

To: Renfrewshire Integration Joint Board

On: 24 November 2023

Report by: Chief Social Work Officer

Heading: Chief Social Work Officer Report 2022/2023

Direction Required to Health Board, Council or Both	Direction to:	
	1. No Direction Required	X
	2. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	
	3. Renfrewshire Council	
	4. NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Renfrewshire Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Chief Social Work Officer provides an annual update report to Renfrewshire Council and the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) in the Autumn each year. The requirement for every local authority in Scotland to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is set out within Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The particular qualifications are set down in regulations and this is one of a number of statutory requirements which local authorities must comply with. In Renfrewshire the role of Chief Social Work Officer is held by the Head of Childcare and Criminal Justice. The Chief Social Work Officer is a non-voting member of the IJB.
- 1.2. The annual reports of all CSWOs are submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor at the Scottish Government in order that a national overview report can be produced. The annual report from the Renfrewshire Chief Social Work Officer provides a summary of activity relating to the role of the Chief Social Work Officer during 2022/23 and is attached at appendix 1.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the IJB:

- Note the key activities outlined in the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report;

- Acknowledge the commitment of social work staff in the consistent delivery of quality frontline services;
 - Note that that the report was presented to the meeting of Renfrewshire Council on 28 September;
 - Note that the report will be submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor at the Scottish Government; and
 - Agree that the next annual report from the Chief Social Work Officer will be presented in Autumn 2024.
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3. Background

- 3.1. The principal role and purpose of the Social Work Service is contained within the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, which gave local authorities the responsibility of “promoting social welfare”. The Social Work Service has a statutory duty to provide care and protection to the most vulnerable people across Renfrewshire, often meaning that many of our service users do not engage with us on a voluntary basis. The role of Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is critical in terms of achieving this purpose.
- 3.2. The CSWO is a ‘proper officer’ in relation to social work function: an officer given particular responsibility on behalf of a local authority, where the law requires the function to be discharged by a specified post holder.
- 3.3. The qualifications of the CSWO are set down in the regulations and stipulate that the postholder must be a qualified social worker registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. The CSWO must be able to demonstrate extensive experience of operational and strategic management at a senior level within social work or social care services.
- 3.4. The overall objective of the CSWO is to provide professional advice on the provision of social work services to elected members and officers; advice which assists authorities understanding of the many complexities which are inherent across social work services. The CSWO should also assist authorities in understanding the key role that social work plays in contributing to the achievement of national and local outcomes, to improving local performance and in terms of management of corporate risks.
- 3.5. The annual report to Council and the IJB, along with CSWO reports from other local authorities, are now being used nationally to create an overview report.
- 3.6. The scope of the CSWO role covers all social work and social care services, whether provided directly by the local authority, or in partnership with others. Where these services are purchased or commissioned from external providers, the CSWO has responsibility to

advise on the specification, quality and standards of service commissioned. Current guidance for the role reflects the strategic nature and the particular function in relation to Integration Joint Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

- 3.7. The CSWO has a range of other strategic responsibilities including oversight of professional standards in social work services, as well as undertaking the leadership of the profession through the Chief Social Work Officer function through promotion of the values and standards.
- 3.8. Social work services have a statutory duty to provide care and protection to the most vulnerable people across their local authority area. Access to the majority of services is assessed on the basis of need, and social work staff in partnership with individuals, carers, families and communities to meet the need within the resources available to the service and partner agencies.

4. Local Governance Arrangements

- 4.1. Within Renfrewshire Council the Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice also acts as Chief Social Work Officer. As well as the responsibilities associated within the directorship, as CSWO he retains professional leadership for adult social work and social care services delivery by Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).
- 4.2. The CSWO has a number of general and specific duties, including:
 - (i) Providing regular reports to Elected Members on the key activities and role of the Chief Social Work Officer.
 - (ii) Leading for Social Work on the Renfrewshire HSCP Executive Governance Group and the Integration Joint Board (IJB).
 - (iii) Reporting directly to the Education and Children's Services Policy Board and Renfrewshire Council.
 - (iv) Member of the Council's Corporate Management Team and Chief Officer's Group and reporting directly to the Chief Executive and senior Elected Members.
 - (v) The CSWO is accountable to the Chief Executive, the Corporate Management Team and the Council as part of the Chief Officers' Group which manages public protection risks on a partnership basis. Heads of Service have responsibility for the management of risk within their respective service areas.
 - (vi) Representing Renfrewshire Council at local, regional and national level.
 - (vii) Chairing the bi-annual meeting of all social work managers from both Children's Services and the HSCP.

(viii) Management of risk.

(ix) Specific Duties associated with the position, the CSWO within Renfrewshire Council acts as:

- Final point of appeal in relation to Adoption and Fostering decisions;
- Recipient of all Mental Health and Adults with Incapacity Orders and Guardianship cases; and
- Decision maker in relation to Secure Care application for children.

5. Activities of the Chief Social Work Officer 2022/23

- 5.1. The report attached as Appendix 1 summarises the key activities of the Head of Child Care & Criminal Justice in his capacity as Chief Social Work Officer in Renfrewshire during 2022/23. It does not provide an exhaustive description of the full range of duties and responsibilities undertaken but seeks to provide a broad overview of the CSWO role. The report and its appendices will be submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Officer to inform a national overview report.
- 5.2. The next report on the activities of the CSWO will be submitted to Council in Autumn 2024.

6. Overview Social Work services

- 6.1. The CSWO has a range of statutory duties which are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report, this also includes detail of demand and provision in those areas.
- 6.2. The Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2022/23 describes services which are performing well with many areas evidencing innovative practice; both inspired by the creativity of teams with the aim of improving service delivery, or in direct response to existing or predicted challenges.
- 6.3. Social work and social care services are delivered by a substantial number of staff from statutory, third and independent sector organisations. Across all sectors involved in the delivery of social work and social care services, workforce remains a key focus, both in terms of recruitment and retention.

Key Priorities in 2023/24

- 6.4. Based on an assessment of internal and external factors the CSWO has identified key priorities for the year ahead:

- Continue to effectively discharge our public protection role and working closely with partners to ensure that vulnerable children and adults live as safely as possible within local communities;
- Strengthen the approach to supporting children and families in the community through the implementation of the Children's Service Partnership Plan;
- Support the delivery of the Promise in Renfrewshire;
- Supporting the Council to deliver on the corporate and community priorities;
- Continue to ensure strong and positive links between Children's Services and Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership;
- Ensure the voice of local social work staff influences the development of the National Care Service.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None
 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
 3. **Strategic Plan and Community Planning** – this report details the progress made by the service to protect vulnerable children and adults, reduce offending behaviour, increase community safety, and promote early intervention, independent living and wider health improvement. It highlights partnership working, details the measure which ensure the workforce is skilled and effective and highlights achievements in relation to support to the communities, customer service and consultation.
 4. **Wider Strategic Alignment** – None.
 5. **Legal** – None.
 6. **Property/Assets** – property remains in the ownership of the parent bodies.
 7. **Information Technology** – None.
 8. **Equality & Human Rights** – The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
 9. **Fairer Scotland Duty** – None.
 10. **Health & Safety** – None.
 11. **Procurement** – procurement activity will remain within the operational arrangements of the parent bodies.
 12. **Risk** – None.
 13. **Privacy Impact** – None.
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List of Background Papers –

- (a) [The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer](#) – Guidance Issued by Scottish Ministers
- (b) [Chief Social Work Officers Annual Report Summary 2021-2022](#)
- (c) [Annual report of the Fostering and Adoption Service 2021/22 Update on developments for Looked After Children and Fostering Service](#) – Education and Children’s Services Policy Board 19 January 2023

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**Renfrewshire
Council**

Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer

2022/23

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerments and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central so social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels.”

Definition of social work agreed by the International Federation of Social Workers, 2014

Chief Social Work Officer – Renfrewshire

Introduction

I'm pleased to present the annual Chief Social Work Officer report for Renfrewshire for the period April 2022 to March 2023. The Chief Social Work Officer is a "proper officer" in relation to the social work function of the local authority. As such, the Chief Social Work Officer is given particular responsibility on behalf of the local authority in respect of social work functions and also the authority to discharge some functions in law on an individual bases.

This report provides an overview of social work and care activity against a backdrop of an increasingly complex and challenging environment e.g., the cost-of-living crisis, recovery from the Covid pandemic and the associated impact on local communities, families, and individuals. In this annual report I hope to demonstrate the commitment of social work and care staff to ensure that those who were most vulnerable were supported and the care they required was delivered.

I want to take the opportunity to express my thanks to social work and care staff for their ongoing commitment to those who required support over the past year.

In discharging my role as Chief Social Work Officer, I'm supported in Children's Services by the Director, the Social Work Children's Services Manager, the Criminal Justice Services Manager, and the Operations Managers in our locality services. Within the Health and Social Care Partnership, I'm supported by the Chief Officer and the Heads of Service. I want to acknowledge their support in helping me address the delivery of social work and care services in Renfrewshire.

This report does not detail all of the social work and care activity within Renfrewshire, but rather serves to provide an overview of services.

John Trainer
Chief Social Work Officer
August 2023

Governance and Accountability

In Renfrewshire, social work services for children and families and criminal justice social work services are delivered by Children's Services. Social work and care services for adults are delegated to and delivered by Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership (RHSCP). Each local authority is required to appoint a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO), an officer with an appropriate social work qualification, to oversee the functions of social work. As social work and care services for adults are delegated, as Chief Social Work Officer I have oversight of how the delegated functions are delivered and I am active in the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care governance arrangements.

As Chief Social Worker in Renfrewshire, I have operational responsibilities in my post as Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice and am line managed by the Director of Children's Services. In the role of Chief Social Work Officer, I provide professional advice on social work functions to the Chief Executive, the Corporate Management Team and Elected Members. I also provide professional advice on adult social work and care to the Chief Officer and Senior Management Team of Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership and to the Integration Joint Board.

The table below illustrates further the range of structures in which the CWSO participates to inform the delivery of the role.

Structure	Role
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Management Team • Head of Service Meetings • Advice to elected members on social work issues
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services Management Team • Education and Children's Service Policy Board
Integration Joint Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Governance Group • Standing member of IJB • Clinical and Care Governance Board
Public Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Officer Group for Public Protection • Child Protection Committee • Adult Protection Committee • Gender Based Violence Strategy Group • Alcohol and Drug Partnership • Community Justice Partnership
Community Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services Partnership Board
Other Council Policy Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and Housing Policy Board (for justice services)

Duty of Candour Statement from 2022/23

All social work and social care services in Scotland have a duty of candour. This is a legal requirement which means that when unintended, or unexpected, events happen that result in death or harm as defined in Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act

2016, the people affected understand what has happened, receive an apology, and that organisations learn from the experience and put in place improvements.

An important part of this duty is the requirements for organisations to provide an annual statement detailing how the duty of candour is implemented across the services. This brief statement describes how Renfrewshire Council has operated the duty of candour during the period 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. During this period, there were no incidents where duty of candour applied. (These are unintended or unexpected incidents that result in death or harm as defined in the Act, and do not relate directly to the natural course of someone's illness or underlying conditions).

Role of Chief Social Work Officer

The role of CSWO was originally designed to provide professional advice on social work services to Elected Members and council officers, in order to assist local authorities in understanding the complexities inherent in social work and social care services. The growing incidence of strategic partnerships across the public sector, whether legislated for or developed through good local joint working, adds a level of complexity to the role of Chief Social Work Officer.

As CSWO I am a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team and of the Chief Officers Group. I have a key role in multi-agency public protection arrangements and as such I'm a member of the Child and Adult Protection Committees, I co-chair the Gender-Based Violence Strategic Group and a member of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

As Chief Social Work Officer I report to Elected Members, primarily through two Policy Boards and the Integration Joint Board. The Education and Children's Services Policy Board has the remit for matters relating to Children and Families Social Work and the Communities and Housing Policy Board has the remit for Justice Social Work as part of its overall responsibility for community justice in Renfrewshire. All matters pertaining to Adult Social Work and Social Care are dealt with by the Integration Joint Board, which has representation from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's Board as well as Elected Members.

In assessing and supporting the social work and care staff to deliver the best services possible and to make the biggest difference for those who need social work and care support I regularly meet with managers and frontline staff to discuss their work. In addition, regular performance reports are considered at strategic meetings to allow the identification of challenges in delivery and to find solutions to unblocking these for staff and those who need access to services.

In addition to supporting business as usual, a priority for me will be ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government on the National Care Service. Whilst outwith the period covered by this report for social work activity, in July 2023, the Scottish Government announced that, contrary to the original plans, Councils would continue to employ social workers and other social work staff under the new National Care Service. I welcome this announcement and will continue to work constructively with the Scottish Government in this significant national agenda.

I will also be focusing on progress towards our commitment to Keep the Promise, providing additional support for its delivery through collaboration and driving change.

Service Quality and Performance

Many of the social work services are delivered by locality teams in Renfrewshire or by one of the specialist services. In addition to the locality and specialist services the council and Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership operates 23 services registered with the Care Inspectorate – four children’s houses, three care homes for older adults, five day services for older adults, five day services for adults with learning disabilities, one day service for adults with physical disabilities, one residential respite service for adults with learning disabilities, Care at Home Service, Fostering Services, Adoption Services, and a housing support service for care leavers.

The Care Inspectorate undertakes regular inspections of all registered services and indicates a formal assessment of the standard on a graded scale. The Care Inspectorate grades are:

- Unsatisfactory – major weaknesses
- Weak – important weaknesses
- Adequate – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- Good – important strengths with some areas for improvement
- Very Good – major strengths
- Excellent – sector leading

The Care Inspectorate generally reviews the following quality indicators when undertaking inspections by assessing:

- How well people’s wellbeing is supported?
- How good is the leadership of the service?
- How good is the staff team?
- How good is the environment?
- How well are care and support planned?

During 2022/23, unannounced inspections were undertaken by the Care Inspectorate at Montrose and Renfrew care homes which are operated by RHSCP. The Inspection Teams looked at a selection of the quality indicators which are based on the intelligence they hold about the service, and any risk factors that they may have identified. Both care homes were graded as either very good or good across all quality indicators.

As Chief Social Work Officer I have procedures are in place for reporting to Elected Members should any care service receive an assessment of Weak or Unsatisfactory for any element. Unfortunately, in September 2022 the Care Inspectorate concluded an unannounced inspection of Renfrewshire Care at Home Service and the inspection highlighted some areas of concern which resulted in the grades of Adequate and Weak.

The HSCP immediately established a working group to expedite implementing the necessary requirements and improvements identified within the report. A follow-up visit was undertaken by the Care Inspectorate and resulted in the positive re-evaluation of the grades to Good. Elected Members were updated on the inspection outturn at the Leadership Board in February 2023.

Three of our four children’s houses were inspected by the Care Inspectorate in 2022/23. Arkleston and Brediland received positive inspections. Inspectors found that staff in

Arkleston have an excellent understanding of trauma informed practice and young people are supported to access mental health services appropriately. In Brediland inspectors recognised the quality of relationships between staff and young people as a key strength where young people felt loved with their views listened to and respected.

Barochan was inspected in September 2022 with the inspectors providing a grade of Weak. The report highlighted a need for improvement in the management of the house and staff training. Work has commenced to address the areas for improvement required by the Care Inspectorate for Barochan. Elected Members have been informed of this work at the Education and Children's Services Policy Board and significant improvements have taken place within the children's house.

The Adoption Service and the Fostering Service were the subject of announced inspections by the Care Inspectorate between January and March 2023. The inspection of the Adoption Service focused on two quality indicators: 'How well do we support people's wellbeing?' and 'How well is our care and support planned?'. The Care Inspectorate graded the Adoption Service as good for the first indicator and very good for the second indicator. The inspection of the Fostering Service focused on the same quality indicators and inspectors graded the Fostering Service as good for both indicators.

No recommendations or requirements were made by the Care Inspectorate in relation to the Renfrewshire Adoption Service. Two areas of improvement were identified for the Fostering Service. The first relates to further develop the core training for foster carers. The second is that we ensure that children and young people have timely moves to permanent care, and that this is monitored robustly. The two areas of improvement are being actioned in the Fostering Development Plan for 2023/24.

Given the Care Inspectorate are returning to full operation, it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of Renfrewshire's services being subject to inspection in the next twelve months.

The following pages set out the performance of each of the three main areas of social work practice in Renfrewshire during 2022/23.

Statutory Service Provision: Adult Social Work and Social Care

In Renfrewshire, the delivery of adult social work and social care services is delegated to Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Mainstream social work services are delivered on a locality basis by two teams – one covering Paisley and the other covering the rest of the local authority area. As Chief Social Work Officer I provide professional leadership and advice to senior officers in RHSCP and to the wider social work and social care staff in adult services.

Throughout the period covered by this report social work and care staff in RHSCP continued to deliver services to those most in need.

The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) was commissioned by the Scottish Government, to design a minimum data set that works both locally and nationally to generate meaningful and comparable data. RHSCP was identified at an early stage to become a learning partner and help develop the new data set that better reflects the whole ASP journey. The new national minimum dataset has been designed, tested and rolled out across Scotland.

The volume of adult protection work in Renfrewshire continues to increase, and in 2022/23 we received 1,314 adult protection referrals, in comparison to 1,298 for 2021/22. There were 98 ASP Investigations completed during the period 2022/23, compared to previous end of year reporting 2021/22 of 91.

The highest number of investigations related to those with Dementia (31); followed by Mental Health (28) and then Learning Disability (21); and the principal types of harm which resulted in an investigation was financial (33); psychological (7); physical (20); sexual harm (5); neglect (9); self-harm (8); and other (14). The location of the principal harm, which resulted in an investigation taking place, remains the adult's own home, with 55 investigations having been carried out.

There has been a steep increase in Adults with Incapacity (AWI) work due to the end of Covid restrictions. This demand is for both private and local authority applications is a significant resource issue in terms of staff needed to complete applications, provide care management for the CSWO guardianships and supervision for private guardianships. The situation in Renfrewshire reflects the national picture for AWI increases. There is an added pressure locally for staff in RHSCP to ensure that the Royal Alexander Hospital meets its discharge targets and keeps its position as one of the most efficient performers in the country. The quality of work to plan for hospital discharges is of a high standard and reflects a rights based approach.

Orders where I, as the Chief Social Work Officer, am appointed Welfare Guardian have risen steeply from the previous year due to the end of Covid restrictions from 15 applications in 2021/22 to 40 in 2022/23. There are currently 138 orders (some still in progress) which requires a qualified social worker/Mental Health Officer (MHO) to act as the "nominated officer" on behalf of the CSWO for day-to-day management of the case. The 176 additional days added to guardianship orders in relation to renewals due to Covid is now ending and there have been 10 CSWO renewals since November 2022 which require MHO and legal input. In addition, the number of private applications has risen significantly from 47 in 2021/22 to 158 in 2022/23. The private guardianships require a minimum of one statutory visit by a guardianship supervisor after being granted but may need to be reviewed up to a year.

The MHO Service continues to deal with a high volume of work under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003. Demands for MHO consent to detention under the Act continues to rise since the pandemic and shows no sign of slowing. The pressures on NHS staffing are affecting the MHO service in terms of time management and monitoring Short Term Detention Certificate's and CTOs and attending meetings, CPAs etc with little notice. Currently there are 164 long term pieces of work (Compulsory Treatment Order CCTO etc) allocated within the MHO team. MHO staff also complete work with restricted patients.

Enhanced clinical and care oversight arrangements for care homes were put in place early in the pandemic to support care home staff to keep residents safe. The guidance required that clinical and care professional at NHS boards and local authorities will have a leading role in the oversight for care homes in their area. There has been considerable learning and examples of excellent partnership working during this time.

On 19 December 2022, the Chief Social Work Advisor and the Chief Nurse set out recommendations, for new arrangements for providing continuing enhanced support to adult and older people's care homes in Scotland. The recommendations have since been adopted in Renfrewshire and a Collaborative Care Home Support Team is in place. Local strategic oversight of these arrangements continues to be provided by the Chief Officer's Group who regularly monitored performance, scrutinised reports and established special meetings of the grouped as and when required.

Although our Care at Home services faced significant challenges, RHSCP were able to continue to support existing vulnerable service users whilst remaining responsive to the safe and timely discharge of patients from hospital. Renfrewshire was once again the highest performing HSCP area in Scotland at March 2023 for standard delays in discharge.

There were no Large-Scale Investigations during the reporting period. Care homes on the cusp of an LSI were managed under a preventative approach, where RHSCP balanced a supportive approach with a statutory duty under Adult Support and Protection legislation. The HSCP was proactive, as soon as issues were identified and deployed the necessary supports, via HSCP clinical teams.

As of 31st March 2023, approximately 1600 individuals had an open involvement with Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service. The Renfrewshire area has welcomed a reduction in the number of drug related deaths but there has been an increase in the number of alcohol related deaths. As CSWO, I recognise that behind all of these untimely deaths there is a family who experiences grief and distress. Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) is committed to continuing to work collaboratively to prevent and reduce alcohol and drug-related harms within communities with a number of key actions and developments currently underway.

Statutory Service Provision: Children and Families Social Work

The service operates a locality-based model for mainstream Children and Families Social Work, with four teams based across Paisley, Johnstone, and Renfrew. Focused support is provided by specialist teams in the areas of Fostering and Adoption, Kinship Care, Residential Services, Pre and Post Birth, Throughcare, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, Children with Disabilities, and the Whole Systems Team who support children and young people involved in the justice system.

The ongoing cost of living crisis and the longer-term impact of the pandemic have significantly impacted the children and families supported by the service. The service continues to monitor the impact of these and to adapt to the needs of children and families.

With the easing of restrictions, all Social Work offices are now fully operational. While the service continued to see children and families face-to-face throughout the pandemic, the easing of restrictions and improved access to office space has undoubtedly made seeing children and families and also facilitating family time easier for the service to coordinate. Child protection planning meetings (previously known as case conferences) once again take place on a face-to-face basis wherever possible with the option of hybrid attendance to ensure that the appropriate agencies can attend. Children's hearings have now returned to face-to-face.

Work is ongoing to implement the National Guidance for Child Protection 2021. The guidance has a two-year implementation period and changes implemented to date have included changes to terminology (with child protection case conferences now known as child protection planning meetings), changes to timescales and the involvement of education in Inter-agency Referral Discussions. Renfrewshire, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities) has commissioned consultants to update local child protection procedures to reflect the national guidance and these will be launched in September 2023.

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

All referrals for families within this geographical boundary are screened by the duty senior social worker and triaged using a screening tool. Where the initial screening identifies that the family might benefit from a targeted, time-limited package of support, and where it would be safe to do so, the referral is passed to the Early Help Service for assessment and interventions.

Building on the positive learning from the successful implementation of the Ren10 mental health and wellbeing family support service, progress continues to be made to develop Renfrewshire's approach to early and effective whole family support measures. The aim of the whole family wellbeing approach is to provide appropriate family supports, focussing on early intervention, and providing opportunities for children, young people, parents, and carers to shape the services that impact them. Local insight has presented a strong case that children and young people's needs are best understood and met within the context of their families.

Through the Scottish Government's Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, Children's Services is engaging with partners to develop collaborative proposals to address the needs of Renfrewshire's families in a way that is non-stigmatising, community-based, and underpinned by children's rights. There is recognition of the benefit to have services linked and access to support being in one place.

There is very good evidence of progress in Renfrewshire to #KeepThePromise, with significant developments underway and more planned across the service and throughout the council and its partners. The delivery of The Promise in Renfrewshire, led by Social Work, is ensuring a strongly committed multi-agency partnership working approach and demonstration of a collective understanding, commitment, and activity in relation to The Promise across all the partners. The Promise is a Priority High-level aim for Renfrewshire's Children's Services Partnership.

Implementation of The Promise in Renfrewshire has been further supported by the recruitment of a Promise Manager in late 2022. The Promise Ambassador, in role since July 2021, is supporting the implementation of The Promise across the local authority and plays an integral part in Renfrewshire's successful Promise Keeper Programme. The active and growing Promise Keeper Network has provided opportunities to incorporate The Promise into service planning and delivery. There are currently 118 Promise Keepers in place across the local authority, HSCP, and partner agencies. The network ensures cognisance is given to the needs and voices of those with care experience. This work is complemented by the development of a Promise Self-Evaluation Tool which, once

completed will enable services to review progress in #KeepingThePromise in key areas such as training and development, trauma-informed practice, and risk management.

In my role as Chief Social Work Officer, I am very well connected to The Promise national delivery mechanisms at COSLA, Promise Scotland and Scottish Government. Working with Renfrewshire's Promise Manager and Promise Ambassador I have hosted visits from COSLA and Promise Scotland to highlight our progress on implementation of The Promise.

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

Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee continues to monitor data in relation to referrals, investigations, child protection planning meetings and registrations. There were 338 Inter-agency Referral Discussions (IRDs) between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, relating to 492 children. Of these, 154 proceeded to a child protection investigation, and 42 to a child protection pre-birth investigation.

There were 78 children on the child protection register on 31 July 2022. There had been 212 new registrations and 14 de-registrations in the year ending 31 July 2022. On 31 March 2023, there were 80 children on the child protection register which was an increase from 61 in March 2022. The increase reflects the trend nationally which saw a decrease in registrations in during the three-year period up to July 2023 when registration then began to increase. Elected members are advised that the relatively small of children on the child protection register can result in significant variances due to the registration or deregistration of larger families.

Children's social work engages in a partnership approach with the police, RHSCP, education and other council services to ensure the protection of children at risk of harm is a priority.

The largest areas of concern pertaining to child protection registration continued to be domestic abuse, parental substance use, neglect, and parental mental health. There were 23 Child Protection Orders granted during the year, slightly higher than the previous year's figure of 21. Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee and its subgroups continue to meet to discuss key trends and emerging areas of focus.

The rate of children in care in Renfrewshire on 31st July 2022 was 1.2%. While it remains higher than the Scottish average, it is a decrease from 1.7% in July 2021.

592 children were looked after on 31 July 2022 which is similar to the figure of 591 in July 2021. Of these:

- 146 were at home with parents
- 230 were with friends/relatives
- 111 were with foster carers provided by the council
- 45 were with foster carers provided by independent agencies
- 9 were in supported accommodation
- 17 were in local authority children's house
- 34 were in independent care houses or residential schools

An initial Quality Improvement Framework for Children's Services social work was introduced in November 2022. The Quality Improvement Framework will be evaluated and further developed to support the re-design of children and justice social work over the next 12 months.

Statutory Service Provision: Justice Social Work

Throughout 2022/23 Justice Social Work has continued to adapt and respond creatively to the challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. Service delivery has returned to pre-pandemic provision, with staff office based and able to deliver a face-to-face service, as expected by national guidance and required to best support service users. We continue to meet statutory obligations and provide support and interventions for some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

The volume of work generated by court and tribunal services continued to increase throughout the year. This reflects ongoing measures to address the still significant backlog stemming from the pandemic. Provisional information shows the service completed 706 Criminal Justice Social Work Reports (CJSW reports) 2022/23 compared to 639 in 2021/22. Though this is still not at pre-Covid levels (966 in 2019/20) it demonstrates a significant uplift in year-on-year work. Diversion interventions have doubled from 54 in 2021/22 to 110 in 2022/23. Diversion cases have also increased in complexity on the basis of changes to the Lord Advocate Guidance, particularly in relation to young people. This is currently under review nationally.

This is also evidenced in the number of new Community Payback Orders, which has increased from 369 in 2021/22 to 450 in 2022/23 (provisional figures). This shows ongoing recovery towards pre-Covid figure of 561 recorded in 2019/20.

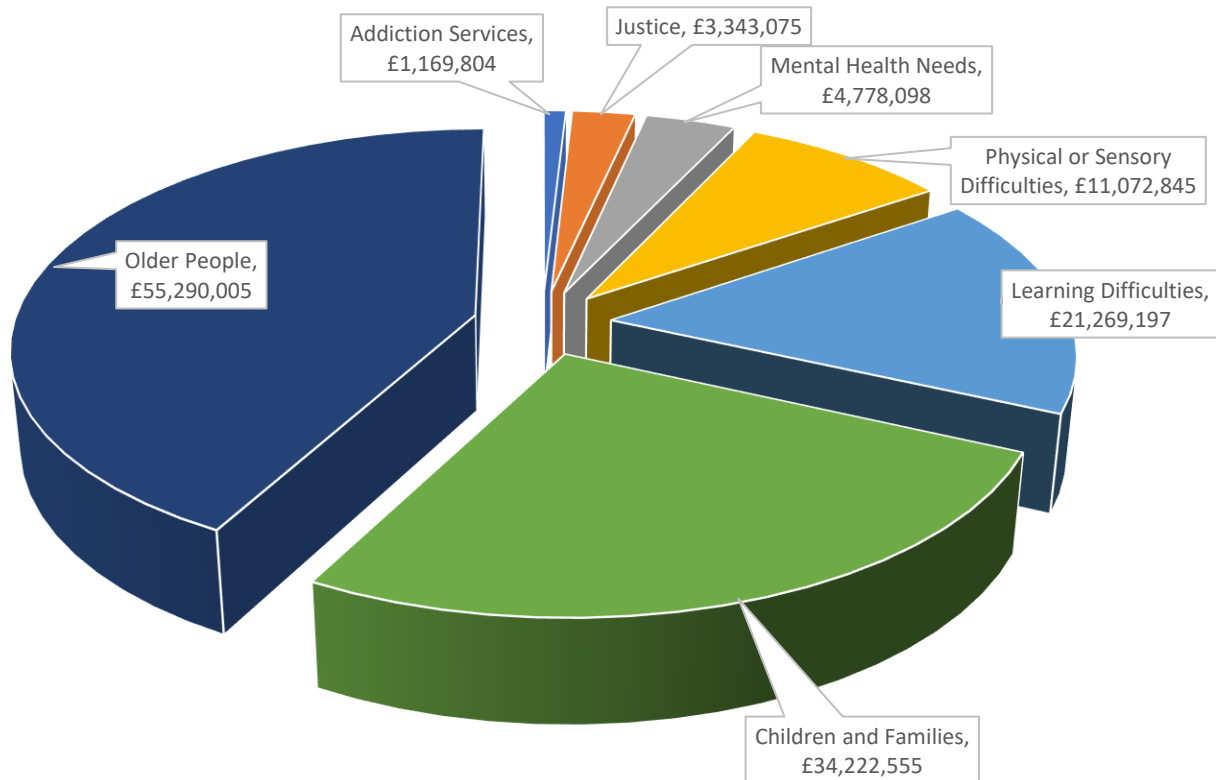
Renfrewshire's Justice Social Work service has worked hard to respond to these increasing demands by reviewing and prioritising workloads to ensure resources are in place to support people with convictions, on community orders and on release from custody. This maintains focus on those with high levels of risk and need. Significant challenges are arising from staffing changes and recruitment difficulties, something that has rarely been a challenge for justice social work in the past.

Working practice has adapted in accordance with safe working requirements to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff and service users. Unpaid work has progressed from home working to community provision. Groupwork continued to be prioritised and has returned to pre pandemic levels.

Within 2023/24 in response to the government vision of reducing remand and engaging with individuals at the earliest point, and limiting their involvement in the justice system, an Early Intervention service is under development to employ additional paraprofessional staff to undertake new services. Electronic Monitoring bail (tagging) commences on 17 May 2023, as will the provision of Structured Deferred Sentences. Additional staff, temporary until 2026 due to funding, will be employed in 2023/24 to enable the creation of a bail supervision service, extend diversion for more complex cases and develop voluntary supervision and post custody supports.

Resources

The chart below shows the breakdown of expenditure on social work by Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire in 2022/23. As in previous years, the largest area of expenditure is on services for older people, followed by services for children and families. Funding for Justice Social Work comes directly from the Scottish Government by means of a grant.



A substantial overspend was incurred within Children & Families relating to external residential accommodation placements, due to a significant increase in the number and cost of complex care packages. All external placements are held under continual review by the service to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the individual children and young people, and options to mitigate cost pressures continue to be examined.

We are currently modelling the coming year financial planning in terms of overall cost/service pressure. In addition, other financial pressures related to inflation, particularly fuel and food prices and also workforce pay inflation will also be factored into this modelling.

Workforce

Social Work Services in Renfrewshire have continued to experience significant challenges during 2022/23 in relation to the workforce as we experienced a high number of vacancies throughout the year. This has been compounded by a national shortage of social workers and social care workers. We are also experiencing staff shortages at the highest level in the past decade. This position is not unique to Renfrewshire and is in fact replicated across Scotland and indeed the United Kingdom. The pandemic made many people consider their future career path with the consequence being that the sector is under extreme pressure and is struggling even to fill gaps with agency social workers. Vacancy levels are being closely monitored and appropriate action taken when necessary to mitigate associated risks.

In addition to a higher number of vacancies than previously, increasingly we have a workforce which is less experienced as candidates applying for posts have only recently left university. New qualified and inexperienced staff require a higher level of support and cannot be allocated the same complexity of work that a more experienced social worker can undertake.

Workload demands are considered on a regular basis and action taken where necessary to align resources to known operational pressure points.

Our approach to induction for our new staff is evolving with initial work underway to reflect the new "first year in practice" assessment for social workers. The learning will be shared across our staff groups to support our staff retention model. Support forums, coaching, mini tailored learning sessions and a focus on the core task supported by self-directed learning ownership.

The new national guidance for children protection and the partner policy for adult protection are being embedded in all of our training materials reflecting the new ways of working and the human rights-based approach. The learning materials reflect the materials in a range of styles as delivery has progressed and learned from Covid delivery innovation.

A partnership approach with Barnardo's which aims to support families on the edge of social work involvement to mitigate the need for subsequent social worker involvement is currently underway. This community-based model of time-limited assessment and intervention is showing positive impact and will be rolled out to other childcare duty teams in the coming months.

Renfrewshire Adult Protection Committee (RAPC) oversees the effectiveness of our adult protection practice. RAPC will be implementing the revisions for the Scottish Government's revised Code of Practice for ASP. A workplan is currently being developed based around what is required to implement to revisions operationally, and then this will expand to consider what is required strategically, and with partner agencies. As part of the phased approach to implementation, a series of briefings are being rolled out to staff and the data management system will be updated.

Our care at home staff group continues to operate in a pressured environment. Ensuing staff are supported and offered learning to meet the demands of their role has had a renewed focus. Our initial learning programme has been updated and reflects the role and

task, coached eLearning modules have been developed and introduced, building on the technology journey that this staff group are on, with more to follow.

In closing this report, I want to acknowledge the commitment of staff across social work services. The Renfrewshire workforce are skilled and knowledgeable, committed to delivering quality support, and to improving outcomes for those who we are working with. My personal and professional thanks to the workforce. I'm proud to work with them and have the opportunity to lead and support them.

“In social services alone, and there,
Not only care but cure: a worker assigned
To be with her throughout school, helping, calming,
A bridge of sympathy between teacher and pupil,
A dedication not far from love.”

From Brothers and Keepers by Edwin Morgan