

2022/23

CSWO Annual Report Summary

FEBRUARY 2024





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Information

Iriss was funded by the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, Scottish Government to undertake analysis and produce an overview of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) 2022-2023 Annual Reports. This Report provides a summary of the main areas covered in the CSWO Annual Reports. These reports were based around a reporting template and give a general overview of the social work landscape in Scotland.

The CSWO Annual Reports are a means of reporting to Councils on the delivery of social work services in their area, highlighting key activities, developments, and challenges.

This summary is intended to highlight key themes drawn from the reports received to improve understanding of performance, improvement and challenges being experienced across the sector. It is not intended to be an in-depth analysis of social services in Scotland. Two CSWO reports were not available for review at the time of writing and are therefore not included in findings.

Executive summary

The Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO) reports give an overview of social work and social care in Scotland by Local Authority area. The social care landscape is marked by several significant pressures, including an ageing population, increased demand, rising complexity of needs, social care cost escalation, workforce shortages, evolving legislation, pandemic effects, and the cost-of-living crisis, disproportionately impacting the most disadvantaged communities.

Continuing challenges persist in maintaining and enhancing service quality and performance. The reports underscore the implementation of the Getting It Right For Everyone (GIRFE) approach. Efforts to strengthen GIRFE practices include the establishment of multi agency improvement groups, practitioner forums, and forums in various regions.

Workforce

Across the service landscape, recruitment and retention difficulties persist. Services experience prolonged high vacancy and sickness absence rates, impacting statutory social work services. National trends include staff movement from Children and Families Social Work to other areas or exit from the profession, with poor responses to vacancies in the children's residential workforce. A national challenge exists in recruiting and training Mental Health Officers (MHOs). Workforce planning is becoming increasingly complex due to new structures and integration models, with varied responses to challenges across different localities. Reports discuss strategies, challenges, and responses to identify future demands and solutions in workforce planning. Workforce wellbeing is a focus. External support from funds and programs is acknowledged to be crucial for promoting staff wellbeing.

Adult services

In SDS, the emphasis is on addressing challenges in delivery. ASP continues to prioritise multi-agency working, early intervention, and preventative options. Delayed discharge patterns remain a national concern, with efforts to address capacity challenges and improve efficiency in hospital discharge activities. Various initiatives, including test changes and enhanced services, aim to reduce delayed discharges. Care at home services are addressing recruitment, retention, and increasing demand, with collaborative commissioning models. The reports also touch on strategies for supporting unpaid carers.

The reports on adult mental health services highlight national priorities such as early intervention, prevention, and self-management, as well as access to appropriate support. There's a noticeable increase in referrals and demands on mental health services, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis. Challenges include rising detention rates and workforce recruitment issues, especially for Mental Health Officers (MHOs). Efforts to

improve data collection, reduce delayed discharges, and enhance workforce capacity are evident.

Drug and alcohol services emphasise family-oriented approaches, and collaborations with justice services. There's a focus within community justice services on intervention, diversion, and support for offenders. Women's justice services and domestic abuse interventions are also highlighted, with a focus on the Caledonia model, holistic support and rehabilitation.

Children's services

The reports highlight national policy priorities and a strong emphasis on fulfilling the Promise commitments, focusing on participation, engagement, and lived experience in children's services. Family support services face challenges due to increased demand. Prevention efforts are evident, with a focus on early and effective intervention across different regions. Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) initiatives have demonstrated positive outcomes, contributing to the goal of supporting children within or returning to their families. There is a consistent effort to improve support for children with disabilities, with particular attention to the transition from childhood to young adulthood. The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is instrumental in enhancing early intervention and wrap-around support.

The Scottish Child Interviewing Model (SCIM) has undergone national development and training in various regions. The primary areas of concern in child protection registration include domestic abuse, parental substance use, neglect, and parental mental health. Joint working, assessment, and planning with adult services have been highlighted in several reports.

Foster, kinship, and residential care face challenges in recruiting and retaining carers. Providing appropriate accommodation, support, and aftercare for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) is highlighted as a challenge, with Authorities making specific efforts to address trauma and exploitation. Various regions highlight the financial strain caused by supporting families with no recourse to public funds.

Throughcare and aftercare services for care leavers have been enhanced in different areas, focusing on financial advice, supported accommodation, and educational support. Youth justice services are highlighted, with various regions implementing practices to avoid the criminalization of looked-after young people. Efforts include improving identification of care-experienced individuals within youth justice services, offering additional support, and piloting programs to enhance outcomes.



Introduction

The CSWO reports continue to highlight the hard work, professionalism, knowledge, skills, and experience of social workers across the sector.

There are a number of significant pressures facing social work: an ageing population, increased demand for services and workloads, increased complexity of need, rising costs of social care, workforce shortages, new legislation and policy developments, the continuing effects of the pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis on communities. Those living in the most disadvantaged circumstances are being hardest hit. These factors are all having significant implications for delivery.

It is difficult to build a national picture due to the different methods local authorities have for collating and recording data and information, and no standard method for reporting, but some things are clear:

- The impact of these pressures on services and their capacity to cope with demand varies from local authority to local authority and service to service according to local circumstances
- Demand for, and complexity of, social work assessment and intervention continues to grow across the sector, as does the need for longer term interventions

Of note is an increase in referrals generally and in particular a growth in new referrals, and demand for support with trauma and mental health conditions. Factors giving rise to particular pressures include the rise in migrant families and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) requiring support, an increase in adult and child protection work, the national shortage of foster carers, and a general increase in work across Justice services (Diversion, Bail assessments and supervision, CPOPs, SDS), with an accompanying rise in complexity. Cross-cutting themes within all areas and all reports are the increase in preventative and early interventions work, multi-agency work, and discharge management.

Social Work Scotland's *Setting the Bar* is highlighted across reports, finding that Scotland needs to train and employ more social workers, provide better support throughout careers, and commit to investment in the profession. There are not enough suitably qualified and experienced Social Workers and Social Care workers at a national level. Reports indicate sustained problems around recruitment and retention across all areas in the sector, with mixed success in addressing them. The national landscape continues to be shaped by legislative and policy developments such as the National Care Service, The Promise and UASC, which impact on how services are delivered. Demands for new initiatives outstrip financial and human resources, with savings impacting upon core services. In addition, short-term funding makes attempts to meet local needs difficult.

About the workforce

Recruitment and retention

Staff recruitment and retention issues persist across the service landscape. This sits alongside high levels of absence, an ageing workforce, and reduced administrative support.

The impact of low recruitment and retention and sickness absence is particularly felt in Older People's Residential Care and Care at Home Services in **Glasgow**. Children and Families Social Work services in **Glasgow** have also been experiencing high levels of vacancies and sickness absence for a considerable length of time, including key leadership and management roles. This has had a significant impact on the ability to deliver effective statutory social work services.

Aberdeen City, Moray and **North Ayrshire** highlight a national movement of staff from Children and Families Social Work into other areas of social work, or out of the profession altogether. There is a national trend of poor response to vacancies and interest across the children's residential workforce. Vacant Residential Practitioner posts in **Aberdeen City** have meant their smallest residential care home remains closed.

In **Orkney** there have continued to be significant and prolonged gaps in Children and Families staffing, including the Team Managers, Social Workers, Family Support Workers, and administrative staff across the service. Interim staff, sourced both internally and externally, have been employed to ensure the functioning of the service and statutory duties for child protection could be met. This has meant significant challenges associated with workforce stability and the operational delivery of Children and Families Social Work services. In March 2023 **Highland** had a social worker vacancy rate of 41% in children's social work, with rates in Justice and MHO services just slightly less. Vacancies within the children's services family teams have created additional pressure. They found it difficult to recruit to short-term, temporary positions and it has meant that new initiatives have not always been able to start as planned.

Argyll and Bute highlight the impact of low rates of pay on the sector, with modest rises for social care staff outstripped by hospitality and other industries. Successful recruitment to one area is generally at the expense of another, both locally and nationally. All of this means there are risks to service delivery and subsequent pressures on the existing workforce. In some areas, such as **East Renfrewshire**, staffing levels were good and not seen as a systemic or pressing issue facing the local area or workforce. The turnover pattern in **Dundee** (significantly fewer younger leavers than older) indicates that some progress is being made in addressing challenges related to the ageing workforce.

Mental Health Officer Recruitment

There is a national challenge in recruiting and identifying workers to train as MHOs, which has led to increased pressure on existing staff to complete statutory work. This recruitment issue further impacts services, such as **Fife's** Emergency Out of Hours service. **West Dunbartonshire** noted that it can also result in MHO skills and knowledge being concentrated within the core team and not being spread to benefit other teams. In **Orkney**, one MHO has been lost in the reporting period. The remaining three MHOs provide a service 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, in addition to their substantive posts.

East Dunbartonshire experienced persistent difficulties in recruiting MHO posts. They have considered how MHOs can be remunerated in a way that enables them to continue to operate as front line staff while being paid appropriately for the high level of autonomy with which they work, however, the challenges remain.

North Lanarkshire and **Aberdeen** have developed a Trainee MHO Scheme. In Aberdeen this was in partnership with Robert Gordon University and has attracted national recognition as a forward-thinking approach to recruitment and retention. MHO Working Groups in **Glasgow** and **Aberdeenshire** are looking at alternative and more sustainable staffing models.

Workforce planning

Workforce planning is becoming increasingly complex as new structures and different models of integration progress. All reports discuss their workforce planning strategies, challenges, and responses, looking to identify future demands and solutions. Responses to workforce challenges have been varied. Alongside recruitment campaigning these include:



Ideas for change: attracting and retaining staff



Anti-racist recruitment

North Lanarkshire commissioned research into the recruitment of Social Workers from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities. It is hoped that the findings of this research will shape recruitment policies and practices, ensuring they are anti-racist, to the benefit of applicants from these communities and the service, as they endeavour to recruit a more diverse workforce. There is growing evidence that racism is pervasive within Scotland's social work, as evidenced by SASW's 2021 report and other more recent research. Considering this, it is striking that only one LA in this year's CSWO's reports has reported actions they are taking to address racism within their workforce.



Re-designed posts

NHSH Reserves is a new initiative in **Highland** aimed at recruiting people who cannot work in part-time or full-time permanent roles but who do have capacity to support on a more flexible basis.



Outreach

Clackmannanshire delivered a campaign of local community career fairs which helped them engage communities and successfully managed to recruit a number of posts for their new Rapid and Rural project. **Orkney** have noted interest with the NHS Education Scotland National Care Service Directorate migrant worker initiative and delivered short 'Introduction to a Career in Care' courses which guarantees everyone who completes the course an interview with either the Council or Third Sector.



Supporting New Practitioners

Increasing support for newly qualified practitioners was a strong theme. **East Dunbartonshire** have delivered the Supportive Year for NQSWs and report that managers and other professionals think that it will provide significant benefits for social workers, social work services as well as service users in the years to come. The Practice Support Officer in **Highland**, supports trainees, NQSWs, and experienced Social Workers undertaking their Practice Learning Qualification.

Working towards qualifications




On the job training was highlighted across many reports as a retention and recruitment tool. Localities like **Scottish Borders** found non-registered posts such as paraprofessionals, Community Care Assessors and OT assistants were more successful in recruitment, suggesting that qualifications are a barrier.

Local examples of professional development as a recruitment and retention tool

- **East Ayrshire** highlight the Social Work Trainee Scheme, recruitment activities under the Care at Home Workforce Planning Group, Graduate Internship and Modern Apprentice Schemes.
- **North Lanarkshire** support people to attain a basic Health and Social Care Qualification while employed in order to fill Home Support Worker roles.
- In **Midlothian**, 16 staff members across social work services are working towards a degree in social work. Retention levels of staff who complete their social work degree through this route are far higher than those recruited externally.
- **East Dunbartonshire** saw a rising demand for student placements and increased demand for practice educator support. They have sponsored two social workers to train for the Professional Development Award in Practice Learning and see the quality of their practice learning service as an important recruitment and retention measure within the service's current Learning and Development strategy.
- The Lanarkshire Care Academy aims to better promote Social Care as a vocation in **North and South Lanarkshire**; reinforce and expand routes into a career in Social Care; and provide a framework to enable the Council to 'grow their own' workforce. It will build on joint working to share learning and enable a more structured approach to address recruitment challenges and increasing demands.

Learning and development continues to be a key area of work, both as a method of service improvement and part of the strategy to recruit and retrain staff. Most local authorities set out their priorities for learning and development and reviewed and updated pathways.





North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and West Dunbartonshire identified that the balance of work between the newly qualified and recruited and more experienced workers, alongside an increasing complexity in the demand profile, has created pressures around work allocation.

East Ayrshire's Social Care Learning Hub developed an annual training programme, covering all core and essential training, to ensure that the social care workforce have access to a practice-based learning and development that meets their needs. This has been achieved through collaboration with services across Community Health and Care and Adult Services, the Scottish Social Services Council, and the Care Inspectorate.

The pandemic has impacted on pre-qualifying opportunities and learning needs. **Inverclyde** notes that delivering some of the mandatory training to social care teams has been particularly challenging due to high turnover of staff, availability of staff to attend the planned training, and competing demands from different services.

Midlothian has invested in its training resource space and equipment. This includes dedicated training rooms and iPads to encourage staff who are less confident with accessing LearnPro to get support from a member of the learning and development team to complete their mandatory eLearning modules.

Workforce wellbeing

Workforce wellbeing is highlighted across most reports as essential during and post-pandemic, and a key part of recruitment and retention. It has been built into workforce planning and health and wellbeing frameworks and led to a variety of wellbeing sessions and development activities including mindfulness, anxiety and stress management, and ambassadors.

The Scottish Government Wellbeing Fund is highlighted as crucial to this by a number of LAs including **Scottish Borders, Dundee, Inverclyde, Argyll & Bute**.

- A new Staff Wellbeing Centre at **Ayrshire** Central Hospital opened for all health and social care staff.
- **South Lanarkshire's** Employee Assistance Programme offers support for all Council employees, including early intervention, counselling, and financial support.
- **Inverclyde** are developing a trauma-informed workforce, continue to promote, and support staff health & wellbeing, and support and implement hybrid and home working policies.



Service improvement and development

There are continuing challenges in maintaining and improving service quality and performance across the social work and social care landscape. Changes to delivery and practices continue to develop. There are too many topics and examples highlighted in the reports to comprehensively list in this summary. Areas of work highlighted below are those that appear most frequently across reports, or interesting local case studies. There has been a particular focus on cross-cutting discharge management measures, and on prevention, early intervention, and wellbeing. Changes in demographics, such as a growing or ageing populations in some Local Authority areas create a challenging landscape when delivering services at all levels, but particularly around prevention and early intervention.

Some 'whole system' approaches are worth noting:

- **Angus** demonstrated a commitment to supporting the delivery of local climate change objectives as a result the community meals service has changed its delivery model from diesel to electric vehicles.
- **North Lanarkshire's** commitment to antiracist recruitment demonstrated scope for simultaneous improvement for staff and user experience and that has scope more widely across other localities.
- **Glasgow** developed a new multi-agency front door Social Work Service called Health and Social Care Connect, with a plan to develop it as the front door entry to some community health services. The aim is to reform, integrate and improve first contact arrangements for health and social care referrals across a significant number of social work, social care and health services.

Island and Rural Social Work

While specific examples are given throughout the report in regards to service improvement, one theme that emerged from the reports was the particular challenges facing areas engaged in Rural practice. **Shetland, Orkney, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Argyll & Bute, Highland** and **Dumfries and Galloway Orkney** all face specific barriers and challenges which relate to their geography:

- **Recruitment and Retention.** Recruitment from within local communities remains a challenge; due to population size, varied career choices and the challenges of dual relationships in living in small island communities. Reliance on agency workers is a concern in terms of sustainability, consistency, and affordability. A lack of affordable housing, the expense of living in remote and island areas, and a shrinking working age population with increasing numbers of older people compound the issues.
- **Capacity.** The capacity of small Councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships can present challenges for undertaking the range and scope of all requirements expected of any such organisations. Operating in smaller health and care systems presents challenges and opportunities, which can hinder or enhance innovation and transformation. In **Shetland** the limited size of the workforce is not large enough to cater to several care providers.
- **Funding.** Social work and other public services provided in rural areas with sparse populations are especially expensive to provide. Cuts, as a consequence of austerity measures, are felt proportionally harder if services are not extensive.
- **Conditions.** During this reporting period, **Shetland** experienced three major incidents involving the cutting of the subsea cable and snow.

On a more positive note, **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar** report that continued remote working has allowed more regular participation in national meetings and developments. Increased participation has given the Outer Hebrides a louder and more sustained voice and influence.

Orkney suggest that the small-scale nature of their operations can lead to speedy and effective new service delivery models. Conversely, balancing strategic planning and operational delivery is a challenge generally. One of the main challenges for Rural social work managers is managing the volume of national guidance and proposed change whilst running services. These are often more difficult to achieve for an island authority as they generally involve a service change that requires specific accreditation criteria to be met or a structural change that is difficult to implement due to island demographics

For example, in the new Scottish Child Interview Model to remain accredited, the interviewers must undertake a minimum number of interviews. That exceeds those conducted locally in **Shetland** so they are looking to collaborate with a larger mainland authority area.

Adult Services

Self-Directed Support

Self-directed support continues to change the way care is delivered. The new Self-Directed Support Statutory Guidance, the National Framework of Standards, and the proposed Scottish Government Self-Directed Support Improvement Plan are key areas of work.

A number of reports highlighted work on SDS implementation plans. The participation of people affected by the service design and delivery has been pivotal in shaping **Highland's** SDS implementation plan. Workstreams are progressing the development of an updated local SDS Strategy in **North Lanarkshire**. Individual budgets have increased significantly, with the introduction and embedding of the SDS and Care at Home Flexible Framework contributing to this. **East Dunbartonshire** is in its second year of its local SDS Implementation Plan.

Furthering understanding of SDS was another area of focus. To understand the low uptake of Individual Service Funds, **Scottish Borders** took part in a research project with five other LAs, facilitated by 'In Control Scotland.' Findings included how Option 2 is defined, how true choice can be limited through procurement methods, and how availability of services in particular areas led to compromised SDS option choice. **East Dunbartonshire** also recognised this trend, noting a 13% decrease in uptake. They felt this could be indicative of the experience that customers and their carers find when trying to source social care providers who can deliver a flexible social care support package. **Fife** engaged Social Work Teams in the implementation of national learning about SDS by delivering on-line, lunch time sessions.

Challenges in delivery were highlighted. **Shetland** highlights the struggle for small and remote local authorities to produce two workforces - social care workers and personal assistants - which is affecting people's choices. In **South Ayrshire** the collapse of independent providers led to commissioned hours being returned to the partnership.

South Lanarkshire are strengthening their approach with Children's Services to improve transitions planning with Adult Services. There is a Pan-Ayrshire Pilot Project to map out and facilitate change projects to improve the experience of SDS for service users, families, social work staff, and service providers.

The appointment of an SDS planning officer has helped take forward the implementation of SDS standards within **Midlothian**. An SDS planning group identified a number of priority areas for development that includes resource allocation systems and a system of accountability. Detailed work plans are being progressed in relation to the priority areas.

Adult Support and Protection

There has been continued focus on Adult Support and Protection (ASP), with an emphasis on multi-agency working, assessment for people requiring support from a number of services, and early intervention and preventative options. Learning reviews, evaluation, inspections and redesign remain common areas for improvement, such as improving the use and collation of data, management of risk, chronologies, electronic IRD, and service user involvement. The ASP guidance suite was launched in 2022.

In terms of good practice, **Moray** highlights their Interagency Vulnerable Adults Procedure, a proactive and preventative work stream that allows for concerns which do not meet the 3-point criteria to be discussed on an inter-agency basis to look at ways to further support the adult. **Falkirk** highlighted their work on increasing awareness of the key information summary in partnership with NHS 24 colleagues. They developed a '7 minute briefing' which includes a link to the easy read 'My Key Information Summary'. An ASP Decision Support Web and Mobile App has been developed in partnership in **South Lanarkshire** which empowers partners across all sectors to quickly access and apply ASP guidance consistently and in a person-centred way.

In **East Dunbartonshire** there has been a significant change in focus towards the use of investigatory powers during inquiries, rather than viewing inquiries and investigations as distinct processes, which has led to a prompt review of local procedures and training. People living with dementia continue to comprise over 50% of referrals. They highlighted Key concerns to be around Adult hoarding and self-neglect issues.

Clackmannanshire have delivered public roadshows at a number of venues to raise awareness of hoarding and self-neglect and inputs delivered locally to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Care Homes, Acute Settings and the Community Nursing teams.

Workforce challenges in **Argyll & Bute** saw the trial development of a centralised ASP Team. Working alongside locality social work teams the ASP Action Team completed a significant proportion of inquiry, investigation, and case conferences, and is proposed to continue, particularly in localities encountering workforce limitations.

East Lothian have identified that interventions with alleged perpetrators and financial harm needed significant improvement to ensure appropriate action is taken on a multi-agency basis. **Scottish Borders, East Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire** worked to improve engagement and feedback with lived and living experience of ASP interventions. Work in **Dumfries & Galloway** continues towards local implementation and has already led to review and changes of ASP training. **Clackmannanshire** also delivered a Forth Valley wide ASP Conference. The theme of the conference was self-harm and self-neglect.

Discharge management

Delayed discharge patterns remain a concern nationally. Alongside the acute sector's increased demand for beds, the lack of capacity, particularly in the social care workforce, has continued to provide whole-system challenges in reducing delayed discharges from hospital, with adults waiting on care services.

Lack of resources in the community impacts hospital discharge activities, with mental health delayed discharges noticeably increasing in **Aberdeen City**. They reviewed hospital social work activities and aligned staff to specific high referring wards and at the 'front door' to encourage early intervention and discharge planning, attached a social worker to the coordination of interim beds to ensure they are used as efficiently as possible, and introduced a fast-track assessment system for flow to these beds. The HSCP's delayed discharge numbers have significantly decreased. The impact of the Hospital Discharge Redesign in **Stirling** is further demonstrated in the significant reduction of bed days lost during the winter of 2022/23 compared to 2021/22.

In **Highland** there is a close relationship between unmet need across the system in terms of the availability of care at home and care home placements and the level of delayed discharges alongside the competing challenges within acute and community services. While practice and efficiency of process are improving, the unavailability of placements and care hours is maintaining delay levels.

Delays in the ability to provide a care at home package to support people's discharge from hospital became a feature over the winter period for **East Dunbartonshire**, a situation not seen previously. This was a direct result of challenges recruiting or commissioning sufficient care staff or services to meet growing need, both in terms of increasing complexity, and volume demand.

Scottish Borders acute hospital based social work team were realigned with the Social Work and Practice directorate, with the team currently made up of NHS and SBC staff. They are in the process of creating an integrated discharge hub. Continued funding of temporary staff, the need to identify a suitable co-location on the NHS site, and use of shared IT systems remain challenges.

Fife's dedicated Hospital Discharge Social Work Team supports rights-based assessments for those leaving hospital who require support, with a dedicated MHO Team. Front Door Discharge Planning model is a successful integrated health and social work team approach with social workers on the team ensuring that assessments can be provided at the earliest point for individuals, preventing unnecessary hospital admissions, and supporting and planning for those ready to be discharged.

A range of quality improvement activities have been implemented within the Community Hospital Discharge Team in **West Dunbartonshire**, linking with the HSCP Senior Mental Health Officer, and in tandem with the implementation of the Discharge without Delay programme. This has been an area of focus for the past two years due to the volume of delayed discharges (both acute and complex).

A test of change in **Dundee** enhanced the review process for existing social care service users. Locating an enablement support worker in the Resource Matching Unit, working closely with the wider social care team, has released a total of 2,298.5 social care hours back into the system.

The **Angus** Discharge Team are working across Tayside acute and community hospitals in partnership with the Enablement and Response Team to enhance the service provided for people leaving hospital on their planned date of discharge. This team will continue to work in partnership across services going forward with a focus on the prevention of hospital admissions.

Falkirk report that more than 750 patients across the Forth Valley area have benefited from the Hospital at Home service since it was established in May 2021. A further 3,000 people were supported by the Home from Hospital partnership, a third sector collaboration that helps people home and to connect with community based supports.


The **North Ayrshire** Model for Enhanced Intermediate Care and Rehabilitation (eICT) utilises multidisciplinary holistic interventions to focus on providing high-quality care and support, through proactive early intervention and preventative action. They aim to assist patients presenting with falls, frailty, low grade infections and general functional decline to avoid hospital admission where possible and facilitating early discharge home from hospitals.

Learning disabilities

There has been a great deal of work around learning disabilities, development days, day opportunities, and early intervention. The challenge facing the **East Renfrewshire** Learning Disability team over the past year has been the crisis in recruitment and retention of staff. Within Learning Disability this proves an even greater challenge due to the complexity of some of the people they work with. These themes are reflected in many reports.

Service re-design

Aberdeenshire Learning Disability Strategy have identified ten people as priority for the new service provision, developing suitable accommodation options for adults who have complex support and behavioural needs. **West Dunbartonshire** Future Landscapes sub-group is working with third sector and housing to recommend new sustainable and co-produced models of support.



Scottish Borders have a multi-agency board which coordinates a range of projects to ensure they have cost effective and resilient services in place for those with complex needs - the Supported Living Service, Lives Through Friends, Shared Lives, and Kelso Supported Housing.

The Learning Disability Integrated Community Team in **North Ayrshire** are key to the Intensive Support Service, and are creating greater scope for the provision of high levels of community multidisciplinary support.

Glasgow City and Greater Glasgow and Clyde HSCPs are working together to take forward a programme of redesign of inpatient services, improving responses in the community to reduce the use of inpatient beds. GCHSCP also secured accommodation for a new enhanced community living service. It will come under care home registration, but with an ethos to support individuals, where possible, to reach a stage when a more independent form of community provision can be considered. **South Ayrshire** are using the Community Living Fund to redesign a model in support of early hospital discharge, admission prevention, and a review of residents who live out of the area.

South Ayrshire's 'League of Champions' are a group established to support the development and review the outcomes of the new Learning Disability strategy and co-produce the strategy. They came together from across South Ayrshire to champion the rights of people living with a learning disability. They have shared lived experiences as service users, providers, parents and carers, have influenced and promoted positive changes in services, policies and practices. They communicate honestly and openly with people, listen to people's views and share this information with the Health and Social Care Partnership. They have a motto that to make a positive difference to people's lives they will "seek the truth and will not back down!"

Building new futures

East Dunbartonshire has seen a move to their new purpose built resource centre within the new Allander Leisure Centre. People who access this service now experience a modern, high quality, fit for purpose setting which offers reciprocal access arrangements, progressive activity-based therapies and extensive accessible resources. The new centre is founded on the principles of a community based approach to service delivery and the feedback from people who attend has been really positive.

Inverclyde are working on a new Learning Disability community building, collocating the Day Opportunities and the Community Learning Disability Teams to ensure a more coordinated approach to improving health and wellbeing. During the reporting period **Midlothian** reported no adults with a learning disability and complex care need either delayed in hospital or inappropriately placed out of area. This is as a result of investment in specialised housing stock, having a Positive Behavioural Support Lead and working in partnership with third sector organisations.

Delivering care

Care homes

Care homes continue to be an area of focus, with oversight and support arrangements, and auditing continuing or developing. Activity is built around a collaborative multidisciplinary approach, and again a focus on early intervention. Care home sustainability remains a risk, as does the availability of beds to meet demand. There are ongoing recruitment challenges.

Aberdeen City are taking a collaborative approach to engaging with care homes and setting out broad terms of reference and high-level priorities have enabled the Care Home Oversight team to improve relationships with providers and improved internal capacity and capability to intervene and support providers when required.

The completion of and the transition of the residents and workforce to the new Goathill campus is a strategic priority for **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**. The benefits of the investment in the campus will provide improved outcomes for residents, families, collective workforce with the support of the Hebridean Housing Partnership and partner agencies. They note however that the improvements to the care at home career pathway, and the opportunities to support enhanced workforce capacity and training at Goathill are challenging to realise.

Technology is being used to tackle challenges. A programme of weekly Tech Tea Parties hosted by **Falkirk** HSCP and AbilityNet over the summer allowed care home residents to learn more about their digital devices and be supported to use digital technology to support their health and wellbeing. **Angus** launched a pan-Tayside Care Home website in early 2023 to make it easy for professionals to access key information, referral forms and guidance related to care home provision across the Tayside area.

East Dunbartonshire established a multi-disciplinary team approach to support for care homes, jointly led between social work and nursing services. Care Home residents now have access to care and treatment when required by a Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist or Senior Rehabilitation Worker. Initiatives have encouraged residents to be more active, particularly male residents who had not previously been showing an interest in taking part in activities.

In terms of challenges, **East Ayrshire** notes that the increased levels of scrutiny and reporting is further stretching resources. Capacity within the sector in **Aberdeenshire** has become a particular issue this year, with the system operating frequently at near full capacity. This has a knock-on effect on delayed discharges from hospitals and puts pressure on other parts of the system. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to find suitable care home places for people with a more complex diagnosis of dementia. Care homes are often unable to take people as they do not have the appropriate staff skills to meet their needs.

Care at home

Challenges in care at home continue around recruitment and retention and increasing need. Social workers often operate with reduced team sizes and increasing complexity. The past year has seen reviews of services, management and staffing structures, pathways, IT systems, communication, oversight and assurance, and improvements identified. The key objectives are to ensure stable and resilient provision and capacity, focus on prevention and early intervention, facilitate hospital discharge, reduce unnecessary hospital admission, and promote independence at home.

Planning the development of care at home services to ensure they are able to meet current and future needs is a priority for **East Lothian**. A care at home Transformation Programme was launched, with a change board established to lead this work. In response to the decline in external provision and the ongoing fragility of external providers, they significantly increased the capacity of HSCP managed Homecare and Hospital to Home services. However, this additional capacity has not fully offset the loss of external hours. **South Lanarkshire** in partnership with care at home providers are developing an interactive mapping solution that will refine the way services are commissioned in neighbourhood areas, minimising travel time and increasing capacity to meet increasing demand.

Aberdeen City care at home collaborative commissioning model is a consortium of providers working together to meet their care at home needs. The model is built on strong integrated principles, and co-produced with providers to improve outcomes, build a skilled workforce, and create enduring stability. Similarly, **Fife's** Care at Home Collaborative is made up of 16 provider organisations, shaping the priorities of the Collaborative and designing the shape and delivery of care response to meet demand, address Fair Work principles, strengthen resilience in current and future care supply.

West Lothian's Home First approach aims to develop new models of care to proactively assess and manage people in the community, with admission to an acute hospital only where there is acute medical need. Specific programmes include Community Single Point of Contact, Review of Bed-Based Resources, Integrated Hospital Front Door Model, Community Connections Hubs. **East Dunbartonshire** delivered their No One Dies Alone project, which aims to support compassionate end of life care for people within their own communities.

South Ayrshire set out to transform the delivery of integrated leadership, management and service delivery arrangements relating to Adult Services. They collaborated with partners across agencies, academics, researchers and third sector and commissioned services to design and enable easy access to modern wellbeing hubs, creating co-located services to reduce bureaucracy and duplication for those accessing the hub. They are now entering the implementation phase of the programme to build this new service model.

In **Clackmannanshire**, the rural care at home team works with providers to ensure care at home is provided in a sustainable, effective and efficient way to achieve personal outcomes for people. Pathways are being developed to build in discharge to assess methodology into the pathway redesign. This will ensure an appropriate level of care is prescribed more quickly leading to potential reduction in length of stay in acute settings and reduction in amount of care requested, and ability to support a greater number of packages of care.

Reablement

The reablement service in **Glasgow** is the cornerstone of home care and has continued to meet key performance indicators throughout the year against the increase in demand and the cost-of-living crisis. In **Scottish Borders**, a reablement pilot was undertaken at a local care home and the findings are being incorporated into a new reablement approach to Occupational Therapy assessment and interventions. The principle is to work towards breaking dependency-creating relationships and maximising independence and recovery. **West Dunbartonshire** HSCP is launching a reablement service in Autumn 2023. Measures and reporting mechanisms have been developed and a clinical pathway in place, with indicators around impact on care at home, impact on acute, and impact on service users. **South Ayrshire** established a RUNAT Team (Reablement Unmet Need Assessment Team).

Care at home work force

A test of change in **Dundee** applying Fair Working Principles and working with care at home providers to use spare capacity to meet personal outcomes has proved successful and has helped prevent hospital admissions. **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar** undertook a restructure of the care from home service to improve career pathways. Additional care and support supervisor capacity was implemented on a fixed term basis to support the service during this transition. A departmental led survey of all care at home service users produced very positive feedback and this mirrored the independent surveys undertaken by the regulator. **Orkney** highlights that the demand for all care at home provision, along with an ageing workforce, absences, and recruitment issues, has led to the need to support the in-house service with a significant number of agency staff.

Carer support

There were a number of areas of improvement and development in carer support.

Respite

Aberdeen City reviewing and commissioning residential respite and day opportunities in line with identified carer priorities and to address a long-standing gap in the city's provision of respite. **Scottish Borders** consultation exercises also identified respite as key to carers being able to continue in their caring role, and a range of opportunities are being progressed to enable short breaks. **North Ayrshire's** Red Rose House officially opened, along with

neighbouring facility Roslin House. The respite centres provide a comfortable, home from home experience for respite guests and a much needed, valued and deserved break for families and carers.

Outreach

Identification of unpaid carers was a focus. In **East Renfrewshire**, a ‘tracker’ was developed with 1380 carers being identified across a range of Health and Social Care Partnership teams. This has highlighted an improvement opportunity to increase the number of carers being directed to access the support services available through the Carers’ Centre, with referral numbers remaining constant at 500. **Dundee** continued to focus on enhancing capacity, including a focus on prevention, identification and assessment of unpaid carers and the use of Adult Carers Support Plans.

Discharge

East Ayrshire restarted their project to support unpaid carers during hospital discharge. Hospital Discharge Carer Link Workers were recruited to support the process and identify unpaid carers. **North Lanarkshire** are also working to ensure that unpaid carers are as involved as they wanted to be in hospital discharge arrangements, including involvement in decision making, as well as support at the point of discharge and beyond.

Support

In **East Lothian** a number of appointments were made to support carers, including a Community Care Worker, short-term appointment of a Mental Health Officer to help clear the backlog of private guardianship applications, and an Occupational Therapist within East Lothian Rehabilitation Service (ELRS) to support an innovative Carers Pathway (focused on health and wellbeing outcomes for carers).

Midlothian have worked in partnership with VOCAL, a local carers support organisation, to increase the support for unpaid carers. VOCAL have been commissioned to undertake Adult Carer Support Plans meaning that unpaid carers can choose to have a plan completed by the HSCP or by VOCAL, helping to ensure that carers can access the full range of support.

West Lothian also focuses on Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements.

Strategy

Unpaid carers and staff from across **Angus** have provided feedback to inform the development of the new Unpaid Carers Strategy 2023-2026. Four core themes emerged from both staff and carer consultations; communication, capacity, clarity, and continuity of care which will be reflected in the new Strategy. A new Carers Strategy is a key piece of work for **East Dunbartonshire** which reflects the aspirations of their new national strategy but locates itself as an expression of local needs and priorities.

Drug and alcohol

Work towards the Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards is highlighted across most reports. This has included developments in reduction over time in the number of Non-Fatal Overdose incidents, gendered approach to services, Naloxone programme; lived or living experience); recovery community ; Safer Drug Consumption Facility, the impact of trauma / poor mental health on young people who misuse substances; multidisciplinary teams; and links to justice services.

A family approach was seen in the Libra Team in **Aberdeenshire**, and the Stronger Families services in **North Ayrshire**. Stronger Families is a new initiative which will be delivered as part of a partnership between Service Access / Multi-Agency Assessment and Hub, Alcohol and Drug Partnership, and Barnardo's. It provides practical and emotional support and advice and opportunities to those affected by substance use, and support to reduce the need for statutory intervention.

East Dunbartonshire have worked in collaboration with the Alcohol and Drug Partnership and the Community Justice Partnership. Justice Social Work services secured funding from the Drugs Death Task Force, to commission a Peer Navigator post to enhance justice clients' ability to access alcohol and drugs services with a view to improving outcomes and reducing drug deaths. Since coming into post the navigator has supported 15 clients to positive destinations.

Midlothian and **East Lothian** Drug and Alcohol Partnership (MELDAP) continue to commission a wide range of services across Midlothian incorporating third sector; Peer and voluntary services in partnership and collaboration with the statutory Substance Use Service. Services continue to engage and support families and carers to address and support their needs.

In **Falkirk**, the multi-agency Forth Valley Overdose Outreach Team has been developed to respond to those who experience a Near-Fatal Overdose.

Ensuring access to social work services for people who are affected by substance misuse continues to be a local priority for **Angus**. The Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (AIDARS) supports individuals and their families affected by substance use within their communities. The service operates an open referral system with all referrals assessed by an integrated referral hub which includes health, social work and third sector agencies. This "one stop shop" approach ensures that each referral is signposted to the most appropriate service according to need.

Adult Mental Health

Priorities in mental health are seen nationally: early intervention, prevention and self-management, access to the right support at the right time, person-centred, and reducing inequalities. Referrals to Mental Health teams and increased demands and pressures on MHOs continue and are expected to continue with the cost-of-living crisis.

Dundee and **Highland** highlight the significant increase in Adults with Incapacity and Mental Health Acts work during this reporting period, and an increase in individuals presenting to mental health services for the first time.

In **Glasgow**, Social Work and the Mental Health Integrated Discharge Teams are having a positive impact on patient flow within Mental Health Hospitals despite significant bed pressures. A tracker for adults with incapacity who are delayed in discharge has been developed in **Argyll & Bute** to ensure an up-to-date overview, support progression, and decrease delays for those in hospital, and to maximise community hospital flow.

Work in community mental health services is seen across reports. **Inverclyde** have focussed on key areas such as Emergency Departments, implementation of Mental Health Assessment Units and Acute Psychiatric Liaison services, development of the Distress Brief Intervention initiative, Primary Care Mental Health, and support for home discharges. A focus in **West Dunbartonshire** has been to review support in accommodation and care home places for adults with complex care needs.

Dealing with Pressures

Successes are noted. In February 2023, the **East Lothian** MHO Team reduced their Private Guardianship Application waiting list to zero for the first time in over ten years - previously, a waiting time of 18 months was not uncommon.

Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) introduced an enhanced community support model for mental health and wellbeing offering a single referral route with no rejected referrals for Adult Community Mental Health Services, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services, Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service and the Psychological Therapy Team. The model, which improves access to critical services, has been recognised through national awards and local evaluation has been very positive.

North Ayrshire established a Short Term Support Worker Recovery Team – as an addition to the Mental Health Social Work Team the Support Worker Recovery Team. It was developed to offer short term support to individuals with Mental Health difficulties. The service has been invaluable in facilitating timeous discharge from hospital support and preventing unnecessary admissions. It has also supported the service in the short term, with unmet need whilst awaiting appropriate packages of care.

Detentions

National trends for detentions have continued to rise both nationally and locally, but with fluctuations in figures over time / since the last reporting period. **West Lothian** highlights the national trend of Emergency Detentions under the Mental Health Act being increasingly done without MHO involvement, which is not related to local capacity. They are making improvements to auditing of Emergency Detentions granted locally. A joint audit is being undertaken in **Glasgow** between Health and Social Work to better understand this and will report in November 2023.

Despite the increase in the combined use of EDC and STDC in **Highland** this year, there is a reduction of EDCs in favour of an increased STDCs this year, in-keeping with best practice. In **Moray** there was less use of EDCs to detain and more use of Short-Term Detention Certificates as the gateway to mental health treatment.

Mental Health Officers


There has been a continuing increase in the workload of Mental Health Officer services across the country, alongside recruitment problems. In **East Ayrshire** for example, there are pressures relating to the backlog of AWI renewals, incoming new referrals, and supporting decision making processes. They are undertaking a rapid review of the current service around the future strategic direction and configuration of service, and a sustainable model of service delivery. A **Glasgow** MHO Staffing Structure Working Group has been established to develop potential alternative MHO staffing models.

There has been a focus on improving data collection and reporting, decreasing delayed discharge times, and improving workforce capacity. **Aberdeenshire** has an MHO aligned to the Hospital Social Work Team to maintain oversight of all Guardianship applications impacting on discharge. The **Scottish Borders** Mental Health Officer forum is recognised as an invaluable support opportunity for professional development.

East Dunbartonshire are developing their MHO service by establishing an Advanced Practitioner Status for Practice Assessors and Link Workers to support the Practice Assessor role. They have seen a sharp rise in suitability reports completed by Mental Health Officers for court in respect of Guardianship applications under Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

Renfrewshire highlights how pressures on NHS staffing are affecting the MHO service in terms of time management and monitoring STDCs and CTOs and attending meetings, CPAs etc. with little notice.

In order to address challenges in recruiting Mental Health Officers the team structure in **East Renfrewshire** was adapted to include social workers, while staff were encouraged and invested in to undertake the post qualifying mental health officer award.



Dundee have concentrated on their mental health discharge hub, local mental health hubs, and a new Distress Brief Interventions Service delivered by Penumbra (initially focused on police referrals, then extending to primary care, A&E and SAS).

South Ayrshire have invested in a dedicated team of Mental Health Officers. In 2021 they provided 4.9 MHOs per 100,000 of the population. There has been a dramatic improvement in this resource and with the input from the statutory MHO team they now provided 23.7 MHOs per 100,000 of the population. The service has made significant innovations in promoting the national agenda for change in working on supported decision making and other aspects of the Scott review. The pilot on Supported Decision Making (SDM) is being implemented and emerging signs are showing a real impact on tackling issues such as delays in hospital. The partnership has agreed investment in a specific post for an SDM social worker to continue this work.

Adult Justice Services

Community Justice

The new National Strategy for Community Justice sets out national aims and priority actions for community justice partners to consider going forward. This includes optimising early use of diversion and intervention, ensuring robust, high-quality community interventions and public protection arrangements are consistently available, ensuring services are accessible and available to address the needs of individuals convicted of an offence, and strengthening the leadership, engagement and partnership working. It is anticipated that additional resources and investment will be required to support implementation of this. Multi-agency community justice work was a big focus in some local authorities, carrying out needs and strengths assessments, and developing local improvement plans and pathways, including:



Argyll & Bute note that the current national Community Justice Strategy takes a general approach to populations but does not reflect the needs of delivering to remote, rural and island communities. **East Dunbartonshire** raised concerns about areas of government policy change that bring unsupported service demand costs. Examples include the extension of rights to aftercare support for looked after and accommodated young people from 21 to 26 years of age, and the presumption against prison sentences of less than 12 months, which results in increasing demand on criminal justice services to manage increasing numbers of offenders in the community.

Midlothian reported a number of Key Achievements in community justice including winning the ‘Excellence in Justice Services’ award as part of Scottish Social Services Council Awards, Publishing ‘The voices of those who have harmed’ (2022) – a ground-breaking consultation exploring motivational factors of engaging in Restorative Justice for individuals that are in custody for a sexual offence(s) and completing a Community Justice project with Edinburgh College Media students in developing community awareness films on pertinent subjects including VAWG, Community Payback Orders; Restorative Justice.

Bail supervision

The new National Guidance for Bail Supervision is a key strand in the Scottish Government’s National Strategy for Community Justice. The Bail Supervision Service expands on early intervention and prevention by offering an alternative to remand and early identification of support needs. It continued in **Glasgow, Moray, and Aberdeenshire**, and started in **Inverclyde**.

The service evolved in **Aberdeenshire, Glasgow, and Stirling** to include Electronic Monitoring. Numbers are low due to the small population of people coming before local courts, but Stirling have noted a small reduction of remand population over the past year. **Highland** saw a delay in this due to recruitment issues. Implementation in **Argyll & Bute** has been challenging mainly due to the remote, rural and island communities served and courts not being full time. Special arrangements have had to be put in place to allow Justice Social Work staff to interview individuals by telephone. As with other local authority areas, **Argyll & Bute** experienced a low conversion rate for bail supervision orders from assessments undertaken, with the majority from Courts having already dealt with cases prior to reports being submitted.

Unpaid work

The community payback unpaid work service continues to support individuals to pay back to communities for offences with their time. Many of the adaptations that were introduced during the pandemic have remained or expanded. **Glasgow** have recently developed a personal placement improvement plan to further enhance this aspect of unpaid work, which includes the commissioning of a short film to demonstrate the positive impact of community sentences for the judiciary, the public and other stakeholders. Two members of the service in **Aberdeenshire** participated in training for trainers, to support the delivery of a new national training programme. This training, covering topics such as values, trauma-informed practice, pro-social modelling, diversity and coaching and mentoring, will be rolled out nationally in 2023. The Higher Support Needs Team in **Aberdeenshire** continues to support individuals who have previously found it difficult to complete unpaid work due to challenges with their physical and mental health, and alcohol and drug issues. They have significantly reduced short custodial sentences because of breach of community-based orders.

East Dunbartonshire, in collaboration with the Local Employability Partnership (LEP) the Criminal Justice Services and Community Justice Partnership have introduced the 'Make it Work' employability project for people in contact with the Justice system, delivered by the Lennox Partnership. A dedicated employment advisor has been employed. **East Renfrewshire** have developed their Unpaid Work Service. They secured an additional workshop which increased capacity, enabling the Justice Team to facilitate additional daily attendance to reduce the backlog of Unpaid Work hours. These premises enable service users to develop new skills. **Falkirk** worked closely with the Council's communication team to raise awareness of projects of particular interest to the community, which received positive media coverage from several local news outlets. This also helped to raise awareness of the ways in which community groups could request unpaid work support, enabling communities to contribute to the types of unpaid work projects delivered.

Women's services

Glasgow has a number of developments in women's justice services including: a Women's Problem-Solving Court, the Lillias Centre Community Custody unit and the Drug Court team established a Women's Clinic.

The 'Moving Forward' Women's Service in **West Dunbartonshire** supports those involved in the Justice system and offers one to one holistic support, looking at increasing independent skills, self-confidence, and mindfulness. The Women's Service in **Aberdeen City** offers safe and appropriate support in the community and in prison, including the Begonia project for those involved in on-street prostitution where police can refer directly to the service, and cuckooing links to County lines.

Dumfries & Galloway saw 25 Structured Deferred Sentences with many cases resulting in admonishment, indicating successful intervention. This approach is proving effective in helping women address the underlying causes that brought them into conflict with the law.

South Lanarkshire's Structured Deferred Sentence service provides women involved in the justice system with intensive support over three to six months with a view to addressing their risks and needs before allowing a prompt exit from the justice system.

Inverclyde has a Women Involved in the Criminal Justice System Early Action System Change project, co-producing system change with a group of women involved in the Justice System. Two tests of change were agreed - development of trauma-informed and responsive services and staff, and a commitment to make referral pathways to community resources more accessible and inclusive.

Domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse is a key priority for social work and its partners.

A new Men's Self Referral helpline, offering high quality evidenced based support to men who have concerns regarding their behaviours was also launched in **Clackmannanshire** with information posted through social media and partner organisations. This has recently been extended for a further three month period for the pilot.

The Caledonian system

The Caledonian system is a holistic approach to ensure work addresses inappropriate behaviour but also ensures the safety of persons harmed. **East Lothian** identified a dedicated member of staff to support uptake of the Caledonian System. Ongoing engagement with the National Caledonian Team to bring Caledonian Domestic Abuse group work to **West Dunbartonshire** has continued, with a launch date and training in place for 2023. It is being implemented with no additional financial resource and this will be closely evaluated in relation to impact and sustainability.

The decision to bring the programme in-house in **Scottish Borders** has proven to be successful, with the original barriers - lack of public transport to and from Edinburgh, lack of flexibility in programme availability to accommodate those with employment and other responsibilities - overcome.

Midlothian rebranded and relaunched their Families First and Caledonian Men's domestic abuse perpetrator programme in February 2023 and is now known as Your Chance to Change (YCTC). The relaunch of the service aims to place responsibility for the abusive behaviour upon the man, whilst providing hope that change is possible.

Argyll & Bute continue to develop practice and improve assessment and interventions for perpetrators of domestic abuse. This links with the Equally Safe, and Violence against Women and Girls strategies and is hoped will act as preparatory work for the national rollout of the Caledonian Programme.


Safe and Together

Work around Safe and Together is seen in a number of reports. The roll out in **Dumfries & Galloway** has continued, with training and awareness raising. Two additional overview sessions took place to increase understanding of how the approach encourages all staff to be more domestic abuse informed. Evaluation activities took place in **East Ayrshire**, including a multi-agency case file audit. The outcome of these evaluations and feedback from people with lived experience will be used to inform future practice and procedures. A programme of practice learning has also been developed to create reflective team spaces to build practitioner confidence in applying the model and complement training. The Violence against Women Strategic Group and Child Protection Committee in **North Lanarkshire** provided direction for the implementation of Safe and Together with social work staff having a key role in embedding the model locally. Staff trained include those in social work, education, NHS, housing, and the community and voluntary sector.

Throughcare

The new Throughcare Assessment for Release on Licence (TARL) has been introduced which encourages collaborative working between Prison Based Social Workers and Community Based Social Workers to produce one single report to the Parole Board. This will help streamline the process and provide stronger communication and consensus between community and prison-based teams around risk and need.

The roll out of the TARL report and guidance throughout the last year was noted by **East Ayrshire. Dumfries & Galloway** note the difficulties caused by the general increase in prison throughcare releases into the community. Alongside limited provision by many other justice services this significantly increased the complexity of the throughcare workers role.



A full review of throughcare services was carried out in **Fife**, which made recommendations around pre-release and post-release support. A significant number of service users are being returned to custody in the initial weeks after being released, and it was identified additional resources were required to increase monitoring and support during this period. Staffing was increased due to the increasing complexity of throughcare work for example, the increase in the number of Oral Hearings.

Children's Services

Rights, voice & participation

National policy priorities are a major feature with a great deal of the work reported by authorities. The Promise commitments are a focus across reports, with new posts being introduced to further this work focusing on participation, engagement and lived experience. These themes continue to be central to children's services outcomes and improvement priorities including advocacy, care experience and co-production, champions and champions boards, or Children and Young People's Engagement and Participation Strategies.

Angus have grown the reach of their Promise Team including their Promise Ambassadors, care experienced staff focussing on engagement. As part of this work and in partnership with young people, they established the 'Promise Hangout' in June 2022, a monthly youth group for care experienced children and young people aged 5 and above.

Falkirk is progressing its service redesign through the lens of the Promise. Some examples of work over the past year include a new dedicated, safe and comfortable space for family time to take place, this new hub is known as the Lodge and was furnished with direct input from young people themselves. 'Falkirk's Promise Roadshow' acts as the vehicle by which staff learn about Keeping the Promise and corporate parenting. The Falkirk Champs (Champions Board) have shared their 'Language in Care,' 'The Promise film' and 'What it means to be a Council Family and Friends Member' presentations to over 400 new staff from across the Council during mandatory induction training.

The Growing Up in **Orkney** website, commissioned by the Orkney Children and Young People Partnership (OCYPP), provides advice, support, and signposting, for children and young people.

North Ayrshire held its first ever Promise conference. Over 120 delegates from a variety of multi-agency partners attended alongside 23 Care Experienced Young People and their families. They are forming a Care Experienced Youth Executive Group to give care experienced young people a platform to use their voice in front of Cabinet members and Parliament and initiate change. The young people involved will help to support the rights of fellow care experienced young people.

A **Renfrewshire** Language Policy has been developed to ensure words and phrases used to describe care experience are positive and do not further exacerbate stigma. The policy is being disseminated for use across the local authority. A mapping and action plan tool has also been developed to support planning and to enable the authority to map Renfrewshire's Promise journey and progress.

Family support services

Service demand

Angus has seen a significant increase in service demand for children and family social work over a 12-month period. With no corresponding increase in the number of social workers and support workers available to deliver the services required, caseloads have become further pressurised. Through sourcing temporary external funding, an additional two temporary Senior Practitioner roles were created to support and enhance the consistency of the duty response across locality teams and create more capacity within the localities management structure to oversee an additional 184 cases.

Midlothian report that referrals for financial assistance accounted for 26% of all referrals over the past year. They are considering how to better support families who are going to be most impacted by poverty. They have established a new Family Wellbeing Service with the aim of providing holistic support to families at the earliest point of contact. The service commenced in January 2023 so is at the very early stages of identifying where it fits with the wider services.

Research with young people and families commissioned by **West Dunbartonshire** found a need for increased support, and visibility of support, for parents and families with children and young people. These themes align with the holistic family-based developments arising from their Whole Family Wellbeing Fund work, with three hubs developed in 2022.

Implementation of the redesign of children's services has remained a strategic focus for **East Lothian**.

Prevention

A focus on early and effective intervention was seen across CSWO reports. **Scottish Borders** Children and Young People's Planning Partnership are looking to develop an early intervention approach by providing resources in the communities where the need is, recognising it should be addressed as early as possible. In **Clackmannanshire**, the development of an Early Help Service has enabled a preliminary screening of all initial contacts to Children's Services for support to children and families. Over a three year period this approach saw a 45% reduction of open cases in children's social work services. As a result the referrals progressing to the practice teams concentrate on children and young people who may require statutory or specialised/targeted intervention.

Renfrewshire are also currently piloting an Early Help Service to provide an alternative to social work intervention for families who are experiencing difficulties which without support, might escalate to require statutory involvement. The aim is, wherever possible, to prevent children and young people from needing to be looked after. The service is being delivered in partnership with Barnardo's and is piloted within the Paisley locality areas. **Dumfries &**

Galloway Family Support Team have supported 271 families, with 420 children. None of these are currently in the statutory social work system, equating to potential cost avoidance of up to £16.8m per year.

Fife's Family Support model enables the active involvement of children, young people, and their families in the review of support plans ensuring they are central to agreeing and planning the support in place.

Highland's Families 1st Strategy has seen a year-on-year reduction of children looked after at and away from home through an approach incorporating early interventions, commissioning, universal partnerships, and realignment of the workforce.

North Ayrshire reported the launch of the Stronger Families service. The service provides practical and emotional support, advice and opportunities to Children, Young People and Families affected by Substance Use in North Ayrshire. It supports families to reduce the need for statutory intervention.

The **Shetland** Family Centre has worked directly with around ninety families delivering parenting programmes, namely Incredible Years, Teen Triple P, Peep Learning Together and the PEEP progression pathway. The staff undertook a road show to the more remote and rural areas over the summer ensuring easier access to the service. Feedback from parents has been positive, highlighting increased parenting skills and better communication with their children. One of the Family Placement Team won an 'Outstanding Contribution by a Social Worker' award at the 2022 Fostering Excellence Awards. She had been nominated by foster carers and colleagues in recognition of her contribution to foster care in Shetland.

Family Support Workers in the **Clackmannanshire** Early Help service have recently been trained in Triple P - a parenting and family support system designed to help children to realise their potential. This programme will be delivered alongside Education colleagues and will offer parents support to build strong healthy relationships and confidently manage their children's behaviour.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

Highland and **Shetland** are developing a Family Group Decision Making Team, which is a strengths-based approach that brings families together to make decisions about the safety and welfare of the child. Through this approach **Aberdeenshire** and **North Lanarkshire** have continued to make progress in supporting children and young people remain within or return to their family. Feedback has been positive. In **East Renfrewshire** from April 2022 to March 2023 there has been 48% increase in families connected to the Family Group Decision Making Service in comparison to the same period in 2021/22.

Scottish Borders commission with Children 1st for the delivery of FGDM continues to provide positive outcomes with encouraging feedback. **Clackmannanshire** received 80 referrals involving 210 children to their FGDM Service. Of these referrals, 36 proceeded to FGDM

Conference, 30 of which have now been closed. Examples of positive outcomes from these cases include identification of Kinship carers, children safely returned home, children removed from the Child Protection Register and one child moved from foster care to kinship care. Moving forward, as part of the new Early Help service, the FGDM team aims to support families earlier and work to build capacity through early family plans before the point of crisis and prevent difficulties from getting worse.

Children with disabilities

The transition from childhood to young adulthood is a time of anxiety for many families of children with disabilities, as they try to navigate different systems of support. Collaboration between Children and Adult Social Work in **Aberdeen City** has seen improvements in support and recognition of the role of unpaid parent carers.

In **Inverclyde** support to disabled children and young people, their families, and carers, has been identified as a key area of development, focussing on early and effective help, including SDS.

The Care Inspectorate's national thematic review of social work services for Disabled Children and Young People, due to report in Spring 2024, will inform authorities' self-assessment work with a focus on these two statements:

- Children and young people are actively heard, informed, and meaningfully involved in decisions about their lives.
- Children's and young people's wellbeing has been promoted through high quality child centred planning and bespoke support.

Mental health and wellbeing

A range of activities that have been developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people with particular focus on use of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.

Whole Family Wellbeing Fund work is developing in **Borders, Highland, Renfrewshire, Stirling**, and **Fife** to enhance early intervention and to increase staffing to offer intensive wrap-around support. Work has continued over the past year in **Glasgow** to align funding and policy associated with the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund and Child Poverty Pathfinder; in **Moray** to increase capacity and offer earlier intensive support to families; and in **South Lanarkshire** to support the Children's Service Partnership assess local gaps and opportunities and plan activity accordingly.

West Lothian piloted a streamlined and responsive approach to mental health support for children, young people, and their families via Roots, a public social partnership. This enables discussions with the families so that support is embedded in the community either close to home, education, or employment. Feedback from families has shown they have achieved positive change.

The Children's Services Wellbeing Model is a transformational approach to improve support in **East Ayrshire**, to ensure that children and families can access support at an early stage in their local community, the model incorporates multi-disciplinary team working and the GIRFEC principles. Within this framework a range of local services (including Education, Early Years, School Nursing, CAMHS, Social Work, Housing and AHPs) have developed Community Teams.

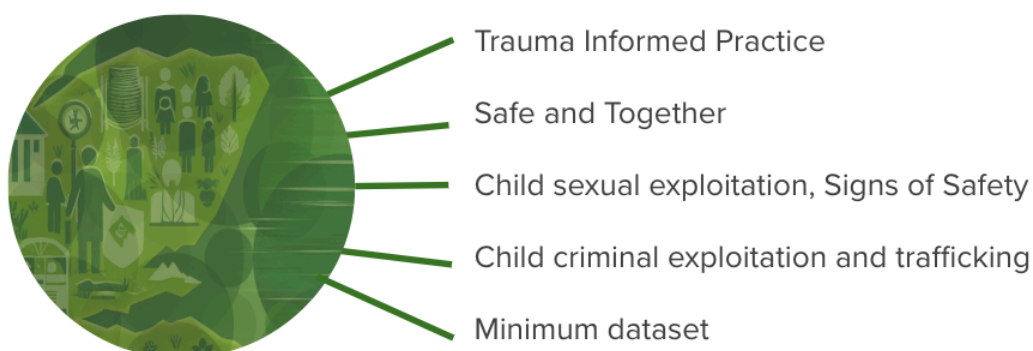
The Ren10 mental health and wellbeing family support service in **Renfrewshire** continues to develop its approach to early and effective whole family support measures, focussing on early intervention, and providing opportunities for children, young people, parents, and carers to shape the services that impact them.

East Renfrewshire has recognised the extent of mental health concerns among the children and young people's population and note a significant rise in the number of those experiencing challenges with their mental health and wellbeing. In response to this a multi-stakeholder Healthier Minds Service aligned to school communities enables mental wellbeing support to promote child and family resilience and recovery.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar note an increase in referrals to CAMHS for neurodevelopmental (ND) assessment or to support already diagnosed ND child. Referrals have grown from 19.4% of referrals in 2019 to 46.9% of referrals in 2023. School Issues (Avoidance, School Issues, Bullying) as the primary or secondary reason for referral have also increased (23.4% in 2023). In response the CAMHS team enhanced capacity for family therapy /interventions to extend provision. Alongside these pressures the service has noted downward trends in relation to suicidal Ideation, low mood and depression, anxiety and panic attacks and as a primary or secondary reason for referral.

Child protection

Implementation of National Guidance for Child Protection is highlighted across most reports with work around training, Newly Qualified Social Workers, and Child Protection Programmes. The largest areas of concern pertaining to child protection registration continued were domestic abuse, parental substance use, neglect, and parental mental health. Other areas of focus highlighted across a number of reports include:



Joint working, assessment and planning with adult services is seen in **Aberdeen City** and **Dundee**. Social Work staff in **Dumfries & Galloway** piloted a new Child Protection Investigation process, with positive feedback from families, CP Planning Meeting Chair, and professionals. Participation of children and young people in child protection planning has also been an area of focus and continues to develop in **West Lothian, South Ayrshire, Inverclyde**, and **Aberdeen City**.

North Ayrshire launched the first localised Child Sexual Abuse Strategy in Scotland in Spring 2021. They established a sub-group to take forward the implementation of the National Child Protection Guidance locally. Representation within the group includes social work, universal early years and education. Work within this group will be reported into the Pan Ayrshire Child Protection Implementation Group.

Dundee has invested in collaborative provision with the Third Sector to allow for a range of support to be available to meet the needs of families whilst reporting lower than average Child Protection Registration rates. This work is scaffolded by an embedded Team Around the Child Approach when early intervention is identified as being required.

Falkirk have been closely monitoring the number of children on their child protection register as numbers locally were much higher than the national average between 2019 and mid-2022. Scrutiny work was undertaken to understand the reasons why register numbers were so high, and several improvement actions were progressed to address this as reported in last year's report. Work was undertaken with reviewing officers chairing child protection planning meetings. These improvement actions have impacted on the reduction of register numbers over time.

Given increasing evidence that children living in poverty are more likely to be subject to child protection procedures, work to reduce and mitigate the impact of family poverty is highlighted as a priority by **Inverclyde**.

Scottish Child Interviewing Model

The national roll out of SCIM has been a focus of development work and training in **Western Isles, Argyll & Bute**, and **West Dunbartonshire**. **North Lanarkshire** have seen interviewers growing in confidence and successfully undertaking increasingly complex interviews involving younger children and children who experience significant learning and or communication needs.

East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and **Renfrewshire**, have worked in partnership with Police Scotland and Children 1st, to deliver The North Strathclyde Child Interview Team and Barnahus initiative. Children and young people are now interviewed and supported by Police and Social Work who are highly skilled, utilising proven techniques to achieve best evidence. As part of the Barnahus approach a 'Wee Bairns Hoose' is set to

open in late summer 2023. This will be seen as beneficial for children and young people who previously would have been required to attend court as there will be a virtual link to the court.



Bairns' Hoose is a transformational, whole-system approach to delivering child protection, justice, and health support and services to child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm. **Comhairle nan Eilean Siar** have submitted an application to be part of the Pathfinder process proposing a three room model in Stornoway .

Implementation has had its challenges, such as recruitment in **West Dunbartonshire**, and the recent Crown Office decision that no child interviews would be undertaken by Police Scotland only. Staff from **Argyll & Bute** have been heavily involved in national and local debate on the efficacy of the model within remote and island communities. It has been a challenge to get Social Work staff to volunteer for this training. At the request of the national SCIM team, **Dumfries & Galloway** social work and police leads hosted a 'Rural Event' for partners from other rural authorities, including Highland and Island areas, to explore obstacles for rural implementation.

East Lothian's child protection team provides a team base for the dedicated Video Recorded Interview (VRI) and Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) coordinator. This approach to joint investigative interviewing with the police is trauma informed, child focused and aims to achieve the best evidence through improved planning and interview techniques.

Clackmannanshire Council has joined with **Falkirk** and **Stirling** Councils to develop and implement a Forth Valley wide Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) team that will include 4 Advanced Social Work Practitioners and a Social Work Team Manager as well as Police equivalents that will be co-located. The SCIM team will be hosted by Falkirk Council.

Foster, kinship, and residential care

Recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a challenge locally and nationally. The Kinship Team in **Aberdeen City** has undertaken a range of engagement activities with kinship carers to better understand and strengthen the support offer. **Dundee** worked with the Vardy Trust and The Lens to increase the recruitment, support, and retention of internal foster carers. **Dumfries & Galloway** note the introduction of the fostering fee has enhanced the service and encouraged new foster carer households to come on board.

In **Moray** work has been completed around assessment and joint planning alongside fostering, adoption, kinship and supported care.

Fife's data evidence a declining trend in the use of foster care which can be explained by the increasing use of kinship care but also by effective family strength-based intervention and flexible and immediate support to families at the time of the crisis. They have a

dedicated therapeutic service, providing expertise, support, and assistance to foster carers, children and the professional network. The service has recently extended to supporting kinship families and family relationships.

East Lothian report an increase in the proportion of children requiring foster care who have diagnosed or suspected neurological diversity, attachment issues and signs of extreme distress. This correlates to an increase in requests for respite breaks as foster carers, and in the number of children and young people moving between foster placements, due to placement breakdown. A project is underway to analyse the reasons for placement breakdowns with a hypothesis that the lack of foster placements is linked to difficulties in matching children to the right placement.

The development of an intensive fostering service in **West Lothian** aims to further reduce the need to purchase external placements from independent fostering or residential providers. The number of brothers and sisters who need foster care continues to present challenges to the service. In response to this, **North Lanarkshire** developed a new strategy, co-led by care experienced development workers and involving carers, to support brothers and sisters stay together when they need to be cared for away from home.

Other areas of work include transitions workers in **Aberdeenshire**, foster care reviews and panels in **Dumfries & Galloway**, events and training in **East Ayrshire**.

East Renfrewshire note that as a result of the pandemic there has been a significant increase in the number of children with complex and additional support needs who have become looked after. Sourcing residential placements has been a significant resource pressure for **Argyll & Bute** Children's Services. External placements remain hugely expensive with some placements costing the equivalent of a third of a million pounds per child per year. Additional pressures on foster carers and residential houses has come from the increase in numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

In **Falkirk** there are two residential care houses. Key messages within the inspection reports were that young people benefited from warm, loving and respectful relationships with a staff team that knew them well and were trauma-informed in their care. The young people and staff felt listened to and were able to influence the development of the service, and continuing care was promoted and supported. Young people commented that "The team was "sound" and "understanding" and "that staff genuinely cared and worried" [about them]; and "it is clear that they do care for me, and I care for the staff just as much".

In **South Ayrshire** there is a focus on developing trauma-informed therapeutic services for children looked after in Foster and Kinship Care, including the employment of a Play Therapist and enhanced training to reduce the number of family care breakdowns.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Local authorities have welcomed significant numbers of displaced (and trafficked) people from war affected countries and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). It has presented a number of challenges particularly around capacity in appropriate accommodation, support across fostering, children's houses, supported housing and residential care, and aftercare. It requires significant additional work and specific expertise.

Dumfries & Galloway established a team to undertake a trauma-informed approach to practice, and work with parents and children who have experienced trauma and war crimes.

North Lanarkshire has also strengthened staff confidence and learning and development around human trafficking and exploitation.


Stirling notes that UASC under the age of sixteen are typically supported within foster care, which has impacted capacity to meet overall need across all family and residential services. The ongoing impact is likely to become more significant without access to additional resources. **Glasgow** notes that supporting a large number of families with no recourse to public funds, has put significant strain into the system around finance and ongoing Social Work provision. **Argyll & Bute** are adapting to a threefold increase in the number of transfers from those anticipated last year. Borders highlight the increased pressure on children being placed outside the local authority.

Shetland has not yet received the care of unaccompanied children but has processes in place should this happen.

North Ayrshire co-produced a new welcome pack with a previous resident for young people where English is not their first language. The new pack includes basic information of what a children's house is and what supports residential staff can offer a young person. The highlight of the pack is where a previous ex-resident details his experience, how he felt and where he is now. The pack is a huge credit to the hard work of the staff and will undoubtedly alleviate stress when young people. They also sourced music tuition for three Vietnamese young people to participate in together. A local musician/sound engineer visits the house on a weekly basis where he facilitates a two-hour jamming session with different instruments as well as showing them some production techniques and how to read music.

Throughcare and aftercare

Support for care leavers has been enhanced in **Aberdeen City**. **Inverclyde** developed a weekly drop-in facility providing young people with access to additional support services. The Aftercare Hub in **North Lanarkshire** has two social workers and three support workers to work with care leavers in need of intensive support.



Argyll & Bute highlight the good practice of more young people choosing continuing care until ready for independence, but it comes with no additional central funding to support the expansion. For example, a young person choosing to continue in an external residential school placement could cost upwards of £300k a year.

East Lothian are working in partnership with the Financial Inclusion Team to provide financial advice drop in for young people one day a week, maximising young people's income by ensuring they are claiming all their benefits and entitlements. They have continued to develop a supported accommodation offer to young people leaving care. This includes the My Place peer mentoring project which matches young people with a supportive flat mate.

In **Angus**, experienced young people have been supported into further education, with ten enrolled in Dundee & Angus college placements. Two young people secured a modern apprenticeship with a further two young people attending university, one now in their second year. Their throughcare service, horizon, also ran a weekly mother and baby group and football team.

In **South Ayrshire**, there is focus on the redesign of their Young Persons Support and Transition Team and the creation of an independent living space built on the site of Cunningham Place to support transition to independence.

Shetland have used The Promise Funding to establish a Lifelong Link Worker post that works with care experienced young people to connect with their families and gain a better understanding of their backgrounds.

Youth justice

Youth justice services were highlighted in a number of reports. **Dumfries & Galloway** Youth Justice Team continues to be recognised nationally and presented at the June 2022 National Youth Justice Conference on the progress of the Age of Criminal Responsibility.

Aberdeen City recorded positive outcomes following practice development in the partnership approach between Police Scotland and local Children's Homes, recognising early trauma has a direct impact on development, and to avoid the criminalisation of looked after young people. Work has been undertaken in **Moray** to improve the identification of those with care experience within youth justice services to ensure that additional supports are offered in terms of any identified needs, alongside support to reduce further offending.

North Lanarkshire started a pilot for children referred on offence-based grounds with an aim to improve outcomes by increasing their understanding of their rights; improve relationships and family support; and ensure orders are the scaffolding of the care plan. To reduce the risk of secure care and remand they introduced a dedicated speech and language service to assess needs and offer bespoke support in communication skills.

The 'Alternative to Detention Protocol' in **Stirling** was developed to support young people to remain in the community wherever possible. The Protocol shares the tasks for this across agencies that hold Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

East Lothian have introduced a concerning sexual behaviour consultation service for professionals and are able to deliver specialist assessments for young people displaying harmful sexual behaviour. They have also delivered dedicated courses such as Inform Young People which is an intervention for young people displaying technology assisted harmful sexual behaviour.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have seen an increase in youth offending and anti-social behaviour, predominantly in the town of Stornoway. Work is underway to better understand the causal factor, including seeking the support of the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice. The incidents have mainly involved young males many of whom are disengaged from education. Third sector partners are supporting statutory services with this group of young people. There are less youth club opportunities in Stornoway than in the past.

Clackmannanshire Children's and Justice services, along with community planning partners, is currently working alongside the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) to develop the re-imagining Youth Justice approach to ensure that support provided is trauma informed, rights based and UNCRC compliant. The Youth Justice Service also works in collaboration with the Adult Justice Service to ensure that all children and young people who come into conflict with the law have a rights based approach delivered by the correct service.

Getting it Right: GIRFEC / GIRFE


Getting It Right For Everyone is a Scottish Government multi-agency approach to health and social care support and services. It builds on existing adult best practice, as well as learning from Getting It Right for Every Child. **South Lanarkshire** refreshed and published resources and guidance to share information and clarify with staff what is expected of them in using the materials. They are developing a workforce development strategy to support single and multi-agency implementation. Key aspects of the revised guidance include a focus on Children's Rights and the UNCRC; links to aligned policy areas including Child Poverty, the Promise, national CP Guidance and Whole Family Wellbeing; simpler language to support engagement; policy rather than legislative driven functions for named person and lead professional; and emphasis on building trusting relationships

In response to messages from Learning Review processes in **West Lothian**, a multiagency GIRFEC improvement group was formed to strengthen practice. The group has revised guidance for Child's Planning Meetings to assist practitioners in understanding the role and function of the meetings. A GIRFEC practitioners forum is being established that will enable networking and support staff to learn about services and roles across the partnership. Some employees across children's services are noted they lack a good understanding of each other's roles and functions of certain teams. More opportunities for learning and networking are being considered to address this feedback.

West Lothian has a pilot, developing a mapping, monitoring, and implementation tool. It links to West Lothian strategic plans and is built on the principles of GIRFEC and UNCRC.

Clackmannanshire has a Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Forum who meet weekly with education and Third sector partners, including mental health representation from Creative Therapeutic Interventions for Children and is ensuring a collaborative approach to early identification and preventative approaches in an effective and timely way for children and families. The quality of referrals into the GIRFEC forum demonstrates improved use of the wellbeing assessment to assess children and young people's needs. The Forum continues to review and reflect on the themes emerging with a clear trend in referrals looking for support in relation to emotional health and wellbeing.

An **Aberdeen City** pathfinder is focussing on ensuring early multi-agency planning for young people where the professional assessment is that they will require care and support throughout their lives. The aim is for greater integrated planning, supporting individuals to experience improved transitions, while allowing resources to be managed more effectively. The team have been working through a series of design days focusing on Discovery, Define, Develop, and Deliver. The intention is to co-design workable prototypes which can be tested with Pathfinder and Partner areas across Scotland.



North Lanarkshire is another of the pathfinders supported by the Scottish Government's GIRFE Design School. Their focus is on Frailty and Older People.

Fife are also taking an integrated approach to their development of GIRFE as a pathfinder area, taking forward their model of practice development to support complex transitions.

Young people in **East Renfrewshire** engaged in 'Track to the Wall', a nine month programme based around Graffiti Art, songwriting and performance leading to young people creating murals and releasing their own songs on Spotify.

In March 2022, **Falkirk** Children's Services Planning Partnership hosted a visit of 25 Swedish delegates, comprising of senior social work managers, education, health, and agency leaders who showed a keen interest in adopting the "Scottish Model" of GIRFEC. This one-day event provided the Partnership with an opportunity to demonstrate the good practice examples that are currently taking place operationally across services and to offer an insight into the challenges of delivering early help and intervention in the current climate, post pandemic.



Looking forward

This report highlights and summarises the statutory duties and activities within the social work workforce across 30 of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities. It has profiled areas of service delivery that are excellent and Scotland can be proud of. It has also attempted to highlight areas of challenge that we face moving forward.

Chief Social Worker Officers from across Scotland articulate clearly that they are unable to meet the challenges presented without the continued commitment and dedication of our social work and social care staff. They share thanks to Scotland's social care workforce: for their passion, values, and motivation to provide the best of services.

CSWOs register their concern that The National Care Service and National Social Work Agency proposals continue to create a backdrop of uncertainty for the future of the profession. It is hoped that 2023-2024 will bring clarification and an achievable national plan to allow leaders to support the workforce through another period of change and pressure. All of this is in the context of increased demand for social work services both in terms of the numbers of children, adults, and families requiring support, but also in relation to increased complexity of need.

All the submitted CSWO reports predict another period of significant change. Councils are acutely aware that services will need to be delivered in different, innovative ways, and will continue to creatively review how they can achieve high-quality statutory service provision. Their joint vision remains to support people across communities to receive the support they require at the right time, within their homes and with their families whenever this is safe and possible.

Looking ahead, it is clear that resilient services are dependent on a stable workforce, and a key priority is to continue to develop innovative, attractive recruitment approaches and job roles to ensure we attract and retain a social work and social care workforce to meet local needs. Innovation and improvement continues to be central to the delivery of safe, effective and sustainable services.