



Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report 2023/24





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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Lee".

KIRSTY LEE – Chief Social Work Officer

Welcome to the Chief Social Work Officers (CSWO) annual report covering the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. This is my first annual report as CSWO and Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice (CFJ) having taken up post on 1 January 2024 and I welcome the opportunity to provide an overview of social work and social care services in Angus.

Social work services in Scotland continue to face pressures many of which stem from wider social, economic, and political factors. Over the last year there have been ongoing pressures in Angus, including an ageing population, increasing demand for services, rising complexity of needs across the population, escalation of social care costs, workforce shortages, developments on policy and legislation, the continuing effects of the pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis which disproportionately impacts the most disadvantaged individuals in our communities. My report highlights that despite the significant challenges being faced, we continue to deliver high quality services through the dedication and hard work undertaken by our social work and social care workforce who demonstrate tremendous commitment to support and protect the citizens of Angus. The scale of the challenge is significant and requires a whole council approach to supporting our most vulnerable people. In Angus, we benefit from strong governance and leadership arrangements in the Council and the Integrated Joint Board that support transparency of decision making and management of risk.

Locally there have been some changes in social work leadership and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Kathryn Lindsay, who departed the role of CSWO and Director of CFJ Services on 31 December 2023 after several years leading the service, including through the pandemic. Kathryn has been a leader in social work locally, regionally, and nationally and through her work in Social Work Scotland, has provided visible leadership, clear direction and been a powerful and passionate advocate of the value of social work.

In July 2023, John Cooper was appointed as Head of Service and Lead Professional Social Worker for Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP). This is a new role that signifies an explicit commitment to the leadership of the social work profession within AHSCP. John has also taken on the role of Depute Chief Social Work Officer. This arrangement strengthens social work reporting and governance and brings added resilience to social work leadership. As we move into the next year, social work governance is subject of a national thematic inspection, and we look forward to engaging in this work to demonstrate the robust arrangements we have in place.

Reflections on 2023/24



Successes

- **Introduction** of Professional Social Work Lead in HSCP
- **Increased uptake** of Independent Advocacy for children in care
- **36 care experienced young people** engaged in 'the Hangout'
- **Pilot commenced** to deliver a Tayside Bairns Hoose
- Fostering and Adoption Service **rated 5, very good**
- **Reduced** hospital discharge times
- **83.5% of registered adult services** evaluated as good or above
- Short breaks centre for children **increased to full time**
- **Full roll out** of PREpare
- **Full roll out of Integrated Hubs** for mental health and substance use
- **15 newly qualified** social workers employed



Challenges

- **Increasing cost** of care across all services
- **Decrease** in the number of local foster placements available
- **Increase** in external foster care placements and residential care
- **Financial pressure** of Continuing Care placements
- **30% increase in domestic abuse reports and risk assessments** in Justice
- **Lack of specialist living resources** for adults with complex learning disabilities
- **Complexity of need** across all social work services
- **Unmet need** for Care at Home
- **Recruitment and retention issues** in social work and social care

1. Angus Profile

The [National Records of Scotland](#) confirms Angus had a population of 116,120 which has increased by 300 people in the last year (reported 2021). Since 1981 the population in Angus has increased by 10,500 people. By 2028 the population of Angus is projected to decrease to 115,138 but there has been no sign of a decrease over the last few years. Between 2018 and 2028, the 45 to 64 age group is projected to see the largest percentage decrease (-9.1%) and the 75 and over age group is projected to see the largest percentage increase (+30.3%).

An ageing population does not indicate that we are living longer, life expectancy in Angus has stalled reflecting a similar picture across Scotland. As a result of the higher birthrates in the 1960s we have a greater number of people in our population aged between 60-69 years old. Over the next 30 years as this group of people get older, we are likely to see the prevalence of chronic illness and multimorbidity increase in the population. The [Scottish Burden of Disease Study](#), published by Public Health Scotland in November 2022, estimated that the burden of disease is forecast to increase by 21% and two thirds of that increase will be due to increases in cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and neurological conditions.

The [Tayside Public Health Annual Report 2023](#) highlights people in Angus have a higher life expectancy than Scotland, however, there continues to be a real gap between life expectancy for those living in the most deprived areas where men can live approximately nine years less and women three years less than those living in the least deprived areas of Angus.

There are approximately 21,862 children and young people in Angus with 24% estimated to be living in poverty and 1,800 children living in lone parent households (Angus Child Poverty Report; December 2023).

The proportion of first-time mothers under 25 is slightly higher than the national average at 24.9% and teenage pregnancy rates moderately higher at 30.25% per 1,000 females 15-19 compared to 24% national rate.

The unemployment rate in Angus is 3.1% slightly lower than the national unemployment rate of 3.8%.

2. Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions

Section 3(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 requires local authorities to appoint a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO). This report is produced to satisfy the requirement to prepare and publish a report in relation to the CSWO's role in professional leadership, oversight of practice, governance, values, and standards as described in national guidance. The report also relates to the specific areas of decision-making and practice where legislation confers functions directly on the CSWO mostly relating to public protection and the restriction of an individual's freedom. The report may be cross referenced to more specific performance reports including AHSCP Annual Performance Report and CFJ Directorate Improvement Report.

The governance of all social work services in Angus continues to be undertaken by the CSWO, who is also the Interim Director of CFJ. The CSWO is a non-voting member of the Angus Integration Joint Board (IJB) and a member of the IJB Audit Committee, responsible for supporting and scrutinising the delivery of integrated adult care services. As a statutory officer of the Council, the CSWO reports directly to the Chief Executive and ensures that Elected Members are provided with reports regarding relevant developments and required decisions. A review of the function of Council and committees has brought the reporting of all matters relating to social work services under Family, Education and Justice Committee therefore ensuring all social work matters for children and adults are brought before the same committee.

The AHSCP Clinical and Care Governance Group (CCPG) provides assurance to the Angus Integration Joint Board (IJB) and partners, that there are effective and embedded systems for Clinical, Care and Professional Governance in all services within AHSCP. Strategic Risks are reported to AHSCP CCPG twice a year using a Risk Assurance Report template and are subject to scrutiny by the group. The risk register is inclusive of all risk across Health and Social Care services. The CCPG meets monthly, the focus alternates between service quality assurance, and strategic risk, adverse event management and Resilience Planning.

CFJ Services maintain and review a Directorate risk register with exception reporting through the Council's Corporate Leadership Team.

The Legal Governance and Change Department offer crucial support to the CSWO in the effective discharge of duties through the provision of advice, guidance, and support with service delegation.

Through engagement in these arrangements, the CSWO remains satisfied that the practice governance arrangements in place are appropriate and proportionate and that practice standards are being met with required improvement plans in place. A Care Inspectorate thematic review of social work governance and assurance work will commence through notification to all local authorities and health and social care partnerships in July 2024 and will conclude in December 2024 and provide a welcome benchmark to consider our local governance arrangements.

3. Learning from Feedback/Complaints

Feedback in social work is an important source of data to help understand and improve services, promote empowerment, and ensure accountability. Complaints information helps ensure we understand our services from the perspective of people accessing them.

3.1 Adult Services

During the reporting period AHSCP closed 25 complaints, 14 were managed at stage 1 (early resolution) with 11 either upheld or partly upheld. Of the 13 stage 2 complaints 1 was fully upheld, 7 were partly upheld, 3 were not upheld and 2 continue under investigation. The number of complaints is consistent with the last reporting period and communication remains a key theme for learning this year.

Learning centred around information sharing, collaborative assessment, planning and reviewing plans jointly with service users and carers. Information Governance training and good practice for subject access requests, data protection and confidentiality refresher training was also highlighted and is being progressed.

During the reporting period no AHSCP complaints were referred onto the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO).

3.2 Children, Families and Justice

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 CFJ service closed 41 complaints with 27 being managed at stage 1 and 14 at stage 2. The outcome of stage 2 complaints saw 3 upheld, 9 partially upheld and 2 not upheld. There have been increasing numbers of requests to escalate a stage 1 complaint to a stage 2 investigation suggesting people feel less satisfied at the early resolution stage.

During the reporting period one children's service complaint was referred to Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO), following their inquiry the SPSO decided not to investigate the complaint.

Analysis of complaints continues to highlight three main themes: communication, attitude of staff and understanding of our processes and decision making. Factually inaccurate recording of information is noted as a concern in a few of the complaints.

Some examples of how learning from complaints is taken forward includes the use of 'reflective discussions' in CFJ; facilitated discussions support practitioners to reflect on what happened and consider improvement actions on an individual, team, and multi-agency basis. The themes from reflective discussions are also considered by senior leaders regularly to inform directorate level actions. This year learning from feedback influenced whole service development events in CFJ service where all staff attended a full day workshop focussing on relationship-based practice, the importance of language, risk, and personal resilience. Ninety percent of staff attending agreed this was an effective way to reflect and learn about social work practice and impact.

Work is underway to ensure that Angus Council and AHSCP has a system in place which is child friendly, accessible to anyone under 18 years of age enabling them to raise a complaint in the same way as adults do respecting United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Act 2024, Article 12, Right to be heard. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) have co-designed with children seven **Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles** which is informing the work locally.

4. Duty of Candour

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.

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were no incidents in Angus where the duty of candour applied. The annual Duty of Candour Report 2023/24 which we are required to publish can be found [here](#).

5. External Scrutiny

The Care Inspectorate (CI) are the national regulator for care services in Scotland undertaking the inspections for social work services provided by local authorities. The CI evaluate the quality of services, using a six-point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent.

5.1 Children's Services

During 2023/24, children's services had two unannounced inspections evaluating how well we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing. Logan Cottage, a care home for children and young people, inspected in January 2023 was evaluated as adequate. A second unannounced inspection took place in March 2024 and Logan Cottage was upgraded to **Good** with one area for improvement, to continue to embed trauma informed approaches. Rowan Cottage inspected May 2023 was graded **Adequate**. The inspection found young people had been affected by a high turnover of staff and the use of agency workers at times to fill vacancies had impacted on the young people's sense of security.

We are committed to ensuring that all our residential provision for children and young people is of the highest standard. The recommendations from Rowan's inspection are being progressed and monitored through the service improvement plan. Staff have carried out child protection training, and support from the wider service is being utilised to expand staff knowledge alongside the continued rollout of trauma informed approaches to support children and young people such as **PACE** (Playful, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy) and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy/**Practice (DDP)**.

Angus Council **Fostering Service** and Angus **Adoption Services** were inspected between February and March 2024 and both services were graded 5 Very Good against quality indicators 'how well do we support people's wellbeing' and 'how well is our care and support planned'.

5.2 Adult Services

There are 76 registered providers of adult care services in Angus, this includes care homes, housing support services, care at home and day care. Adult services are also subject to inspection and grading by the Care Inspectorate. The grading system operates by applying a grade between 1 and 6. The lowest grade in any area of the service is then given as the overall grade for that service.

In Angus, 83.5% of services operate at grade 4 (Good) and above. During the period, 20 care homes, 6 housing support and 9 supported services were inspected. Eleven providers had requirements including actions on infection control, medication administration, living environment, risk, and support planning, and 20 providers had areas of improvement to address regarding contingency planning and improving adults choice of activities.

Providers including care homes are supported with improvement via various groups including Collaborative Care Home Support Team (CCHST). AHSCP also provided funding to Scottish Care to appoint an improvement officer to work with the independent care sector on quality improvement and change locally.

6. Service Quality and Performance

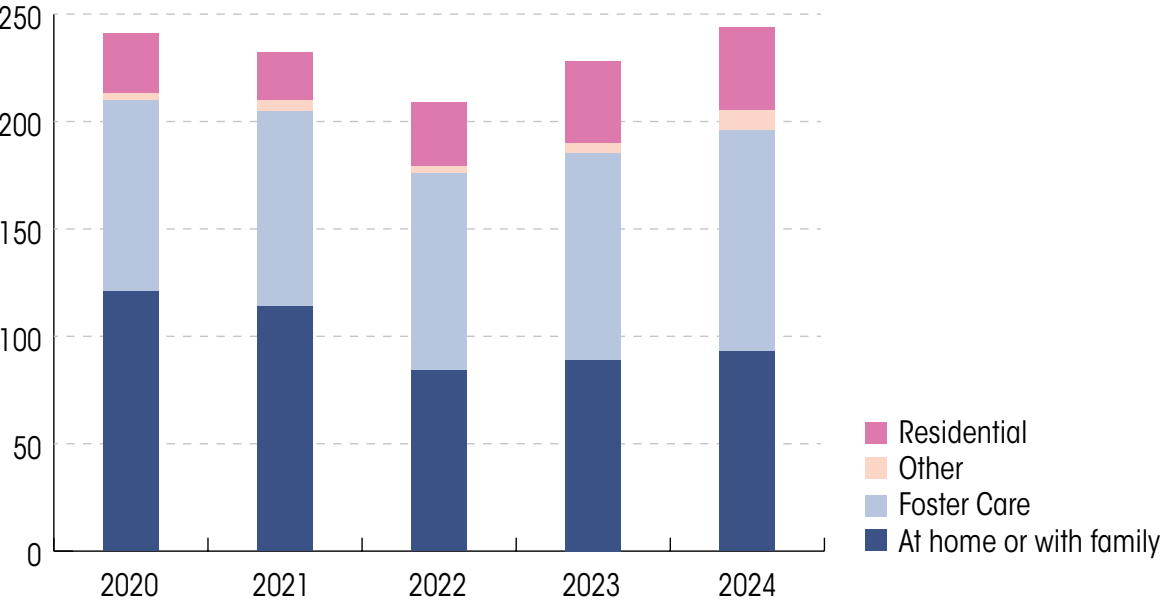
6.1 Children and Families

Social work services receive a range of referrals from partner agencies including Police, Health, Education and from members of the public online, face to face or through telephone contact. During the reporting period 1,440 referrals (for 1,535 children) were made to children's social work services. This has continued the very gradual decline in referrals we have seen over the last 7 years. However, the proportion of referrals assessed as requiring social work assessment or intervention has remained high. In the year to March 2024, 756 (52%) referrals required assessment or intervention continuing to put pressure on frontline social work services.

6.1.1 Looked after children/Care experienced children and young people

On 31 March 2024 the number of children 'looked after' was 244, continuing an increasing trend as illustrated by the figure 1 on page 10.

Figure 1: Placement by type – 5-year trend



Pressure on alternative placements continues to be an issue with a slight further decrease in children supported at home or with family or friends.

As is reported in the Angus Adoption and Fostering Report 2023-24, on 31 March 2024, we had 32 externally commissioned placements for 42 children compared to 20 external fostering placements for 27 children the previous year. The increase is due to local placements not being available or being unable to meet individual needs from local resources.

The use of external fostering agencies means that children may be placed some distance from Angus, away from recognised beneficial bonds and connections with their family, friends and local communities to get the care they need. In addition, this has placed significant financial pressures on social work services, both in terms of placement costs, and the impact on staff time, to travel out of area to undertake statutory visits to children in placement, and to support and facilitate family time.

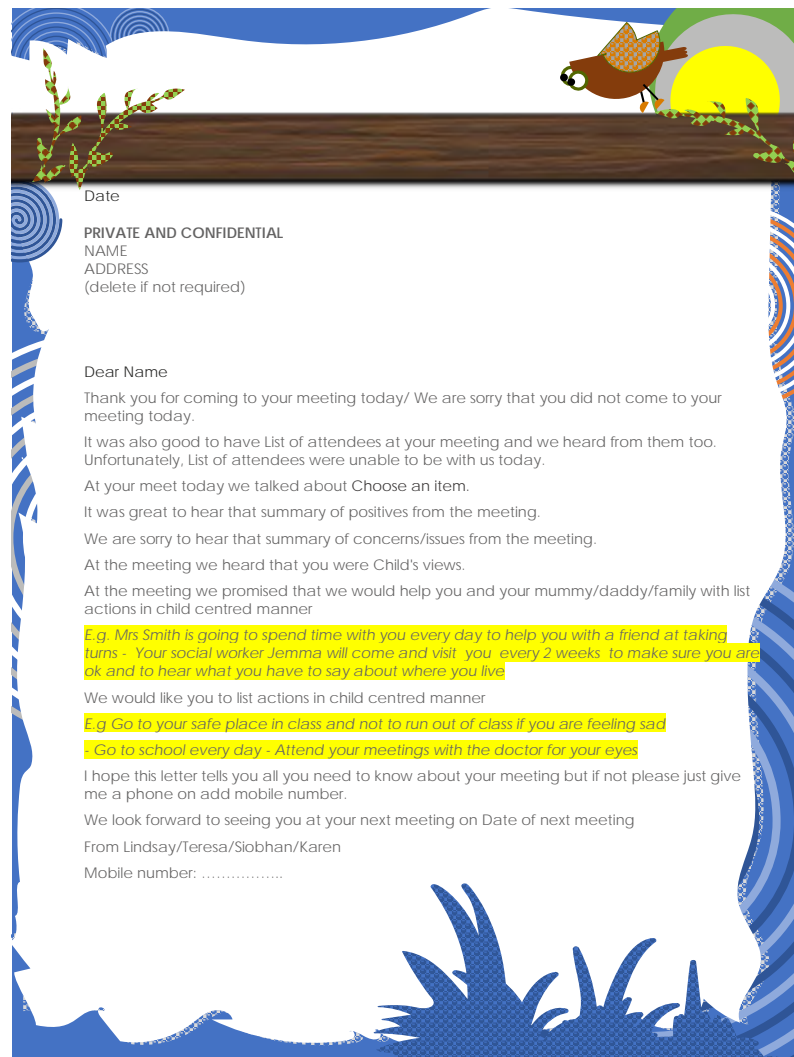
In December 2022, Angus Council Policy and Resources Committee approved further development of our local children’s residential houses, to increase our ability to provide care for children within their home area. This year, a suitable house was identified and procured, and work will progress next year to conclude the necessary internal adaptations. This will provide additional placements which will enable children to be returned to Angus from external placements or for children to remain in their local community.

A few children experienced three or more placements during the reporting year. Angus remains above the national average for this measure. Local benchmarking indicates that the use of initial short-term placements in Angus may be a contributing factor.

The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) continues to have oversight of all young people whose liberty is restricted through secure care. The **Secure Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2013** outlines the duties of the CSWO in relation to secure care. Numbers of children placed in secure care in Angus remains low with less than 5 individual children placed in secure accommodation during 2023/24.

In response to an increasing number of children and young people presenting a serious risk of harm to themselves, a CARM (Care and Risk Management) project has been established following a successful funding bid to the CORRA foundation. A multi-agency group is developing and testing models of support to this small but highly vulnerable group of children aged 12 – 18 with the aim of reducing the need for residential and secure care for young people.

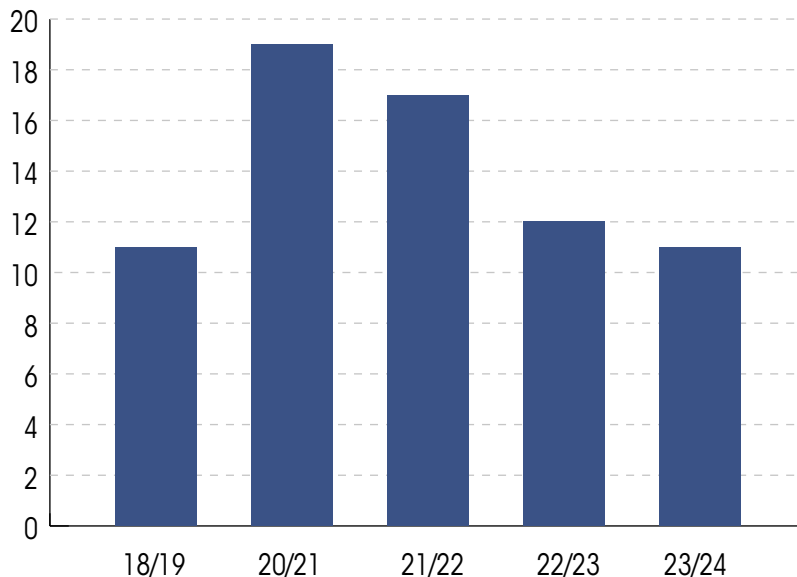
As part of our commitment to the Promise, work has been ongoing to improve how the minutes of child planning meetings are recorded ensuring they are meaningful and accessible for children and families. 'My Plan' letters have been highly evaluated by children and families and have now been fully implemented for all children with a social work plan. For children under school age, letters are also written and kept on the child's record to support their understanding at a later date.



An example of My Plan letters

The number of young people accessing continuing care placements has continued to fluctuate since its introduction as the graph below highlights.

Figure 2: Continuing Care Placements



Of the eleven young people in continuing care placements this year 6 young people remained with their foster carers and 5 young people remaining in local and external residential care. We continue to encourage young people to 'stay put' where they decide this is the right choice for them, with indications that a number of young people will exercise their choice to continuing care next year.

Extending placements is very positive for individual young people supporting them through a period of transition into independence, an approach which is in-line with the Promise and our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. However, the Continuing Care eligibility has not been fully funded by Scottish Government and therefore does impact on both financial resources and the availability of foster and residential placements for children entering care, a resource already under significant pressure as reported above.

6.1.2 Child Protection

This year Angus (along with colleagues in Police Scotland, NHS Tayside, Perth and Kinross Council and Dundee City Council) successfully applied to become a **Bairns Hoose** pathfinder. Bairns' Hoose is a model that provides holistic support to children who have been victims or witnesses of abuse or are under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour may have caused harm. The vision of a Bairns' Hoose is that all children will have access to trauma-informed, recovery, support, and justice.

The new Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) of joint investigative interviewing is a welcome development to support children who are victims and/or witness to crime and to improve the quality and validity of forensic interview. As the model

is embedded, SCIM requirements are likely to increase pressure on the specialist Investigations Team.

Child protection continues to be an area of utmost importance with social work resources prioritised to ensure appropriate child protection responses. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 there were 146 child protection investigations involving 182 children, 8 children had more than one investigation.

The average number of children on Angus Child Protection Register (CPR) over this year has significantly decreased from 63 last year to 39. This figure last year was impacted by the increase in registrations towards the end of 2022 which spiked at just over 90 children registered.

These measures and others are now reported as part of the Minimum Data set for Child Protection. Additionally, they are considered by the multi-agency Self Evaluation and Continuous Improvement (SECI) subgroup of the Child Protection Committee. The SECI considers the full suite of information and reports back to committee on areas of concern or where further investigation is required. This level of data analysis and reporting has provided a greater understanding of pressures in the service in understanding referrals, registration trends and investigations.

Domestic abuse is a significant risk factor affecting children in Angus and continues to feature as at least one risk factor for around 75% of child protection registrations. Tackling domestic abuse requires a confident and competent workforce with skills in recognising and responding to domestic abuse in families. Social work services have made a commitment to train staff in 'Safe and Together' and work has continued this year to embed this into practice. Practice evaluation and child protection data shows an improvement in identification of domestic abuse and interventions with survivors and their children. Language has moved towards a strengths-based approach and is progressing away from a 'failure to protect' rhetoric. This has strengthened relationships with survivors and improved safety planning which is evident in case records.

The length of time children are subject to registration is reviewed regularly to ensure the supports in place are improving children's safety and wellbeing.

Most children (89%) are on the register for less than one year (38% less than six months) with 12% of children on the register between one year and 18 months. There has been a slight increase in children remaining on the register over 18 months from 2% last year to 6% in 2023/24. As the number of children on the register is small, an increase of one or two families can impact this figure. To understand the reasons for extended periods of registration, new guidance is in place for individual case reviews to assess risk and quality of planning and inform learning and development for professionals involved in child protection work.

Where possible we support families in a planned way, however Child Protection Orders (CPOs) are sought where immediate risk of significant harm is identified. During 2023/24 this legislation was used to protect 23 individual children, a decrease from last year's figure of 26 children. An internal reflective learning review continues to be held following every CPO being taken to identify any missed opportunity for early support.

We remain committed to improving the experience of families involved in child protection. PREpare, a social work led, strengths-based model that improves child and parental engagement in the child protection planning and decision-making process has been offered to all families referred to Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM) with a 50% uptake. Feedback has evidenced that PREpare is having a positive impact including evidence of a more positive emotional atmosphere, parents reporting less stress and being less oppositional, feeling less intimidated and less judged. Professionals report an improved understanding of the parents' position and children's views. This approach is a demonstration of trauma-informed practice that will be further developed this coming year. A [short film](#) has been used to promote the model and PREpare was a finalist at the Scottish Social Services Awards 2023.

6.1.3 Permanence, Foster, Kinship and Residential Care

Angus Council has a statutory duty to provide an adoption service and meets this duty through the Angus Adoption Agency, which has been in place since 01 April 1996. Responsibility for the functions and decisions of the Adoption Agency rests with the Chief Social Work Officer, with authority delegated to the Service Leader, CFJ acting as the Agency Decision Maker, alongside other nominated officers within CFJ.

The performance of the Adoption Agency and Carers Service is reported separately, and full details can be found in the Annual Report 2023/24, [Report number 282/24](#).

By way of summary, the service has taken a focus on improving support to kinship carers and worked this year on concluding a service review, realigning resources to enable kinship carers to access the same support as foster carers and reviewing assessment and approval of carers based on analysis of outcomes and feedback.

On 31 March 2024, the Carers Service was supporting a total of 148 children and young people living with kinship carers, an increase of 19 from the previous year. Less than half of the kinship families have the child residing on a formal 'looked after' basis with the service ensuring support to a wider range of kinship families.

The number of permanence plans considered by the Adoption and Permanence Panel between April 2023 and March 2024 was 29, representing an increase of 107% from the previous year. Children matched with permanent foster carers has also increased from one last year to four children this year. During the same period three children were matched with adoptive parents an increase of one from 2022/23.

Following several years of decreasing numbers of people coming forward to be assessed as foster carers this year fostering applications doubled from last year's figure with 6 fostering households presented and approved. While this is positive, it does not balance the number of carers retiring or leaving the service and reflects the ongoing national picture.

There have been no applications of approvals for Supported Lodgings Placements (SLP) this year highlighting the difficulty locally in sourcing this specific type of care.

6.1.4 Leading the Promise

In partnership with young people, Angus Promise Team and Promise Ambassadors we established a very successful children and young people group, 'The Hangout'

for care experienced children aged 5 and above. Numbers of attendees have continued to grow with 36 children registered and regularly engaging with the monthly sessions. The Hangout is also a space where the CSWO directly engages with young people to form relationships and deepen understanding of the needs of Angus young people to inform strategic developments and influence change.

Following an increase in funding for children's advocacy services in 2022/23, referrals have increased by 31%. There has been an increase in the uptake of independent advocacy through Who Cares? and Angus Independent Advocacy (AIA). AIA report 97 families accessing advocacy to address child protection and family-based issues compared to 76 the previous year. It remains a priority that the voices of children, young people and families are heard and valued.

6.1.5 Children with Disabilities

This year Strathmore Short Breaks Centre has been operating on a fulltime, permanent basis due to recurring financial support provided by the Carers Support Fund. This development makes it possible to provide increased numbers of much needed breaks for children living with complex needs, and their families. The service supports children both in the community and in the Short Breaks Centre. Strathmore Service were also finalists for excellence in care in the Scottish Social Services Awards 2023.

In May 2023 the bespoke residential house set up for a sibling group closed with the remaining residents moving on to adult care provisions.

During 2023/24, 47 self-directed support (SDS) child assessments were completed with 44 children allocated a SDS budget. The remaining three families not assessed as requiring a budget continue to be supported alongside the 34 children open to the team receiving advice, guidance, and intervention on a voluntary basis. Expanding SDS is identified as an action and target measure in the CFJ Improvement plan 2024-27.

6.1.6 Horizon (Throughcare and Aftercare)

The Council is required to provide services that support children leaving care and to eligible care experienced young people. In Angus, these services are delivered through the Horizon service, alongside youth justice services and the planning and provision of support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

This year Housing and the Horizon team have worked in partnership to review the joint housing protocol agreed in 2013. Since the protocol was introduced the number of care experienced young people (looked after less than 5 years ago) applying as homeless reduced by 46%. The joint housing protocol ensures services work together to be responsive to individual need with a return to care being an option where appropriate.

During 2022/23, 14 care experienced young people were supported into further education. The number of young people who were in further education at the start of the academic year 2023/24 was 29. One young person was undertaking a modern apprenticeship, 6 were on a university course and 22 had started Dundee & Angus Collage placements.

Since the UK Government mandated the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in December 2021, Angus Council have received a total of 25 young people with 18 arriving this year. The young people arriving here have predominantly been placed in independent flats with support provided by dedicated support workers. The next 12 months are likely to be increasingly challenging with an increase in the number of young people expected. Proposals are currently under development to ensure appropriate financial support to unaccompanied young people including a local scheme to provide Educational Maintenance Allowance.

6.2 Adult Services

6.2.1 Care at Home

Care at home remains an area of significant growth as people are supported to remain independent in the community for longer. The provision of care at home hours increased in the last year from 12,317 hours per week to 12,813 hours per week.

The number of delivered or commissioned hours for personal care was 666,285 (12,813 per week) in March 2024 being delivered to 1,937 people, an increase of 42 from last year. Demand for personal care continues to be a pressure with data showing there were around 984 hours of care that went unmet (as at 31 March 2024). The level of unmet need is reducing and was at its highest point in Oct 2022 with 2,291 hours of unmet need. This is an area under close scrutiny with regular meetings chaired by a Head of Service to understand the pressures and ensure resources are directed appropriately and provide regular reporting to Scottish Government.

During the period, 93,200 community meals were provided for 428 people similar demand as in 2022/23. The number of people with a care plan increased slightly from 4,419 last year to 4,537 in March 2024.

As of 31 March 2024, 647 older people reside in care homes in Angus. Apart from the slight increase noted last year this has returned to the downward trend seen since 2018/19. Of the 647 people in care homes, 41% required Nursing Care and 59% required residential care, noting a trend of growth in Nursing Home placements overall. This is reflective of people having complex care needs requiring nursing care as well as people being supported to stay at home for longer before moving into residential care, at which point their needs require nursing care. Overall, service users in nursing homes and residential care are often presenting with more complexities associated with frailty and cognition and an increased level of complexity.

AHSCP monitors hospital discharges of Angus people across Tayside on a daily basis identifying potential delays in accessing on-going care. While most people leave an Acute Hospital with no need for social care intervention when there is a requirement for ongoing care a referral is made to Angus Enablement & Response Team (ERT). More complex Acute discharges and discharges from Community Hospitals are managed by the Angus Discharge Team (ADT) based within Whitehill's Forfar. Since the inception of the ADT in Nov 2022 evidence has shown that having one team focusing on all complex Acute Hospital discharges has contributed to a reduction in length of stay by 87% and a reduction in delays of 93% (reported February 2024). There remain challenges in Angus for people with Mental Health and Learning

Disabilities delays, where lack of local resource availability for complex needs has an impact on the ability to support timely discharges.

6.2.2 Self-Directed Support (SDS)

As with previous 5 years, Option 3 (staff organised support on behalf of the person) is the preferred option for the majority of people. Securing a broad range of service provision to ensure people have real choice in their care options remains challenging in Angus with services continuing to work with the third and independent sector to address this.

Funding from Scottish Government has supported an 18-month senior practitioner post to lead SDS development plans, review the process, update resources, and upskill the workforce. The 'SDS toolkit', renamed 'Angus Support Pathway' now includes information about referrals and screening, is accessible, and provides resources to improve practice.

Guidance documents for SDS Option 1 Direct Payments has been developed in collaboration with a wide group of staff which aligns with Scottish Government legislation, with work continuing on a suite of guidance. An evaluation of the Framework of Standards will identify further improvement actions and will support a clearer, more consistent approach from all staff teams in how SDS is provided for both the carer and the cared for person.

6.2.3 Support For Carers

Grant funding for the third sector has continued to enable Angus Carers Centre (ACC) to provide support for adults and young carers providing care for loved ones. The importance of supporting unpaid carers while ensuring they are able to live fulfilling lives themselves is highlighted in the [Angus Carers Strategy 2023/26](#).

During 2023/24 adult service practitioners completed 284 adult carers assessment with 252 of those having a carer's budget calculated. The figure this year is slightly lower than last year where 315 adults had carer support plans in place, however last year there had been a significant increase on the 274 in 2021/22. Work is ongoing to ensure we can report on the number of carers who have been offered a carers assessment but declined.

6.2.4 Young Carers

A young Carer statement (YCS) is offered to children and young adults (18 or over, but still in education). The statement helps young people with caring responsibilities to identify their personal goals and any support that they may require.

During 2023/24 ACC, Young Carers Service supported 325 young carers with 61 young carers having a young Carers Statement. Work is ongoing with Carer Champions and Angus Carers Centre to record the number of young carers who are offered the opportunity to prepare a YCS and declined so as to improve understanding of the reasons. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of young carers identified for a third year, with 145 children and young people recorded as a young carer, an increase from 88 in 2021/22 and 99 in the last year.

6.2.5 Adult Disability Service

A service review of the rehabilitation service for people with physical disability was concluded in January 2024 and improvements implemented including work in Glenloch previously a building-based service, which is now a community service delivering enablement support. The Gables which provided residential care for people with a learning disability closed in March 2024 with residents moved to their new home in Beech Hill House.

Last year the adult resource centres providing services for people with a learning disability achieved the National Autism Certificate of Accreditation and this year they have been awarded the Advanced Certificate. The service continues to maximise its capacity within the resource centres to meet continuing and future demand.

The Learning Disabilities Service has implemented the Scottish Government required, **Dynamic Support Register** for people with learning disabilities and complex care needs to record and monitor progress in delivering the ambitions of Coming Home, which are to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, reduce out of area placements and minimise placement breakdown. Work continues to source appropriate and sustainable community placements where this is required.

6.2.6 Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services

Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (AIDARS) continues to support individuals and their families affected by substance use. AIDARS has an open referral system with all referrals assessed by an integrated referral hub which includes health, social work and third sector agencies. The hub ensures that each referral is passed to the most appropriate service according to need. The integrated referral hubs for Mental Health and Substance Use Services have now fully rolled out across Angus ensuring equity of approach across Angus.

AIDARS continue to review access to treatment with an improvement observed in the percentage of people receiving treatment within 21 days of referral. The Health Improvement Efficiency Access and Treatment (HEAT) standard of 90% of people engaged in treatment three weeks after receipt of referral was not met in 21/22 (83.9%) but has shown improved last year and this year with the data for quarter 4 for 23/24 showing 95.9%.

Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) services have initiated a monthly Residential Rehabilitation Assessment Group which is progressing improvements to the Angus Residential Rehabilitation Pathway, including a stakeholder event and subsequent Residential Rehabilitation Action Plan.

In line with the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards Experiential Engagement Plan, local MAT surveys and focus groups captured lived experience information from people accessing substance use services, family members and staff.

Reducing the harm associated with substance use remains a priority. The multidisciplinary Near Fatal Overdose hub continues to provide assertive outreach and follow up to individuals' affected, offering support to engage with services.

6.2.7 Mental Health Officers (MHO)

Recruitment to Approved Medical Practitioners (AMP) (also known as Section 22 doctors) remains a challenge for Angus, as the posts are difficult to recruit to on a permanent basis, and locum doctors are required to provide consultant care and treatment. There is a designated Mental Health Officers (MHO) team as well as 'satellite' MHOs placed within the community teams. This year there has been an increase in some MHO work which is expected to continue to grow, for example:

- Continued increase in demand with 35% increase in referrals to the Adult Community Mental Health Service since 2019/20.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Enhanced Community Support Hubs have been developed in every GP cluster in Angus, bringing together adult mental health, substance services, mental health and wellbeing peer support, and clinical psychology to improve access to support, promoting self-referrals, and meeting need more effectively and in a more co-ordinated way for people with multiple needs.
- Consultant support, care, and treatment for people with complex needs most at risk were prioritised to ensure their needs could be met. A multi-disciplinary team (MDT) involving GP's, a Community Mental Health Nurse, Pharmacist and Psychologist undertook 557 MDT reviews of people waiting on the non-complex Consultant Psychiatrist waiting list in 2023/24. Analysis of data indicates that after review, only 16% of people required an appointment with a Consultant Psychiatrist, 40% were discharged to their GP, and the remainder were allocated to a member of the MDT or another service for support. This review has provided an outcome for 557 people who were on a waiting list. Reviews will be continued into next year.

MHO attendance at Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences (ASPCC) fell by 18 during the reporting period due to a change in process to best utilise MHO time. MHOs now only attend case conferences in which their additional legislative knowledge and expertise is required, during 2023/24 MHO attended 144 ASPCC.

Angus Council's Internal Audit team reported their findings of "no assurance" on the Adult with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 process in Angus for Welfare Guardianships in early 2023. This led to a full review of the guardianship process, and improvements being implemented with new operational instructions and guidance, training for staff, and processes for quality assurance.

This year the number of Guardianship reports (new and renewal) requested under Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, fell by 31 reports and MHOs completed 135 reports in line with 2021/22 figures.

At the end of August 2023 Angus MHOs joined the Tayside Out of Hours (OOH) rota increasing the availability of MHOs out of hours. This change has led to a reduction in the use of Emergency Detention Certificates, and an increase in the use of Short-Term Detention Certificates, which affords people more rights.

6.2.8 Adult Support and Protection

Operational demand for adult support and protection work has continued to grow with adult protection referral data showing an ongoing year on year increase with a further 34% increase in referrals this year. The most common source of referral is from Police (55%) and a significant increase is noted in referrals from members of the public, friends, neighbours, and Acute Health Services. Referrals have not however translated into increased case conferences which have remained broadly the same as last year, suggesting more referrals are signposted and/or issues are addressed without formal adult protection interventions.

AHSCP Clinical and Care Professional Governance Group made a decision to archive the AHSCP Adult Protection Strategic Risk in January 2024 as a result of robust monitoring and reporting arrangements being in place. Compliance with mandatory training and a regular programme of audit activity demonstrates the effectiveness of current controls and ongoing governance arrangements.

A multi-agency learning event was held in May 2023 to review progress and learning from **SCR P19**, and consider outstanding system improvements. This was well attended with a high number of social work staff. All actions relating to AHSCP have been completed and formally signed off.

Celebrating Success events were held for adult service case holders and managers in May and December 2023. These events enable engagement with staff on what has been achieved and areas for improvement. As an example, key themes emerging from the events were chronologies and Operational Instruction and these have been updated in response. Self-Directed Support improvements have included training delivered by SDS Forth Valley to a number of practitioners.

6.3 Angus Justice Service

Angus Council Justice Service deliver a range of services, including the statutory Justice Social Work functions of delivering support and supervision to people who have committed offences and are involved in the court and/or prison system.

Performance information for all Justice Social Work Services is reported publicly by Community Justice Scotland and embargo restrictions prohibit publication of some of the 2023/24 information before the report is laid before the Scottish Parliament. Available information on data for 2022/23 can be accessed [here](#). The full information for 2023/24 is due to be published later in 2024, the information referred to below is permitted for the public domain.

In most cases prior to sentencing, the Courts will request a Justice Social Work Report to assess risk, identify interventions required and detail potential disposals. In 2023/24 there was an increase of 26% in the number of reports being requested; there was also an increase of 30% in the number of reports and risk assessments required for cases of domestic abuse, which adds additional pressure to the teams due to these cases being resource intense.

The total number of hours of unpaid work imposed during 2023/24 was 23,490 an increase of 12% on 2022/23. The number of hours completed to the benefit of local communities in Angus was 15,156 hours, the equivalent of 409 full-time equivalent

weeks of work. Although increases continue to be seen in some of this data, figures have not as yet all returned to pre-covid levels. The service runs seven days per week and continues to achieve no delays in starting a weekday work placement; a very short wait remains for a weekend placement. During 2023/24, 81% of all Community Payback Orders were completed successfully. The successful completion rate in Angus remains above the national average of 73%.

Diversion from Prosecution remains a critical part of the justice system. There continues to be a significant upturn in the number of Diversion assessments requested during 2023/24 (11% increase on 2022/23) with 40% of Diversion assessments for people under 19. This reflects a continuing and significant increase in demand for this service. Angus Community Justice Partnership are currently developing a partnership improvement plan for Diversion to ensure we are able to meet the increased demand and address presenting needs in more creative ways.

Forfar Sheriff Court custody unit where those appearing from police custody in Angus are held was closed and remained closed during covid, returned to operational use this year in June 2023, enabling a more responsive support service to people leaving the custody unit. Every Angus resident held in custody is offered an Arrest Referral Assessment to identify early interventions and support. Relationships between Justice Social Work and the local Sheriff Court continue to be strong with good communication and regular meetings between personnel to identify and resolve issues.

Service improvements have included developing partnership approaches to support men in the Justice system. A pilot funded through ADP and mental health funding has enabled the introduction of Penumbra Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioners hosted within the Munro Justice Team, enabling direct support for males presenting with mental health and substance use. Success has been demonstrated by the number of men accessing support showing positive outcomes including improved mental wellbeing, reduced substance use, moving on to training and employment and supported access to specialist services where needed.

In response to the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Community Justice (2022) and the focus on trauma informed services, the Connecture Programme is a trauma responsive intervention programme run over 16-sessions, to work with people who have a history of trauma and commit offences. Angus Justice Services was one of three local authorities to facilitate the pilot ahead of the programme being rolled out in 2023.

For men who commit sexual offences, Justice Service is preparing for the change from Moving Forward Making Changes Program to the revised Moving Forward to Change. The Tayside Partnership's Tay Project are ready for the implementation and staff will receive full training next year. All men who sexually offend currently have access to the Connecture Programme as preparation for other accredited programmed work.

Following the conclusion of the Glen Clova Project's 4-year pilot in 2022 and the positive independent evaluation which found that women who engaged in the project did so on average for 12 months and benefited significantly from support to address poverty, substance use, mental health, and parenting, Angus Council

agreed permanent core funding for the Glen Clova Project. The model is being further expanded as part of Whole Family Wellbeing (WFW) programme. Increasing staffing will enable the project to continue to provide early intervention to more women and their families. There has been a 60% increase in referrals for women through this year. The project is prioritising support to pregnant women and those with a child under 3 as part of a multi-disciplinary approach to preventing crisis.

Further consultation is planned later this year with colleagues from the Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Team, Tayside to explore the needs of marginalised women in Angus, increasing understanding around women's sexual, physical, and reproductive health. Such sessions have already taken place within the Bella Centre (CCU) in Dundee with success.

7. Resources

The total gross spend on social work services in Angus during the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 was £132.4 million.

7.1 Adult Services - 100.770 million

AHSCP continues to invest in services for people in Angus. The budget is impacted most significant by the following factors:

For older people, there has been a lower than planned demand for care home placements along with a continued high demand for care at home services. The care at home demand continues to exceed the available capacity resulting in unmet need and costs being incurred at a lower level than would otherwise have been the case.

In under 65 social care services, in particular Learning and Physical Disability services, there continues to be a rise in the number of complex high-cost packages for both residential and community placements with costs being incurred at a higher level than budgeted.

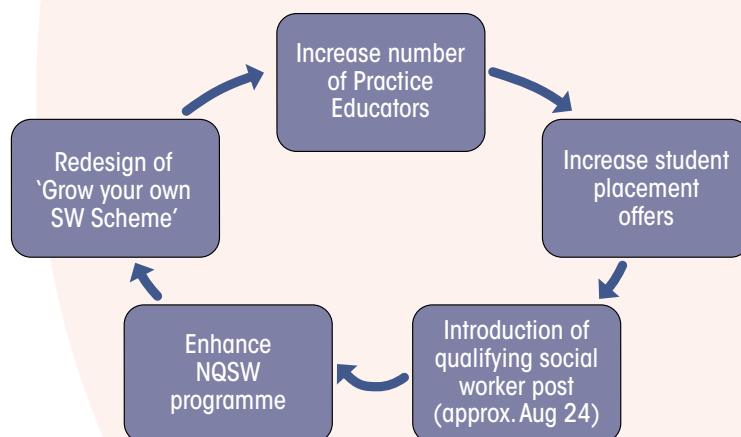
Across all service areas there continues to be a large number of unfilled vacancies linked to staff turnover and recruitment challenges which reduces the levels of costs incurred.

This shift in the balance of care will require to be sustained in future years through the rebalancing of resources.

Looking forward, the AHSCP Strategic Financial Plan sets out the serious financial challenges the HSCP will require to manage over the next 3 years. This will require significant progress with associated Strategic Delivery Plan, further service change which may result in the IJB having to revisit its overall Strategic Commissioning Plan.

7.2 Children's Services - 28.913 million

Angus Council have continued to prioritise the care and protection of vulnerable groups including children and family social work. The budget is impacted most significantly by the following factors:



The relatively stable number of children in care has continued however the balance of care has shifted again this year with a higher number of external fostering placements and residential placements requiring to be commissioned and continued pressure from Continuing Care arrangements. This spend is unavoidable as we have a duty to meet the needs of children and young people up to the age of 18 and 21 in Continuing Care placements.

As with adult services, challenges in recruitment and retention of qualified social work staff are largely responsible for the significant underspend on staffing. Locality social work experience the greatest pressures with over £510,000 staff slippage in locality teams this year.

7.3 Justice Services - 2.756 million

Justice social work services are funded through Scottish Government ring-fenced grant in line with Section 27 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended. This year, additional funding of £197,087 was provided to support service development. However, the increased costs from the Local Government Pay Settlement and increasing Justice Social Work Services costs in respect of vehicles, fuel, equipment, and property have had to be met. Budget pressures remain a significant concern as the increased grant allocation must be used to meet increased costs rather than provide additional services.

The temporary covid recovery funding is supporting with staff capacity (additional temporary posts) and increased vehicle costs. There is commitment to provide this funding through next year.

8. Workforce

8.1 Recruitment, retention and workforce development

National shortages of qualified social workers is well evidenced through Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) data and the issues have impacted service delivery in Angus. Social care staff are also in demand with statutory, private and third sector providers all reporting significant recruitment issues.

Across all social work teams, vacancies for qualified social workers have been difficult to fill. Workforce data shows the following for this year:

- Successful graduate recruitment saw 15 newly qualified social workers Angus Council
- In CFJ, 29 staff left in the year; 7 within the first 6 months of practice
- AHSCP staff turnover reduced from 14% last year to 12.7% this year and a 3.4% reduction in vacancies reported
- 35% of staff in Community Health and Care Services age 55 or over

A priority across both CFJ and HSCP strategic plans is on supporting the social work and social care workforce and being an attractive employer and career choice for people. This year joint work between CFJ and AHSCP has seen a focus on the following areas set out in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Recruitment and Retention Development Work

Practice Educators and Student placement – data shows students who have a successful learning experience are more likely to apply for a post on qualification. This year Angus have placed 20 social work students and will continue to be creative around placement support. Practice Educator qualification is offered to senior practitioners and protected time is provided for existing Practice Educators to ensure a high level of student support.

Qualifying social worker post – plans are in place to introduce new qualifying social work posts to enable final year social work students to undertake sessional work and gain experience working with a statutory setting. This will also support student to transition into NQSW posts at the end of their qualification.

Enhanced NQSW support – Angus have continued to develop the supported first year for qualifying social workers and have committed to protected learning time for graduates. This is subject to evaluation including feedback and analysis of retention data and will be further reported next year.

'Grow your own' traineeship – staff who train 'on the job' have a high rate of retention. Investment has supported double the number of traineeships to be offered next year with 4 employees being supported to access Social Work training from their current post. An important aspect of this is paying staff at their current grade ensures affordability and equity of access.

In terms of non-social work qualified staff, a number of developments are taking place. In CFJ in response to workforce feedback, a development pathway for para-

professionals will be established to increase job mobility and transfer of skills. AHSCP have delivered a range of targeted actions aimed at attracting people into social care and retaining existing staff which has resulted in an increase of 120 Care at Home staff now in post. More creative advertising methods including promotional videos linked to job advertisements and wider use of social media has resulted in a significant increase in numbers applying for posts.

The Organisational Development team continues to support staff to attain the qualifications required as set by the SSSC. In this reporting period 17 staff completed Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 6 or 7 and 8 staff started their qualifications. Five staff completed the Professional Development Award (PDA) in Health and Social Care Supervision delivered jointly with Dundee City Council.

To maintain a focus on the social work workforce, the CSWO has established a shared Social Work Leadership forum across the Council and AHSCP with a view to strengthening social work identity, identify shared learning opportunities and increase mobility across the different services. AHSCP have progressed the 3-year workforce plan (from 2022) and established subgroups to progress requirements such the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing)(Scotland) Act 2019 and staff wellbeing.

Angus is experiencing the similar challenges as the rest of the country however the CSWO is assured there is strong leadership and attention to resolving workforce challenges and deploying resources to the areas of greatest need.

9. Looking Forward 2024/25

Moving into the next year it is certain the strain on resources will continue to create demand right across the service, for example, a lack of foster placements, care at home provision and complex learning disability living resources, will continue to impact budget, pressure on staff and on individuals and families. A range of developments detailed above will contribute to a solution, specifically a new children's residential house opening next year, continued embedding of the Hospital Discharge Team and our approach to workforce capacity building, but the scale of the challenge and the impact of social-economic factors affecting peoples safety and wellbeing will undoubtedly see an ongoing increase in need.

Participation in the Care Inspectorate (CI) Thematic Audit of Social Work Leadership will inform future developments on governance and accountability and support national and local work on the National Care Service and National Social Work Agency. The timescale for these significant developments remains unclear but Angus will continue to support the work as active partners in a range of work through Social Work Scotland and CoSLA.

We will continue to develop the Bairns Hoose in Angus and across Tayside and will introduce fully the Scottish Child Interview Model.

Work will embed the [Children, Families and Justice Directorate Improvement Plan 2024-27](#) which lays out our ambition for the delivery of high-quality services for

children, young people, families. The plan is firmly rooted in the 'Quality Framework for children and young people in need of care and protection' and the 'Health and Social Care Standards'.

On 16 July 2024, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Act 2024 made Scotland the first country in the UK to directly incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law, ensuring children's rights are central to policy and decision-making and children's right to complain are upheld by local authorities. Work is already underway in Angus to develop our Child Friendly complaints process based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Child Friendly Complaints Handling **Principles**, and Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process **Guidance**

Over the last year work has taken place to implement a new structure for Protecting People Angus. As from the 1 April 2024 a Protecting People Angus Strategic Committee (PPASC) will be established bringing together Angus Adult Protection Committee, Angus Child Protection Committee and Angus Violence Against Women Partnership. The PPASC will provide leadership and oversight of partnership arrangements to ensure support and protection of vulnerable Angus citizens.

Improvement work is being taken forward to redesign Self Directed Support (SDS). Development of staff guidance and rolling out of staff training is underway and the provision of public information, including easy read versions, which supports understanding of SDS developments.

Through the next year work will take place to respond to the emerging policy and legislative landscape with preparation for the Care and Justice (Scotland) Act 2024.

10. Conclusion

This report demonstrates the significant work being delivered by social work and social care professionals to ensure the most vulnerable Angus residents experience services that respect their rights and wishes, empowers, and values them as individuals, as members of a wider family and community and believes in and promotes social justice. The report does not capture the significant contribution social work makes to wider partnership arrangements, to the corporate leadership of Angus Council and Angus Community Planning Partnership but acknowledges the importance of social work in the wider context and the support the CSWO receives from a range of people to effectively discharge her duties.

Appendix 1

Glossary of acronyms

ADP	Alcohol and Drug Partnership
AIDARS	Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service
ADM	Agency Decision Maker
AHSCP	Angus Health and Social Care Partnership
AMP	Approved Medical Practitioners
CCPG	Clinical Care and Professional Governance Group
CFJ	Children, Families and Justice Directorate
CPO	Child Protection Order
CPPM	Child Protecting Planning Meeting
CPR	Child Protection Register
CSWO	Chief Social Work Officer
IJB	Integration Joint Board
MAT	Medical Assisted Treatment Standards
MHO	Mental Health Officer
MWC	Mental Welfare Commission
NHS	National Health Service
NQSW	Newly Qualified Social Worker
NTS	Home Office National Transfer Scheme for UASC
OPG	Office of the Public Guardian
PPASC	Protecting People Angus Strategic Committee
SCR	Significant Case Review
SDS	Self-Directed Support
SPSO	Scottish Public Service Ombudsman
UASC	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
YOI	Young Offenders Institute