

To: Council

On: 29 September 2022

Report by: Chief Social Work Officer

Heading: Chief Social Work Officer Report 2021 – 2022/Update on Fostering and Adoption Panels

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Chief Social Work Officer provides an annual update report to Council in 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 Council the role of Chief Social Work Officer is held by the Head of Childcare and Criminal Justice.
 - 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 2021/22 and is attached at appendix 1.
 - 1.3 At the meeting of Council held on 19 May 2022 Council agreed that consideration of appointment of members to the Adoption and Fostering Panel would be continued and instructed the Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice to bring a report back to Council in respect of these appointments.
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2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Elected Members:

- 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 the report will be submitted to the Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor at the Scottish Government;
- Agree that the next annual report from the Chief Social Work Officer will be presented in Autumn 2023; and
- Note the information in relation to the membership of the Adoption and Fostering Panels, agree that council doesn't make appointment to these panels and any elected member who is interested in being a member contact the Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice for further information.

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, 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.
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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) Specifics 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 2021/22**

- 5.1 The report attaches 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 2021/22. 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 2023.

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 2021/22 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. Services continued to operate and transition through recovery, whilst following public health measures governing national and local restrictions.
- 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 2022/23

- 6.4 Based on an assessment of internal and external factors the CWSO 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 development of the Children's Services 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;
 - The new social work case management system within Justice Social Work;

- Ensure that the voice of local social work staff influences the development of the National Care Service.

7 Adoption and Fostering Panel Membership

- 7.1 At the meeting of Council held on 19 May 2022 Council agreed that consideration of appointment of members to the Adoption and Fostering Panel was continued to allow this report to be considered.
- 7.2 For many years Council appointed elected members to the Fostering and Adoption Panels at the statutory meeting immediately following the local authority election. During 2020 children's services reviewed and updated the constitutions of the Fostering and Adoption Panels. The revised constitution was considered and approved at the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 21 January 2021. The new constitution removed the provision that council make appointments to the Fostering and Adoption Panel.
- 7.3 The constitution sets the panel membership as "...no less than six persons, including at least one man and at least one woman, representing the local community it serves. The Panel shall include a qualified Medical Practitioner, preferably a Paediatrician, who will act as a Medical Adviser; and a Solicitor or Advocate who will act as Legal Adviser. Other members should, where possible, include a permanent foster carer or adopter, a current or previous child care manager from Children's Services, an education officer such as a head teacher, a psychologist, an independent representative from a relevant child care agency and a manager of the fostering and adoption team who will act as Panel adviser and who will be a non-voting member."
- 7.4 The updated constitution set a new approach to terms of office which are different to the term of office of elected members. The term of office for the Fostering and Adoption Panels is three years compared to the five-year term of elected members.
- 7.5 The Fostering and Adoption Panels meet monthly, and members are expected to attend at least 50% of the meetings. Not all elected members who were appointed by the Council were able to meet the 50% target of attendance at meetings. In addition, the preparation for meeting is significant with members having to review a substantial number of reports on those applying to be foster carers or adoptive carers and in relation to the long-term planning of children.
- 7.6 Over the years the involvement of elected members has been welcomed and recognised as of benefit to the Fostering and Adoption Panels. Some elected members have made significant contribution to the Panels and there should continue to be an opportunity for them to do so. To facilitate this any elected member who wishes to be a member of the Fostering and Adoption Panel should contact the Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice for further information and they would then be appointed in line with the constitution.
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Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community/Council 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. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** – None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have no negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals’ human rights because it is for noting only. 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 website.
8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** - Risks related to the management and delivery of social work services are closely monitored and are included within both the Children’s Services and, where appropriate, the Corporate Risk Register.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None
13. **Climate Change** – None

List of Background Papers

- (a) [The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer](#) – Guidance Issues by Scottish Ministers
- (b) [Chief Social Work Officers Annual Report Summary 2020-2021](#)
- (c) Annual report of the Fostering and Adoption Service 2019/20
[Update on developments for Looked After Children and Fostering Service](#) – Education and Children’s Services Policy Board 21 January 2021

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Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer

2021/22

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to 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 2021 to March 2022. 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 basis.

This report provides an overview of social work and care activity during a period where the whole country continued to be impacted for by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this annual report I attempt to demonstrate the commitment of social work and care staff to ensure that those who were most vulnerable to the challenges posed by the pandemic were supported and the care they required was delivered and the learning considered and informed the service recovery planning. The delivery of care was impacted by the changing restrictions of the pandemic however staff from social work and care remained on the front line throughout.

Scottish Government has set out the vision for a new National Care Service which will be accountable to Ministers, with services designed and delivered locally. This is an evolving landscape, which we will continue to participate in and contribute to this significant national agenda.

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 and the Criminal Justice Services Manager. 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 doesn't 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 2022

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. 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'm active in the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care governance arrangements.

As the Chief Social Worker in Renfrewshire, I have operational responsibilities in my post as Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice and line managed in that post 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 Integrated Joint Board.

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

Structure	Role
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporate Management Team• Head of Service Meetings
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Services Management Team• Education and Children's Service Policy Board
Integrated 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

Duty of Candour Statement for 2021/22

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 requirement for organisations to provide an annual statement detailing how the duty of candour is implemented across services. This brief statement describes how Renfrewshire Council has operated the duty of candour during the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. During this period, there were no incidents where the 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 condition).

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'm 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 front-line 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 and Covid recovery work, a priority for me will be ongoing engagement with the Scottish Government's on the National Care Service. The vision set out by Scottish Government would have a considerable impact on the social work and social care workforce as well as on people who use these services and will need to be a focus for ongoing consideration, engagement and participation 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

As a statutory service, social work provision continued throughout the various phases of restriction, and as we transition out of Covid-19, we continued to deliver services and develop strong foundations.

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 areas 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 the period covered by this report the Care Inspectorate was continuing to operate a reduced programme of inspections. As a result, only one of the Renfrewshire registered services were inspected over the past twelve months. The service was graded in two areas as good and two areas as adequate. The service took immediate action to address the two areas graded as adequate and has an improvement plan in place to increase grades for future inspections.

Looking back at the most recent inspection for those services not inspected in period covered by this report almost all have been graded as good or very good.

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. None of the most recent Renfrewshire inspections have required these procedures to be initiated as no service has been graded weak or unsatisfactory.

Given the Care Inspectorate are returning to full operation it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of Renfrewshire's registered 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 2021/22. This includes information about how the service recovers from Covid-19 and the incorporates learning which arose from delivering services through a pandemic.

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 Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership continued to deliver services to those most in need. There were, as a result of the restrictions required by the pandemic, some changes to how some services were delivered.

The three care homes, Hunterhill, Montrose and Renfrew continued to operate throughout the pandemic with staff having to work to ensure that those who live in the homes had as close to a normal experience as possible whilst managing the risks and restrictions in place. The care staff worked closely with staff from environment and infrastructure to deliver care and support to the residents. Staff from other areas also supported the operation of the care homes.

Although our Care at Home services faced significant challenges, the HSCP were able to continue to support existing vulnerable service users whilst remaining responsive to the safe and timely discharge of patients from hospital.

The volume of adult protection work continues to increase, and in 2021/22 Renfrewshire received 4,263 adult welfare concern and adult protection referrals. Of these, 1,444 were adult protection concerns and 2,819 were adult welfare concerns. The total referral number for 2021/22 reflects a 22% increase in the referral rate as compared to the 2020/21 financial year, which was a 12% rise on the previous year.

Following initial inquiries, 88 adult protection investigations were conducted, a decrease from 112 the previous year. 29 of these investigations resulted in an Initial Adult Protection Case Conference, a decrease from 51 in 2020/21.

To ensure that people using our services were kept safe from harm during the pandemic, the Renfrewshire Adult Protection Committee (RAPC) met on a regular basis to consider adult support and protection governance from both operational and strategic perspectives, including: the impact of COVID-19 and associated risks and national guidance; specific adult support and protection concerns; and an analysis of data and identification of any actions required.

During the year, four large-scale investigations were carried out in private sector care homes across Renfrewshire, as a response to concerns raised by HSCP staff and by the

Care Inspectorate. Enhanced governance arrangements and safeguards were put in place in these four establishments.

Adults with Incapacity work remains a significant demand pressure, and the situation in Renfrewshire reflects the national picture of having to manage an increasing number of guardianships and supervise private guardianships. Orders where the Chief Social Work Officer is appointed Welfare Guardian rose in recent years, from 79 in March 2015 to 125 in March 2022 (up from 115 in March 2021). Each order requires a qualified social worker to act as the “nominated officer” on behalf of the CSWO for day-to-day management of the case. In addition, there are in excess of approximately 485 private welfare guardianship orders running throughout Renfrewshire. These require a minimum of one statutory visit by a guardianship supervisor after being granted.

The MHO Service continued to deal with a high volume of work under both the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Adults with Incapacity Act 2000. Demands for MHO consent to detention under the act has risen by approximately 25-30% since the pandemic and shows no sign of slowing, this picture is reflected nationally. Work under Adult with Incapacity and the provision of MHO reports for applications for guardianships is also up by 25% and like the mental health act work demand continues to remain high. The pressures on the service for reports where a hospital delayed discharge is involved also creates additional pressures for the service. The total number of MHO's in the authority has reduced since last year as result of staff moving to other employment. There remains a constant challenge of recruiting sufficient MHO's to maintain the service capacity and also for existing social workers to undertake training to gain the MHO qualification in order to fulfil the duties of an MHO.

As of 31st March 2022, 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. 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 & families social work, with four teams based across the three largest towns in Renfrewshire. Specialist teams provide focused support 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.

Throughout 2021/22 the service continued to adapt to the needs of children and families as the longer-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic became apparent. Securing office accommodation that satisfied safe working guidance was a particular challenge, with teams such as Whole Systems, Renfrewshire Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Resource and the Women and Children's First Service impacted most severely by this disruption. As accommodation became available, locality teams quickly made use of this to deliver their duty service and facilitate family contact time. Child protection case conferences were provided via a hybrid model, with parents, social work staff and other professionals accessing from offices and through video calls. An increasing number of children's hearings took place on a face-to-face basis, progressing work previously delayed because of the pandemic.

Children's houses continued to operate to meet the needs of the young people who live there. The children's houses have maintained a high-quality support for young people throughout and the period following the pandemic.

The emotional and mental wellbeing of our children and young people was previously identified as a risk factor prior to the pandemic, and significant work was undertaken throughout 2021/22 to address their immediate needs and develop a sustainable approach that embeds this provision in the longer term. A new multi-agency service called Ren10 was launched to improve families' access to health and wellbeing support, by providing appropriate and proportionate help at the time it's needed most. Ren10 seeks to bridge the gap between universal services that deal broadly with wellbeing and the highly special support for more severe mental health conditions. Ren10 is part way through implementation, and key activity has included the development of Non-violence Resistance Approaches, Child Psychology Parent Drop Ins, inter-agency training and extensive digital supports. Interventions are framed within a context of open access to ensure families who believe they will benefit can seek support timeously. Over 1000 children and young people have been directly supported by a Ren10 resource, 125 of whom were care experienced. The added value of the partner collaboration has been critical to Ren10's success, and previously distinct services and teams are more integrated and benefit from enhanced communication.

Very good progress has been made in supporting the implementation of The Promise in Renfrewshire and raising its profile amongst key partners. A Promise Ambassador was recruited in July 2021 to support the implementation of The Promise across the local authority and drive forward the key recommendations of The Independent Care Review. A large component of this role has been to raise the profile of The Promise through engaging with a wide range of staff teams and partners. Through awareness raising sessions, points of interest and relevance are highlighted to ensure all partners understand what role they play in ensuring that care experienced children and young people are appropriately

supported. To support this work further, a set of values have been developed for professionals to #KeepthePromise. Promise Keepers are formally recruited and are responsible for acting as a champion for The Promise, ensuring that the recommendations and priorities remain at the forefront of discussions around service delivery and design. Good progress has been made to establish The Promise Self-Evaluation tool, which will be used to identify areas of best practice that can be shared to encourage partnership learning between staff teams and identify where services require further support to fully implement The Promise.

Information on referrals, investigations, conferences and registrations continued to be monitored by the Child Protection Committee. During 2021/22 there were 111 new registrations and 121 deregistrations, roughly in line with that reported in 2020/21. A total of 61 children were the register as of 31 March 2022, fewer than the 71 reported as at the 31st March 2021. The biggest areas of concern pertaining to child protection registration continued to be domestic violence, neglect, parental mental health problems and parental drug misuse. There were 21 Child Protection Orders granted during the year, slightly higher than the previous year's figure of 15. 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 when measured as at 31st July 2021 was 1.7%. Although this remains higher than the Scottish average figure of 1.3%, the rate reflects the long-term efforts of the service to reduce the number of children in care, particularly those in foster care and residential provision. The number of looked after children in Renfrewshire who are cared for in kinship, foster or residential care has reduced from 517 in 2012 to 427 in 2021. The number of children in independent sector foster care has reduced by 56.3% over a ten-year period. By comparison, internal foster care numbers have reduced by 21.4% and kinship care has increased by 12.9% over the same period.

Statutory Service Provision: Justice Social Work

Throughout 2021-22 Justice Social Work has continued to adapt and respond creatively to the challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. This approach enabled the service to meet its 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 increased throughout the year. This reflects measures that came into effect to address the significant backlog stemming from the pandemic. Provisional information shows the service completed 693 Criminal Justice Social Work Reports (CJSW reports) 2021/22 compared to 472 in 2020/21. Though this is not at pre-Covid levels (966 in 2019/20) it demonstrates a significant uplift in year-on-year work. This is also evidenced in the number of new Community Payback Orders, which has increased from 218 in 2020/21 to 369 in 2021/22. This shows 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 need and those who present a risk to the community.

Working practice has adapted in accordance with safe working requirements to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff and clients. Creative solutions such as home-based unpaid work activity brought in during the height of the pandemic have continued, allowing clients to progress their orders safely within required timeframes. Groupwork activity continues to be prioritised where safe to do so, with group sizes increasing when restrictions have allowed. The service remains committed to overcoming challenges relating to client accommodation and transport, particularly in terms of capacity constraints. Efforts continue to identify safe and appropriate venues that allow provision to be delivered at an appropriate pace. The service has also taken steps to meet the increased demand for weekend provision, owing to a higher number of clients in weekday employment.

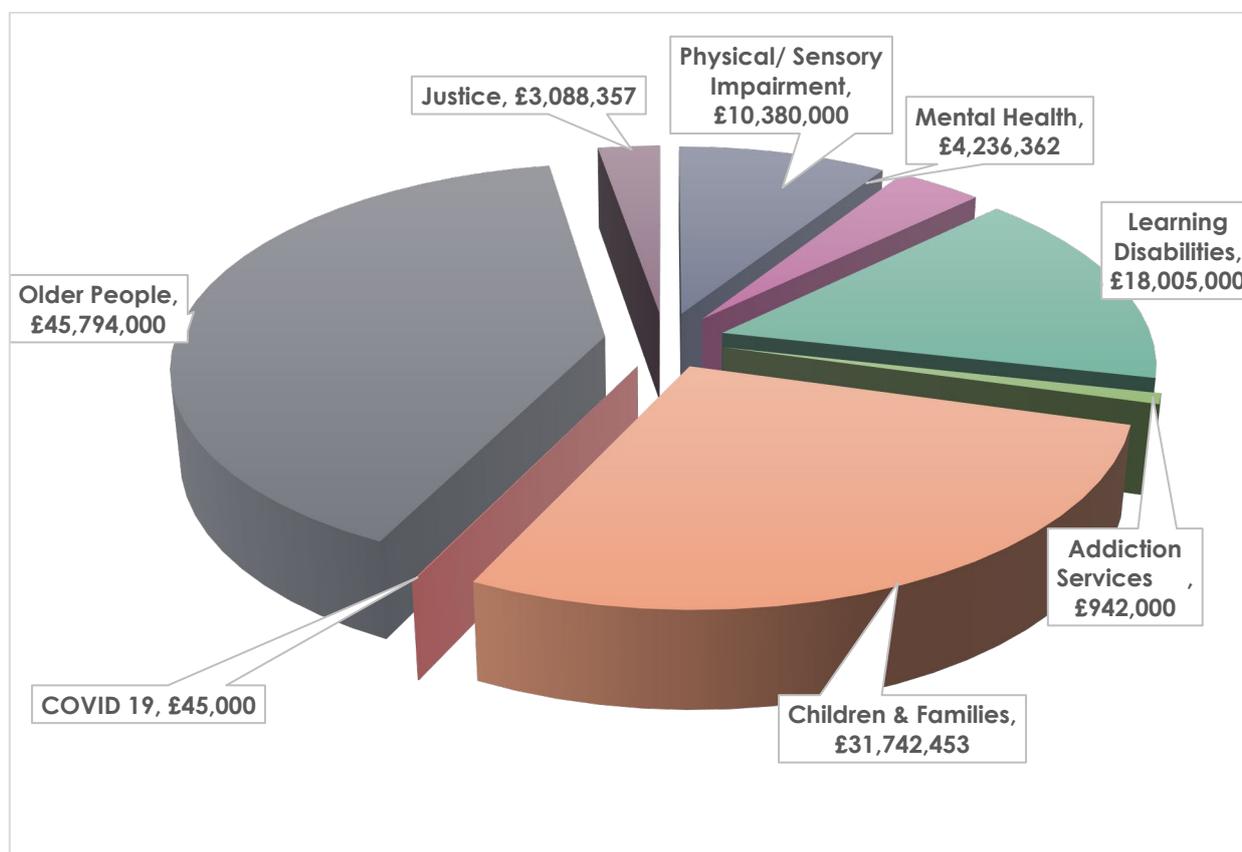
Throughout 2021/11 Justice Social Work provided a Voluntary Throughcare service to support people with the transition from custody to our communities. This support has helped ensure such individuals have the means to access vital services that facilitate reintegration and provide the best possible chance of going on to attain positive outcomes. This service is offered to all individuals in Renfrewshire released from short custodial sentences.

A temporary post, established through CORRA foundation funding and as agreed through the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, has yielded an analysis of pathways between justice social work and addiction services in relation to information sharing and standardisation. This will be developed further over the coming year, with learning used to improve the interface between these areas of work.

Preparation has commenced in relation to alternatives for demand (electronic monitoring assessments, provision of bail supervision, alternatives to custody such as Structured Deferred Sentences) to ensure the service is aligned and appropriately resourced to support government requirements.

Resources

The chart below shows the breakdown of expenditure on social work by Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire in 2021/22. 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.



There have been significant pressures on services during 2021/22 and Renfrewshire Council has ensured that appropriate funding has been allocated to children and justice social work. A substantial overspend is anticipated within Children & Families relating to external Residential Accommodation placements, the number of which is currently around 80% higher than it had been in 2020/21. This is due to the complexity of cases arising in recent months coupled with the additional number of placements required, this presents a significant cost pressure to the service. The cost pressures relating to external Residential Accommodation placements have continued to build since the latter part of 2021 22, and in that financial year the impact was mitigated through the application of COVID 19 funding where appropriate.

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

The challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic have continued to impact the delivery of social work throughout 2021/22. Whilst operational solutions have been identified to meet the needs of our communities, cognisance has also been given to the associated impact on social work staff and the measures required to ensure their wellbeing and development needs are satisfied.

The service has consolidated this work into a Covid Recovery Plan which seeks to address the following areas:

- Return to office accommodation
- Revisions to Social Work Policy and Procedure Manual
- Staff training and development programme
- Targeted capacity enhancements at critical points of service
- Development of a new collaborative, community-based early intervention model, and
- Improved recruitment process

The service has made significant progress in returning to office-based delivery from a largely home-based working approach in 2020/21. This change – delivered at a pace in accordance with safe working guidance - has increased the opportunities for in-person contact between individual social work colleagues and teams, and fostered the associated benefits of peer learning, reflection, and general professional and personal support. This is invaluable for all staff, and particularly those new to the profession who benefit from the advice and support from more experienced colleagues. Whilst home-working by arrangement will continue to provide flexibility to staff who require it, it is anticipated at least 80% of the workforce will attend the office on any given day.

The service has revised its Work Policies and Procedures manual to improve the relevance and legibility of practice expectations to social work staff. The new manual forms the basis of quality improvement activity and complements the wider training and development programme. New and inexperienced staff will be a training priority over the coming months, with the structure, format and content of these sessions shaped by a series of planned engagement events to establish the challenges, lessons learned and opportunities relevant to this staff group. All training and development will reflect our core competency framework, ensuring staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence around the key practice areas of risk, vulnerability, recording and home visiting. More experienced staff will be invited to contribute their insight to these sessions, adopting a mentoring role which it is aimed will prompt practice reflection.

Additional work is underway align resources to known operational pressure points to make best use of available capacity, both in house and that available through our local partners. An emerging partnership approach with Barnardo's will aim to support families on the edge of social work involvement to mitigate the need for subsequent social worker involvement. This community-based model of time-limited assessment and intervention has shown itself to work well in other areas by reducing social work referrals. This local pilot will be a key learning opportunity that will inform local workforce planning.

Recruitment to vacant posts remains a key challenge across social work and social care in Renfrewshire. We experienced a high number of social work vacancies throughout 2021/22, compounded by a national shortage of social workers. Work in partnership with colleagues in HR to ensure that critical front-line posts are filled as quickly as possible is progressing. A new process has been agreed on a trial basis with a named officer to support each social worker recruitment. Weekly progress reports on recruitment are being provided to the relevant senior manager to ensure appropriate actions are taken timeously.

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Walking and singing through forests of music,
But let us have the decency of a society
That helps those who cannot help themselves.
It can be done; it must be done; so do it.”

From *Brothers and Keepers* by Edwin Morgan