

# Evaluation of Sustain Borders

A Report for Aberlour Child Care Trust



*Social Research*

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*Service Design & Innovation*

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*Strategy & Collaboration*

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*Evaluation Support*

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*Social Impact Measurement*

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December 2019



# 1. Introduction

This section introduces the study, Aberlour Child Care Trust and the Sustain Borders service, sets out the aims and objectives of the evaluation and describes the research methodology applied.

## Aberlour Child Care Trust

Aberlour Child Care Trust (Aberlour) is Scotland's largest children's charity, providing support to more than 7,500 children every year. Aberlour delivers over 40 services, in areas such as family support, children with disabilities, residential care and fostering and early years support.

Aberlour works increasingly with families and children at the 'edge of care', where there is concern about parental capacity to care adequately for children at home, and where there is an immediate risk of children being taken into care.

## Sustain Borders

Aberlour has developed a bespoke service for families with children at the edge of care, whose physical, emotional, social or educational needs are at risk of not being met by parents. Currently there are Sustain services operating in Highland (established in 2016) and Perth and Kinross (established in 2018).

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) has funded a pilot Sustain service from October 2018 till March 2020. The service was originally delivered across the two main communities of Hawick and Galashiels, but is now extended across the local authority area. Sustain Borders aims to work with at least 30 children living in edge of care families.

## Research objectives

The overarching objective of the evaluation is to evidence the impact of the service to help SBC to make an informed decision about the continuation of the pilot.

The detailed objectives of the evaluation are:

- 
- Assessing whether the service has met its intended outcomes.
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- Evidencing the impact of the service on children, young people and families.
- 
- Assessing the impact of the service on Scottish Borders Council and the further service landscape for children and families;
- 
- Assessing the cost savings made by SBC in reduced care placements and reduced need for other services;
- 
- Making recommendations to develop the service in the future.
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## Research methodology

We have used a mixed methods approach to this evaluation, including:

### Desk research

- 
- A review of the project data collected by Aberlour in its Dynamics data management system.
- 
- Sample of anonymised referral documents and pre- and post-engagement forms from parents and young people.
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### Fieldwork

- 
- In depth interviews with 4 families that have used the service.
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- Semi-structured interviews with 6 SBC Social Workers and a survey completed by 4 SBC Social Workers
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- Semi-structured interviews with 5 partners and key stakeholders from the health (2), education (2) and community (1) sectors
- 
- Face-to-face and telephone interviews with 4 Aberlour management and delivery staff and a focus group with 3 Aberlour delivery staff
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## 2. Sustain Borders Service

This section describes the service in more detail, setting out the background to the service, its aims and objectives, delivery model and approach.

### Background to the service

Aberlour developed the Sustain service model to tackle the increasing number of children and young people placed into care due to a lack of suitable and appropriate support for families at the edge of care.

Sustain Borders offers personalised, flexible and responsive support that other services find challenging to provide to families. The approach seeks to maximise the potential of family strengths and assets, getting them access to the required support when and where they need it.

The service is informed by five key principles:

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- **Consultation and co-production:** recognising that children and families need a voice and need to be involved in service design.
- 
- **Relationship-based support:** understanding and respecting families, and building trust through positive interventions.
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- **Intensive support:** being there when families need support the most such as evenings and weekends.
- 
- **Edge of care, not edge of Social Work involvement:** supporting those families most in need and those children most at risk of being accommodated.
- 
- **Personalised support:** not restrained by one approach or evidence-based practice but drawing upon a range of approaches that best meet family need.
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Sustain Borders is working in collaboration with SBC offering the service to families involved with SBC Social Work. It follows a multi-agency approach, ensuring that all relevant services are working together to support the whole family.

These families face a wide range of issues such as poor mental health, substance misuse and neglect. They require support that is attachment and trauma-informed, delivered in a personalised and relationship-based way.

Aberlour has been delivering services for vulnerable children and families in the Scottish Borders for over 20 years. As of 2018, there were around 230 children and young people being looked after by Scottish Borders Council and up to 40 in costly out of authority placements. Sustain Borders can therefore help SBC to manage budgetary pressures by transferring resources from expensive crisis management to earlier, more preventative interventions.

Before the Sustain Borders pilot programme there was also no established outreach service for families in the Scottish Borders. SBC has funded outreach services for families in the past, one provided in-house and the other delivered by a third sector partner.

### Service aims and objectives

The service agreement between Aberlour and SBC states the following objectives for the Sustain Borders:

1. To provide intensive personalised and relationship-based whole family support to children and young people (10-18 years) and their parents, carers and siblings to strengthen relationships and prevent family breakdown.
2. Children and young people are supported to remain within their own families where possible.
3. Children and young people shall be enabled to maintain positive relationships with their Parents/Carers.
4. Reducing youth crime and promoting community safety.

### Service outcomes

The service aims to achieve a number of outcomes for children and families:

- 
- Reducing the number of children going into care by keeping families together.
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- Improving SHANARRI outcomes for children, in particular increased resilience.
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- Improved healthy relationships within families and between families and other services.
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- Improved school attendance and attainment.
- 
- Reduced barriers to inclusion.
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Sustain Borders also targets outcomes for SBC:

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- A reduction in care placements leading to cost savings or spending reallocated towards earlier intervention.
- 
- Reduction in the need for Social Work and wider statutory intervention.
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### Delivery model and approach

The Sustain Borders delivery model is designed to:

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- **Engage:** providing personalised and relationship-based whole family support to parents, carers and their children aged 10 and over.
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- **Support:** offering timely, responsive and safe provision seven days a week, 365 days a year, tailored to family need and circumstances.
- 
- **Improve outcomes:** demonstrate to SBC successful progress towards intended outcomes for children, families, the Council and communities.
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Sustain offers a flexible model built around a staged and planned approach to supporting children and families. The strength of the model lies within the flexible and creative menu of support interventions and evidence-based approaches applied in practice by experienced staff. The five stages are:

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- **Referrals:** from SBC gatekeepers, a single point of referral for edge of care families.
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- **Proactive engagement / action planning:** community support practitioners will engage children and families in their own homes, schools and other community venues. An action plan will be produced with children and families, containing agreed actions and outcomes that relate to the Child's Plan.
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- **Types of interventions:** a range of innovative and creative interventions will be used to ensure that families are supported to make the changes that will help them to progress and integrate within their communities.
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- **Reviews / disengagement:** support workers will undertake ongoing assessment of family progress towards outcomes, regularly reviewed using Aberlour's Outcomes Framework.
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- **Ongoing capacity building:** the service will enhance community resources to ensure that they are capable of supporting families beyond Sustain intervention.
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### Service delivery

Up to November 2019 the Sustain Borders service has received 51 referrals for young people and worked with a further 53 parents/carers and siblings. Of these 16 young people (and 16 parents/carers) are in an early stage of the engagement process so have not been included in the assessment of outcomes to date.

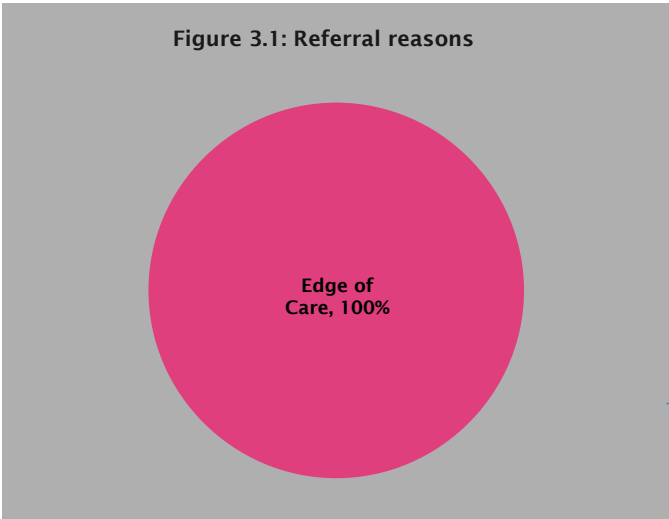
### 3. Impact on Children and Families

This section of the report reviews and presents evidence of the impact of the Sustain Borders service on children, young people, their parents/carers and siblings.

**Reaching families at the edge of care**

From the outset it was clear that a key condition for the success of the service is that the right children and young people are referred: children and young people who, without targeted intervention, would be extremely likely to end up in care.

The project data show that **all of referrals to the service (100%) are children and young people at the edge of care.**

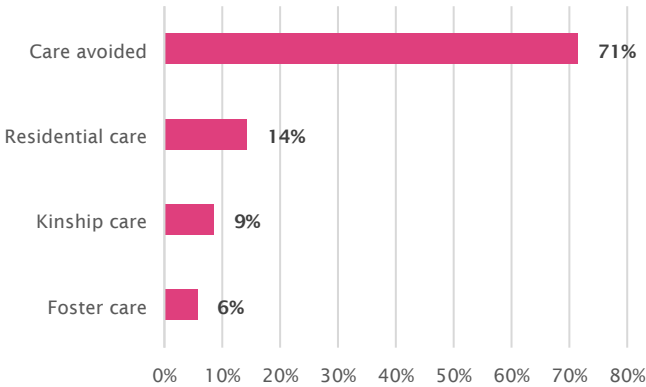


This shows that the referral system and the ‘gatekeeper’ role of senior SBC officers has worked well. This was confirmed by Social Work staff and stakeholders.

**Keeping families together**

Sustain Borders has been highly successful in its main ambition of avoiding children and young people being taken into care and keeping families together wherever possible. Figure 3.2 breaks down the outcomes for the children and young people that Sustain Borders has worked with.

**Figure 3.2: Final outcome for children and young people**



This means that of the 35 children and young people the Sustain Borders service has worked with (and for whom final outcomes could be established) **25 have avoided being taken into care** and are still living at home with their family and are expected to continue doing so.

*“I definitely think the adoption would have broken down without them.”*

*“If the objective of Sustain is to stop children going into care then it definitely worked for us.”*

*“[Child] might have even been taken away into care.”*

Parents

The flexibility and intensity of the Sustain support is a key factor in this success. The service is available ‘as and when required’, including during evenings and weekends, which allows issues to be dealt with quickly and can help to avoid them developing into a full-blown crisis.

*“[Child] would probably have been accommodated if the Sustain worker had not been available over the weekend.”*

Social Worker

As well as being available at times of crisis Sustain workers can continue providing support when things have settled down and underlying issues can be addressed. Families cited the importance of ongoing support by the same Sustain worker.

Even for the families where the end result was a care placement, the value of the Sustain Borders service was acknowledged by the parents. One parent said that Sustain Borders were able to spend the time explaining processes and helping them to navigate the system.

Sustain also helped this parent to develop coping mechanisms for the challenging behaviour of their child and keeping the relationship going during the care placement.

*"I learned to walk away and calm down."*  
*"Without Sustain I might have ended up in jail or [the child] might not even be here"*  
*Parents*

Two of the parents and carers highlighted the positive effects Sustain had on their other relationships.

*"My wife and I might not be together anymore."*  
*Parent*

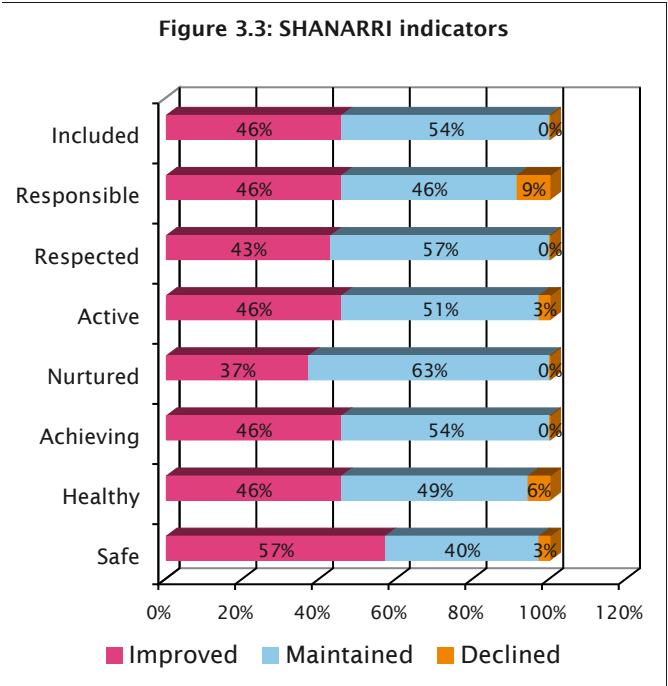
Increased wellbeing (SHANARRI)

The Sustain Borders service works with children, young people and their parents/carers to improve overall wellbeing. The service uses SHANARRI indicators, part of the Scottish Government's Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, embedded in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.



Figure 3.3 shows the extent to which the **children and young people have achieved progress towards the SHANARRI indicators.**

Sustain Borders uses a 6-point scorecard to determine progress against the SHANARRI indicators at the start and the end of the process, using bespoke visual aids. The scores are established by triangulating the scores of the young person, the parent and the observations of the Sustain and Social Work staff. Overall, figure 3.3 shows good progress across all eight indicators.



It should be noted that not every young person has issues across all eight SHANARRI indicators, most young people had only issues in 2 or 3 areas, these generally are the areas where progress has been made, while their score on the other indicators was maintained. Young people were felt to have regressed in only a very small number of cases.

Building better family relationships

Because the Sustain service provided flexible and intensive support focused on the root causes, relationships between parents and children improved significantly.

*"[Child] is now interacting better, is back in school, and the relationship with his mum has improved. This would not have happened without Sustain."*  
*Social Worker*

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*“Things look more positive now, we seem to be doing more together.”*

Parent

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The whole family approach meant that the focus was not solely on the child and many parents started to look at their own behaviour and attitude, and how that affected the child’s behaviour.

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*“I did change the way I was parenting, and some other things helped but Sustain was main reason our placement didn’t break down.”*

*“I’m being a more stable parent now.”*

*“I knew I was stressed out but I didn’t realise how bad it was. I was doing lots of avoidance and going out as much as possible to avoid being in the house with him. I am now spending much more time looking after the children.”*

Parents

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Some parents mentioned the practical nature of the support, as contrasted to the ‘therapeutic’ nature of other services available, helped them to deal better with their child on a day-to-day basis. This in turn **improved the relationships between parents/carers and children.**

One educational stakeholder mentioned Sustain buying a CD player for a family, so they could play music when getting ready for school. This made a huge difference on the pupil’s behaviour at school and on the peace in the household during the morning rush hour.

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*“Another positive impact is better school attendance and pupils turning up on time.”*

Education stakeholder

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### Living safer lives

The young people referred to Sustain often are involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal activities. Of the 35 cases under review in this evaluation, this was the case for **XXX young** people.

Sustain worked with these young people to **address any underlying issues to their behaviour and divert them from criminal behaviour.**

Sustain is flexible in the way it supports young people in changing their behaviours and

environments. For example, one Sustain Community Support Practitioner took a young person to a boxing club, which diminished his anti-social behaviour.

One parent told about their child ‘hanging around with the wrong crowd’ and getting involved in criminal activities. Through the support provided by Sustain the young person was now in a safe place and has started to build up his life.

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*“[Child] is safe now and doesn’t have the same bad influences on him.”*

Parent

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One Social Worker mentioned four different cases where anti-social and criminal behaviour was a key issue, where Sustain Border’s approach to working with the families and schools made a significant difference.

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*“Targeting home and school life made a real difference.”*

Social Worker

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### Developing trust in the system

Families that are referred to Sustain Borders typically have a long history of receiving support from a variety of support providers. Mostly these relationships are time-limited and focused on crisis intervention.

The support provided by Sustain helped families to make sense of the various support options available and better navigate the system. This also included better understanding where services such as Social Work were coming from and what they needed to change to avoid crisis situations and therefore the threat of their child taken into care.

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*“They [Sustain] are a bridge between all the other services.”*

*“Sometimes the Social Worker would give us a lot of information, Sustain would explain what it meant and what was involved.”*

*“Sustain came in and told us clearly we needed to present a united front – having an external, independent voice helped us.”*

Parents

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As a result of Sustain’s work with **children, young people and their families they started to rebuild families’ trust in the system** and increase their ability to interact with other service providers effectively. This includes Social Work services, but also health services, schools, housing, police and community services.

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*Social Workers*

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*“Sustain have helped young people to trust again and showed them that teachers and other professionals are trying to help.”*

*“Sustain will be the voice of the young person so they are prepared to have difficult conversations with parents, teachers or anyone else when they have to.”*

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## 4. Impact on the Service Landscape

This section discusses how the Sustain Borders service fits in with other service providers and the impact of the service for other agencies provided support to children, young people and families.

The interim evaluation report provided some initial findings on the extent to which Sustain Borders had complemented and aligned with Social Work and other statutory and third sector support services (at that stage). These broadly positive findings have been further elaborated below, taking into account the additional interviews with stakeholders that have since taken place. These later interviews also have a more complete, longer-term view of the impacts of Sustain Borders and how it fits with existing support services for young people and families.

In general, other service providers continue to express high levels of satisfaction with Sustain Borders, mainly in terms of the amount and quality of support for young people and families in crisis.

### Impact on Scottish Borders Council

Social Workers and management felt that Sustain Borders was meeting a clear **need for more and more intensive support** for young people and their families.

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*“It enhances the value of the Social Work service. There was a gap.”*

*Social Worker*

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Many welcomed the additional resources that Sustain Borders has been able to bring to complex cases, recognising the fact that Social Workers (and other agencies) had often been working with these families for some time.

Social Workers and management highlighted some of the specific aspects of the Sustain Borders’ service as being particularly helpful, such as their ability to provide **immediate, intensive, personalised support**, and respond as and **when needed** (i.e. out of hours). Others were just glad to have **additional resources** available, particularly having expert support practitioners they could call on to work with families in crisis.

Sustain Borders have been able to take responsibility for the bulk of day-to-day work with young people at the edge of the care and their

families, meaning that Social Workers have less direct involvement (while monitoring progress against the young person’s care plan). Three of the Social Workers we spoke to felt that this had helped to **reduce pressure**, allowing them to get more involved in other cases. However, given the level of existing pressure on Social Work resources, this would be very unlikely to translate into an overall feeling that workloads were more manageable.

The interim report included a potential concern that partnership working was working better at strategic than operational level. We found no evidence of any structural issues in the subsequent research, outside some initial issues with information sharing or updates and the approach of an individual member of staff.

There was strong support for the idea that a service like Sustain Borders can potentially reduce the need for (and cost of) care placements down the line. Social Workers recognised that Sustain Borders staff had worked hard to **build trust and rapport with the young people**, building their **self-esteem and resilience** but also helping to **get to the root causes** of family breakdown in several difficult cases. Any progress in these cases will reduce the likelihood of problems recurring, or help families to deal with them more effectively if and when they do.

### Impact on other service providers

Other service providers tended to agree that Sustain Borders **complemented existing services** and staff had worked well with partner agencies. A number of the health and third sector stakeholders felt that Sustain Borders’ had supported their work and **helped them to achieve their own objectives**.

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*“Other agencies rely on them as part of the team.”*

*Education stakeholder*

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For example, education stakeholders spoke highly of Sustain Borders staff and their support for young people who had been **refusing to attend school**.

In some cases, the young people had been refusing to attend for some time and been subject to interventions and support from different agencies and professionals.

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*“We were at the point where we had tried everything with these young people, this support could only benefit them.”*

*Education stakeholder*

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Sustain Borders managed to **build trust and develop the confidence of young people, often in a very short period of time.**

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*“It has been incredible; they’ve been able to go in and make a difference within a few weeks.”*

*Education stakeholder*

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One commented that because Sustain Border has managed to build the trust of young people, they were more likely to appreciate that school staff (and potentially other professionals) were actually trying to help them.

A key element in progress has been Sustain Border’s focus on **child-centred care**. As highlighted in the previous chapter, there was evidence that Sustain Borders have communicated with agencies on behalf of the young people, and have been willing to have **difficult conversations** when required. For example, Sustain Borders have encouraged school staff to accept that a school refuser can engage with school life and schoolwork in a more limited (but still structured) way, rather than insisting on full attendance where this might have been contributing to their reluctance to attend.

Health stakeholders also welcomed Sustain Borders, recognising that it is a different kind of service to that normally available in the Borders (or elsewhere?) and that there is a particular need for **intensive, whole family support**. They also felt that Sustain’s involvement with young people had helped to improve their attendance at health appointments.

There are also some examples of Sustain Borders involving other third sector providers, where the activities or services they provide would be of value to that young person (examples include Stable Life<sup>1</sup>, Children 1<sup>st</sup> and Quarriers).

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*“We’re all part of the jigsaw.”*

*“There’s a willingness to do joint work to support the young person.”*

*Third sector stakeholders*

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Many of those consulted felt that their work with these young people and families would benefit from Sustain Borders supporting them at an earlier stage, before they reached crisis point or the edge of care.

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*“It has filled some of the gap, but we need more of it.”*

*Social Worker*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stablelife.org.uk/>

## 5. Valuing the Impact of Sustain Borders

This section explores the potential financial implications of the service for the public purse and how the service can help SBC to meet its budget targets.

Like any other public authority, SBC is experiencing increasing budgetary pressures. The Council has published Fit for 2024, a transformational strategy to meet future challenges<sup>2</sup>. Fit for 2024 recognises the need for additional budget savings, even after the ‘easy wins’ have been captured. This means the Council needs to capitalise on innovative ways of working, including ways of reducing the increasingly unsustainable costs of providing care.

Sustain Borders offers an opportunity to do things in a fundamentally different way, by transforming care for vulnerable children, young people and families and reducing the need for expensive care placements.

Thanks to the strict gatekeeping policy applied by SBC, all families that were referred to the Sustain Borders service were at the edge of care. It was clear and agreed by SBC and Sustain Borders staff that without intervention, these children and young people would be very likely to end up in care.

In the 15 months under review in this evaluation, 25 of the 35 children and young people for whom a final outcome could be established<sup>3</sup> have avoided being taken into care.

SBC Social Work estimates the average cost of a care placement at £155,310<sup>4</sup>, which is in line with the national average (£158,800)<sup>5</sup>. If this were applied to the overall outcomes achieved by Sustain Borders, costs of £3.9m would have been avoided over the 15-month period.

The cost of the Sustain Borders service over the same 15-month period are £345,000. This means a potential budget saving of over £3.5m.

By continuing to fund Sustain Borders **SBC could save around £2.8m per year in direct care placement costs.**

The average cost of a care placement does not include time spend and overhead cost of SBC. These are estimated by Audit Scotland at 15%. This means **another £420,000 of resource reallocation per year** could be attributed to the Sustain Borders service.

There is also a cumulative effect, where costs would be saved for every year that a young person is not taken into care. The likely cost avoidance as a result of Sustain Borders is likely to be much higher if the duration of care placements is taken into account, bearing in mind that they can now be extended to 21.

However, the costs of care are not discretionary and do not translate directly into additional resources available to the Council. A care placement is the result of a court decision and the local authority has a statutory duty to provide the placement under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Apart from the avoidance of statutory care cost, there are **a range of other preventative benefits of the Sustain Borders service** to SBC and other statutory organisations that represent a financial value:

1. A reduction in time and other resources that SBC and the judicial system others have to spend on preparing court cases regarding care.
2. A reallocation of resources for the police and other community safety and criminal justice organisations for the young people turned away from anti-social and criminal behaviour.
  - a. 7.3% of looked after children come into contact with the youth justice system, compared to 3% of all children and young people (NACRO, 2012)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20062/strategies\\_plans\\_and\\_policies/923/fit\\_for\\_2024](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20062/strategies_plans_and_policies/923/fit_for_2024)

<sup>3</sup> The service has worked with 51 children and young people in total, but 16 of these were in an early stage of the process and have not reached any conclusion.

<sup>4</sup> Sustain Borders – update, Aberlour Childcare Trust, October 2019

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2010/nr\\_100902\\_children\\_residential.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2010/nr_100902_children_residential.pdf)

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<sup>6</sup> Looked After Children and Crime, Kristina Moodie, Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, University of Strathclyde, 2016

- b. A third of young offenders, and almost a third of the adult prison population, self-identify as being Care Experienced (SPS, 2016)<sup>7</sup>.
    - c. Some practitioners estimate that around 50% of the adult prison population may have care experience (HM Inspector of Prisons for Scotland, 2009)<sup>8</sup>.
  3. Potential future reduction of cost for mental health services by addressing the underlying issues with children and young people.
    - a. 45% of children and young people aged 5-17 looked after by a local authority had a diagnostic mental health disorder 37% had clinically significant conduct disorders; 12% were assessed as having emotional disorders - anxiety and depression – and 7% were rated as hyperactive<sup>9</sup>.
    - b. Among 5- to 10-year-olds, the rates of disorders for looked after children compared with those in private households were<sup>10</sup>:
      - i. Emotional disorders: 11% compared with 3%.
      - ii. Conduct disorders: 36% compared with 5%.
      - iii. Hyperkinetic disorders: 11% compared with 2%.
      - iv. Any childhood mental disorder: 42% compared with 8%.
    - c. Among 11- to 15-year-olds, the prevalence of mental disorders for children looked after by local authorities compared with children from the private household survey were:
      - i. Emotional disorders: 12% compared with 6%.
      - ii. Conduct disorders: 40% compared with 6%.
      - iii. Hyperkinetic disorders: 7% compared with 1%.
      - iv. Any childhood mental disorder: 49% compared with 11%.
  4. Potential future reduction of cost for health services due to avoiding care and the re-engagement with health services.
    - a. Looked after children appear to have higher rates of particular physical health conditions for example, dental caries, vision problems and obesity<sup>11</sup>.
    - b. High rates of health-risk behaviours (for example, smoking and sexual relationships at a younger age) have been identified among the looked after population<sup>12</sup>.
    - c. There is evidence that care leavers of all ages are over-represented in suicide<sup>13</sup> statistics and other early deaths
    - d. It is estimated that one of the highest rates of youth smoking exists for care leavers at 67% (ScotPHO, 2009)<sup>14</sup>.
  5. Potential future reduction of future welfare cost due to the avoidance of care and re-engagement with education.
    - a. In 2017/18 44% of children in care for the full year and 40% of those who were in care for part of the year left school in S4 or earlier, compared with just 11% of all school leavers<sup>15</sup>.
    - b. In 2017/18 12% of school leavers who were in care for the full year and 11% who were in care for part of the year had qualifications 1 or more qualification at SCQF level 6 or better, against 62% of all school leavers<sup>16</sup>.
    - c. In 2017/18 76% of children in care for the full year and 69% of children in care for part of the year, were in positive destinations, compared to 93% of all school leavers<sup>17</sup>.
    - d. The figures show across all stages, that a lower proportion of Care Experienced children achieved the CfE level relevant to their stage compared with all pupils – especially in writing<sup>18</sup>.
    - e. In 2016/17 the rate of exclusions among Care Experienced children was

<sup>11</sup> The health of looked after children and young people: a summary of the literature, Dr Andrea Priestley and Dr Lisa Ann Kennedy, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCLIS), University of Strathclyde, 2015

<sup>12</sup> The health of looked after children and young people: a summary of the literature, Dr Andrea Priestley and Dr Lisa Ann Kennedy, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCLIS), University of Strathclyde, 2015

<sup>13</sup> The health of looked after children and young people: a summary of the literature, Dr Andrea Priestley and Dr Lisa Ann Kennedy, Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELCLIS), University of Strathclyde, 2015

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>9</sup> The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in England, Office for National Statistics, 2003

<sup>10</sup> The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in England, Office for National Statistics, 2003

- 169 cases per 1,000 pupils, compared with 27 per 1,000 in the general school population<sup>19</sup>.
- f. 30% of Care Experienced young people who were in care for part of the year are classed as unemployed 9 months after leaving school, compared to 5% of their non-Care Experienced peers<sup>20</sup>.
6. Potential future reduction in homelessness cost
- a. Practitioners estimate that between 30-50% of individuals who are homeless could be Care Experienced.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.whocaresscotland.org/who-we-are/media-centre/statistics/>

## 6. Conclusions

**This section draws conclusions from the evaluation findings and provides recommendations on the continuation of the Sustain model in the Scottish Borders.**

### Conclusions

From the research the following conclusions can be drawn:

#### Avoiding being taken into care

1. The Sustain Borders service is achieving its objectives.
2. The Sustain Borders service is reaching the right children, children and families. Due to the strict and well-functioning gatekeeping by SBC all service users were children at the edge of care (100%) and families in crisis.
3. Over the first 15 months of the pilot period Sustain Borders has avoided 25 children and young people being taken into care (71%).
4. This number of care placements would have required up to £3.9m in care placement costs and another £420k in overheads.
5. SBC could achieve a cost saving of up to £2.8m per year by continuing to fund Sustain Borders at the current level of £345,000 per year. This amount is potentially much higher if the likely duration of the placements avoided could be taken into account.
6. By avoiding children and young people being taken into care, there is a whole range of potential resource reallocation opportunities for the public purse, including health, mental health, education, welfare and criminal justice.

#### Impact on children, young people and families

7. The children and young people that Sustain Borders have worked with are making excellent progress against the SHANARRI indicators.
8. The Sustain approach of delivering flexible, intensive, whole-family support and thus addressing the root causes rather than responding to an immediate crisis situation has a positive impact on family relationships.

9. Addressing the root causes of young people's issues helps to reduce anti-social and criminal behaviour.

10. With the intensive and flexible support children, young people and families are regaining trust in 'the system' and are re-engaging with other services, such as health and education.

#### Impact on the service landscape

11. Sustain Borders clearly fills a gap in the service provision for children, young people and families in the Scottish Borders.
12. Sustain Borders can reduce some pressure on SBC Social Work staff, in the sense that they do not have to spend as much time on cases with Sustain Borders involvement, freeing some time for other cases.
13. Because the Sustain Borders service addresses the root causes of family issues, the likelihood of them returning to Social Work or other services in the future is reduced.
14. Sustain Borders has given the children and young people a voice, and has been able to act as an 'honest broker' between families and other services, such as health providers and schools, in many cases.
15. Sustain Borders works in partnership with a range of statutory and third sector organisations and helps these services to achieve their objectives.

Find out more  
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