

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

15 December 2021

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

**Report by Chief Social Work Officer
(Report No. 21/244)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides the Chief Social Work Officer's overview of social work services in Perth and Kinross during the financial year 2020/21. It sets out how social care and social work and criminal justice social work services, have been delivered up until the end of March 2021, and in some instances, up to the end of July 2021.

It covers the key challenges in responding to COVID-19 in support of our most vulnerable and at-risk citizens for a full year and describes the impact that this has had on demand for services and how teams have adapted to new ways of working. The report also details the arrangements to enable the Chief Social Work Officer to fulfil the responsibilities outlined in Section 5 (1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (as amended).

1. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 requires every local authority to appoint a single Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO).
- 1.2 Scottish Ministers published statutory guidance in 2016 on the role of the CSWO for local authorities and partnerships which have certain social work functions delegated to them. The CSWO role was established to ensure the provision of appropriate professional advice in the discharge of the full range of the local authority's statutory functions and the updated guidance sets out the importance of the CSWO role within Integrated Joint Boards.
- 1.3 The CSWO is accountable to elected members of the Council and must be:
 - A qualified social worker, registered with the Scottish Social Services Council;
 - Designated as a 'proper officer' of the local authority;
 - Of sufficient seniority and experience in both the operational and strategic management of social work services; and
 - A non-voting member of the integration authority.
- 1.4 The CSWO is a role and function, rather than a specific job description and is therefore distinct from the post holder's operational management responsibilities and from the role of the Chief Officer of the integration authority.

It is for the CSWO to use their authority to challenge and intervene when proposals may have a detrimental impact on vulnerable citizens or to the workforce on whom they depend. In leading the social care and social work profession, the CSWO provides:

- Professional independent advice to the Chief Executive and elected members in relation to the discharge of the local authority's statutory functions as outlined in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968;
- Strategic and professional leadership in the delivery of social work services;
- Assistance to local authorities and their partners in understanding the complexities and cross-cutting nature of social work services and the key role they play in meeting local and national outcomes; and
- Support for performance management and the management of corporate risk.

1.5 Together with the CSWO, elected members have duties to oversee that effective, professional and high-quality social work and social care services are delivered to professional standards. The annual CSWO report, and its consideration by Perth and Kinross Council and the Perth and Kinross Integrated Joint Board, is one important way to accomplish this. The CSWO annual report is an opportunity to gauge the quality of performance of social work and social care services and to identify the challenges for continuing to meet the needs of local people and communities into the future.

1.6 Over 2020/21, the CSWO role was carried out by Jacquie Pepper alongside her responsibilities as Depute Director (Education and Children's Services). The Head of Adult Social Work and the Head of Services for Children, Young People and Families deputise and provide cover when required.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 The Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser (CSWA) uses all 32 CSWO Reports to produce a national summary report and this provides an opportunity to set our local social care and social work services in the wider national context.

2.2 The report considers how social work and social care services have been delivered over the last financial year (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021). It identifies the challenges which have faced social work and social care services as a result of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and how new demands and trends are emerging. This year, the report emphasises how teams have and are continuing to adapt, and where possible, tells this story through the experiences at team level. There are many examples of inventive and adaptive changes to working practices, including increased use of technology and the introduction of virtual meetings to ensure that essential services are maintained. Many of these changes have proven to be efficient and effective and work will be taken forward in the renewal and recovery work in due course.

2.3 The report illustrates how social care and social work services delivered outcomes for service users over 2020/21 including:

- Moving temporarily to 7-day cover in adult services between April and June 2020 to manage hospital discharges and increased activity in the Home Assessment Recovery Team (HART);
- The Perth and Kinross Care Home Oversight Group (inclusive of the Health and Social Care Partnership, Health Protection, Scottish Care and the Care Inspectorate representatives) was formed in May 2020 and has provided assurance and support across the sector;
- Managing a 14% increase in Adult Support and Protection concerns and a 22% increase in inquiries and investigations while at the same time improving performance in timescales;
- Maintaining a healthy number of Mental Health Officers and providing 24/7 cover to meet statutory requirements and in legal processes;
- Managing a 10% increase in Vulnerable Persons Reports via the ACCESS Team and responding to a significant increase in mental distress by augmenting the team with Mental Health Nurses;
- Supporting the early release of prisoners through the Criminal Justice Social Work teams and with key partners between May and July 2020;
- Adapting arrangements for Unpaid Work in accordance with Scottish Government guidance;
- Continuing to implement a new project (now called EVOLVE) specifically for men open to Criminal Justice Social Work Services;
- Continuing to achieve a balance of care for children who are looked after in the community at 96% for the third year running;
- Continuing to provide flexible 24/7 support for young people on the edges of care;
- Expansion of intensive flexible family support services for families with younger children, providing support in the evenings and weekends;
- Responding to increases in Unborn Baby Referrals and important changes in the age profile of children subject to Child Protection Plans (with more unborn babies and infants than experienced before);
- Achieving a fivefold increase in the number of children being provided with independent advocacy with a 96% uptake; and
- The number of children looked after as at 31 July 2021 has remained relatively stable compared to 2020.

2.4 During 2020/21, social work and social care staff have successfully adapted ways of working to care for and protect the most vulnerable people across all communities in Perth and Kinross. The CSWO is confident that staff across all sectors have done everything possible to minimise the impact of COVID-19 and have acted professionally and safely throughout this last year.

2.5 The CSWO's report highlights the significantly higher workload as a result of COVID-19, particularly at our "front door" services. In October 2020, Council approved the equivalent of 4.0 full time equivalent (FTE) temporary additional social work staff for Services for Children Young People and Families to ensure capacity within the Child Protection Duty Team and that resources were not directed away from preventative and earlier intervention.

The data in this report shows that this has had a positive impact on performance and outcomes for children.

2.6 In October 2021, funding was announced by the Health Secretary, Humza Yousaf, to support an NHS and Care Winter Package which, among a range of measures, includes funding to enhance capacity for social work assessments. This, in addition to funding to support additional mental health social worker capacity, will ease pressures in adult social work services over the next year.

2.7 The key challenges going into 2021/22 will be:

- Pressing ahead with review and transformation, in line with the Perth and Kinross Offer, where there are demand pressures and to secure earlier intervention and prevention including:
 - Developing new models of support for adults with complex needs and to improve transitions from children to adult services.
 - Continued development of technology enabled care.
 - The increased demand in relation to adults with incapacity or mental disorder.
- Continuing to meet our corporate parenting responsibilities through a revised Corporate Parenting Plan and responding to the recommendations of the Independent Care Review set out in The Promise to achieve whole systems change for care experienced children and young people;
- Continuing the support for care home and care at home services to manage the ongoing impact of COVID-19, focusing on infection prevention and control, and managing the additional demands arising from that and workforce pressures;
- Implementation of a new fit for purpose social work and social care IT system and associated staff development;
- Embedding positive changes to working practices, including the use of technology;
- Managing the financial pressures and increasing demands across all sectors;
- Responding to workforce pressures and recruitment challenges in social care services;
- Working in partnership with key third sector organisations to deliver a range of essential services and continuing to explore areas for collaboration and jointly commissioning services with partners; and
- Developing and implementing new workforce development programmes in trauma-informed practices, public protection and disseminating learning from case reviews.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 The CSWO's assessment of performance over 2020/21 is that overall performance in securing high quality experiences for people who use social work and social care services has remained good despite major challenges. This report focuses on the ways in which all of the diverse teams have responded to the pandemic by changing their working practices, adhering to

national guidance and responding to increasingly complex circumstances and entrenched difficulties. It sets out how staffing levels have been maintained and demonstrates the benefit of strong teamwork in social care and public protection.

The demand for social work and social care services has increased as the pandemic continues, and it is to the Council's credit, that the value of early help and support has continued to be recognised, and that in Perth and Kinross, the shift towards prevention and earlier intervention has been preserved.

- 3.2 The continued improvements in outcomes for children and young people in need of care are demonstrated. This shows that the focus on prevention is having a positive impact on outcomes, bringing down spend on external residential placements and reducing the number of children requiring intervention through child protection measures and a Child Protection Plan. Within adult services, the strong partnership approach that exists at team and practitioner level continues to be evident. The changes in practices such as the implementation of multi-agency Initial Referral Discussions in adult support and protection is improving the effectiveness of the initial response to adults at risk. Determined and committed staff are delivering a high quality of service to our citizens and continuing to innovate, improve and adapt practices. That is a huge achievement and demonstration of the contribution our social care and social work staff can make to the experience of our most vulnerable citizens.
- 3.3 There is a need to ensure that staff receive support for their health and wellbeing to stay well and to continue to provide essential and critical services in the longer term. This is recognised both locally and nationally and the Scottish Government announced additional funding for practical support measures for the health and social care workforce from November 2021. A Perth and Kinross Wellbeing Steering Group has been established to implement a local plan of support.
- 3.4 This report provides examples of social work and social care professionals leading the redesign of services towards prevention, earlier intervention and personalisation. This innovation and investment in new ways of working are now making significant inroads to addressing longstanding pressures in areas such as residential care for young people. Continued investment in a skilled, adaptable, and digitally aware workforce, which is supported by a more advanced IT system to replace the existing case management system, will be key over the next few years.
- 3.5 It is recommended that Council:
 - (i) Approves the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1.

Author

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Jacquie Pepper	Chief Social Work Officer	ECSCCommittee@pkc.gov.uk 01738 475000

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Jacquie Pepper	Chief Social Work Officer	7 December 2021

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	None
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No. (i), (iv) and (v).

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No. (i), (iv) and (v).

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Vision, Values and Priorities in respect of the following key Priority areas:

- Best Start
- Health and Wellbeing
- Care and Equity
- Safe and Protected

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 None.

Workforce

2.2 Any future workforce implications will be reported via individual service reports.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 None.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

This section reflects that the proposals have been considered under the Act and no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee are not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

Sustainability

- 3.3 Not applicable.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 Not applicable.

- 3.5 Not applicable.

Risk

- 3.6 Not applicable.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 Head of Service Adult Social Work and Head of Services for Children, Young People and Families have contributed to this report.

External

- 4.2 Not applicable.

5. Communication

- 5.1 Not applicable.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 None.

3. APPENDICES

- 3.1 Appendix 1 - Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2020/21