

2023/2024

Annual Summary CSWO report

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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) 2023-2024 Annual Reports. This Report provides a summary of the main areas and themes 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 includes 31 of 32 CSWOs and 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.





While reading this report please keep in mind that:

- This is a **summary report** and will not be able to include all activity in all local authorities explicitly. We aim for good representation across Scotland when giving examples and to present a **snapshot of current activities**. For more detailed information, please refer to the individual CSWO reports from each local authority.
- We conducted a **thematic analysis of the reports** meaning we analysed the reports with the help of the analysis software Atlas.ti to identify the most discussed areas within social work currently, as well as **identifying trends or emerging issues** across the local authorities.
- This summary is based on the CSWO from each local authority. This means it is **not an independent evaluation** of social work and social care.

- The CSWO reports are also **local summaries** of the ongoing work in each area. This means that the CSWOs needed to choose to highlight specific areas of their work. This means that just because a local authority may not have reported on a topic that does not automatically mean they do not work in this area or have not encountered an issue but chose to report on other aspects.
- We have selected **examples based on what was reported**. Examples selected are based on the data provided, as well as our professional judgement of relevance. We have selected examples that we feel illustrate a topic or approach well. We are **unable to evaluate or judge the effectiveness of examples beyond** what has been mentioned in the reports.

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the work conducted across Scotland over the past year in social work and social care based on the Chief Social Work Officer reports. This summary includes 31 of 32 reports. Across Scotland, the landscape social work and social care operates in has been influenced by a number of external factors:

			
Policy changes	Funding	Population changes	Cost of living crisis
There has been a number of policy changes over the past year which have influenced the way social work and social care deliver services. While these policies aim to create positive impacts on individuals, local authorities face challenges to adapt their services to accommodate these.	Increased demand in services and increasing costs while budgets are stagnant or being reduced is putting pressure on social work and social care. As this is not a challenge unique to social work and social care, the limited funding has significant system wide impacts, which in turn impact the service delivery.	Scotland wide the trend of an aging population continues to put a strain on social work and social care. This includes both having a larger proportion of older people in society and an aging workforce. At the same time people's healthy life span is decreasing indicating long-term support needs.	The continued increased cost of living provides challenges for services, staff and service users. The increased costs of food, fuel and other basic necessities put a strain on the system. The cost of living has resulted in people needing more services, while the cost of delivering the services has increased.

Local authorities reported on some of the key areas of their work throughout the report. Across all these services, local authorities saw an increased demand in support, increased complexity of cases and recruitment and retention challenges.

			
Adult services	Children and Families	Justice services	Workforce
Adult services are working to create services that allow increased independence for individuals, while protecting them from harm. This has involved increased support within communities.	For children and family services, this year has included a focus on providing whole family support. This includes trying to focus on relationship building and supporting children within their existing networks, through for example kinship care.	Justice social work has revolved around an increase of community-based sentencing, such as supervised bail and unpaid work. This has shifted the workload and type of work required from justice social work.	Across all services, there have been challenges around the recruitment and retention of staff. This has a direct impact on the workload and wellbeing of existing staff. One way local authorities are trying to mitigate the impact through 'grow your own' initiatives.

Different local authorities focused to show different parts of their services and the changes, achievements and challenges that took place throughout 2023 / 2024. However, there were several areas of services that were highlighted across multiple local authorities.

 Partnerships	 Community-based support	 Person-centred support	 Lived experience
<p>Partnership work is not a new area of work but due to the increase in demand and the complexity of cases has become more crucial to provide the best support to individuals.</p> <p>Partnership works has resulted in more consistent support, easier access to services and improved data collection.</p>	<p>Services have started to focus on supporting individuals to live longer independently in their own homes. This has required a shift to a more community-centred approach to service delivery.</p> <p>This approach has had the impact to ease access of services, reduced isolation and access to low intensity interventions.</p>	<p>Over the past years, there has been a focus on creating a more person-centred approach to support. This is due to the understanding that there is no 'one fits all' solution to care. It involves focusing on advocacy and including individuals in the decision- making process.</p> <p>This approach aims to provide more targeted support and through that lead to more positive outcomes for individuals</p>	<p>To create better services, local authorities increasingly work with people with lived experience to support the future planning of service, as well as service design and delivery.</p> <p>How people with lived experience are involved differs in each involvement. Local authorities report positive changes to their services due to the lived experience involvement.</p>









Aside from these current developments, there were a couple of emerging issues which will likely become a more prevalent part of the social work and social care delivery in coming years. This includes a focus on technology and care and a focus on anti-racism activities relating to service users and the workforce.

Context

The CSWOs cover a wide range of topics and are inconsistent in the information they provide. However, almost all local authorities provided information on the context in which the social work and social care services operate.

Population

Social work and social care services are determined by the population within the local authorities. Therefore, the Chief Social Work Officer reports included information about the population they serve. The changes in this reporting year included:

			
Aging population	Long-term illness	Cost of living	Changes in population size
Across all local authorities, the growing aging population is the main concerns about the current and future need of social work and social care services. This means there is likely to be an increase in support need across social services.	Several local authorities noticed that there was a decrease in the healthy lifespan in their population. This comes from longer lives but also an increase in long-term illnesses, both mental and physical. This increases the support need within local authorities.	The increased cost of living is impacting poverty levels, as well as energy costs and the cost of other essentials across Scotland. This directly impacts how much support individuals might need, including need for meals or financial support.	Across Scotland there are changes to the population size. While most local authorities mentioned that their population is decreasing, there are some local authorities who are reporting increasing populations. Both come with difficulties on service provisions.
			
Increased child population	Changing household composition	Poverty	Geography
Several local authorities reported an increased child population. This comes at a time where child poverty is becoming an increasing challenge. Poverty is often associated with inequalities which could lead to an increased support need.	Several local authorities reported a change in household numbers and compositions in their areas. This includes an increase in lone parents in some areas and an overall decrease of household in others.	Poverty is a challenge several local authority highlight as one of the main challenges in their areas. Poverty and the related inequalities are associated with more complex needs and increased demand of services.	Especially rural and island local authorities highlighted challenges they faced in their service delivery due to the geography of their councils. There are often distinct communities and differing needs across the local authorities.

Economic and policy environment

The policy environment has a direct impact on how social care and social work operate.¹ Over the past year there have been a number of policy developments and increased profile of potential coming policies that were discussed frequently in the CSWO reports:

- **National Care Service:** Since the CSWO reports have been submitted, there have been developments on the National Care Service Bill. The feedback received has led to the decision to make some structural improvements without the bill.² The discussions and consultations around the National Care Service created a feeling of uncertainty of the future in local authorities and a significant time commitment for those taking part in consultations.
- **National Strategy for Community Justice:** This strategy has led to changes in implementation on the local level, as well as the development of local implementation plans.
- **National Transfer Scheme:** This policy has resulted in an increase of unaccompanied asylum seeker children for young people
- **The Promise:** This policy is the foundation for the service delivery for children and young people
- **UN convention on the Rights of the Child:** Local authorities have been working towards the continued implementation of the convention on the local level
- **GIRFE and GIRFEC:** These policies inform the adult and children's service delivery to create a more equal society

External circumstances are influencing the ability of social work and social care to provide their support. One of these areas is housing. Lack of available housing has been one of the main challenges across services. However,

¹ Examples provided by Aberdeen City, Dumfries and Galloway, Inverclyde, Midlothian

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-care-service-ncs-factsheet/pages/the-way-forward/>

working with housing services has become an increasingly important partnership to reduce these challenges. Examples include:

- **Transitional support:**³ Children and family services are working with housing services to help young people who are about to leave care with transition into adulthood
- **Justice social work:**⁴ With an increase of community-based sentencing there is an increased need for appropriate housing. Justice service social work are closely cooperating with housing services to improve this.
- **Social work and social care staff:**⁵ There is a lack of affordable and good quality housing available for staff to access, which several local authorities have mentioned as a challenge, particular in rural and island areas.

An ongoing cross-cutting external issue is the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic. CSWOs reported that while the effects of the pandemic are reducing, they are still encountering waiting lists and high levels of scrutiny, especially in care homes.⁶ In addition, the cost of living crisis following the pandemic has continuous negative impacts on those receiving and delivering care. This includes the cost of food, fuel and more.⁷

Funding

The most common theme mentioned across the Chief Social Work Officer reports is the uncertainty of available funding have on social work and social care. One of the most common challenges related to funding are the costs of retention and recruitment⁸, service delivery based on changing national

³ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

⁴ Examples provided: Fife, Midlothian and West Dunbartonshire

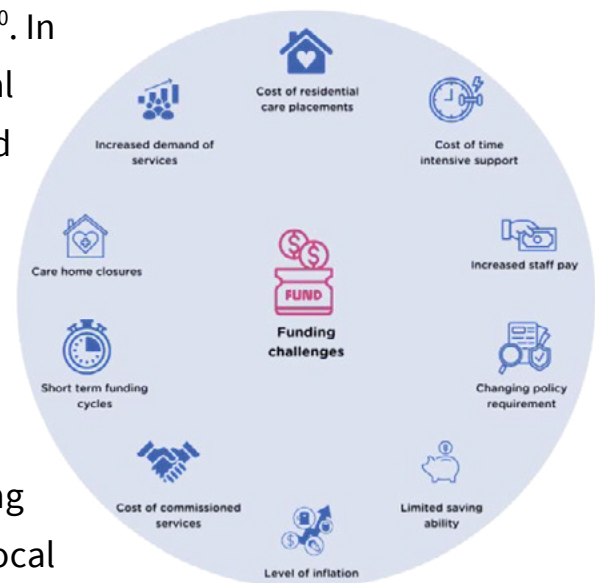
⁵ Example provided by: Examples provided by: Comhairle nan Eilean, North Ayrshire, Highland, Orkney and Shetland

⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Fife, North Lanarkshire,

⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Moray, Shetland, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire.

⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

policy⁹ and the overall scarcity of funding¹⁰. In addition to those challenges other external factors like the increasing costs of care and inflation have put additional pressure on local authorities. At the same time, the budgets have not increased in proportion to the increased costs and the increased demands. Because of this the funding challenges were one of the defining aspects of the year 2023 / 2024 across all local authorities.



The current funding shortage is estimated to impact the sustainability and stability of social work and social care services. This is due to challenges for local authorities to make the savings needed and having to use reserves to cover some of the increasing costs. Having reduced savings is expected to increase the uncertainty of services for the future.¹¹ One of the main ways local authorities have had unexpected savings has been through unfilled vacancies.¹² The limited funding and the increased demand in services has resulted in local authorities to adapt and adjust their services.¹³ While this has included streamlining and making some services more efficient, in some cases this has led to service restructures and redundancy schemes¹⁴.

To reduce some of the impact of funding and workforce challenges, local authorities have been commissioning external services. These commissioned services are usually provided by third sector or private companies.¹⁵ The way services are commissioned to fill the gaps and to ensure high quality services

⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

¹⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland and Stirling

¹¹ Examples provided by: Clackmannanshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, North Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹² Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Stirling

¹³ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹⁴ Examples provided by: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney and Stirling

¹⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, Fife, Glasgow and Scottish Borders

and good working conditions for those delivering them have become an increasing focus of local authorities. This includes trying to move closer to an ethical commissioning approach.¹⁶

In some cases, local authorities were able to secure additional funding through the Scottish Government or external foundations to support specific areas of support. This, however, is not a sustainable way to deliver services as this type of funding is usually tied to short term projects. There was no solutions or suggestions provided in the CSWO reports on how this challenge can be overcome in the long-term.

Quality assurance, data collection and evaluation

Quality, data collection and evaluation are an essential part that influences the level of funding received, how resources are used and most importantly indicates the impact on individuals. The main areas of focus over the past year included:

				
Self-evaluation	Learning reviews	Audits and inspections	Short-live working groups	National groups
There has been an increased focus on self-evaluation. This comes in line with new national guidance and practice. While the CSWOs included reporting on self-evaluation activities, there was little data on the outcomes and impacts of these.	Local authorities seem to conduct an increasing number of learning reviews to better understand the challenges they face and to avoid repeating mistakes. CSWOs included mostly on the activities but not on the outcomes and learning from the reviews.	There have been formal audits and inspections by the Care Inspectorate over the reporting period. Most local authorities reported that the findings of these inspections were in line with their internal evaluation activities. There was, however, limited information on the coming changes following an inspection.	To better understand challenges or issues with the quality of service delivery, local authorities often create designate short-life working groups to investigate these further. The CSWO reports often mentioned the creation of these groups but provided limited information on their roles and the impacts.	There has been a involvement in national groups and activities that focus on increasing the quality and data collection of services. Local authorities appreciate being able to work with partners on a national level but highlight the needed time commitment as a challenge at times.

¹⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Fife, Glasgow, Moray, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

To ensure the support services are working smoothly despite the challenges social work and social care services are facing, data and feedback has been used to restructure some services to ensure a higher quality support.¹⁷

¹⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Fife, Renfrewshire Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, Stirling West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

Cross-services themes

Partnerships

Across all local authorities, partnerships were mentioned as a key part of their social work and social care work. These partnerships most commonly include local collaborations with different key actors in their area. The partnerships that are commonly mentioned across all areas of social work include police, NHS health services and mental health services. Depending on the area of social work justice services, third sector organisations or education institutions were named as some of the most crucial partners.¹⁸



There are also a number of partnerships which include regional cooperation across local authorities. This allows local authorities to provide services and support they might not be able to provide

¹⁸ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highlands, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Shetland, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

otherwise.¹⁹



As social work and social care do not work in isolation, partnerships are often mentioned as a tool to create more coherence in the support individuals receive. While partnership working is not new, it seems to have become one of the main ways local authorities aim to address some of the funding and demand related challenges facing their areas. These challenges include the following:



Aside from the partnerships' work to ensure better support for individuals, partnerships are also working together in terms of governance. This includes:

¹⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire



Overall, local authorities reported that partnership work has a positive impact on individuals receiving support and credit this to the good cooperation between partners.²⁰ This includes working together to create a holistic approach. What this holistic approach looks like depends not only on the local authorities but also the individual teams within social work and social care.²¹ A summary of what overarching themes local authorities consider part of the holistic support can be found in the graphic below.



Despite the positive impacts of the partnership work local areas are already seeing, there are some that have identified partnership work as one of their

²⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Perth and Kinross, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

²¹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

areas of improvement for the coming years. The improvement needed was closer cooperation to provide better support for individuals.²²

Early intervention and prevention

Early intervention and prevention continue to increase in their importance across all services to reduce the number of crisis and emergency interventions.²³ The work in this area focuses in particular on:



The CSWO reports provided limited data on the outcomes and impacts of the early intervention and prevention efforts. For those that have conducted evaluations on their work have reported that individuals needed less crisis interventions and were reaching out to services at earlier stages.²⁴

Self-directed support

Self-directed support (SDS) was introduced to provide individuals and their loved ones with more choices about the care and support they receive, as well as allowing for increased independence.²⁵ Across most local authorities it was reported that individuals most frequently choose the traditional model of support delivery through Option 3 of SDS. The main challenge local authorities face in the SDS delivery is having the funding and the workforce

²² Examples provided by: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dundee and West Dunbartonshire

²³ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire, Shetland, Stirling

²⁴ Examples provided by: East Renfrewshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire and Stirling

²⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross and Shetland

to deliver everyone their preferred option of SDS.²⁶ There has been little change reported in 2023 / 2024 regarding SDS. However, the changes mentioned included:

 <p>Increased training</p> <p>Several local authorities increased their training delivery related to SDS with their staff to ensure everyone receives the appropriate support when they need it.</p>	 <p>Improvement plans</p> <p>Several local authorities have created improvement plans to create easier access to SDS and to streamline the support.</p>	 <p>Close cooperation</p> <p>In some areas rather than having fully separated teams focusing on SDS delivery across different social work and social care services, there have been efforts to create a more joint up approach.</p>	 <p>Increased use of short breaks</p> <p>Some local authorities reported seeing an increased use of SDS for short breaks across all services.</p>
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Violence against women and girls

Violence against women and domestic abuse was reported on across all services showing not only the devastating impact of violence against women on individuals, but on their families, communities and society as a whole. Across multiple local authorities there have been increased reports of violence against women and domestic abuse cases.²⁷ Some of the activities in this area included the following. There has been a limited data on the impact of these activities.

 <p>MARAC</p> <p>There has been an increased use of multi-agency risk assessment conferences. Over the past year there have been changes to improve the cooperation between different services.</p>	 <p>Awareness raising</p> <p>There have been continued awareness raising campaigns with the public and other services to improve prevention and support. Local authorities also took part in international campaigns like the 16 days of Action to eradicate gender based violence in November.</p>	 <p>Outreach services</p> <p>There have been ongoing outreach activities in collaboration with third sector organisations. This is particularly focused on support after experiencing violence against girls. It at times includes training on healthy relationships.</p>
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²⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Shetland, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

²⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Midlothian, Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

To address violence against women and girls, there have been a number of local authorities delivering perpetrator programmes. These aim to reduce the number of individuals reoffending and to foster rehabilitation. The most common programmes reported were Moving Forward: Making Changes and the Caledonian statutory programmes. Limited information was provided on the outcomes of these interventions.²⁸

Lived-experience involvement

Lived-experienced voices have become an integral part to service design and delivery across all branches of social work and social care. This has had the form of long-term lived-experience forums, project-based support or one of engagements.²⁹ One of the main reasons for consultation of people with lived experiences continues to be the planning of future services.³⁰ In some cases, local authorities have reported positive impacts of employing staff with lived experience. There was limited information on what these positive impacts look like.³¹ Despite being aware of the importance of lived experienced involvement, some local authorities identified this as an area of improvement in their work for the coming years.³²

²⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Midlothian, Moray Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian

²⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, Fife, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

³⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

³¹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Dumfries and Galloway, North Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire

³² Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Highland, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Scottish Borders and West Dunbartonshire

Adult services

Adult support is the largest proportion of the work covered by the Chief Social Work Officer reports. In the last year, across all local authorities there has been an increase in referrals into adult services, as well as an increase in the complexity of cases.³³ The impact of the increased workload in combination with the workforce challenges and the limited funding is that social work and social care staff have to prioritise cases resulting in delays to care for others and increasing waiting lists.³⁴

Across adult services, the teams have been working to promote and increase a person-centred support. Person-centred support has the purpose to provide more individual and flexible care ensuring positive outcomes for individuals.³⁵ The main goal of the person-centred support is to ensure independence for people accessing services.³⁶ Some local authorities highlighted that having a person-centred support involves being able to build positive relationships with people supporting them.³⁷ There has been limited information of what the elements of a person-centred approach look like in the day to day delivery of services.

Advocacy has been an important part of creating a more person-centred support. Advocacy ensures that individuals voices are heard and are involved in the decision-making about their own care.³⁸ CSWOs reports that the increased advocacy can increase the satisfaction and quality of service for individuals receiving support.

³³ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

³⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, City of Edinburgh, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian and Stirling

³⁵ Examples provided by: Angus, Perth and Kinross, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire

³⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Fife, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Shetland and Stirling

³⁷ Examples provided by:

³⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Inverclyde, South Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire

Supported individuals

CSWOs reported continued changes to who they are supporting. The trends across the populations who are showing increased need of support have not changed since last year. The changes they have seen are as following:



The changes in the population have resulted in needed changes to the support services to ensure the services are accessible to everyone that needs them. In some areas, this meant focusing on establishing or furthering a ‘no wrong door’ approach meaning that no matter where individuals ask for help they will receive it.³⁹ In addition, local authorities have worked on lowering barriers to access by providing in easy to read information about services⁴⁰ and increased BSL support⁴¹.

Adult with learning disabilities is a key demographic supported through adult services.⁴² There has been an increased demand in support for adults with learning disabilities over the past year.⁴³ The main activities to support this group over the past year included:





³⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire

⁴⁰ Examples provided by: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

⁴¹ Examples provided by: East Renfrewshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife and Scottish Borders

⁴² Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire

⁴³ Example provided by: East Dunbartonshire, Midlothian and Scottish Borders

				
Community support	Flexible support	Inclusion of lived experience voice	Collaboration	Localised support
There has been an increase in provision of day services for individuals with learning disabilities or neurodivergence. The day services also support skills development and employability services.	There has been a focus on individual and flexible support for people with learning disabilities and neurodivergence. This aims to enable increasing independence,	Local authorities have focused on better including lived experience voices in the planning and delivery of services for people with learning disabilities and neurodivergence.	Local authorities there has been increased collaboration with other services to ensure holistic support for people with learning disabilities and neurodivergence. This includes working with mental health and housing services.	In addition to community support there is an emphasis on developing support in local areas that is specific to the needs of the local communities.

Community-based support

The largest part of the community-based support is at home care services. In the CSWO reports, care at home is associated with increased independence for individuals due to the flexibility and individualised care.⁴⁴ Care at home services play an important role in reducing social isolation, making everyday tasks easier for people and play a key role in providing prevention and early intervention, as well as support reablement.⁴⁵ Care at home is often supported by a high number of unpaid carers. This has led to a number of challenges for care at home services:

				
Increased demand	Increased cost of care	Increased time needed	Rurality	Community meals
There has been an increased demand for care at home services across Scotland, in some areas exceeding the capacity of the services.	There has been an increased cost of care at home. This has put pressure on budgets for many local authorities.	There has been an increase of the time staff need to provided the care within communities. There is also an increased demand in 2:1 care requirements.	Rural councils highlight the challenge of delivering care at home due to the time it takes for them to travel between different homes.	There has been an increased in delivery of meals across the community. This is partially a result of the increased cost of living.

⁴⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

⁴⁵ Examples provided by: Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

Hospital discharge, particularly for people to return to their own homes, has been a continuous challenge over the past few years for adult services. This has resulted in delayed discharges and additional pressure on hospitals. Before being able to go home an assessment of support needs takes place.⁴⁶ Some of the delays are explained by an increased complexity of cases.⁴⁷ In some local authorities there have been reviews of the assessment process to reduce the discharge delays because of this.⁴⁸ Another change to the discharge protocols has been closer cooperation with community teams to ensure a smoother transition.⁴⁹ This cooperation also has the purpose of lowering the risk of readmission to hospitals because of unsustainable recovery.⁵⁰

Over the past year, there has been an increase in community hubs dedicated to adult support services. Their purposes include having a central access point within communities to services and providing day / respite services in local areas.⁵¹ The range of services provided within the community differ substantially within each area.⁵² Providing community support further allows to have localised support meaning more a targeted approach for those communities.⁵³ Despite the efforts to increase community support, some population groups or areas are struggling to access this. This is frequently tied to funding, the number of spaces available or physically being able to get to the activities.⁵⁴ Across the community support, CSWO reports highlight the following positive impacts:

⁴⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁴⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Dundee, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, North Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders and West Dunbartonshire

⁴⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁴⁹ Example provided by: Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Glasgow, Perth and Kinross, North Lanarkshire, Shetland, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁵⁰ Example provided: City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian

⁵¹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Midlothian, Moray, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, North Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian

⁵² Examples provided by: East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire and West Lothian

⁵³ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian

⁵⁴ Examples provided by: West Lothian

				
Improved access to support	Reduced isolation	Increased independence	Reduced waiting times	Increased skills
Working with third sector organisations and providing community support has improved the access for individuals to some form of support and makes the support more visible in communities.	Having community-based support, CSWO reports outline that it helps reduce isolation and foster communities. This in turn is understood to have a positive impact on the mental health of individuals.	Providing support within the community has resulted in increased independence within communities and allowed people to stay in their homes for longer.	Having access to support in their community has facilitated access to services, in particular while waiting for other services. This ensures people are not left without support while waiting.	Within community support and through community projects, people accessing community support are able to increase life skills and take part in activities.

The importance of community-based support according to the CSWO reports is growing due to the workforce challenges, funding limitations and the need for short breaks / respites in adult services.⁵⁵ There was limited explanation provided on what impact the shift has had on their own resources and the workforce.

Residential Care

Care home services are still an important part of adult services. Over the past few years, especially since the pandemic, challenges around scrutiny and costs have influenced care home availability and costs.⁵⁶ The limited workforce and care home closures have increased the pressure on the existing care homes. The Care Inspectorate has continued to undertake inspections of care homes. Some CSWO reports provided the outcomes of these inspections. In the limited information provided around the inspections, there is not enough information to draw conclusions on trends within the inspection reports.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Highland, North Lanarkshire Perth and Kinross, Shetland, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire

⁵⁶ Examples provided by: Angus, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire

⁵⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee, Highland, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire

The priorities for residential care have been to provide high levels of care and ensuring a safe environment for residents.⁵⁸ This includes providing activities for residents. The type of activities depends between care homes. The CSWOs provided a number of examples of activities which have provided positive outcomes, such as reduced isolation.⁵⁹

Within areas where there has been a closure of care homes, there has been a challenge with the demand in residential care placements resulting in people having to live outside their communities and areas. This negatively impacts individuals receiving support as they live away from their families and loved ones and on local authorities as the cost of living out of area is substantially higher than accessing care within their own local areas.⁶⁰

Adult Support and Protection

Similar to other areas, the number of ASP referrals have increased across Scotland for most local authorities.⁶¹ While there is an understanding that there is an increased need across Scotland, some areas reported on continuing their awareness raising work which is a reason for increased referrals.⁶² There have been differences in reporting on the number of inquiries with section 7 to section 10 investigatory powers.⁶³ In some areas there have been increases⁶⁴, while in other areas they have decreased⁶⁵. There was little to no information on the reasons behind these changes.

There have been a number of developments across the ASP work in the past year. With the implementation of the National Minimum Dataset, as well as the work of the National Implementation groups, there have been many

⁵⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁵⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire

⁶⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Scottish Borders and West Lothian

⁶¹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Shetland, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

⁶² Examples provided by: West Lothian

⁶³ Examples provided by: East Renfrewshire, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire

⁶⁴ Examples provided by:

⁶⁵ Examples provided by: East Renfrewshire and Perth and Kinross

national, as well as regional and local initiatives to increase the consistency across the work and the improvement of services for people accessing support.⁶⁶ Some trends across the ASP work include:

- **National Minimum Dataset:**⁶⁷ Through the national minimum dataset which has been developed with learning partners from the sector and Iriss has contributed to improve the data collection for ASP. It has resulted in local authorities having comparable data for ASP for the first time.
- **Improvement plans:**⁶⁸ Inspections by the Care Inspectorate, as well as ongoing audit and self-evaluation activities have informed ongoing improvement plans across ASP services. Limited information on the impact of the improvement plans was provided across the CSWO reports.
- **Case recording:**⁶⁹ Chronologies and case notes have been the centre of improvement work within ASP for a while. Ensuring consistent and trauma-informed notes has been subject of training and design of templates and guidelines across different local areas. There has also been an increased effort to ensure the case recordings are taken a life course approach and a more joint up approach across partners.
- **Risk assessments:**⁷⁰ In order to deliver more consistent approaches to risk assessments within ASP has resulted in drafting frameworks and ensuring more training for people working within ASP.
- **Case conferences:**⁷¹ One of the main changes regarding to case conferences is the increased focus on who is attending the case conferences. This includes adults invited, independent advocates and other professionals. Having increased attendance is associated with a

⁶⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Clackmannanshire, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire and West Lothian

⁶⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian

⁶⁸ Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Moray, Orkney, South Ayrshire and West Lothian

⁶⁹ Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Moray and Orkney

⁷⁰ Examples provided by: City of Edinburgh, East Renfrewshire, Fife and Stirling

⁷¹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dumfries and Galloway, Falkirk, Inverclyde, Moray, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire and West Lothian

more trauma-informed approach and an increase of independence for individuals.

- **Large Scale Investigations:**⁷² Through growing confidence in how to conduct large scale investigations and an increased interest in collecting data, there has been an increased number of large scale investigations across Scotland.

Mental Health Support

Mental Health services across Scotland continue seeing increased levels of requests to their services. Some local authorities provided data on the numbers of referrals and an increase in the complexity of cases but there was limited information on the reasons for this.⁷³ One of the main activities within mental health services has been awareness raising with partners and the public. The most common topic for awareness raising reported on was suicide prevention.⁷⁴

Mental health officers have continued to be a point of focus over the past year. There is no one way of how mental health officer support is structured across Scotland with local authorities using mental health officers in different ways. In some local authorities, mental health officers are distinct roles and in others mental health officer duties are joined with other roles.⁷⁵

There has been an increase in requests for mental health officer support.⁷⁶ The work of mental health officers has a positive impact on the people they support with the main one being protection for people needing it.⁷⁷ At the same time, local authorities have faced significant challenges recruiting mental health officers (discussed in section on the Workforce). The vacancies

⁷² Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁷³ Example provided by: Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Highland, Inverclyde and Perth and Kinross

⁷⁴ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and City of Edinburgh

⁷⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Shetland, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁷⁶ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Renfrewshire, South Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian




⁷⁷ Examples provided by: Angus, Fife, Midlothian and West Lothian

have had a negative impact on the service provided and the timeframes in which individuals can be supported.⁷⁸

Some local authorities provided the numbers of decisions made based on the duties of mental health officers⁷⁹, there is limited analysis of outcomes, why changes took place or what they mean for the local authorities.

Drug and Alcohol Services

Reduction of drug and alcohol related harm has been a priority in Scotland for many years and continues to be one of the main priorities in social work and social care. Within this scope, local authorities are working to implement national policies.⁸⁰ Another focus is providing a whole family approach to reduce the wider impact of drug and alcohol related harm.⁸¹ The changes in numbers to drug and alcohol related harm differ between different local authorities.⁸² The main changes reported in drug and alcohol service delivery include:

				
Improved access	Lived experience	Work with pregnant women	Focus on MAT standards	Pilot projects
There have been different ways local authorities are working to make access to support services easier. This includes outreach activities, drop-in services and alternative treatment options	The involvement of people with lived experience in the service design and delivery is used to create more appropriate services.	There has been an increased focus on early interventions with pregnant women to reduce alcohol and drug related impact.	Local authorities have continued to work on the implementation of the Medication Assisted Treatment Standards in their areas.	Local authorities have continued to develop pilot projects to increase treatment options. These include working with the third sector organisations and securing additional funding for these.

⁷⁸ Example provided by: East Ayrshire, Moray, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁷⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁸⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Falkirk, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Stirling and West Lothian

⁸¹ Examples provided by: City of Edinburgh, Falkirk, Renfrewshire and West Lothian

⁸² Examples provided by: East Ayrshire, Inverclyde and West Lothian

Children and family services

Children and families social work has faced similar challenges to adult services in the past year, in particular looking at an increased demand in services, complexity of cases, limitations to funding and recruitment and retention challenges. The three main referrers for children's services include the police, health services and education. Some local authorities were able to secure additional funding for children and family services over the past year to ease some of the pressure on the services.⁸³ Others have collaborated regionally to share resources.⁸⁴

Some local authorities provided the number of child protection concerns, children added and removed to the child protection register and inter agency referral discussions. The patterns of change differ across the local authorities and limited analysis for the reason behind these changes were provided in the CSWO reports. This means it is currently not possible to identify national trends of the reasons behind the changes in child protection numbers.⁸⁵ The same issues are seen with number of children and young people receiving care, including who these children are looked after by foster and kinship carers, adoptive families or residential care. The changes in the data are often reported but there is limited information provided on the reasons behind them or the implications for the services.⁸⁶

⁸³ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Perth and Kinross, Shetland, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire and Stirling, West Dunbartonshire

⁸⁴ Examples provided: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire

⁸⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁸⁶ Examples provided by: Angus, City of Edinburgh, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

			
Time on child protection register	Relationship with social worker	Reasons for child protection	Children's hearings
One area of focus has been to reduce the time children spend on the child protection register and to avoid re-registration. This has been done by closer collaboration with families.	To increase the positive impact of social work on children and families there has been an increased focus on creating positive relationships between families and social workers.	The main reasons for child protection activities include neglect, domestic abuse, emotional abuse, parental mental health challenges, parental drug and alcohol use self-harm and exploitation.	There has been an increase in children hearings in a number of local authorities. There has been an increased focus in having the children's and young people's voices in children's hearings.

Throughout 2023/ 2024, delivering trauma-informed support has continued to be a priority across Scotland. This can be seen in the ongoing delivery and implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model and the Bairns Hoose approach. In addition to these approaches, there has been ongoing training and support to ensure all interactions children and families have, are trauma-informed.⁸⁷ This also extends to continued work to make case recordings trauma-informed.⁸⁸

CSWOs reported that over the year there have been changes to risk assessment processes to make them more child and family centred. This included changes in guidelines, training to staff and improved processes. It also further included principles of contextual safeguarding to ensure individuals are receiving the protection they need.⁸⁹ Only a few local authorities reported on the impact this change had. Those that reported that it resulted in a more targeted and empowering support for families.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Examples provided: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

⁸⁸ Examples provided by: Angus, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Shetland and West Dunbartonshire

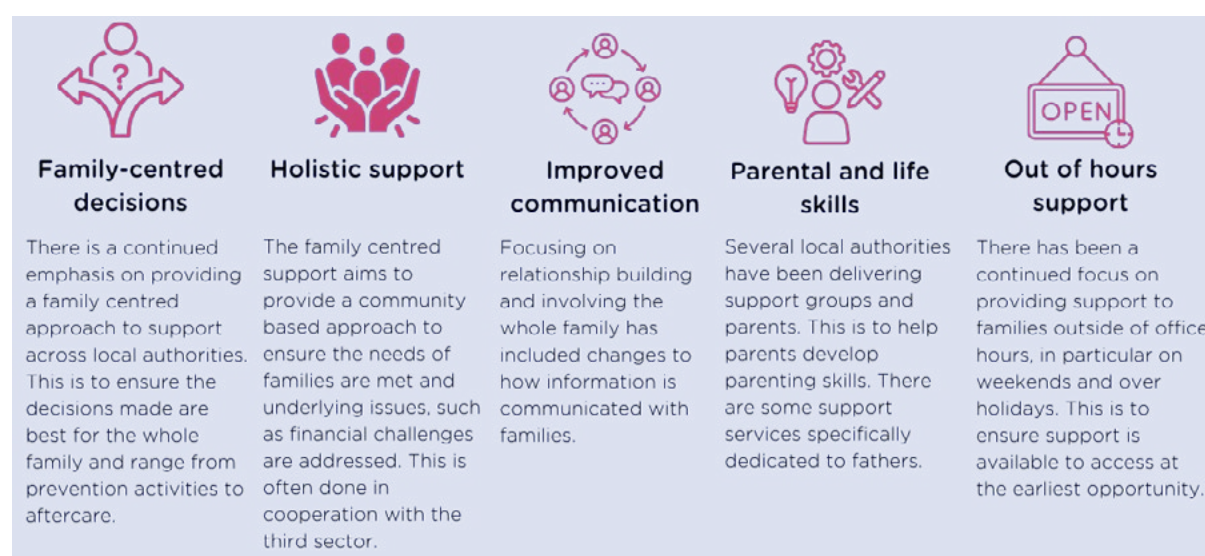
⁸⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Orkney, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

⁹⁰ Examples provided by: Glasgow, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

Throughout the year, there have been several inspections of children and family services across Scotland.⁹¹ There is limited information in the CSWO reports on what caused their specific ratings in the inspections and the coming changes following these inspections.

Whole family support

One of the main developments over the past few years has been the development of community hubs focusing on a whole family support. These have the purpose of creating easier access to services and a holistic approach to services.⁹²



Adoption and Fostering services

Fostering and adoption services are a crucial part of children and family services. This service aims to ensure children have a safe place to live free from harm. The main changes and challenges relating to adoption and foster

⁹¹ Examples provided by: Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, Midlothian, Orkney, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire

⁹² Examples provided by: East Ayrshire, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire

care this year included:

				
Lack of foster families	Increased kinship care	Focus on carer support	Corporate parenting	Awareness raising
There is a national crisis due to a lack of foster families. This results in challenges in placing children in homes that are close to their own communities.	To mitigate the lack of foster families and to focus on family relationships, there has been an move to engage more kinship carers rather than going into foster or residential care.	There has been an increased focus on providing ongoing support and training to foster and kinship carers, as well as adoptive parents and in turn to provide better support to children.	Across local authorities, there have been developments to improve corporate parenting work. One area of improvement includes ensuring the voice of children is heard in decision-making about their lives.	Some local authorities have conducted awareness raising campaigns to attract new foster parents. This include short and long term foster carers. These campaigns often resulted in an increase of foster carers.

In some areas, inspections of adoption and fostering services took place in the past year. Those primarily had good outcomes with the most noted positive outcome being that children had good relationships with their adopted or foster families.⁹³ Limited information was provided on what helped create these outcomes.

Residential care

There have been differing reports on the changes of numbers of children in residential care. In some areas, there has been an increase while others reported a decrease in placements. The reasons for the changes included having reduced spaces in residential care and care home closures and an increased focus on kinship care.⁹⁴

⁹³ Examples provided by: Angus, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk and South Ayrshire

⁹⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Highland, Moray, Perth and Kinross, Stirling and West Lothian

			
Closer to community	Consistency	Cost of residential care	Respite support
One aim for improving residential care has been to try and find care solutions that allow children to stay in their own communities. This includes aiming to have children return from out of area placements.	There needs to be increased consistency in the approaches to residential care. This includes to having a more trauma-informed approach.	An increasing challenge for local authorities is the cost to provide residential care. This includes particularly placements for those with complex needs and refers to in and out of local authority placements.	There has been an increase in request for respite support. This means short term stays in residential care to give carers a break. The increase of requests has proved challenging within the available resources.

Over the past year, there have been several inspections of residential children's homes. There have been mixed reviews of these primarily relating to known challenges of resources and the increased complexity of cases.⁹⁵

Supported children and young people

Unaccompanied asylum seeker children

One of the main challenges and one of the reasons for an increase in service demand across local authorities has been the number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children as a result of the National Transfer Scheme. Some of the challenges in supporting this groups include the language barrier, the level of trauma experienced by the young people and requests for age assessments by other authorities.⁹⁶

Some local authorities have seen positive impacts of their support for these children and young people. The positive impacts relate to inclusion activities and young people moving towards positive destinations regarding education and employability.⁹⁷ One of the reasons local authorities believe they have a

⁹⁵ Examples provided by: Angus, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Glasgow, Orkney and South Ayrshire

⁹⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

⁹⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Scottish Borders

positive impact on the lives of unaccompanied asylum seeker children is through a trauma-informed approach to their support.⁹⁸

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities services are seeing an increase in demand of their services which is an increasing challenge to manage within the current resources available to the teams.⁹⁹ To better navigate these changes in demand, some local authorities are working with teams specifically designated to children with disabilities¹⁰⁰ and in some cases there has been a focus on community support.¹⁰¹

There has been an increase in demand for children's mental health services and neurodivergence support services.¹⁰²

Youth Justice

Some local areas are providing targeted support for young people who have had or are at risk of conflicting with the law. The most common themes in Youth Justice included:¹⁰³

				
Community support	Cooperation	Diversion activities	Individual support	Population of concern
Provision of peer support groups and community projects focusing on sports, creative or outdoor activities are used as diversion activities. This is also to provide young people a safe place to spend time.	There has been increased cooperation with children's mental health services to address underlying reasons that might lead to conflicts with the law.	There have been increasing diversion and structured deferred sentences for young people. This has resulted in increased partnership work to better understand the reasons behind the increased sentences.	There has been an increased focus on delivering individual support that can help individuals better and help people achieve the best outcomes for young people.	There have been reports of some groups being overrepresented among young people in conflict with the laws. This includes boys and also people leaving care. This highlights the need for targeted interventions for these groups.

⁹⁸ Examples provided by: East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

⁹⁹ Examples provided by: City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire East Dunbartonshire Scottish Borders and Stirling

¹⁰⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Scottish Borders and West Lothian

¹⁰¹ Examples provided by: East Ayrshire and West Lothian

¹⁰² Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire

¹⁰³ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dundee, East Ayrshire, Midlothian, Moray, North Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

Transitional support

Most local authorities reported an increased focus on transitional support from children and family services to adult support services and for those leaving care without requiring further support. The main aim of the transitional support is to empower young people to live independent lives.¹⁰⁴ Having transitional support requires closer cooperation between children and family services with other services including adult support services, housing, education and employment services.¹⁰⁵

			
Life skills	Housing support	Education / employment	Counselling / Trauma support
Some local authorities have started to work with young people to develop life skills. This includes financial literacy, cooking skills, numeracy and literacy skills. This is perceived as ensuring young people have the skills they need as adults.	Working with housing services has helped young people move into their own sustainable tenancies. Early interventions ensure that young people have a smoother start into adulthood.	Having access to alternative ways of education has increased the number of young people at risk of dropping out of school with a qualification. In turn education and employability support helps care leavers reach positive destinations.	Transitional support includes access and engagement with counselling and psychological support. This is to help navigate the transition and to provide coping skills.











Justice Social Work

As in adult and children's social work, there have been changes in the demand of services. Most local authorities reported that in regard to justice social work, they have now been able to catch up with the backlog of cases

¹⁰⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, Fife, Inverclyde, Glasgow, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Perth and Kinross, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹⁰⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dundee, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Glasgow, Midlothian, Orkney, Stirling,

that have been a legacy from the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁰⁶ However, the consistent increase in cases, in addition to the increased complexity of cases, has changed how some of demands on the workforce.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, there have been national challenges regarding the number of prisoners, the change of the demographics of the prison population and increased early releases from prisons.¹⁰⁸ Some of the reported changes in justice social work have included:

 <p>MAPPA management</p> <p>Local authorities reported improved management of Multi-agency public protection arrangements. This relates to the outcomes for individuals, cooperation between agencies and managing of the workload</p>	 <p>Alternative sentences</p> <p>There has been an increase in supervised bail request and structured deferred sentences. The number of assessments required has put a significant strain on justice social work resources.</p>	 <p>Increase in unpaid work</p> <p>Throughout the year, there has been an increased focus on unpaid work schemes. These are seen as beneficial to the communities where the work is done and the individuals doing the work</p>	 <p>Increase in diversion from prosecution</p> <p>With increasing numbers of diversion from prosecution cases, local services are working on improving their guidance and processes related to this.</p>	 <p>Trauma-informed approach</p> <p>There has been a continued focus on delivering trauma-informed justice social work to provide better and more appropriate support. This has also included providing more tailored support to women specifically.</p>
 <p>Appropriate Adults</p> <p>There has been an increase in request for appropriate adults to support individuals who need help in communication or understanding in interactions with the police.</p>	 <p>Recruited paraprofessionals</p> <p>To support an increase in community-based sentences including electronic monitoring, bail supervision, structured deferred sentences and diversion from prosecution, additional staff was recruited.</p>	 <p>Increased through care</p> <p>There is an increased focus on providing through care for individuals finishing sentences to reintegrate back into society. CSWOs report the increased importance with the high number of early prison release and an aging prison population.</p>	 <p>Awareness raising</p> <p>Local authorities have continued to raise awareness with partners and communities about community payback orders and the positive impacts they have.</p>	 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Local authorities there has been increased collaboration with other services to ensure holistic support for people engaging with justice social work. This includes in particular mental health and drug and alcohol services.</p>

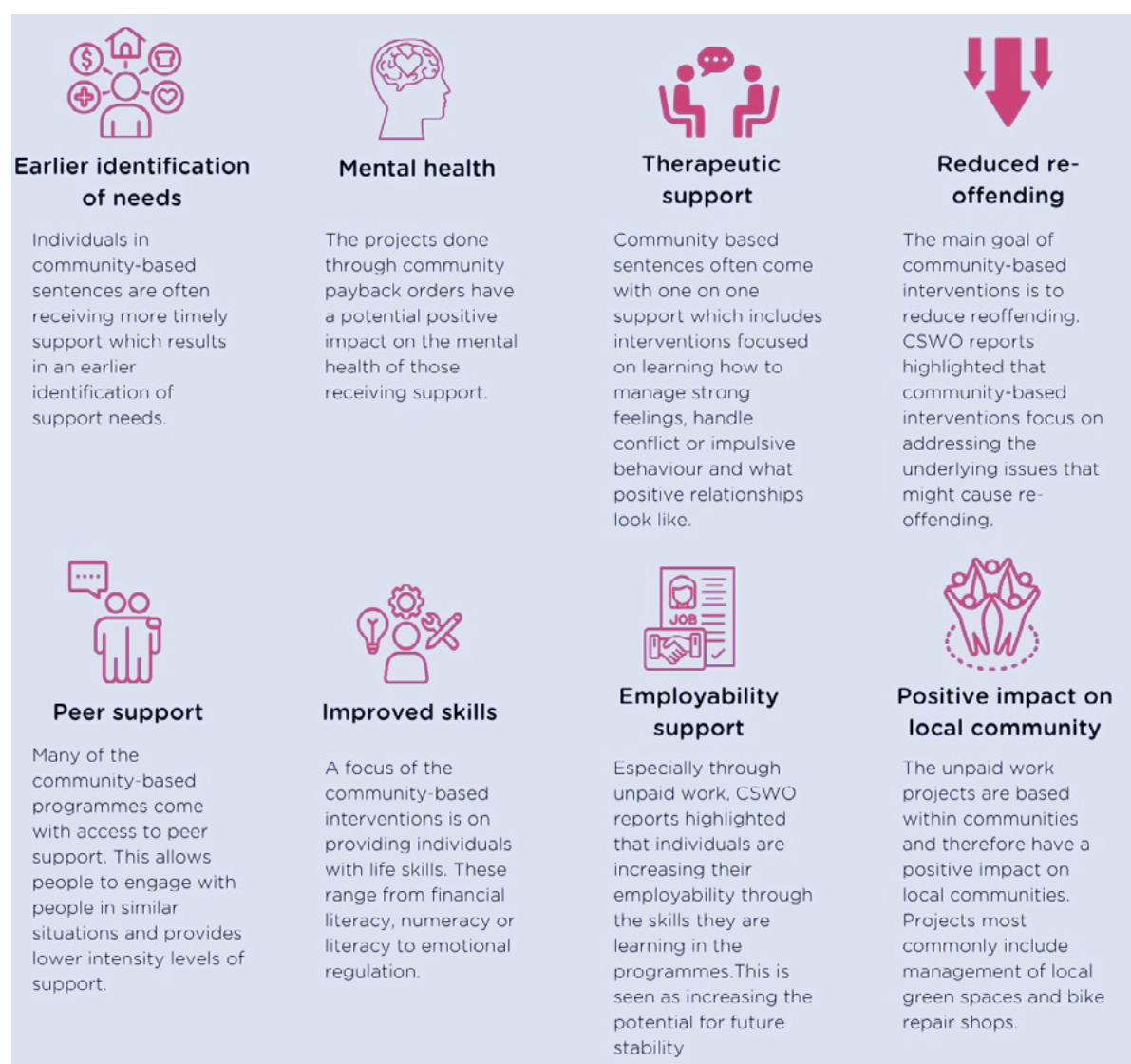
¹⁰⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Fife, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

¹⁰⁷ Examples provided by: Angus, Argyll and Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, City of Edinburgh, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, Falkirk, Moray, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹⁰⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Glasgow and Stirling

To navigate some of these challenges, some local authorities received additional funding from different government bodies or foundations. This often included specific funding for pilot programmes as an investment in service improvement.¹⁰⁹ In other areas additional funding was used to provide recruitment support to address the gaps in the workforce.¹¹⁰

The increased use of community-based services is perceived to have the following impacts:



¹⁰⁹ Examples provided by: Perth and Kinross, South Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹¹⁰ Examples provided by: City of Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, Highland and North Ayrshire

Workforce

Across all CSWO reports, chief social work officers praised the commitment and the capabilities of their staff. They are the core of all social work and social care. The CSWO reports highlighted specifically that the dedication of the social work and social care staff in the light of the challenges outlined in the previous sections of this report. They explain that because of those challenges staff is often required to deliver creative service delivery and that many of the staff go above and beyond to support the people in their care. Some of the CSWO reports specifically highlighted the crucial roles that the administrative play in being able to provide this level of support and how instrumental they are to ensuring services run smoothly.¹¹¹ Workforce planning is one of the parts of the role of chief social work officers and it is influenced by the parts outlined in this chapter.

Recruitment and retention

All local authorities reported recruitment and retention challenges. It differs

across the local authorities and within service areas to what extent the

recruitment and retention

challenges are impacting the

services.¹¹² Most commonly the

challenges related to recruitment

and retention included the

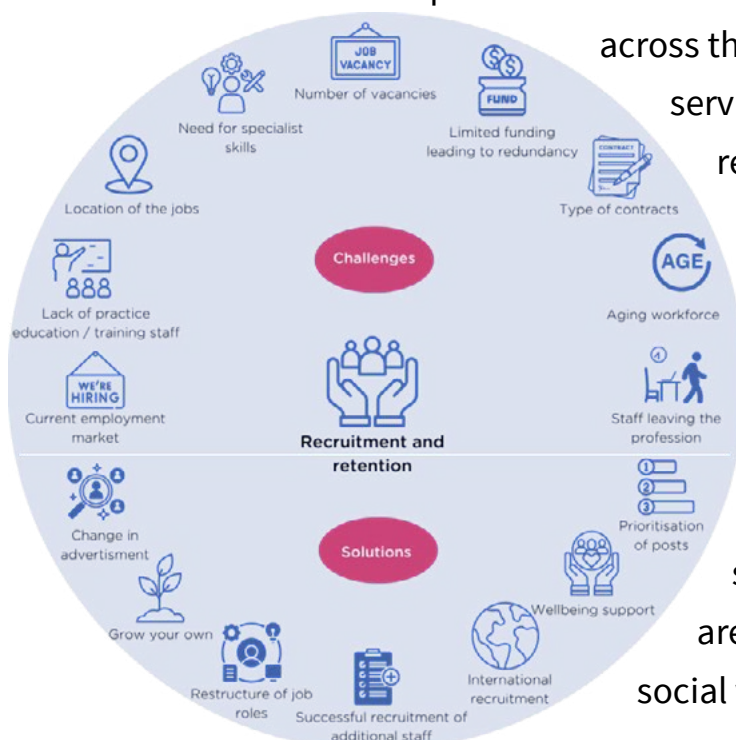
current employment market,

aging workforce and the need for

specialised staff. These challenges

are not exclusive to the statutory

social work and social care but also



¹¹¹ Examples provided by: Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire and Stirling

¹¹² Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, Orkney, Perth and Kinross, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

impact the third sector, health sector and other partners of social work and social care which results in more pressure on the system.¹¹³ The CSWO reports highlighted that there have been some successful recruitments which have had a positive impact on workloads and the services provided, including reduced waiting notes. Common roles that have been recruited included practice or development leads.¹¹⁴ One of the challenges with newly recruited posts includes a high number of newly qualified social workers (NQSW) as the main group recruited. While the CSWO reports are happy for the filled posts, there are challenges around NQSWs as there are limitations to the cases and roles, they can take on.¹¹⁵ Similarly, agency staff has become a way to support the gaps in the social work and social care workforce. This, however, comes with challenges of providing consistent levels of care, contract terms and financial implications.¹¹⁶

There was limited information provided on the reasons for why people are leaving the workforce. Some CSWOs discussed they were doing research into this, but the results were not provided. Some of the reasons mentioned included limited progression opportunities¹¹⁷ and the temporary nature of contracts.¹¹⁸

To cope with the challenges of recruitment and retention the local authorities have developed strategies to manage these challenges. These include the change in advertisement through restructure of job advertisements, using social media and partnership collaboration for recruitment and a change of priorities.¹¹⁹ To reduce the pressure on the workforce and to create more appealing roles to advertise, some local

¹¹³ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland, North Ayrshire

¹¹⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Highlands, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire, Shetland, Stirling West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹¹⁵ Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, Highland, Midlothian, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, Shetland and Stirling

¹¹⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Highland, Midlothian, Moray, Orkney, Scottish Borders and Shetland

¹¹⁷ Examples provided: Clackmannanshire and Highland

¹¹⁸ Examples provided by: Fife

¹¹⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Falkirk, Fife, Perth and Kinross, Stirling and West Lothian

authorities have restructured some of the roles within their teams.¹²⁰ In terms of MHOs, Aberdeenshire have worked with former MHOs to help pick up some MHO work and to fill some of the gaps.¹²¹ One local authority saw a positive impact of staff with lived experience on both people accessing the support and the retention of the staff.¹²²

There are some roles and social work areas that seem to face additional challenges when it comes to recruitment. These include: Care at home staff, especially with the increased demand for at home care¹²³, Children and families¹²⁴, Mental Health Officers¹²⁵, Occupational Therapists¹²⁶, Leadership and management roles¹²⁷, Specialised staff, especially for teams focusing on specific population groups¹²⁸ and Rural and island staff, especially attracting qualified staff to move to the relevant areas.¹²⁹

The challenges with recruitment and retention have several impacts both on the staff and people accessing the services. These includes:

				
Need to prioritise cases	Instability of service	Negative impact on staff wellbeing	Gap in services	Relying on unpaid carers
Due to the challenges in recruitment and retention challenges and resulting workloads, there is a need for staff to prioritise cases. This can have an impact on the number of contacts, waiting times and more.	While prioritisation and agency staff can help balance out some of the challenges of lack of staff, needing to shift priorities and rotation of staff can lead to instability of service.	The pressures of the vacancies on the workforce increase the stress and pressure on the the existing workforce. This can have negative impacts on their physical and mental health.	Having these gaps in vacancies can result to limited coverage of social work and social care services. This is particularly a challenge in rural areas where the logistics create an additional challenge.	Having these gaps in vacancies means there is an increased reliance on unpaid carers to provide the support needed. Unpaid carers are a crucial resource to support social work and social care. To support them there are peer support and other support service for unpaid carers.

¹²⁰ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Highland, Midlothian, Moray, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹²¹ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire

¹²² Examples provided by: North Ayrshire

¹²³ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute and East Ayrshire

¹²⁴ Examples provided by: Falkirk and Orkney

¹²⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Moray, North Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹²⁶ Examples provided by: Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Scottish Borders

¹²⁷ Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway and Highland

¹²⁸ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Highland, East Ayrshire, Midlothian, North Ayrshire and Perth and Kinross

¹²⁹ Examples provided by: Comhairle nan Eilean, North Ayrshire, Highland, Orkney and Shetland

Grow Your Own

To address the challenges with recruitment and retention, local authorities have started to develop programmes summarised as different versions that include supporting or growing their own workforce. This involves creating loyalty through supporting the career development and by providing development for existing staff.¹³⁰ There have been developments over the past year in how local authorities are advertising their grow your own programmes. This includes particularly how social media and internal communication is used to advertise the programmes.¹³¹ Examples of the grow your own programmes include:

				
Paying for qualifications	Collaboration with education	Apprenticeship / Traineeship	Collaboration	Local pathways
Local authorities are paying for existing or potential staff's qualification to increase recruitment and retention into roles they need. There has been a specific focus on helping paraprofessionals gain qualifications that allow for progression.	There has been an increasing collaboration with higher education to provide more placements and other joint schemes. Having positive experiences through this can increase the appeal of local authorities as an employer.	There are multiple developments to increase the numbers of apprenticeship and traineeship programmes. These allow to train people within a local authority and are seen as a positive tool for recruitment and retention.	Social work and social care are working with other delivery partners to increase the visibility of potential opportunities. This includes taking part in employment conferences and joint advertising of roles	There has been a move to create local pathways and qualifications to allow people to access the qualifications they need for their roles. This has been a particular focus for MHO recruitment.

Training and development

Training is a core part of social work and social care to ensure that people in need of services are receiving the best support possible, but also for staff to be equipped to safely interact with members of the public in a wide range of situations. All local authorities provide training and development opportunities in different formats. This includes e-learning, in person training, 'lunch time chats', and other resources. These training and development sessions need different levels of involvements. These include

¹³⁰ Examples provided by: Highland, Midlothian

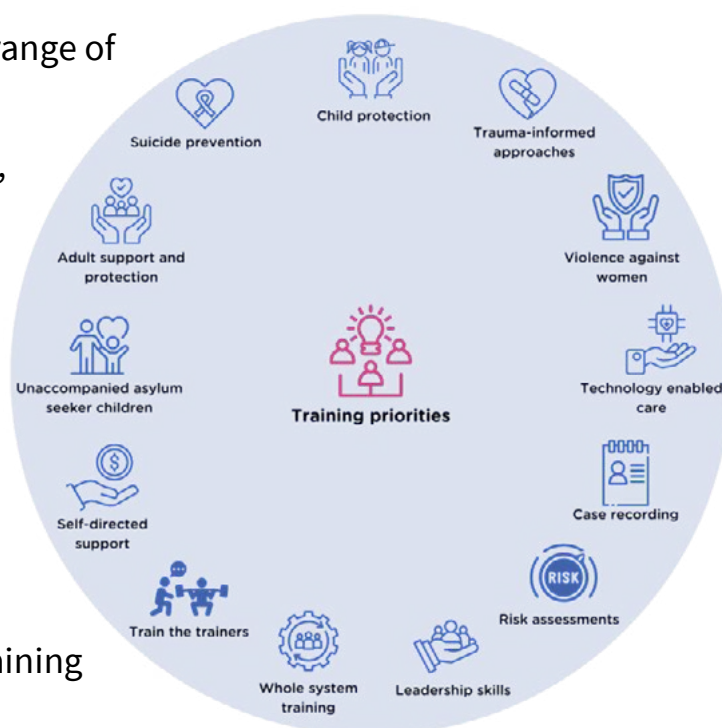
¹³¹ Examples provided by: Angus, Falkirk, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Shetland

onboarding, day or weeklong or short training sessions. Having these different ways of providing training has the purpose of increasing accessibility for the staff, as well as provide the baseline for skills and continuous development. Training in this section includes both informal and accredited training.¹³²

The training needs differ by local authority and teams. There seems to be a common theme of needed training on how the workforce interacts with the people they support and how to address the increased complexity of cases. This relates to deciding care plans and how to communicate these with the people accessing support.¹³³ Often these training needs were identified through self-evaluation, audits and other data collection activities¹³⁴, as well as based on policy changes¹³⁵ and feedback from the workforce.¹³⁶

The training provided includes a wide range of topics and skill sets including trauma-informed approaches, child protection, violence against women and how cases are recorded.

Aside from the broader skills some local authorities and teams provided access to specialised training to their workforce. This often includes specific training for specific roles, for example, court skills, permanence placement training or a missing persons training.¹³⁷



¹³² Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Dumfries and Galloway, Falkirk, Fife, Inverclyde, Midlothian, Perth and Kinross, Renfrewshire and West Lothian

¹³³ Examples provided by: Angus, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Fife, Renfrewshire, Orkney, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹³⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dundee, Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Midlothian, Moray, Orkney, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire

¹³⁵ Examples provided by: Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Perth, Renfrewshire and Kinross and West Lothian

¹³⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Fife, Highland, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and Stirling

¹³⁷ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, East Ayrshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, Orkney, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

The impact of the training was rarely reported in the CSWO reports. In the instances it was reported it was explained that the training helped increase the confidence and skills of staff.¹³⁸

Despite the continued commitment from the CSWOs to ensure staff have continuous training and development opportunities, there are some challenges that staff face to access the training as outlined in the figure below.



Local authorities have specific support and training for newly qualified social workers. This support usually lasts for the first 12 to 18 months. It focuses on helping transition NQSW from an education setting into the workforce. It also supports their early development as social workers and is supposed to support the retention of NQSW. Most local authorities reported a positive impact of the NQSW supported year.¹³⁹

Staff wellbeing

Staff wellbeing has been a focus for a number of years but with ever growing pressures on the social work and social care system it is becoming

¹³⁸ Examples provided by: Fife, Midlothian and West Lothian

¹³⁹ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Fife, Glasgow, Highland, Inverclyde, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Shetland, South Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

increasingly crucial. The high workload, emotionally intense work and potential for taxing interactions can leave staff feeling exhausted and at times leads to staff wanting to leave the workforce. The impact of this can be seen through an increase in staff absences across Scotland and across services.¹⁴⁰ This means that local authorities have the responsibility and the need to find ways to support their staff.¹⁴¹

There are a range of actions / structures which were reported as beneficial to staff:

- **Accessibility of management team:**¹⁴² Being able to interact and engage with the management team was reported as beneficial to staff wellbeing and staff feeling appreciated.
- **Supervision:**¹⁴³ Having good and trauma-informed supervision was deemed essential to ensure staff wellbeing.
- **Peer support:**¹⁴⁴ Having access to peer support allows staff to get support from people with similar experiences and challenges. This includes local staff support or community of practice groups.
- **Staff communication:**¹⁴⁵ Having good and clear communication with staff is important to ensure staff feel valued and is important to foster a safe and open environment for staff.
- **Wellbeing programmes:**¹⁴⁶ Provision of physical activity, mental health and other wellbeing initiatives for staff.

¹⁴⁰ Examples provided by: Fife, Glasgow, North Ayrshire, Scottish Borders and Stirling

¹⁴¹ Example provided by: Angus, Argyll and Bute, Inverclyde, Moray and Perth and Kinross

¹⁴² Example provided by: Glasgow and West Lothian

¹⁴³ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, City of Edinburgh, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, Falkirk, Fife, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Orkney, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹⁴⁴ Examples provided by: Aberdeenshire, City of Edinburgh, East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, Highland, Inverclyde, Moray, North Ayrshire, Orkney, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

¹⁴⁵ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Fife and Inverclyde

¹⁴⁶ Examples provided by: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Highland, Midlothian, Moray, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, Shetland, South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire and West Lothian

Emerging issues

Aside from the overarching themes within social work and within the specific service areas, there are emerging issues presenting within the CSWO reports. By emerging issues, we understand developments within wider society that are beginning to or are increasingly impacting how social work and social care works and will likely work in the future. These emerging issues include:

- Technology in a care setting
- Anti-racism work

Technology in a care setting

Several local authorities reported that they are currently exploring how technology can assist in social work, as well as what the benefits and challenges are for the staff and the service users.¹⁴⁷

Based on the CSWO reports, one of the main ways technology is used to enhance the lives of people in need of support is through digital alarms in people's homes which allows people to live independently for longer.¹⁴⁸ In Fife, the use of alarms is currently also being piloted in prevention programmes to further the benefit individuals, as well as reducing waiting times for people accessing out of hours services.

Another way technology is used is to enhance accessibility, particularly in rural areas and for people with disabilities that prevent them from accessing traditional services.¹⁴⁹ This means people may have access to phone or online appointments or access to resources through apps or websites.¹⁵⁰ For children's services it is primarily used to enable digital access to services and share information about support.¹⁵¹ To ensure potential service users are

¹⁴⁷ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Perth and Kinross, Orkney, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire, Stirling and West Lothian

¹⁴⁸ Example provided by: Fife, South Lanarkshire, West Lothian

¹⁴⁹ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian

¹⁵⁰ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian

¹⁵¹ Examples provided by: Dundee, East Ayrshire, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian

aware of their options, relevant teams within the local authorities have provided awareness raising campaigns.¹⁵² There is no data reported on the impact of these campaigns.

Another hope is that technology assisted support can help reduce costs of delivering care, as for example, travel time and service costs would be reduced, as well as an increase of the realistic time social workers and carers have to engage with service users as the time commuting is reduced.¹⁵³ Some local authorities are also exploring how artificial intelligence (AI) and other technology might help to reduce the amount of time social workers and social carers spend on reporting and chronologies, as well as improving the quality of the data.¹⁵⁴

There are, however, drawbacks and challenges to using technology in care. The main challenge is the roll out of the technology. This challenge comes from the number of resources in terms of time, money and people that are needed to embed technology into the service.¹⁵⁵ With council budgets stretched and limited staff across Scotland, it is at times challenging for local authorities to prioritise monies and staff time over ongoing support of service users, even if in the long term these investments might have positive impacts.

To ensure the care supplemented by technology is appropriate to the service users, local authorities are working on having assessments of how technology can be used to enhance the lives of service users and promote independence.¹⁵⁶ There is also the challenge of people having the digital skills to use the new technology effectively. This applies to both people that are accessing care and those delivering it. It is important to ensure that both the staff and service users feel empowered by the technology through

¹⁵² Example provided by: West Lothian

¹⁵³ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, and West Lothian

¹⁵⁴ Example provided by: Aberdeen City and Perth and Kinross

¹⁵⁵ Example provided by: Aberdeen City

¹⁵⁶ Example provided by: West Lothian

training and upskilling.¹⁵⁷ Currently, ongoing support is being provided to service users and staff in those local authorities that are reporting transitions of part of their services to digital technology, however there is limited impact reported on the effectiveness of this support.¹⁵⁸

Local authorities seem to expect technology to become a more integral part of their work in coming years and are preparing through strategies and engagement with tech companies.¹⁵⁹ At the same time, the local authorities are aware that there needs to be a continuous assessment and review of new technology and how it is used to ensure it serves the intended purposes.¹⁶⁰ At the moment, the reporting about technology is primarily focused on the activities in this area, as well as the expectations of future impact. There is limited evidence provided on the current impact that technology is already having on services, as well as on service users.

Anti-racism

The Social Work Code of Practice outlines the professional values for social work which include respect, compassion, supporting the rights of others and ensuring dignity of those they support. In addition, the Code of Practice has a strong emphasis on anti-discriminatory practices towards individuals, carers and colleagues.¹⁶¹ Some of the local authorities, underlined their commitment to these values by talking about their equality strategies and some specific actions to further equity among their staff.¹⁶² Some of the specific actions mentioned look as follows:

- **Gender equality:** Provision of menopause leave¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Example provided by: South Lanarkshire

¹⁵⁸ Example provided by: West Lothian

¹⁵⁹ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian

¹⁶⁰ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Perth and Kinross and West Lothian

¹⁶¹ <https://www.sssc.uk.com/knowledgebase/article/KA-02412/en-us>

¹⁶² Example provided by: East Ayrshire, City of Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Inverclyde, Perth and Kinross, North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire

¹⁶³ Example provided by: South Lanarkshire

- **Disability inclusion:** Specific training on engagement with people with different sensory needs¹⁶⁴
- **Overall equality:** Introduction of peer support networks¹⁶⁵, monitoring of recruitment data to reflect representation of the local community¹⁶⁶

With the release of the Statement of Intent by the Social Work Anti-racism Oversight Group¹⁶⁷ and the anti-racism survey for social work¹⁶⁸, we would like to highlight the actions that are taken by local authorities to address racism across social work in Scotland.

At the moment, only a small number of local authorities explicitly mention what their anti-racism work looks like. For example, some local authorities explained that they have a mandatory annual equality and diversity training which includes anti-racist elements for everyone working in their services.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, some local authority areas, there are designated peer support forums for people from minority ethnic groups¹⁷⁰ and some have specific strategies for minority ethnic recruitment to increase the percentage of minority ethnic staff in their areas.¹⁷¹

Across local authorities there is limited reporting on the impact these activities have on eliminating racism and other inequalities among their workforce and service users.

¹⁶⁴ Example provided by: Perth and Kinross

¹⁶⁵ Example provided by: Inverclyde, South Lanarkshire

¹⁶⁶ Example provided by: South Lanarkshire


¹⁶⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/anti-racism-social-work-statement-intent-social-work-anti-racism-oversight-group/>

¹⁶⁸ Results forthcoming

¹⁶⁹ Example provided by: East Ayrshire, Falkirk, City of Edinburgh, South Lanarkshire and West Lothian

¹⁷⁰ Example provided by: South Lanarkshire

¹⁷¹ Example provided by: Aberdeen City, Dundee and North Lanarkshire



If you found this resource useful and have any queries, please get in touch at:

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