

Nationally there has been renewed discussion of the important role of holistic family support in prompting family wellbeing and averting family breakdown and recognition that provision of such services across Scotland has been variable. The range and complexity of issues facing families and those supporting them has continued to increase, poverty has not lessened, and the COVID 19 pandemic brought further and new challenges. There has also been an increased awareness and understanding of the negative impact that adverse or traumatic experiences in childhood can have on children's development which without support, can lead to poorer health and social outcomes in adulthood. An excellent local example is the First Steps Programme designed to reduce inequalities by taking an early intervention approach.

173 Parents  
engaging  
51% SIMD 1  
26% SIMD 2  
Feb 22

### First Steps Programme

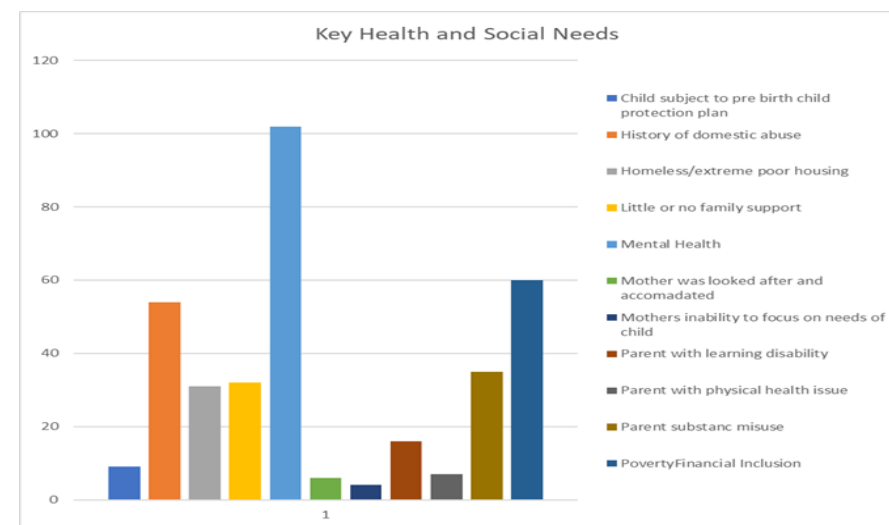


First Steps workers are valuable members of the midwifery teams within localities. The service offers vulnerable pregnant women one-to-one, home based, intensive support to assist them through their pregnancy and in the early postnatal period. The programme has been continually evaluated and adapted to ensure it meets the needs of our most vulnerable families. It assists Lanarkshire's midwifery and health visiting services to support higher risk groups, identify and manage non-clinical risks during their pregnancy and beyond. The priority for the service is to engage and support women in the early antenatal period and support can be continued up to the child is 6 months old.

Many of the women and families supported by First Steps have been affected by adverse traumatic experiences in childhood which can have long lasting negative impacts on health and well-being.

Between November 21 and February 22 two health improvement managers carried out engagement sessions with staff and parents around first steps programme. Outlined in the report are the key health and social needs of the first steps population and parents experience of the service.

### Key Health & Social Needs



In February 22 the key health and social needs identified at referral highlights a change in the top three categories. A comparison of the data from 2015 showed the top categories as - little or no family support, mental health and parent with a physical health issues compared to current data evidencing mental health, poverty, financial inclusion and clients with history of domestic abuse.

Listening to the parent's journeys and exploring how the programme helped families by providing enhanced support based on relationships was a key element to understanding some impacts. The explanations offered by the parents were indicative of a person-centred, flexible, needs-based approach that takes account of individual circumstances. First Steps Workers that had supported families were described as more than support workers to the families they care for; they are

***“fairy godmothers, and considered to be their professional family”.***

Parents and carers reported a crucial benefit was the excellent practical support, around meeting the needs of their baby, companionship and emotional support given. Citing First Steps Workers qualities of easy to talk and relate to, non-judgmental and responsive to the needs of both me and my baby.

**(Parental quotes outlined below)**

*‘Provided one to one support baby massage and sensory sessions tailored to my daughters needs in my house as I couldn’t get out during COVID and have social anxiety’*

*‘When other workers moved on quickly after my pregnancy loss MY FSW stayed on supporting me and left a number for me to call’*

*‘My FSW took me and my baby to swimming and helped me with my severe anxiety and MH issues. The swimming helped me a great deal and the emotional support was crucial’*

*‘FSW gave me self-confidence and reassurance I was doing well. I felt loved and secure like family and my baby bonded with her too.’*