading to us effectively embedding them within our Secure Service.

The primary focus was on our admission pathway, with the installation of an airport scanner and a review of how we welcome young people into our care. The scanner, and subsequent review of our search processes, uphold the embedding of Standards 19 and 20. Together with our young people, we co-designed the renovation of our welcome room and set up a welcome champions group. Training for the welcome champions was young-person-led and based on the experiences of young people and what they felt was the most supportive way of being welcomed into our care. When a young person arrives we ensure that the welcome champion is part of the 'Team Around the Child' (TAtC) along with their social worker or someone important to them, making sure Standard 17: *I am supported by someone I know on the day of arrival and I feel welcomed and reassured by everyone involved* is fully encouraged.

Our co-production work progressed, as we developed our welcome video, meaning Standard 13: *I know the details of where I will stay and I have access to information, which explains daily life there. Every effort is made to enable me to visit before going to stay* was illustrated. Due to the success of the production, our young people and champions have continued to develop a series of videos to illustrate the standards.

Rossie's work on implementing the Standards has sought to review engagement with young people prior to arriving in our care. We have developed pre-admission meetings, supported by digital technology to ensure meaningful participation, and tools to ensure that we are upholding Standard 1: *I am involved and influence any discussions about potentially restricting my liberty and my decision to recommend secure care in a way that works for me*. The changes to our pre-admission pathway support the 'Team Around the Child' to ensure that the young person has everything they need when they arrive to keep them safe and healthy and that the team have all of information they need to look after the young person safely. This upholds Standard 18.

In response to reducing risks or harm, young people may have items or belongings that they are not able to have during their stay. We provide young people with a welcome pack, which includes a Buddy bear. The pack helps to support young people to settle into our care, building relationships and feeling safe and cared for. We have introduced a similar concept, a 'New Beginnings pack' for young people moving on from our care, which forms part of our work to support Standard 41: *I am fully prepared for making the transition from the service and this is taken at a pace which means I am completely ready*.

In June 2021 the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland published a [report](#) following an investigation related to the powers and performance of statutory duties. While published after the Standards, this report was fundamental for Local Authorities in terms of children's rights and standards.

In recognition of the Standards work, the Care Inspectorate (in partnership with stakeholders) developed [A quality framework for the inspection of secure care services](#), where the Standards were incorporated. The indicators, quality illustrations and resources within the scrutiny and improvement toolboxes of the framework are beneficial to all agencies involved in Standards implementation. The Care Inspectorate advised:

"We incorporated the Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland into our new quality framework for secure accommodation services in November 2020, which all the secure services are evaluated against. In acknowledging the significant pressures on the sector due to the pandemic we proportionately examined how providers were incorporating the standards into their service development plans." (Care Inspectorate, 2022).

In June 2022, the Care Inspectorate produced a briefing paper outlining a piece of work that they would be undertaking to review the experiences of children in, or on the edges of, secure care; more information can be found here: [Secure Care Pathway Review](#). As the next section shows, the announcement that the secure care pathway review was to begin had a positive impact upon continued engagement with the Standards work.

The review team advised:

"In July 2022 we commenced a review to consider the impact of the secure care pathway and standards. The review is focusing on young people up to the age of 18 who have been placed – or are at risk of being placed – by Scottish local authorities, in secure care accommodation. The review centres on listening to and understanding the experiences of 30 young people across Scotland before, during and after experiencing secure care accommodation. This review will conclude in July 2023, and we plan to publish a report by September 2023" (Care Inspectorate, 2022).

In addition to the work undertaken by the Care Inspectorate, the Standards have been embedded within the contract for the four independent charitable secure care centres managed by Scotland Excel on behalf of Scotland's local authorities and the Scottish Government. From the outset of the Standards, children's voices and experiences have been fundamental to everything that has followed. We will revisit this when looking at the activity that has supported implementation.

Phase One: Activity to support implementation

Before the launch of the Standards in October 2020, a considerable range of activities were introduced to support the implementation process. These included information sessions and resource development and dissemination. At the point of launch there was a series of activities, and a national event, attended by more than 70 stakeholders, took place on the 5th of October. On the 8th of October a special event for the children and staff from secure care centres took place.

Raising awareness of the Standards

Raising the profile and awareness of the Standards involved a combination of both targeted and generic communication pre, during and following the launch. Contact was made with individuals across all of Scotland's 32 local authorities, in addition to other key agencies with roles and responsibilities that included implementing the Standards. Written communication included [blogs such as 'Scotland - time for open hearts and minds' and 'securing better futures'](#). This was followed by inputs at a range of single agency and multi-disciplinary forums and meetings which included the Independent Reviewing Officers Forum, Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance, Social Work Scotland Standing Committees, National Youth Justice Advisory Group, and the CELCIS Education Forum. These inputs often led to further activity such as blogs or additional sessions with targeted teams. What has been clear is that this has not been a linear process; agencies have required an individualised approach.

Local authority and partner engagement

Since their launch, formal Standards inputs have largely taken the form of roadshows or workshops. These sessions were undertaken by members of the CYCJ team and STARR and opportunities for engagement were extended to all local authorities and partner agencies. In the first year after their launch, a total of 13 local authorities engaged in sessions that were either one-offs, or a series of workshops, practice studies or practice review working groups. These initial sessions were largely attended by senior or operational managers. In the second-year post-launch, a further 12 sessions took place with local authorities; four of these had previously engaged in this process, with these follow-up sessions targeted to a greater degree at frontline staff. It was clear that as personnel changed, and the appreciative inquiry got underway as part of the Care Inspectorate's review of the secure care pathway and standards, renewed interest was shown in the implementation process. It was also evident that some agencies were embedding the Standards at a strategic level, and the Standards were informing youth justice strategies as the below example illustrates. However, 11 local authorities have not received specific formal input, although they may have approached the Standards without any assistance from CYCJ. A barrier to engagement has been evident when agencies do not consider the Standards as having application to their particular area of work. Children's Social Work Statistics reflect that in 2020 8 local authorities did not use secure care; this figure increased slightly to 9 in 2021 (Scottish Government, 2022).



We have made the Secure Care Standards integral to our Secure Accommodation Procedure and have sought to make all our staff, partners, and young people aware of the rights of children and young people in, or on the edges of being accommodated in, Secure Care.

Prior to the publication of the Secure Care Standards in 2020, we had already begun to undertake a review of our approach to the use of secure care. This was being done on a cross-authority, multi-agency basis and had 'improved outcomes for young people' as its central focus. Much of this work mirrored the intentions of the Standards which made it easier to fully implement them when they were published in October 2020. Our renewed procedure for Secure Care was published 6 months later in April 2021.

To implement the Standards within this document we consolidated the Standards according to the three relevant sections and sought to understand the impact of each standard on our existing approach. We also appended the entire set of Standards into this Procedure to further make staff, children, and young people alike aware of the importance of this rights-based approach.

To fully embed the Standards into our work we circulated this extensively among staff and to our partners to ensure everyone understood our approach and the rights that children and young people can expect if they are to be accommodated within Secure Care. We also updated our paperwork to reflect the Standards more closely.

In terms of procedural changes, we embedded Secure Care Screening into Care and Risk Management meetings removing the need for additional processes whilst maintaining the role of our CSWO and the importance of continued multi agency commitment.

The instances of children being considered for Secure Care in Stirling is relatively low in comparison to many other local authorities so the impact in this sense has been measured. However, we have seen particular benefits, particularly with regard to the implementation of the rights of young people who are on the edges of secure care. We have used our renewed procedure to educate and inform partners of children's rights allowing us to avoid secure care except in only the most extreme circumstances.

Embedding the Standards entirely within our Secure Care Accommodation Procedure has also been effective in helping staff to understand the need to support young people to more fully understand why they are being considered for secure care. The Standards have helped to inform our 'Alternatives to Detention Protocol' which is currently being worked on in collaboration with relevant agencies, and we hope this will be adopted in full in 2023.



We have also been able to use the learning around the Secure Care Standards to challenge partners where we feel they are not upholding their responsibilities accordingly. In one case, we called into question the use of restraint within an external care provider. This led to a change in their policy, with both ourselves and the young person involved being offered assurances. We have also used the Secure Care Standards to inform our practice in other residential settings further cementing this rights-based approach as standard for children and young people in Stirling. Having the capacity to challenge decision makers is one of the key strengths of the Procedure being backed by the Secure Care Pathway and Standards.

In terms of learning we have been able to effectively collaborate with a number of different partners in this area and in turn this has helped to strengthen our relationship in other areas. However, we are only beginning to develop a relationship with SCRA and think more work is needed to unite our positions with regards to Secure Care. It is also quite challenging to explain to children, young people and their families what Secure Care is and the purposes it serves, alongside the 'criteria' for being sent to secure care. Many families, for a variety of reasons, want their child to be sent to secure care as they feel they can no longer cope, but we would argue it is not in their best interests. This can lead to challenging conversations in this regard; however this is likely due to the relatively low numbers of young people being considered for Secure Care.

One of the most consistent challenges related to the Secure Care Pathway, is that the opportunities prior to, during and after being detained in a Secure Care placement are heavily co-dependent upon a wider network of support external to our own services. The 'success' of implementing the Standards is affected not just by our own work, but by community-based resources, and the willingness/ability of these resources to support these young people with high level need and high tariff risk presentation. This is particularly true for the experiences of young people 'after' Secure Care. For example, a lack of day placements in secure care, challenges in some residential schools offering placements to a young person coming out of Secure Care, and challenges in-house in providing supported housing for young people have all affected the outcomes of people leaving Secure Care.

Relatedly, we think more could be done to further implement the Secure Care Pathway and Standards with regards to what happens *after* Secure Care but again, due to low numbers of young people in Stirling entering Secure Care, this is not something that staff have much experience of.

As work around the UNCRC develops, we will be looking at how we embed this within our own frameworks in a similar way. However, we are cognisant of the variances in legislation currently in this regard. We hope much of this will be streamlined with the eventual publication of a Children's Care and Justice Act.

While a few local authorities took a single agency approach to the input relating to the Standards, for most agencies a multi-disciplinary approach has been the preferred option. Workshops have varied considerably in size, with the largest engagement being a group of more than 80 practitioners. While online input allows for the facilitation of larger groups, there was recognition of the increased impact with face-to-face training, which recommenced after the pandemic. The Children's Hearings System, Independent Reviewing Officers and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration were involved in Standards inputs at both single agency and cross-sectional events. For many local authorities input relating to the Standards was an ongoing piece of development as agencies evolved, team compositions changed and at times became realigned. The following example shows an ongoing approach to Standards input.



In 2021 colleagues from CYCJ facilitated a series of three online workshops for a wide range of services and partner agencies within South Lanarkshire. These provided an opportunity to broaden understanding of the standards, and to open conversation about what aspects of the standards were being implemented and where changes could be made. A follow up workshop with social work staff working directly with children and young people in secure care, or on the edges of secure care was hosted by CYCJ colleagues in Autumn 2022; feedback from this session has further informed our self-evaluation. Representatives from Social Work and Education Services have also contributed to the work of the Secure Care Champions Group.

Focus on the voice of the child or young person and a rights-based approach are resulting in a more individualised approach that puts the child at the centre, rather than being process-driven. Through collaboration and a joined-up approach changes to practice are being introduced that are trauma informed and challenge established ways of working. An example is of a young person required to attend court whilst remanded to a secure care establishment. Rather than being held in the cell area on arrival at court there was a designated room and arrangements made for the case to call before the sheriff when the young person arrived, allowing the case to be dealt with quickly and efficiently. The young person was also supported during transport to and from secure care by their key worker and community based social worker.

A multi-agency approach to secure screening has been successful as it allows wider exploration of all community-based options before secure care is considered. Not all secure screenings will result in a child or young person being placed in secure as a more robust community-based plan may be identified, with responsibility for this shared between different agencies. There is closer collaboration between social work teams working with children and young people aged 12-18 in conflict with the law, resulting in more consistency and a transparency of decision-making. Before secure care young people are better informed and have a much better understanding of what to expect and the reasons why secure care is felt necessary. There is often a planned approach and a very transparent and open dialogue with the young person and their caregivers about why secure care is required, and what this will mean for them. In most instances the child, young person and family or caregiver attend all decision-making meetings and are integral to the decision-making process.

Another area of progress is in relation to transition and the development of robust and intensive support plans that provide the young person with the best possible safe transition. However, with regards to being able to fully implement the After standards there needs to be timely availability of suitable step down, or other placement that meets the specific needs of the child or young person.

Within South Lanarkshire we are looking at how existing processes and procedures could better support implementation of Before standards. Social work services have introduced a centralised approach towards targeting young people on the edges of, in, or returning from, secure care. We are looking to implement a council wide contextual safeguarding approach to ensure we have timely, multi-agency responses for young people at risk of non-familial harm and to align these with our care and risk management approaches which will help ensure there are supportive and robust safety plans in place. We are revising our approach to secure reviews to ensure they remain legally compliant and inclusive to young people and their families.

As mentioned previously, along with other agencies, all the Secure Care Centres were heavily involved in Standards development from the outset; in the two years post-launch there have been six further sessions delivered across these settings. In addition, professionals from various populations have received input when the Secure Care Pathway and Standards have been presented at conferences (such as the Contemporary Childhood Conference 2021, and the National Youth Justice Conference 2022) or delivered through national workshops (such as the SIRCC Conference 2022). International audiences from Jersey, Australia and Estonia have also benefited from Standards input.

The Standards Champions Group

This group was originally formed of individuals from each of the five secure care centres who had been crucial in leading and coordinating the coproduction activity relating to the Standards. This work included: supporting the design and development of the website; running the poster competition with winning designs from each centre represented on the poster launched with the Standards; supporting the development of a pocket-sized pull-out (snapfax) that contains all the standards; and implementation in respect of the standards within their centres thus far. The work of the Champions group reflects the fact that the application of the Standards does not sit with any single agency; it takes a partnership approach to meet the needs of children. Following the launch of the Standards, the group was widened out to members of any agency with roles and responsibilities that include implementing the Standards. The remit of the group evolved into an implementation support group, providing a space where members could share their journeys, learning, experiences, opportunities, and challenges in implementing the Standards. The group also provided a space to collaboratively create, innovate and support best practice and progress in meeting the Standards. Membership of the group includes representatives from each of the five secure care centres; six local authorities; STARR; the Scottish Government; CELCIS; Cyrenians Keeping Families Together; and SCRA. The team manager from one third sector agency shares her experience of the impact of the Standards below. Information on the work of the group can be found here; [Events and Resources - Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland \(securecarestandards.com\)](https://securecarestandards.com).

Cyrenians

As the Service Manager for Cyrenians Keeping Families Together with Cashback for Communities I am passionate about upholding the rights of children, young people, and their families, especially when the young person has experienced secure care. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the secure care champions group where we can combine our efforts with others in ensuring that the standards are implemented, and young people's experience of secure care is improving.

Working alongside Scotland's Secure Care Centres and building on the support they provide for young people, Keeping Families Together (KFT) supports children in secure care to rebuild family relationships and, where possible, return to the family home. KFT delivers a rights-based, trauma informed, integrated and intergenerational service which focuses on reducing conflict and promoting positive interactions within families. Keeping Families Together supports young people in secure care at two key points: the point of admission, and those who are in the process of returning home. It is closely aligned with the UNCRC, particularly articles 3, 6, 7, 12, 18 and the Secure Care Pathway and Standards, specifically relating to during and after a period of being in secure care.

Within our service we are using the standards to influence our practice and ensure that young people and their families are aware of what they can expect to happen, especially relating to the standards after a period of care, when returning home. We are sharing the standards with families as part of our service level children's rights and wellbeing impact assessment, which highlights the touch points within our service to ensure young people and families are aware of the standards, their rights and their entitlements. As we journey with families, we see key themes where the standards are of particular importance which we are sharing within the champions group. These key themes include: absent or not-followed-through care plans; neurodivergent and additional support needs requiring individualised approaches; children's voices being unheard; a lack of knowledge and understanding about the pathway and standards and where to get help or support; and a lack of whole family support. I look forward to the next stage of implementation of the Standards as I can already see where they have influenced positive change for young people and their families.

STARR

[STARR](#) is Scotland's only curated space for people with experience of having been in, or on the edges, of secure care. The STARR group played a pivotal role throughout the development of the Standards and the website, supporting the coproduction activity within the secure care centres. Assessing each standard individually, they checked that the language was trauma-informed, easy to digest, and could result in real, lasting meaningful change; they considered the strategic implications of each standard and ensured that their lived experiences informed their role as a critical friend. Since the launch of the Standards the group has been integral to the championing of the Standards across agencies and within work: they provided contributions to the media at the launch of the Standards and co-presented and delivered inputs at local and national events, highlighting the significance of the standards and their implementation for children and young people. STARR continue to engage with children and young people through their fortnightly support, action and consultation group and they have engaged in a series of visits to secure care services

nationally thereby ensuring that the voices of children are at the heart of current and future developments. One of the co-founders, and Chair, of STARR shares their experience below.



I think the Secure Care Pathway and Standards have made an immense difference in the lives of children. Namely, giving children more autonomy over their own lives. They all have the standards and are supported to understand them (kudos to the secure care centres) but most importantly, they are supported to challenge the appropriate people when they are not delivering the services that our children need.

I think the centres have been amazing at implementing the standards however, as we discussed at the inception of the standards, these will be fluid and will adapt and have to be flexible to meet the needs of the children we seek to serve. I do think there is still a lot of work to be done with local authorities for the before and after section of the Standards. Children should not need to challenge what is classed as basic care and protection for an extremely vulnerable group. But alas, this is what an adversarial system looks like.

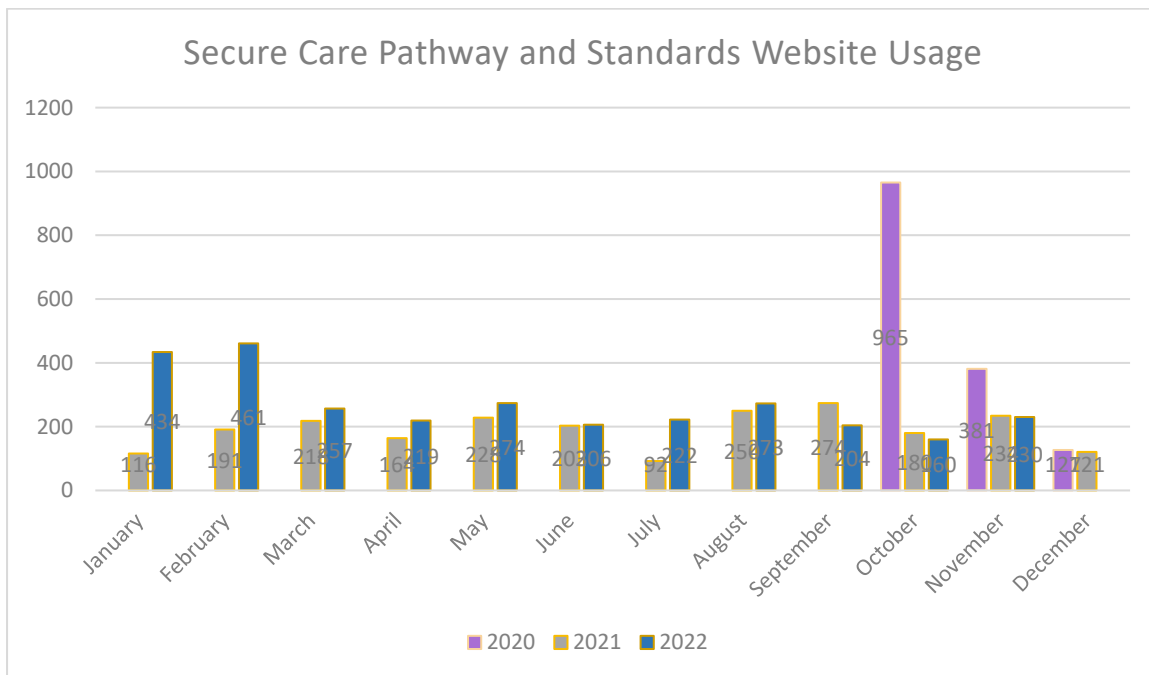
I do believe that if we realise the Standards in all that they were designed to do, we will see an empowered, supported and uplifted cohort of children able to understand and articulate their needs appropriately.

STARR continues to support the roll out of the Standards, and we will continue to be available for all children and practitioners who wish to talk to us and learn more. You can find us on twitter @STARR_Secure.

The Pathway and Standards Website

The website was co-designed, and the materials contained within this co-produced, with children in secure care, the STARR group, and the Standards Champions. The site provides information about why each Standard matters to children and young people in their own words using images they developed to depict the Standards, and the associated policy, legislation and guidance for each stage in a child's journey before, during and after a stay in secure care, and illustrative links to the Health and Social Care Standards and How Good is Our School? The website continues to be a work in progress; in addition to collating information about each of the secure care centres and children's rights - following feedback that this could help agencies to implement the Standards - we encourage agencies to share good practice. We have added practice examples of activity that relates to individual or groups of standards; while CYCJ are able to provide a proforma to ease the capturing of information, organisations have taken an individual approach to [practice examples](#).

The following chart illustrates how the website has been used since the launch of the Standards in 2020.



During the two years since the Standards have been operationalised the website has been used in the following way:

- 2020: 1453 users, 6008 page views and 1857 sessions
- 2021: 1970 users, 8687 page views and 2963 sessions and
- 2022: 2656 users, 8156 page views and 3548 sessions.

The audience has also changed over time although it has largely remained constant within the UK, with UK website usage steady at 79.42%, 73.49% and 79.95%. International visitors have been evident from Finland, the Netherlands, US, France, Austria, Australia, Canada, China, Estonia, Ireland, Andorra and Japan.

While it is evident from the data that the number of users and sessions have increased steadily over this time period, the number of page views has reduced between 2021 and 2022, suggesting a more focussed approach to usage.

The Secure Care Group

The Secure Care Group is a multi-agency group, co-chaired by COSLA and the Scottish Government. The Group consists of representatives from many of the key agencies with roles and responsibilities that include implementing the Standards. The group is keen to support agencies and stakeholders to ensure a full understanding of what is required to meet the standards and improve approaches to vulnerable children across the continuum of intensive supports and services in Scotland. The resources and support needed to implement the Standards have been the subject of ongoing discussions within this group; feedback on the Standards implementation process is provided by CYCJ within this forum.

A sub-group of the secure care group led by COSLA and CYCJ were tasked with exploring the potential development of secure transport for children, an aspect of the Standards work that required additional input. A group of key stakeholder volunteers met as a focus group and a comprehensive national secure transport specification for children was developed,

illustrating that a more collective approach may be required to meet some of the Standards more meaningfully.

The Secure Practitioners Forum

This forum resulted from requests at the Champions group for a safe space where staff could share, explore, and learn from, secure care experiences. Since the first meeting in March 2022, the group have met every second month, identifying themes to give the group focus, while supporting practitioners to share their experiences in broader terms. Themes have included self-harm and contagion, least restrictive alternatives and supporting healthy group dynamics. Group membership of the forum is currently reflective of nine agencies.

What has worked

Learning from the journey of implementation, a variety of factors have supported Standards activity.

- **Multi-agency approaches:** Throughout the discussions on the Standards the importance of joined-up working, relationships, and a multi-agency approach to support implementation has been stressed. The opportunity for multi-agency staff working across services to come together to reflect on practice, share experiences, and identify challenges has been positively commented on. Staff report a sense of inclusion and ownership in being part of this process of self-evaluation, and the subsequent development of plans to support Standards implementation. We continue to support multi-agency inclusion, although not all partners have engaged in this process.
- **The co-production of the Standards:** The continued message that the Standards are rooted in children's voices and experiences has helped them to "land". It has made the need for, and rationale behind, the Standards difficult to argue with. In particular, the inclusion on the website of quotes from children on why the Standards matter to them and reflections on the co-production of materials has assisted with this. The fact that co-production did not stop in the development of the Standards and has continued into implementation has also been crucial. This has involved the combined efforts of the STARR group and other children and young people with current or recent experience of secure care. The ongoing input of lived experience is at the heart of how this work continues to evolve.
- **Proactive Standards champions:** There has been good buy-in in respect of the Standards, with "champions" evident at various levels. The Standards Champions have had a fundamental role in pushing forward the implementation of the Standards within their own agencies and more broadly, with this forum providing opportunities for important relationships to develop and sustain across members. All staff within secure care centres have had a key role to play in highlighting the Standards to referrers. Likewise, individual champions in agencies have done vital work raising awareness of the Standards at both a single and multi-agency level. The buy-in, enthusiasm, sustained effort, and dedication has been key to the success of implementation.
- **Openness and willingness to collaborate, co-create and share:** Across agencies there has been a real willingness to collaborate, to ensure that the Standards achieve

their aims. This has been evident across different local authorities, for example as illustrated through the joining up of different geographical areas for self-evaluation workshops and subsequent planning, secure care centres, and via the Standards Champions Group. Sustaining and building on this momentum will be important as implementation evolves and progresses into future stages.

- **Contextualising the Standards in the broader context:** Helping people to understand where the Standards fit within the broader context of change that is currently taking place across Scotland has been both crucial and beneficial. We have demonstrated that the Standards are rooted in existing statutory requirements, reflecting the ethos and principles set out in the relevant legislation, policy and guidance. Furthermore, they complement these, providing additional context and a new lens through which to view the outcomes set out in the Health and Social Care Standards. Implementation of the Standards is also a key vehicle for supporting the achievement of, and responding to the recommendations from:
 - the '[Vision, Purpose, Values and Principles of secure care](#)', as agreed by the [Secure Care Strategic Board](#)
 - [Calls for Action](#) made during the Secure Care National project
 - [Keep The Promise](#)
 - [UNCRC](#) incorporation
 - the Scottish Parliament's [Justice Committee Inquiry into Secure Care Places](#)
 - [CYPSC Investigation into statutory duties in secure accommodation](#)
 - Care Inspectorate [Report on the deaths of looked after children in Scotland 2012 – 2018](#).
- Continuing to situate the Standards within the broader context will be important as agencies align Standards work with the wider approach to risk management practice.
- **[Secure Care Group](#):** As previously mentioned, these standards were co-produced by the Scottish Government, secure care experienced people and key partners including COSLA, having been developed via a workstream under the multi-agency Secure Care Strategic Board. This workstream was chaired by the Care Inspectorate and membership has helped to secure commitment to the Standards. The full potential of the Secure Care Group, with regard to the Standards, is arguably yet to be realised. It will be an important forum for addressing challenges in meeting the Standards at a national level. Secure transport provides an example of how this can be effectively utilised.
- **Flexibility of approaches:** Based on what has been said elsewhere, flexibility of approaches to supporting implementation has been important. By continuing to review, reflect and analyse what was emerging from the journey of implementation,

approaches and support from CYCJ has been streamlined and tailored. For example, workshops varied from half a day to three days depending on need, resources, and post-Covid requirements. In addition, the input was tailored to individual need. For agencies less familiar with secure care and its usage a more detailed information session was developed.

- **Starting to make change immediately:** The secure care centres did not wait until the Standards were launched to start making changes; it could be argued that some of the standards were developed pre-launch and continued as the innovation in practice evolved. This enabled change to happen for children quickly, supporting and sustaining the momentum of the Standards, and promoting the sharing of activities and learning.
- **Dedicated support:** CYCJ has operated in a dedicated support role, proactively reaching out to partners - including those who were less involved in the implementation of the Standards -, inputting at forums, capturing activity and continually making links between the Standards and other activity. This has been key.

Areas of learning and improvement

Key themes emerged highlighting potential barriers and obstacles to effective implementation. These are outlined below:

- **Time and resources:** At various levels, time and resources were a challenge. For the self-evaluation activity, bringing staff together over the sessions was difficult, with factors including the pandemic, limited capacity and resources and a multitude of change activity. The Standards set out the expectations we should be aiming to achieve for every child but change takes time, and the pace and scale of change has differed across agencies and areas. As many attendees at sessions highlighted, achieving the Standards often requires a change in resource prioritisation, and redeployment of expertise and capacity to different parts of the systems surrounding children within, and at risk of entering, secure care. Identification of what is needed, and the resource implications of implementing the Standards, has yet to be fully realised and will require further and ongoing discussions as not all local authority areas have been fully involved in the implementation process. Amongst all participating authorities thus far, resource implications have been highlighted as significant challenges that require deeper consideration and action.
- **Involvement of all partners:** It has been challenging to secure the involvement of all partners with roles and responsibilities that include implementation of the Standards. Particular challenges have been reported in areas where there are few, or no, children in secure care, resulting in staff being unable to develop expertise in this area. Challenges were also highlighted where the role of the Standards was to support children to remain in the community; this point was stressed at the initial point of training input as it was recognised as a barrier to participant's engagement. It has also been important to continually communicate that whilst the number of children these Standards will apply to is likely to be small, it is well established that these are some of our most vulnerable children, experiencing extreme needs and risks in their lives. Moreover, the decision to deprive a child of their liberty infringes

on one of their most fundamental human rights and impacts on a range of associated rights. The potentially catastrophic consequences of failure to get it right for, and uphold the rights of, these children have been clearly articulated by children and young people during the development of the Standards, and more widely. It also must be recognised that taking a rights-respecting approach to children more widely could see these Standards applied across other care settings. Through the support that has been provided, other key agencies where further support may be needed have been identified - this includes health, education, Police Scotland, legal professionals, and the judiciary. Continuing to monitor activity relating to the Standards across all settings will be crucial to achieving greater consistency of practice and ensuring all children benefit from their implementation.

- **Quality co-production:** There is an ongoing need to ensure that genuine co-production continues throughout the next phases of the Standards. Failure to do so risks not only undermining the ethos of the Standards but also the alienation of those who have had such a pivotal role in the Standards journey so far. Similarly, solutions and approaches to achieving the Standards ought to be co-produced. Those organisations who have established working groups to develop plans should consider how best to ensure that children and young people have an opportunity to meaningfully influence change and decisions within those plans.
- **The scale of change:** The Standards were launched seven months after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the associated restrictions, capacity, and other challenges this brought with it. They also launched at a time when significant change had either already begun, or was being called for, in respect of Scotland's approaches to children in, or on the edges of, secure care. As such, it has been reported that people are overwhelmed at the amount and scale of change, feeling that they are operating within a context of shifting "goalposts"; they are weary and fatigued by both this and COVID-19. The Standards are also about both incremental and transformational change, with some of the transformational change that has been identified as necessary being outwith the gift of the Standards. This is a challenging space to work within.
- **Genuine implementation:** Two years after their launch, there continues to be an anxiety that the Standards do not lead to the change they require quickly enough for children. The Standards need to be fully embedded within the structures and systems of organisations rather than relying on the commitment of individuals. Supporting people through this journey and process continues to be important. A continued openness and willingness to engage in meaningful change is key.
- **Measuring impact and ensuring this leads to change:** Measuring the impact of the Standards, particularly in terms of children's experiences and outcomes is challenging, as is monitoring what is happening across agencies in respect of the Standards. The appreciative inquiry being undertaken by the Care Inspectorate is a much-welcomed support in this. Equally, self-evaluation and individual monitoring mechanisms are critical to gathering evidence of impact.
- **Reviewing the Standards:** A common issue highlighted by participants was the absence of specific Standards relating to the role of education, despite the fact that a child's educational needs and potential are closely linked to the Standards, and

impact upon success. 'Information related to meaningfulness will be essential to phases 2 and 3 of the implementation process.

Emerging Themes

CYCJ have analysed the outputs from the self-evaluation workshop sessions we facilitated, and we also sought information from other partners to identify emerging themes in respect of the Standards. The following areas were highlighted as requiring additional consideration:

Consistency of Support

Access to consistent support and follow-up support throughout a child's journey requires further consideration. This has been identified as giving cause for concern across disciplines. Agencies have highlighted issues around the availability of services for children in, or on the edges of, secure care, stating that there are gaps in service provision and resources particularly around the steps before and after – or as an alternative to – secure care.

Partnership working

The importance of partnership working in the context of: GIRFEC; relationship-based practice; and information sharing was highlighted, as was the need for dialogue around expectations around responsibilities re. the development of services. A variety of challenges to achieving the Standards in practice were identified and the lack of sharing of knowledge and understanding with children and families was highlighted. Knowing the pathway to services, resources being available when they are needed and access to whole family and specialist mental health services requires services to work together. Respondents have been able to contextualise these issues and highlight how they could seek to be addressed in broader work on GIRFEC, The Promise and corporate parenting. This may be an area where more systemic change is required.

Participation

Involvement, influence and advocacy was also identified as a theme. We heard a lot about everyone's role in supporting children's participation, involvement, and influence, as well as efforts to make decision making processes more inclusive, for example children planning and chairing their own meetings. In terms of formal advocacy, many areas have well developed access to advocacy services; where a child is in the Children's Hearings System or in secure care, people are confident that advocacy support is provided. However, this is not consistent nationally and while sessions illustrated excellent examples of effective advocacy, there was a lack of this provision in some areas for children who were in the community. There were queries around what stage advocates should become involved at, at a local level, where resources are more limited. How far advocates would be involved in the decision-making process about placing a child in secure care has also been discussed. There is a need to ensure that this service is available at all stages of the decision-making process, regardless of the route to secure care, including on an emergency basis and via court. Consistency and continuity of advocacy throughout a journey is also necessary. Discussions have taken place with advocacy providers regarding this, such as Who Cares? Scotland and the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Previously it was highlighted that STARR have engaged in a range of visits to secure care centres providing opportunities for children and young people to share their views and experiences, with a view to informing and effecting change. How this is embedded within the systems themselves is variable and this theme requires further consideration. At the heart of this work is STARR.

Communications

Policies and procedures need to be put in place to give children and young people the chance to feed back on how changes are experienced in practice. The Care Inspectorate's appreciative inquiry should provide some insight into how this is being achieved, but further work is needed to embed this into infrastructure, systems, and processes.

Relationships

The importance of relationship-based practice and continuity of relationships throughout a child's journey is a theme that has been publicised elsewhere. This was also a feature of the Standards work. Preparation, communication and shared understanding in discussions with partners and multi-agency practice has been evident throughout the implementation process. Good relationships are central to this work. However, we have also heard that this can be difficult, hampered by challenges in ensuring common and joined-up working, even across agencies where there is a shared understanding. Affected areas include: language; the purpose, and impact of, secure care; and children's feelings about, and experiences of, secure care. In response to these issues, various efforts have been made to ensure that professionals have an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding, including: awareness-raising and training across agencies about secure care (with secure care experienced children participating in these sessions); and the development of support materials for children and their families. Secure care centres have produced and shared videos, and work is ongoing to develop resources for children. These have included virtual introductions and visits for children where physical visits cannot take place.

Rights

The revision of policies, procedures and practices across agencies to reflect and embed the Standards, which are grounded in a rights respecting approach, is ongoing. Promoting shared learning and understanding is key. Work continues on arrival toolkits, and co-produced welcome materials continue to be developed by services. Having identified a knowledge gap amongst practitioners, children and their families with regards to children's rights, children's rights wellbeing and impact assessment input was provided to the Champions group. Future Standards workshops will provide fuller insight into the wider youth justice standards and risk practice, in recognition of the fact that agencies are not always able to align different practice areas. Existing information on children's rights and the importance of upholding them has been collated on the Pathway and Standards website. CYCJ plan to work with partners to develop information on children's rights at different stages of their journey, including their rights if an appeal is required.

Language

Work on language has aligned with work on The Promise; Rossie have produced their own response to sharing a common non-stigmatising language that was co-produced with their children.

The Environment

Co-produced physical spaces is something that was explored as part of the Standards development. This is an area that centres have continued to develop but this continues to be an emerging theme.

Searches and Restraint

There are gaps in how the Standards are being met in relation to searches. There is also inconsistency across: the availability of body scanners; the use of restrictive practice mechanisms; and access to technology. Progress in these areas has been limited although the involvement of agencies in both the Scottish Physical Restraint Action Group (SPRAG) and Restraint Reduction Scotland reflects the fact that we are moving in the right direction.

Next steps

In considering next steps it must be noted that future developments require the ongoing commitment of the Scottish Government and key stakeholders. Once again, key themes can be identified here:

Continuing to support areas and agencies who are currently undertaking or are still to undertake phase 1 self-evaluation, learning and improvement activity

We continue to be advised within Standards forums that not all professionals understand their roles and responsibilities as regards the Standards; there are a number of areas and agencies within Scotland where we are not able to evidence work that has been undertaken in relation to the Standards. It may well be that Standards activity is underway in these agencies, and we simply have not heard about it; we will continue to reach out in order to capture this. CYCJ will continue to offer support to any agency promoting increased knowledge and understanding in this area.

Planning, testing and implementation

The learning from self-evaluation activity and Standards inputs will form the basis for planning, testing and implementation of approaches contributing to the standards journey before we are able to progress our work so that we provide evidence of improvement. This is an iterative process. In taking this work forward we recognise that parts of the Pathway and Standards may already be in place and working well, while other areas could be improved upon quickly and easily, or form part of existing plans for improvement. It is recognised that other areas of development may be more challenging and take time to fully implement in practice, secure transport would be one example of this. We know that the approaches and supports to children in or on the edge of secure care differ across local authority areas, so we expect that change will happen at a different pace and people will be at different stages of the implementation journey. We will continue to work with partners to identify what support is needed in this next phase.

Capturing and sharing learning and modelling

In respect of specific standards and the standards overall, this continued collation and sharing of learning, activity, practice examples and modelling will be important. CYCJ are keen to continue to collate information on good practice examples; opportunities, themes, challenges, and barriers in implementing the Standards; develop understanding of support that may be required to make the Pathways and Standards a continued success; and learning in respect of the journey of implementation. We will continue to work alongside partners to capture and share this learning using a range of methods and mediums.

Collectively work to address the challenges and barriers to implementation

We will continue to identify where coordinated or national level support is needed to address barriers and challenges to implementing, embedding and taking forward the Standards. The Secure Care Group will continue to play an important role here; ongoing discussions with partner agencies take place within this group. Additionally, we will continue to afford curated spaces to support implementation such as the Champions group and Secure Practitioners forum.

Responding to the changing landscape

Change in the following areas will provide additional opportunities for embedding the Standards; the Promise; the extension of the Children's Hearing System; the National Care Service; the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill (including ending the detention of children in YOIs) and the implications for Cross Border placements. CYCJ will continue to play a pivotal role here.

Evidencing impact

CYCJ and the associated Standards groups will continue to explore how improvement and transformation will be evidenced. Efforts will continue to be made to identify where the Standards and activity related to their implementation is included within plans, such as corporate parenting plans and children service plans. We will continue to offer to collate this information. The intention is that these plans will be subject to specific external scrutiny in respect of the Pathway and Standards in Phase 2. Phase 2 includes monitoring, assurance, and accountability with a much greater focus on external scrutiny. We are mindful that the Independent Care Review called for a new framework for inspection and regulation and the fundamental altering of the way in which services for children are regulated and the workforce is supported. As such the Secure Care Pathway and Standards potentially represent an opportunity to consider what this new framework could look like, and they may provide an opportunity to test a new approach. Additionally internal monitoring, auditing and evaluation is central to any evidencing of impact. CYCJ will continue to work with partner agencies to support the development of resources that enhance this process.

The Care Inspectorate appreciative inquiry findings are expected to be published in the Autumn of 2023 and learning from these findings, as well as the regular progress updates, will continue to inform this work.

Reviewing the Standards

In Phase 3 of implementation the Standards should be fully reviewed and audited where required. To do this effectively key stakeholders need to continue to be involved in the Standards journey, and we will need an effective monitoring and evaluation system in place. It is envisaged that this review and auditing process is a longer-term piece of work that must align with other transformational developments in Scotland.

Conclusion

This report has illustrated what has supported and hindered the implementation of the Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland which were launched on the 5th October 2020. It reflects progress made during the two years post launch and highlights the varied approaches that have been taken by local authority areas within Scotland; the most effective of these have involved a multi-disciplinary partnership agency approach.

Evidence of engagement with the Standards has also varied and while all five of Scotland's secure care centres have embraced a rights-respecting approach to children in, or on the edges of, secure care, further information is needed to ascertain the impact the Standards have had within 11 of the 32 local authorities as we have been unable to gather data on their progress.

The report focussed on phase one of the implementation process, using implementation science to utilise tried and tested methods. Self-evaluation and knowledge exchange will continue to be an ongoing piece of work but as we move into phase 2, supporting agencies to monitor and evaluate progress will gain momentum. This will be followed by phase 3 requiring a review and audit of the Standards. For this to be possible, continued engagement with agencies and the Champions group will be essential.

References

- Care Inspectorate (2022). Secure Care Pathway Review: The experiences of young people in - or on the edges of - secure care accommodation. [June 2022 briefing.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](#)
- Care Inspectorate (2022). Secure Care Pathway Review – Update. [Secure Care Pathway Review quarterly update August 2022 \(office.com\)](#)
- Care Inspectorate (2022). Secure Care Pathway Review – Update (November). [Secure Care Pathway Review - update \(office.com\)](#)
- Care Inspectorate (2020). [Quality framework for secure accommodation services.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](#)
- Care Inspectorate (2019). [Self evaluation for improvement - your guide.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](#)
- Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (2020). [Home - Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland \(securecarestandards.com\)](#)
- Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (2019). STARR. [STARR in Scotland - Children and Young People's Centre for Justice \(cycj.org.uk\)](#)
- Education Scotland (2018). [How good is OUR school? | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)
- Education Scotland (2021). [Using implementation science to support the implementation of interventions in real world contexts | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)
- Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blasé, K. A., Friedman, R. M. and Wallace, F. (2005). Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Florida: University of South Florida
- Gough, A. (2016). [Secure Care - Children and Young People's Centre for Justice \(cycj.org.uk\)](#)
- Logan, B. (2020). Scotland - time for open hearts and minds - Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (cycj.org.uk)
- Metz, A., Burke, K., Albers, B. Louison, L. and Bartley, L. (2020). A Practice Guide to Supporting Implementation. USA: National Implementation Research Network/European Implementation Collaborative/Centre for Effective Services. [A Practice Guide to Supporting Implementation | NIRN \(unc.edu\)](#)
- Scottish Government (2017). [A nation with ambition: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2017-2018 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Scottish Government (2019). [\[ARCHIVED CONTENT\] Secure Care Strategic Board - gov.scot \(nrscotland.gov.uk\)](http://gov.scot/nrscotland.gov.uk)

Scottish Government (2015). [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015, part 2 Community Planning: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2020). [Children's services planning: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2022). Children's Social Work Statistics 2021 – 2022. [Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2020-21 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2020). [Secure care: pathway and standards - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2019). [Secure Care Strategic Board: report to Scottish Ministers - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Scottish Government (2014). [Statutory guidance on Part 9 \(Corporate Parenting\) of the Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Sullivan, P. (2020). [Securing better futures - Children and Young People's Centre for Justice \(cycj.org.uk\)](http://cycj.org.uk)

Sullivan, P. and Logan, B. (2020). [Secure care pathway and standards: Co-production process and implementation plans \(celcis.org\)](http://celcis.org). *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*. Vol 20.1