

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL – 16 JANUARY 2020

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the Chief Social Worker Officer (CSWO) Annual Report for the financial year 2018/2019. The preparation of an annual report is not mandatory but is a recommendation in Scottish Government Guidance on the role of the CSWO.

2 Recommendations

Full Council is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report for the 2018/2019 (Appendix 1) financial year in relation to Social Work Services and approve the report in terms of the Scheme of Governance.**
- 2.2 Acknowledge the level of investment by the Council in Social Work Services for the residents of Aberdeenshire.**
- 2.3 Acknowledge the commitment of social work staff in the consistent delivery of high performing services.**
- 2.4 Consider the recommendation agreed at Education & Children's Services Committee detailed at 3.5.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Council Committees and the Integration Joint Board receive reports throughout the year on the performance of social work as measured against a range of national and local indicators, and also receive reports on particular initiatives and issues.
- 3.2 In order to add value, the CSWO report attempts to avoid duplicating this information.
- 3.3 Rather, it draws on these reports to highlight particular overarching themes and trends, and also reports on key areas concerning the proper discharge of the social work function that may not have been addressed elsewhere, including those areas of decision making that require CSWO input.
- 3.4 This report will be considered at the Integration Joint Board on 18th December 2019, Education and Children's Service Committee on 5th December 2019 and Communities Committee on 19th December 2019 before being considered at a meeting of the full council. Updates will be incorporated after these meetings.

- 3.5 In addition to the recommendations contained within respective covering reports, the Education and Children’s Service Committee agreed the following:

To recommend to full Council that consideration be given to more extensive partnership working between Criminal Justice Services, core Council Services and the Third Sector.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 The CSWO report describes a service that is performing well in most of the key areas upon which the report is focussed.
- 4.2 In those areas where improvement was required, timely and effective remedial measures have been put in place.
- 4.3 Currently there are no specific areas that require additional scrutiny of planning beyond that provided by Service and Council processes.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report helps deliver Council Priority 4 - Work with parents and carers to support children through every stage of their development.

The report helps deliver Council Priority 8 – Work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our communities.

The report helps deliver Council Priority 10 – Have the right people, in the right place, doing the right thing, at the right time

- 5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities		X	
Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
Town Centre First		X	
Sustainability		X	
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing		X	

- 5.3 An equality impact assessment is not required because all the projects and initiatives referenced in the CSWO report have their own Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

5.4 There are no staffing or financial implications.

6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

6.2 The remit to consider and approve the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report and any related action plan is reserved to Full Council in terms of Section A.13.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance.

Iain Ramsay, Chief Social Work Officer

Report prepared by Iain Ramsay, Chief Social work Officer
Date 17 December 2019

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Annual Report by Aberdeenshire's Chief Social Work Officer 2018/19

ANNUAL REPORT BY ABERDEENSHIRE'S CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER
2018/19

Introduction

There is a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) who is registered with the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC). The overall role of the CSWO is focused on the provision of effective professional advice and guidance to Local Authorities, Elected Members, and Officers in the provision of Social Work Services whether directly provided or commissioned. The CSWO also has a responsibility for overall performance improvement, and the identification and management of corporate risk in so far as these relate to Social Work Services. Further information is available on the [Role and Function of the CSWO](#) on the Scottish Government website.

The role of Social Work in Aberdeenshire is to support, care for, and protect people from pre – birth to end of life care. Social Work does so by providing or purchasing services designed to promote the dignity, safety, and independence of people who use these services, and to contribute to community safety by reducing re-offending. The Third and Private Sectors are key partners in these endeavours.

The Social Work Services workforce is diverse, and includes social workers, practitioners working in residential and day care services for adults and children, care at home and housing support staff, occupational therapy staff, mental health officers, people working in child and adult protection and in criminal justice services.

Social Work Services are provided 24 hours each day of the year. They are provided in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including people who use or benefit from them. National standards are required to be met as is the achievement of best value.

This Report on the Social Work Service in Aberdeenshire for 2018/19 uses the national reporting cycle first adopted in 2013/2014 and is concerned with the financial year rather than any other time period. This follows the request of the Scottish Government's Chief Social Work Advisor in order to assist with ensuring that on a national basis key issues are highlighted, and information and learning is similarly shared. On receipt of Reports from 32 CSWO's the Chief Social Work Advisor prepares a national overview, a copy of which for 2014/2015 can be located on the [Scottish Government Website](#).

The overall approach of avoiding the duplication of information that has been reported to a range of Committees has largely been maintained. By and large this Report adheres to the financial year time frame with only minor exceptions around external Inspections of services where the calendar year 2018/19 is referenced. The author wishes to thank those who assisted in the production of this report.

There is always a requirement for the CSWO or designated deputy to be available at all times. As Aberdeenshire does not have formal deputising arrangements, as in previous years thanks are due to colleagues from Children's and Adult Services who deputise without recompense for the CSWO during periods of leave.

1. Summary Reflections

Everyday social work and social care services play an integral role in supporting many of the most vulnerable people in our community: staff positively change lives. Aberdeenshire has a committed workforce which strives to help those in need or to protect those most at risk. In 2018/2019 staff across social services have continued to demonstrate their commitment to improving the lives of service users, families and carers. Many legislative, policy and demographic drivers have been approached positively, with innovative thought and behaviour, and with a focus on solutions, all to the immense credit of our staff.

In spite of the continuing challenging financial climate, service users, carers, and staff continued to benefit from substantial financial investment in service delivery. In addition, both the Council and Integration Joint Board (IJB) have continued to support service re-design and re-provisioning in accordance with best practice and a strong service focus. The ongoing development of Social Work Services and the associated achievements rely on the continued commitment to working in partnership with a wide range of external partners. The support and commitment of the Council's Elected Members across all groups is also recognised.

In 2018/19 it was reassuring to note the recruitment of an Interim Head of Children's Services following a period when the post was vacant. The CSWO viewed this as a positive development leading to greater stability of both professional, and operational leadership of children's social work.

Over the past year innovative approaches have led to tangible improvements, both in terms of positive outcomes people experience, and the way in which services and organisations work collaboratively towards a single aim. As you will note, throughout this report there are many examples of innovative practice, including partnership working across Aberdeenshire.

Whilst this report describes social work and social care services across Aberdeenshire positively, it is important to acknowledge individual practitioners, wider teams, and services are contending with some very real and growing challenges associated with budgetary pressures; greater and more complex needs; growing complexity of legislative and statutory tools; maintaining professional identity; and greater use of thresholds and eligibility criteria. Within this landscape it is important the core principles of social work, such as, social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are not compromised or undermined.

2. Partnership Structure / Governance Arrangements

The CSWO is a member of the Council's Strategic Leadership Team and has direct access to Elected Members, the Chief Executive, managers, and frontline practitioners in relation to professional social work issues. The CSWO has the authority to report directly to relevant Aberdeenshire Council, its Committees and the IJB. The CSWO meets regularly with the Chief Executives of Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian, which enables a wider understanding of social work matters that have traditionally been seen only within the realms of the local authority. This is a refreshing approach which enables discussion and

consideration of a number of policy developments and their impact on social work functions. In addition, the CSWO has regular meetings with Chairs of Education & Children's Services and Communities Committees, both have roles encompassing social work services. Again, this is an important arrangement which enables the discussion of both national and local policy changes impacting on social work services.

The governance of social work services continues to be undertaken across two discreet structures. Children's Social Work Services remain within Aberdeenshire Council and are part of the Education and Children's Service's (ECS) portfolio. All other Adult Social Work and Social Care Services, including Criminal Justice, are part of the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and are overseen by the Integration Joint Board (IJB).

As described in last year's report, older people and adult social work services are managed on an integrated (i.e. not profession specific) basis in 12 localities, while Criminal Justice and Substance Misuse Social Work Services continue to be delivered on a functional basis. The opportunity which health and social care integration has created in respect of the delivery of Substance Misuse Services has initiated some changes to the delivery model as health and social work teams move towards co-location. The single management structure within the HSCP also allows for the better development of integrated working whilst professional leads maintain the integrity and identity of individual professions. Criminal Justice Services have continued to deliver their statutory function. Community Justice Scotland has strengthened their existence in many aspects of the national picture. Locally, the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership has become well established.

Previous Reports have highlighted the potential risks associated with the social work function being dispersed throughout a range of governance bodies, albeit with each passing year it is clear there is a growing maturity. Whilst this landscape does inevitably create risks, and the themes of transitions and identity remain areas of focus, the author has witnessed a growing maturity in the arrangements across ECS and the HSCP, which is leading to positive and progressive arrangements.

An example being, that during 2018/19 a joint ECS and HSCP group has continued to meet and develop approaches to a number of areas associated with children and adult service provision. In addition, two fora have been created with the aim of developing greater alignment and information sharing between social work practitioners from across all functions. The author views these forums as adding great value to the objective of collaboration at all levels associated with social work provision. In previous reports the risks associated with integration and the alignment of the children's social work with ECS and adult social work with the IJB have been highlighted as key areas of risk. It is inevitable that due to the complexity and span of social work and social care provision a comprehensive arrangement of operational and governance structures are required. These structures provide assurance in relation to the authority's statutory responsibilities for social work and confidence that safe practice and clear lines of professional support and accountability are maintained.

Whilst the operational arrangements across ECS and HSCP are now well embedded, there is ongoing work to build robust governance structures which provide the necessary level of assurance in relation to child protection, adult protection, and adult social work provision delivered within the HSCP. The appointment of a single independent chairperson for both

Child and Adult Protection Committees is welcomed and provides the opportunity for consistency of approach and ultimately greater levels of assurance.

In 2017 the Aberdeenshire Clinical and Adult Social Work Governance Committee was established as a committee of the Integration Joint Board. It has a remit for providing assurance to the IJB throughout all aspects of the HSCP. The Committee has undertaken several development workshops throughout 2018/19 with a view to establishing greater clarity regarding role, remit and design of the clinical and social work governance structure. This work will conclude during 2019/20.

As a member of the Executive Group for Public Protection, the CSWO has observed a maturing forum which has provided a tier of assurance not previously in place. The important aspects of public protection which have been considered by this group in 2018/19 are the spheres of Child and Family Protection Committee; Multi Agency Offender Management; Adult Support and Protection; Domestic Abuse; and Initial Case Reviews. Social Work is integral to the planning, delivery, and monitoring of these arrangements.

Key forums which the CSWO attends and influences include:

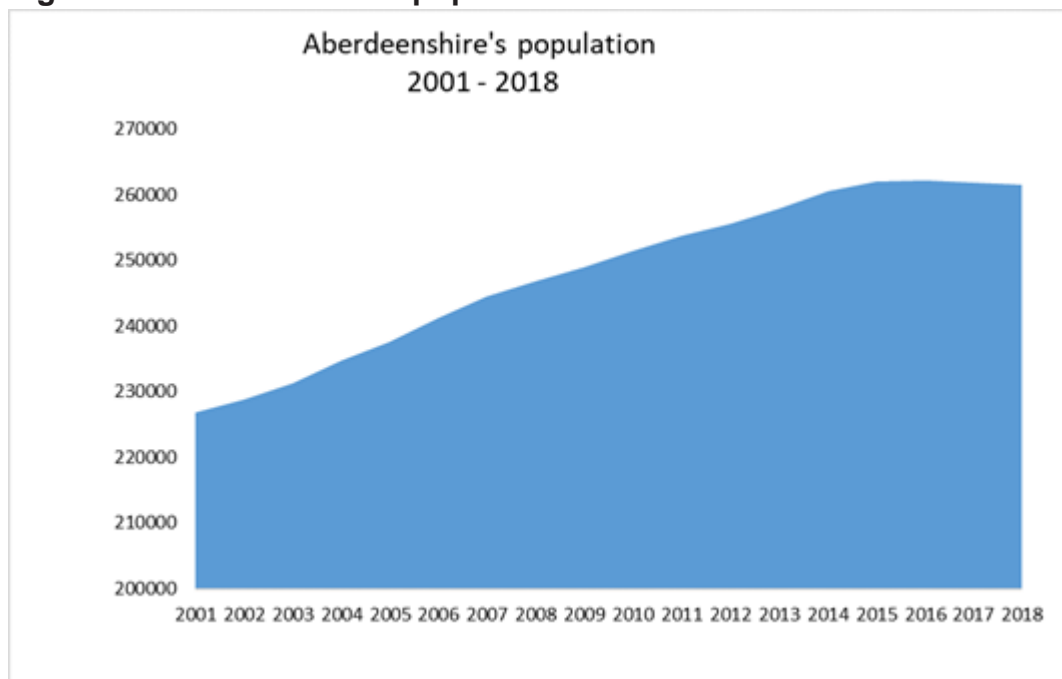
Structure	Role
Council	The CSWO attends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Leadership Team • Heads of Service meetings • Corporate Leadership Group
Integration Joint Board	The CSWO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is a standing member of the IJB • attends Health and Social Care Management meetings • attends Clinical and Adult Social Work Governance Committee
Children's Services	The CSWO is a member of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECS/IJB Group • Social Work Managers Forum
Public Protection	The CSWO is a member of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Group for Public Protection • Child Protection Committee • Adult Protection Committee
National	The CSWO is a member of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Work Scotland's CSWO Group • Co-Chair of Resources and Workforce Standing Committee • Scottish Government's Social Work Education Partnership

As referred to in previous annual reports, the role of Lead Social Worker for Adult Services was created and commenced in May 2017. Over the period, this role has continued to provide professional guidance and leadership for social work within the HSCP and has been the link to wider social work services within the Council. With a lead role for Adult Support and Protection, Self-Directed Support (SDS), and Learning and Development (across Children's and Adult Services), the Lead Social Worker gives assurance to the CSWO that there continues to be effective links and consistency of social work practice, throughout Aberdeenshire.

3. Social Services Delivery Landscape

Aberdeenshire is a predominantly rural area in North East Scotland covering a wide geographical area of 6,313 square kilometres (approximately 8% of Scotland's territory). There is a relatively low population density of 41 people per square kilometer compared to 70 for Scotland. In 2018 Aberdeenshire's population was estimated to be 261,470, approximately 5% of Scotland's total population of 5,438,100. This represents a small fall of 330 people since 2017 and is the second consecutive year that Aberdeenshire's population has fallen (Figure 1).

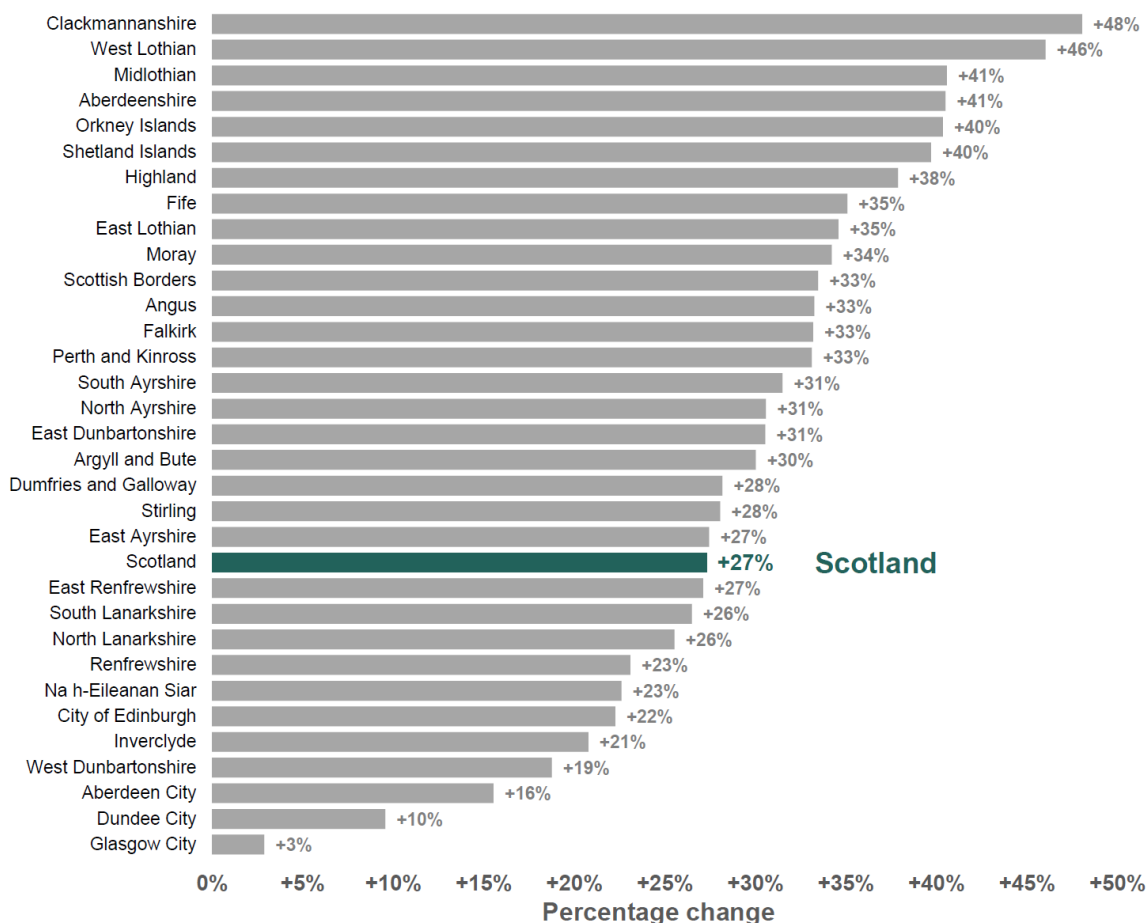
Figure 1: Aberdeenshire's population 2001-2018



Aberdeenshire's child population (aged 0-15 years old), is above the Scottish average and growing steadily, with a predicted further 6% rise between 2016 and 2026. Overall, the population of Aberdeenshire is projected to rise steadily over coming years. Between 2016 and 2026 there is a predicted 8% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over, compared to a national increase of 5%. Figure 2 illustrates there is a particularly sharp

increase (41%) over the same period of people aged 75 and over. Whilst this should be rightfully celebrated, it also means people will be living longer with potentially more complex health and care needs. As a result of these demographic changes, there are increasing demands on education, health, social work and social care services.

Figure 2: Projected percentage change in population aged 75 and over, by council area (2016-2026)



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Compared to some areas of Scotland, Aberdeenshire is generally not considered to be an area of high deprivation. As a local authority area, Aberdeenshire is considered to be the fifth least deprived in Scotland. However, there are significant numbers of individuals and families who experience the effects of multiple and persistent deprivation. Of 340 areas in Aberdeenshire considered in relation to deprivation, 6 are classed as within the most deprived in Scotland. It is important to recognise the impact of poverty on all those affected, and to provide services in a way which respond to the particular needs associated with people and groups who are disadvantaged. The level of social work provision in those areas broadly reflects the increased levels of deprivation.

Bringing together both older people and children - Intergenerational Activities in Care Homes

Intergenerational activities offer mutual benefits for both older people and children. They bring diverse groups in our communities together and offer opportunities for learning from each other and benefiting from different experiences and skills. These activities can help with relationship building and dispel stereotyping and stigma. Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) care homes and local schools have embraced intergenerational activities with an aim of being at the “heart of our community” by working in partnership to provide social and learning activities for residents and children.

Intergenerational activities have taken place at Edenholme Care Home in Stonehaven. In 2018, the care home formed a partnership with the local Lions Club and primary school. The Lions Club dug over the garden area and the school pupils assisted the residents to build the home’s “bug hotel”. In May 2019, the two groups returned to help residents create a new vegetable patch and the children joined the residents for lunch, following a video presentation on sustainable food sources. The children and residents also planted potatoes.

Edenholme has welcomed pupils with additional needs to the care home and they have planted window boxes with the residents. The home has also started a weekly music group. The facilitator of the music group commented,

“The children and parents/carers are actively embracing and encouraging their peers to join in and are also experiencing the level of enjoyment and participation of the residents and staff leading to a full community.”

Most importantly, everyone involved thoroughly enjoys these visits, but they also provide opportunities to participate in social, creative, physical and learning activities both indoors and outside.



4. Finance and Resources

4.1 Finance

Social work services continue to be delivered within an increasingly challenging financial environment as the level of funding increases do not keep pace with the increasing demands on services. Aberdeenshire Council and the Integration Joint Board continue to invest in social work and social care services to meet current and anticipated increased levels of demand where many service users are living longer with increasingly complex needs. The total expenditure on social work services during 2018/19 was just over £30 million on children's services and over £133 million on adult social work services.

Social work services commission resources from a wide range of private, not for profit and voluntary sector providers. Services have access to independent care homes, including resources for older people and people with learning disabilities. They also have access to placements for children and young people across Scotland. Additionally, providers in Aberdeenshire operate across home care, day care, and supported living.

In terms of Children's Social Work Services, the main area of pressure has been on externally provided residential and care provision. This is largely generated by the need for externally procured placements to meet the complex and changing needs of a particular group of children and young people, as well as experience of living wage pressures. Direct payment packages are facing similar issues as well as external fostering placements.

The Integration Joint Board and associated services delivered through health and social care services have experienced financial challenges across a number of social work functions, including older people's care management and learning disabilities services. These financial pressures are borne against a backdrop of greater emphasis on the use of eligibility criteria and service redesign. Whilst there is undoubtedly increasing demand on services across all user groups, the main reason is associated with increasing complexity of service users requiring support. This is particularly apparent when considering medical advances and the associated consequences of living with long-term conditions such as heart disease or respiratory illness. In addition, services are seeing a rapid increase in requests for mental health support for children and young adults.

In 2018/19 the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board recorded an overspend of £3.1 million and required additional funds from Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian. The commitment of both organisations in supporting the IJB is to be commended, especially at a time when all budgets are constrained.

As part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) programmes of work are ongoing to deliver more sustainable models of service delivery. A strategic and medium term view of resources is essential if social work and social care services are to deliver their priorities. This focus is challenging but necessary to support the continued availability of services for the most vulnerable.

Commissioning for Outcomes: Aberdeenshire Tests of change

A task group with representatives from the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP), Commercial and Procurement Services and providers of supported living services has been working to co-produce outcome based, flexible and responsive contractual arrangements. A review of current research has informed decision-making and arrangement within the test areas.

Three tests for change pilots are being implemented in Aberdeenshire to explore a move away from “time and task” to outcome-focused commissioning. The pilots are linked to two new service developments, including a residential care home de-registration. The aim has been to develop an approach which concentrates on providing care and support to people which is more reflective of their current and future needs, with a specific focus on helping people reach a positive outcome.

Social Work assessments of need and eligibility criteria continue to inform referrals, but support plans are created in collaboration with the service user and the potential provider of care and support. This is a significant move away from the current approach to commissioning services and is not without its challenges. This current pilot will inform future developments in this area.

5. Service Quality and Performance

5.1 Inspection

Service quality, performance management, and reporting are intrinsic parts of the duties of the CSWO. Social work services utilise regular performance reporting to inform delivery against strategic objectives, highlighting areas of progress and subsequent approaches to continuous improvement.

The Care Inspectorate continue to regulate and inspect registered services across Aberdeenshire and undertakes planned and unannounced inspections. Inspections do not assess all quality themes in every visit. Themes are selected from a range of sources of “intelligence”, including self-evaluations/assessments. The Social Work Service considers Care Inspectorate reports individually and strategically in order to highlight any themes that may require to be addressed.

Detailed inspection reports for all services can be viewed online here: [Care Inspectorate](#).

Aberdeenshire Council has three Children’s Homes which provide care to sixteen Looked After Children aged 12 years and above. All establishments are inspected annually against two of the Care Inspectorates four over-arching care standards. During the period of this report, all the Homes were graded at 5 (Very Good) for the standards on which they were inspected. The period has been fairly settled for each of the homes, despite there being ten new admissions of young people across the three establishments. Many of these young people arrive with issues of poor or non-attendance at school, but all are quickly established back into full time attendance at their selected Academy. This is a major achievement for

many as they will often have had a considerable period of non-attendance prior to moving to the Home. The staff in the Home also seek to work closely with families, and support parents in establishing more effective parenting skills to manage their child and to set clear and consistent boundaries for them. Where possible, the service will support young people to return to their families, but if this is not an option, staff work hard to help the young person develop the skills they will need when they subsequently move to a more independent setting. Overall, the services provided by Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership are of a high standard, with these regularly achieving grades of 4 (good) and 5 (very good). However, there are occasions when resources fall below these standards and concentrated efforts to address concerns are required to make the necessary improvements.

Health and Care Standards

The new Health and Social Care Standards introduced in April 2018 are proving challenging to implement for all providers. Within the internal care homes and Very Sheltered Housing (VSH) services work has commenced to incorporate knowledge and understanding of the Standards into everyday practice. The service has developed and shared approaches that ensure staff are able to relate their own practice to each of the standards.

This has involved including the topic as a regular item in supervision, team meeting and daily handovers with managers and assistants as well as in care plans and feedback from residents. Managers have developed approaches with staff which are intended to be quick and fun, including "Standards Bingo" where staff are asked before each team meeting to pick a standard and indicator and to then think of an example of their practice which illustrates that particular standard. Over time this has developed into daily discussions in which staff can quickly illustrate their understanding of the standards. Sharing of this practice across the service has helped enhance care provision within services.

By way of additional narrative, information on areas where services have undertaken development activity to improve quality and performance is as follows:

5.2 Transition from Children's to Adult Services

Throughout the year, staff continued to work with guidance on the transitions from children to adult services. Transitions meetings were established in Aberdeenshire that met regularly in recognition of the number of young people who may move towards adult services. Work has been done throughout 2018/19 to ensure eligibility criteria used in adult services continues to focus on levels of risk to individuals, so does not rely on medical diagnoses as a way of determining eligibility for services. This has proved particularly useful in relation to the transition of young people, who had in the past experienced delayed access to services at the point of transition.

Whilst Transitions activity varies across Aberdeenshire, it was encouraging to learn that the process is working well, and young people are successfully completing their care experience and are being supported to transfer over to adult services at an appropriate point.

However, alongside this it was also identified there were some young people who have very complex care experiences and have multiple needs and issues as they progress towards adulthood. Whilst there are examples of transitions working well for some of these young people, there is also an anecdotal view that some young people were not in receipt of all of the services they needed and consequently were struggling in their early adulthood. It was also felt there were further opportunities for cross-service assessment and practice around allocating workers across Aberdeenshire. Consequently, it was agreed that further work should be undertaken on this area. This work is ongoing at present and will continue into 2019/20.

5.3 Out of Authority Placements

The challenge of reducing the number of young people requiring out of authority placements remains an ongoing challenge for Education & Children's Services. Following a series of Rapid Improvement Events, a number of key workstreams have been identified to improve the level of support young people and their families receive prior to consideration being given to an out of authority placement. These include increasing and improving respite provision in Aberdeenshire for children and young people with complex health and care needs; the development of a framework of interventions to support colleagues from all services to draw on resource, tools and experience to offer children and their families a different type of resource, and improved collaboration across Services to ensure plans and recommendations are GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) compliant.

Whilst it is acknowledged that some young people will continue to require and benefit from specialist residential care and educational placements, an audit of Out of Authority Placements in November 2018 also indicated that earlier, targeted intervention could play a critical role in either preventing the need for such a placement or being able to support children in the community for longer.

The CSWO is assured the Service remains committed to supporting young people to remain in their local communities and to keeping children, young people, and their families at the centre of planning on both an individual case basis and service planning.

5.4 Children's Services Wellbeing Team

The vision of Aberdeenshire Council's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016 – 2019 (MHWS) is that "all children and young people are mentally flourishing".

There have been a number of positive steps made to support children at risk of becoming looked after, including the creation of a Children's Wellbeing Team which was established in January 2018 to provide community based direct therapeutic intervention to young people where there is significant concern in regards to their emotional wellbeing. The team targets young people who are Looked After Children or who are at risk of becoming a Looked After Child and aims to support their emotional wellbeing needs. This can be in the form of direct work, group work or family work, and support to wider professional colleagues is offered to

increase understanding of emotional wellbeing concerns through consultation and training workshops. In the first year, the team worked directly with 40 young people. Positive outcomes include direct intervention with a child who was at risk of being accommodated in a residential school, and is now living locally, accessing mainstream education, and whose emotional wellbeing needs are now manageable.

5.5 Engaging Care Experienced Young People (CEYP)

The Corporate Parenting Leads Group, chaired by the Interim Head of Service for Children's Services, is a thematic group of the GIRFEC Strategic Group and is responsible for continuously improving the service experience of looked after children, young people and care leavers, and care experienced young people (CEYP).

The group is committed to responding to the challenges faced by care experienced young people to improve outcomes for this particular group. The work is underpinned by the priorities of GIRFEC.

Our care experienced young people told us that a good corporate parent is:

“When Aberdeenshire Council and people who work there act as our parent and take responsibility for doing everything that a good parent should do, for looked after children and care leavers”

This forms the focus and vision of the Corporate Parenting Leads Group, and in line with the indicators of wellbeing, the Leads Group work together to achieve the promises Aberdeenshire Council have made to our young people.

In January 2017, the Corporate Parenting Leads Group launched a three-year [Corporate Parenting Action Plan \(2017 -2020\)](#) which contains both the promises made to CEYP following consultation on what they needed from their Corporate Parents.

In 2018/19, meaningful engagement has been further enhanced with CEYP through Twilight Sessions whereby CEYP and Corporate Parenting Leads meet to discuss and identify 'what works well' and 'even better if...'. These discussions inform the direction and priority setting in developing Aberdeenshire's Corporate Parenting Plan. The Corporate Parenting Leads Group have listened, responded to and made pledges to, our CEYP. Young people then hold the leads accountable for their actions and are required to report back progress at subsequent meetings.

Key highlights from 2018 include:

- Young people's participation in service improvement, recruitment, and training.
- National recognition for Young People's Organising & Campaigning Group materials.
- Twilight Sessions involving CEYP and Corporate parenting leads.
- Highly successful Awards evening – Celebrating Success' for CEYP.
- Good inspection outcomes for our residential and fostering services.
- No young people leaving care were placed in a B&B accommodation.
- Increase in number of care leavers sustaining their own tenancies.
- Increased choice through a suite of supportive accommodation for care leavers.
- Increase in the number of care leavers returning to the Service at times they most need support.
- Greater awareness and good up take of continuing care options.

- Significant increase in Our Family Firm placements.
- Strong collaboration between partners to secure improved outcomes for CEYP.

5.6 Children's Charter

In 2018 as part of Year of the Young Person, over a hundred of Aberdeenshire's children and young people came together at a participation focused event to begin to develop Aberdeenshire's Children and Young People's [Charter](#). Now published, the Charter created **by** Aberdeenshire's children and young people, **for** Aberdeenshire's children and young people now forms an integral part of Children's Services Service design and delivery. The 7 charter statements represent Aberdeenshire children and young people's voices and reflect what they have told us is most important to them. This declaration reflects a commitment across the Community Planning Partnership to uphold the values of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and to work from a foundation of Children's Rights. It sets out the rightful expectations all children and young people can, and should have, of all organisations, services, politicians, communities, and individuals working in Aberdeenshire.

5.7 Children's Social Work Services Improvement Plan

Children's Services Social Work is a continually evolving and improving service designed to deliver high-quality assistance and support to children and families in Aberdeenshire by building relationships that change lives. The Service is committed to listening to and working together with, families, and partner providers/services, to enable sustained change that improves outcomes for children, young people and their families in need of support. The Service is committed to delivering the service with kindness, dignity, and compassion.

Quality assurance is an integral part of everyday practice within Children's Services. Measuring the impact of service delivery is central to achieving improved outcomes for children. A strong quality assurance framework assists the organisation to deliver an efficient and effective service. The Children's Services Management Team review practice standards, audits, inspections, performance information, compliments and complaints, procedures and current issues for the service to identify key themes for improvement which informs the Children's Service Improvement Plan. In the last year, key priority areas have included a review and audit of our Duty System, Self-Directed Support, and transitions from Children's to Adult Services to improve outcomes by share learning and to identifying and implementing improvement activity.

The Service has also evidenced its commitment to developing a competent and confident workforce by focussing collaboratively with practitioners and managers on identifying need which has resulted in the establishment of a Team Manager Seminar Programme and ongoing Practitioner Forum to support continued professional development. This has also included developing a practitioner emotional resilience and wellbeing course and support materials.

5.8 Criminal Justice Social Work

During year 2018/19, to meet the continued demand on the Criminal Justice Service due to ever increasing numbers of community sentences with the further predicted increase as a result of the introduction of PASS (Presumption Against Short Sentences) of 12 months or

less, the Criminal Justice fieldwork service has been enhanced through additional posts. Key areas in North Aberdeenshire host this enhanced service which enables fieldwork social workers to deliver more individual and group work programmatic interventions as part of the supervision of community sentences. There is a noted greater diversity of people receiving community sentences in terms of underlying need. Supervision has had to become more responsive so that compliance can be supported, and Orders completed in a meaningful and successful way.

During 2018/19, the Criminal Justice Service continued to deliver an Intensive Interventions Service established in 2017/18. This service is designed to break the cycle of reoffending by providing an assertive outreach approach, building relationships and establishing trust so that patterns of contact can take place which develops routine, attendance patterns, and addresses the underlying issues which perpetuate the cycle of non-compliance and reoffending. The Intensive Interventions Service works with people who present a high risk of harm and are most often serving short sentences on a repeat basis. The “custody in-reach” approach has been developed if someone who has been working with the Service does receive a short sentence. The work started in the community continues during the short sentence alongside Scottish Prison Service. This continues the relationship, gives further opportunity to address underlying need, and also promotes the positive links with the Employability Officer attached to the Service who can then work with the individual during their period in custody in the Education and Employment environment of prison.

The Criminal Justice Service has been committed to continuing to embed the Whole Systems Approach into the justice environment. In year 2018/19, the emerging young people’s work became established with the appointment of a dedicated full-time criminal justice social worker who carries a small caseload of young people at various stages of involvement in the justice system. The post provides early intervention and supportive intervention to ensure that alternatives to prosecution, and alternatives to remand and custody are real options for the Crown and Court Service when considering sentencing disposals for young people. Work is also undertaken with the Scottish Prison Service in those situations when a young person is in custody due to the nature of risk. Effective and person centred throughcare and transitions work being key components of practice as young people are reintegrated into the community.

Early Intervention, Alternatives to Remand and Diversion are components of practice which have developed in response to both national and local priorities. A Court/Custody Suite social worker, based at Aberdeen Sheriff Court took up post in early 2018 . The role undertakes an assessment based on the circumstances of the arrest and presentation of the person appearing from police custody which can then be provided to Court services. This may influence a pathway to diversion from prosecution or imposition of bail supervision. The post also works alongside third sector providers and forensic health care based at the Kittybrewster Custody Suite. This marks the establishment of a greater partnership arrangement with Police Scotland and has been one of the foundation changes towards the developments in other areas of practice such as the roll out of Alcohol Brief Interventions Training for custody officers and Action 15 mental health practitioner posts being secured within the custody environment.

In Peterhead Sheriff Court and Police Custody Suite in Fraserburgh, a criminal justice social worker linked to a Health4Work project which was funded by the Scottish Government Employability, Innovation and Integration fund and offered direct access to employability

support for people appearing in Court from police custody. The post holder had access to the other parts of the Health4Work project which included welfare rights support and training opportunities. The concept of identifying and addressing underlying need throughout the pre-sentencing period moves Criminal Justice intervention to a much earlier stage in the justice pathway. Again, this goes some way towards the preparation for a further increase in Community sentences and PASS.

5.9 Self-Directed Support within Children's Services

Since the implementation of the Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 there has been a significant increase in the number of children with disabilities and additional support needs who require financial resources to meet their identified outcomes.

Prior to 1 April 2014, there were 120 children with funded packages of support through social work, a small number had a Direct Payment, and others were supported in block funded short break services and traditional overnight respite services. Currently, there are 339 Support Plans for children: this reflects the diverse range of needs from those who require support to engage in social activities to those who have very complex needs who require extensive packages of care and support to meet the needs of the child and their family.

In last year's report, it was highlighted that some families find it difficult to make effective use of their child's individual budget due to lack of availability of people who wish to be employed as Personal Assistants. In order to address the gaps in provision, and to meet the individual needs of children, young people and their families, a tender was recently undertaken to create a Children's Services Framework for Care at Home. The Framework was developed with the aim of ensuring 'best value' and to provide a choice of providers across Aberdeenshire. The Care at Home providers have indicated which locations across Aberdeenshire they can provide staff and which tasks their staff would be able to undertake, which is helpful for both families and practitioners in identifying which service would best meet their needs. The Framework includes agreed prices for regular care at home and for the provision of complex care at home.

5.10 Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

Both Adult and Children's Services Social Work play a significant role within local Children's Services Planning arrangements and are represented at all levels of its governance. The GIRFEC Strategic Group leads the development, delivery, and review of the plan, and provides strategic direction as to how local resources are best used to promote wellbeing and improve outcomes for children and young people. There is strong representation within each thematic group, focused on addressing agreed areas of strategic priority. (Corporate Parenting, Children with a Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Early Years, and Substance Misuse). Children's Services Social Work also chair a further two partnership groups, focussed on Whole Systems Approach and the needs of Young Carers. A cycle of self-evaluation supports the annual review of these arrangements, with a GIRFEC Review currently underway led by the Acting Head of Children's Services.

The role of Adult and Children's Social Work Services remains essential in supporting ongoing national implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child. Aberdeenshire's GIRFEC Modules Group designs and delivers multi-agency training on key aspects of GIRFEC and use of the National Practice Model. In addition to Children's Services Social Work,

Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership's Lead Social Worker is a member of the group, along with colleagues from Substance Misuse and Criminal Justice Services. This forum provides a locus for sharing key GIRFEC practice updates and helps consider multi-agency GIRFEC learning and development needs of the wider workforce. Representatives promote the GIRFEC Modules within their service, highlight single service training needs, and ensure these are developed in line with the agreed Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Approach.

Further national updates are anticipated on aspects of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 which have not yet been enacted. Any implications of these for Adult and Children's Social Work Services will be considered and responded to via current Children's Services Planning arrangements. Revised local GIRFEC Guidance due to launch later in 2019, will be a key reference for practitioners in Adult and Children's Social Work Services. Supported by a range of locally developed practice tools, guidance, and a programme of self-evaluation under development, this places Aberdeenshire in a good position to continue to support a confident and competent workforce.

5.11 Sensory Impairment Services

Services for people with a sensory impairment in Aberdeenshire include ophthalmology, audiology, optometry and visual impairment rehabilitation. In addition, there is sensory support in schools and specialist support to adapt to, and manage, sensory loss, with the aim of promoting independence in daily living. There is no dedicated social work service for visual impairment, although the visual impairment support groups and rehabilitation services are facilitated from within social work and occupational therapy services. Adults and children with a visual impairment also have access to self-directed support packages and occupational therapy equipment/adaptations from care management and children with disability resources.

Services are delivered collaboratively by the statutory, third, and independent sectors, with oversight from the Aberdeenshire See Hear Implementation Group, which was established to drive the implementation of "See Hear – a strategic framework for meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment in Scotland". It is intended this group will continue to progress the provision and development of sensory impairment services in 2019/20.

5.12 Learning Disability Services

There are estimated to be 1,216 adults with learning disabilities in Aberdeenshire; of whom 982 receive support from Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Of the 982 adults with learning disabilities receiving support from Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership, 47% of them live in some form of residential and supported accommodation. The service could not deliver support to people with learning disabilities without strong links with partners; statutory and third sector alike. The Partnership commissions various organisations to provide care at home, residential and supported living services.

Aberdeenshire's health and social care system is experiencing a rise in the numbers of adults with learning disabilities accessing commissioned services each year. Of these, there are increasing numbers who require more complex services. There is also growing pressure on meeting the needs of people with autism and learning disabilities. Demand for services is continuing to increase.

Along with developing a learning disabilities strategy, the service is identifying areas of delivery where creative approaches based on the needs and changing choices people make when identifying services they would like to access. The author looks forward to reporting developments in this area in 2019/20.

6. Delivery of Statutory Functions

This part of the Report focuses primarily on areas in which the CSWO has specific decision-making responsibilities, including agreement to a child/young person being placed in Secure Accommodation; the appointment of Mental Health Officers (MHOs); the Guardianship of Adults with Incapacity; and certain matters relating to adoption.

6.1 Secure Care

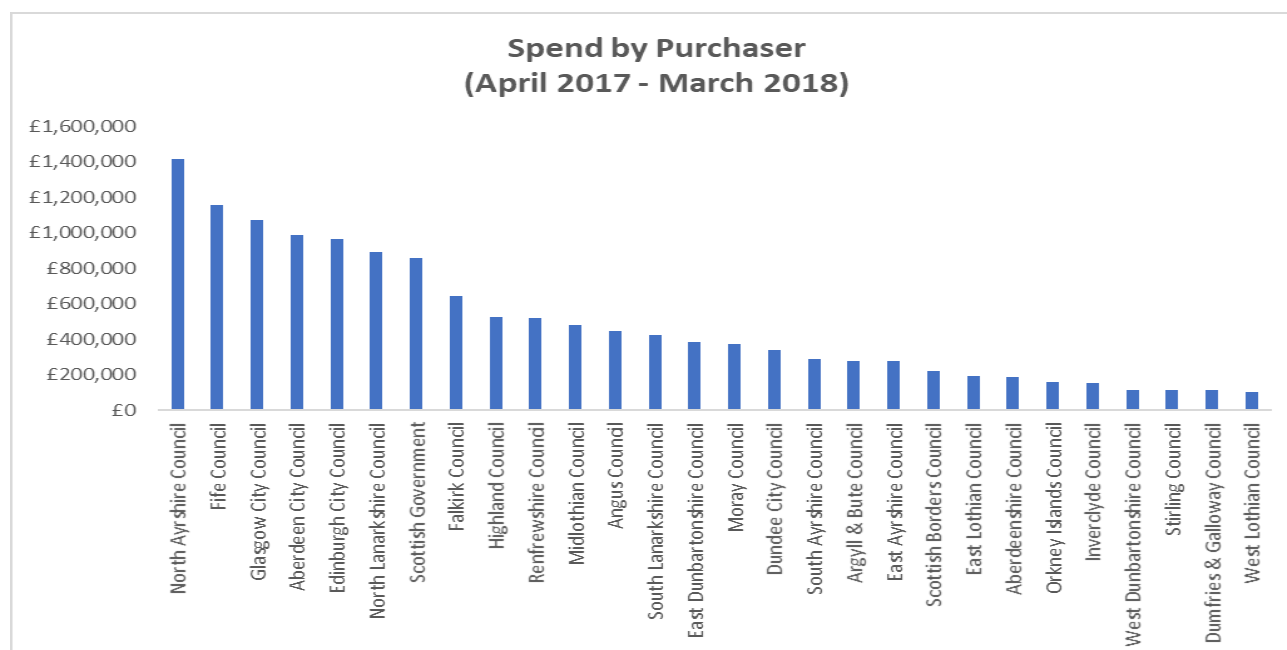
Secure accommodation is a form of residential care for the small number of children and young people whose needs and risks, for a period in their lives, can only be managed in the controlled setting of Secure Accommodation. These children and young people have been deemed to be a significant risk to themselves or others in the community.

Admission to Secure Care is a major development in a young person's life. It strikes a different balance between autonomy and restriction on personal liberty to that enjoyed by other young people under the age of 18 years.

Thus, even if a Children's Panel decide that a young person presents sufficient risk to him/herself or to others to warrant admission to Secure Care, legislation requires that the CSWO and the person in charge of the Secure establishment agree to the placement. All such admissions are subject to regular and rigorous review.

Scotland has 84 secure accommodation places spread across five dedicated units, the closest to Aberdeenshire being Rossie in Montrose, Angus. In 2018/19 Aberdeenshire continued its trend of using these facilities very rarely. Albeit 2017/18 information (Figure 3) demonstrates Aberdeenshire's spend and therefore use of secure care compared to other local authorities. This supports the position that the authorities approach to child-centred resilience and a professional approach to risk management, demonstrated by the childcare workforce when faced with considerable pressure to "solve" a challenging situation by placing a child in Secure Accommodation, has been pivotal in maintaining a relatively low use of the secure estate.

Figure 3: Spend per Local Authority for Secure Accommodation (April 2017 – March 2018)



6.2 Adoption

Adoption is the process whereby parental rights and responsibilities are transferred from birth parents to Adopters. Although courts ultimately determine whether an Adoption is granted, the CSWO (or alternative appointee) is the ultimate Council decision maker on matters appertaining to Adoption.

Throughout 2018/19, 7 families (4 less than 2017/18) were approved by Aberdeenshire’s Permanence Panel as adoptive families. 19 children (4 more than in 2017/18) were successfully matched and moved to live with adoptive families.

Aberdeenshire is a full participant in the national adoption register which seeks to progress the matching of children with approved adopters on a national, rather than local authority basis. Nationally, the ongoing recruitment of adopters and foster carers remains challenging and in the last few years, Aberdeenshire has also experienced dwindling numbers of people registering an interest in becoming Adopters. Recruitment is a key priority for the Council and Services continue to be innovative in their approach to engaging with local communities. This has included drop in sessions for interested parties, a regular social media presence, and newspaper and radio advertising as well as local poster campaigns.

6.3 Adult Support and Protection

Adult Support and Protection (ASP) in Aberdeenshire is operationally overseen by the Adult Protection Network (APN) which is part of the multi-agency Aberdeenshire Adult Protection Partnership. In November 2017 the Aberdeenshire Adult Protection Partnership were subject to a Joint Thematic Inspection. The [full inspection report](#) was published on 3 July 2018.

Prior to the report being published, work had already commenced on the implementation of improvements identified internally. This was most notably around improving operational

structures and processes, and reintroducing regular training and support to practitioners and council officers. This has continued and is embedded in the Improvement Action Plan developed from the recommendations and themes identified from the Joint inspection. The areas for improvement, along with recommendations from completed case reviews, were all incorporated into the Aberdeenshire Adult Protection Committee (APC) [Action Plan 2018-20](#). This plan is ambitious, focussing on practice and process improvements, performance monitoring and leadership.

To achieve these actions a significant commitment has been given by all agencies in the Adult Support and Protection Partnership in Aberdeenshire. Practice improvements have been implemented throughout 2018/19 and it is planned that all actions will be completed by March 2020.

The inspection highlighted that the views of adults at risk of harm were not being fully considered. This led to an improvement work stream with North East Advocacy Service, to develop with service users accessible and appropriate methods of gaining feedback and measuring their outcomes (National Safeguarding Tool). Developing an effective and meaningful process remains a challenge but the new methods have been introduced and will be monitored and reviewed in 2019/20.

In November 2018 the way of recording referrals changed and timescales for screening were introduced. As part of the improvement programme there was a recognition the distinction between non-ASP work, including advice, signposting and referral for other appropriate support was not being consistently distinguished from “protection” work. More effective screening has enabled a distinction to be made between each referral and also allows monitoring of the time taken between referral and a decision being taken (within the 2-day timescale).

Figure 4: Monthly number of referrals, concerns and investigations

	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19
All Initial Contacts	149	155	173	167	168	247
ASP referral concerns	23	29	24	27	21	16
Investigations	7	6	7	7	25	11
All Adults at Risk	41	39	37	48	47	47
2-day timescale between referral and decision	95%	94%	95%	98%	97%	93%

In addition, further improvements to processes have been introduced, which has altered the data produced. It is expected the additional staffing to manage the increased number of concerns being received and the introduction of an initial referral discussion will further enhance the screening and investigation timescales, thereby ensuring adults at risk of harm are supported in a timely manner (Figure 4).

The APC also published its [biennial report](#) in November 2018.

6.4 Mental Health Officers (MHO)

Section 32 of the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 requires Aberdeenshire Council to appoint sufficient numbers of Mental Health Officers (MHOs) to discharge the MHO function under the 1995, 2000, and 2003 Acts. MHOs are Social Workers who have successfully completed post qualification training across these Acts and who are designated Mental Health Officers by the CSWO on behalf of the Council. Only MHOs can undertake certain statutory responsibilities.

Under legislation a court can appoint a “Welfare Guardian” if an adult is unable to make decisions or take necessary actions to safeguard their own welfare. “Financial Guardianship” arises where there is impairment to an adult’s capacity to safeguard their property or financial affairs.

In both areas MHOs have a key role in assisting the court and supporting the individuals involved, demographic changes, including the increasing prevalence of dementia have continued to contribute to the increasing orders granted. MHOs can also make a significant contribution to reducing the number of hospital bed days lost due to people being delayed in hospital longer than is needed. Over recent years MHOs, along with multi-disciplinary colleagues, have endeavoured to minimise delays associated with legislative processes and have made good progress.

In March 2019, Aberdeenshire had 42 MHO’s, 4 MHO Trainees, and a further 5 MHO Trainees ready to commence the MHO Award in September 2019. This enables the service to respond to service demands as they arise. We are one of the few Local Authorities who do not have a waiting list for MHO services: flexibility and responsiveness between functions has contributed to this.

We have good coverage of MHOs across all areas, with, as detailed above, several more staff members in the process of completing training which will result in the MHO Award. This will support locality needs and ensure the service is in a position to discharge all aspects of the MHO role in supporting and protecting people vulnerable because of mental disorder.

As of 1 November 2018, there were 589 people in Aberdeenshire subject to Guardianship which is a 10% increase on 2017 figures. 467 require a Local Authority Supervising Officer and 91 require a Local Authority Day-to-Day Welfare Guardian. Figures 5 and 6 provide information on the number of guardianship orders granted between 2004 and 2018 and the age distribution of those people subject to guardianship. The biggest service demand arises from adults with learning disabilities, and 55% percent of people subject to guardianship are aged 40 or under.

Figure 5: Private and Local Authority Guardianship Orders Granted (2003 – 2018)

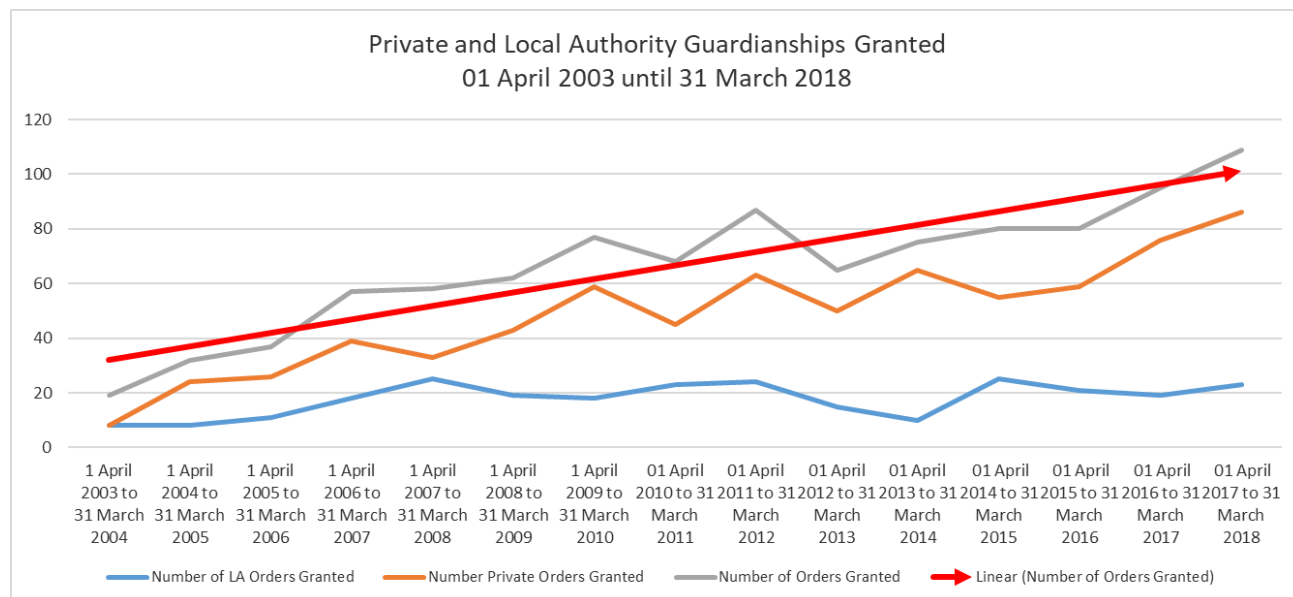
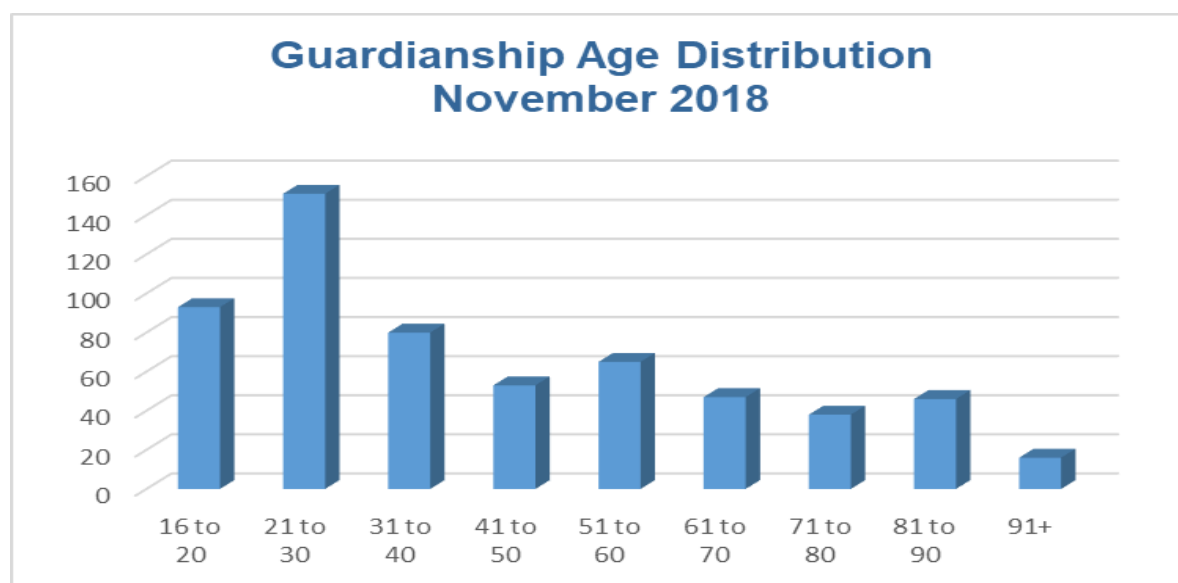


Figure 6: Age distribution of those people subject to guardianship (At November 2018)



7. Engagement

An important aspect of service planning is the role in which users, carers and communities are engaged in developing and commissioning services. Throughout 2018/19 there were several positive examples where social work and social care services worked collaboratively with individuals, communities, and other sectors.

7.1 Implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

Engaging and working with unpaid carers continued to be a priority during 2018-19, with the main area of focus being implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, which came into force from April 2018.

The Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) commissions a carers support service from [Quarriers](#) which provides support to young and adult carers. In addition to this service, other organisations also provide support to carers, such as Advocacy North East and [PAMIS](#) (Promoting A More Inclusive Society). From 1 April 2018, carers have been offered an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) or Young Carer Statement (YCS) which replaced Carer Assessments. This approach determines what information, training, and support will enable the carer to continue in their caring role. Under the new legislation, the local authority where the cared-for resides is responsible for supporting adult carers and offering an ACSP. Figures 7 and 8 show the number of new adult carers registered with Quarriers Aberdeenshire Carer Support Service during 2018-19 and the number of ACSP completed / declined and in progress for the new referrals.

Figure 7: New adult carers registered with Quarriers by area (2018/19)

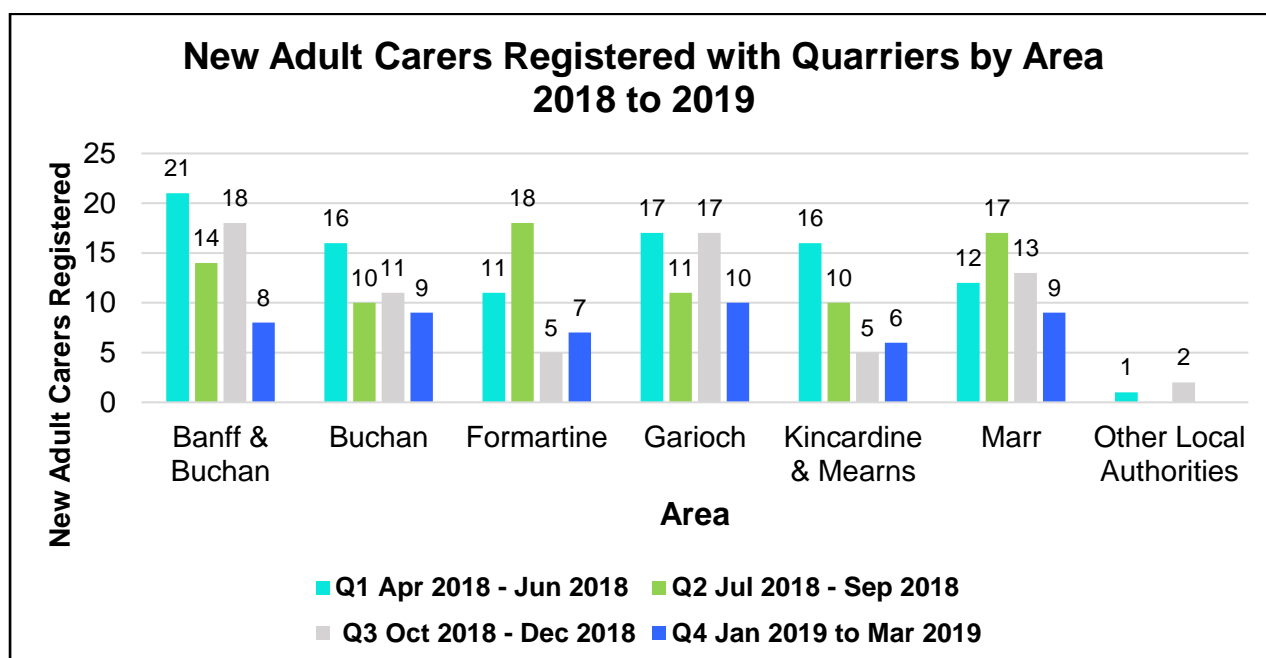
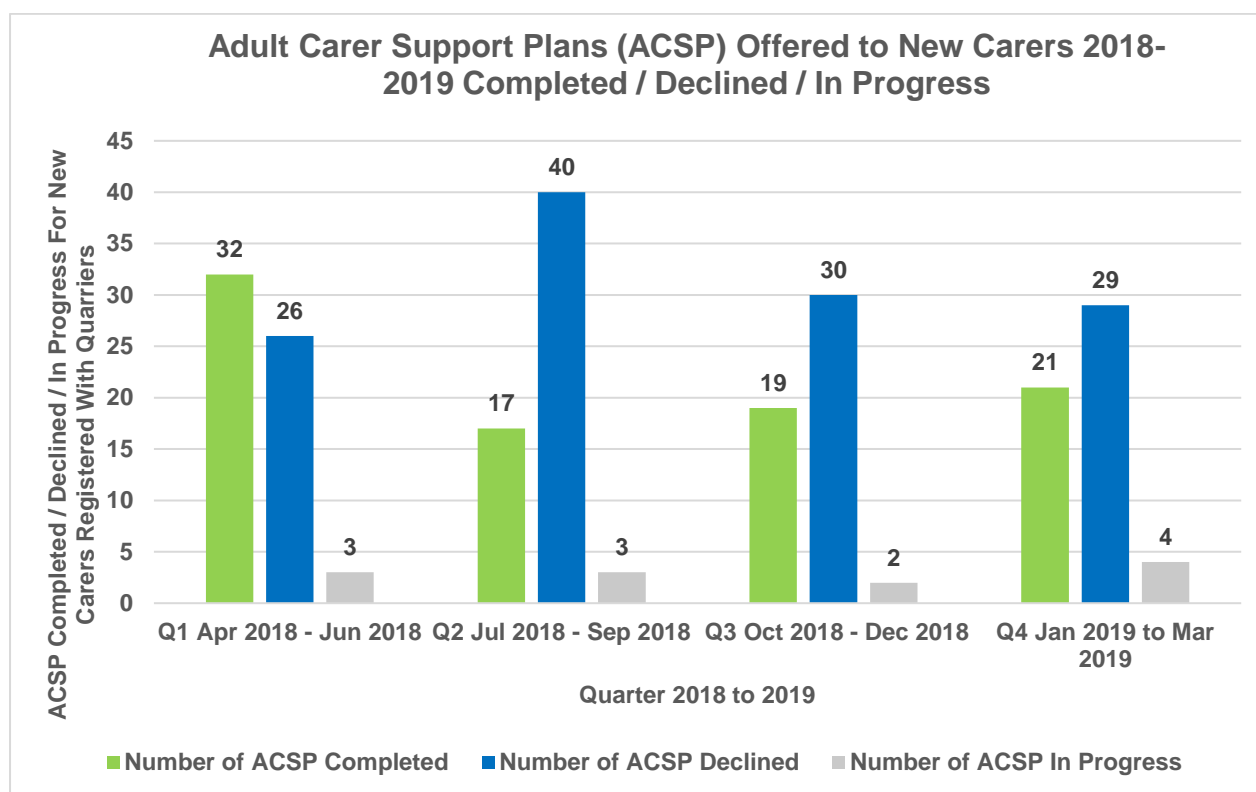


Figure 8: Adult carer support plans offered to new carers (2018/19)



The number of new adult carer registered with Quarriers in 2018-2019 was higher than in the previous year at almost 300 carers, an increase of 30%. The number of new referrals was highest in quarter one, following implementation of the Act and promotion of the support available. The number of new referrals then steadily reduced for the rest of the year but remained higher than the previous year.

The [‘Scotland’s Carers’](#) report published by Scottish Government in March 2015 estimated there were 759,000 carers aged 16+ in Scotland, equating to 17% of the adult population. In Aberdeenshire this would mean Aberdeenshire has an estimated 36,228 adult carers. By the end of 2018/19 there were a total of 624 adult carers registered with Quarriers, which equates to 1.8% of the estimated number of carers in Aberdeenshire. The number of ACSP completed was also highest in quarter one and although decreased, remained relatively steady for the rest of the year.

Achievements during 2018-19 included the publication of Local Carer Strategies and Eligibility Criteria for adult and young carers and the [Aberdeenshire Short Breaks Services Statement \(SBSS\)](#), which were requirements of the Carers Act. The updated [Aberdeenshire Carer Information Pack](#) and other carer support literature were also widely distributed across Aberdeenshire locations.

A Carer Practitioner was recruited to support eligible carers following completion of ACSP / YCS, to look at how the carer could be supported to meet their needs and outcomes through use of a Self-directed Support budget. The ACSP and YCS enabled collection of mandatory carer census data as specified by the Scottish Government, to monitor the implementation of the Carers Act.

The Partnership continues to support carers to access training and development opportunities. There is an ongoing programme of support for carers to complete a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) level 2 in Social Services and Healthcare, if the cared-for is an adult, or Social Services (Children and Young People) if the cared-for is a baby, child, or young person. Since the start of this project in 2014, 33 carers have been awarded this SVQ, including the first young carer in May 2018. There was a slight reduction in the number of carers completing the qualification in 2018, due to a gap in SVQ assessor cover to support the candidates. An internal SVQ Assessor has been recruited for those who care for an adult and an external assessor supports carers who care for children and young people.

Looking forward into 2019-2020, the impact of the Carers Act on local carers will be reviewed and work will continue on the actions identified in both local carer strategies.

7.2 Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Engagement

As part of the development of a new mental health strategy for Aberdeenshire, a project team, including Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, Scottish Association for Mental Health and the Scottish Recovery Network (SRN), was tasked with developing a programme of public engagement. The SRN provided advice and practical input in the development and delivery of the engagement sessions, sharing good practice from across Scotland.

The aims of the engagement process were to:

- Identify people's priorities for mental health and wellbeing in their local communities;
- Find out what resources currently supported people's mental health and wellbeing;
- Provide an opportunity for ongoing public engagement and involvement.

In total, 13 public events took place across Aberdeenshire in August 2018, in addition to a number of focussed sessions with a wide range of organisations and groups, with over 270 people taking part in the engagement activity.

People were asked to discuss the types of groups, activities, community facilities and services currently available that support mental health and wellbeing. Participants also gave views on current gaps and issues in terms of mental health services and were also asked what our future mental health priorities should be.

Feedback from the workshops was used to inform the priorities within the new Aberdeenshire Mental Health Strategy, which will be launched in June 2019.

Based on this engagement and wider strategic development work the following mental health and wellbeing strategic priorities have been identified:

1. **Prevention and Self-management:** People are supported to maintain and improve their mental health.
2. **Access:** People have access to the right treatment, care and support at the right time.
3. **Person Centred:** We deliver person-centred, recovery focussed services, that promote choice and control.
4. **Mental Health Inequalities:** We reduce the negative effects of mental health inequalities.

Each strategic priority will be linked to a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-21. Within this plan, a number of projects have been identified to drive the change required to meet these outcomes.

7.3 Learning Disability Strategy

A major area of focus for the Learning Disability team during 2018-19 was a programme of engagement to inform the new Aberdeenshire Learning Disability Strategy, which will come into effect during 2020. During 2018, the service carried out engagement events across Aberdeenshire by attending existing groups for people with learning disabilities, to ensure engagement was taking place in a relaxed environment. The service visited day services, supported work placements, social clubs, and service user forums and over 120 people with learning disabilities took part in these sessions. Learning from a pilot session informed the approach to these events, to ensure they were based around the style of a relaxed conversation. Feedback was also provided by people with learning disabilities through an online survey, which was shared widely through social media, promoted through local press and targeted specific groups. Four strategic themes, based on the national direction and local priorities, were identified to inform the development of the strategy. These were about feeling well, involved, valued and supported. Feedback from the engagement activity has been used to develop areas for development for each strategic theme. Looking ahead to 2019/20, the service will carry out a consultation of the draft strategy to gather further views from key groups which will inform the final version.

7.4 Self-Directed Support (SDS)

There has been good progress in the continued implementation of SDS, across children's and adult services, already having introduced commissioning arrangements around options 1 and 2 with Cornerstone SDS Aberdeenshire, who provide advice and support to service users and their representatives. In 2018/19 Cornerstone were approved as the ongoing provider for this service for a further 4-year period.

Aberdeenshire continues to reflect SDS national data regarding option choice, with the vast majority of service users continuing to receive services under Option 3, however there is a steady increase in the use of Options 1 and 2. Although outwith the reporting period, in May 2019, 498 individuals received a direct payment under Option 1 (466 employing Personal Assistants and 32 commissioning from an agency), 24 people were in receipt of a service under Option 2. This compares with 168 Direct Payment clients in 2009; 344 in 2014 and 411 in 2016.

Self-Directed Support forms a key component of the Scottish Government's Social Care Support Reform agenda, especially considering the way people access services; the way people are supported; and the systems processes and decision-making arrangements services have in place. Representatives from Aberdeenshire have been involved throughout this reform work, including as part of the consultation process.

8. Workforce Development

The Workforce Development Team, hosted by the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Work Partnership, supports the annual training Plan that incorporates training needs across all

Social Work functions. In terms of planning to ensure staff achieve and retain the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) registration requirements, courses and bespoke support for individuals continue to be provided.

A range of training opportunities exist for staff involved in the delivery of social work services, including post-registration support. In 2018/19, 26 newly qualified professionals met the requirements to join and successfully completed a one-year Social Work Professionals Support Programme. The programme provides an induction into the service, familiarisation with service expectations regarding good practice, and opportunities for reflection and discussion on challenging themes. Services are currently working with SSSC Newly Qualified Social Workers Pilot Project; (2018/19) - Approaches to a Supported and Assessed Transitional Year as one of three national pilot sites.

Figure 9 provide information on both the number of registered social workers and staff that work in social work teams, titled in this table as Social Work Assistants, although titles varies across functions. This paints a picture of a stable workforce which has slowly evolved through developments in role and tasks, with growing consideration given to skill mix. Figure 10 illustrates the demography of social work teams and it is encouraging to see success in maintaining a balance across all age categories.

Overall, Aberdeenshire is well placed to continue to provide services through a competent and confident workforce, sufficient investment in training must remain a key aspect of the authorities approach to retaining and supporting existing staff and attracting new candidates.

Figure 9: Aberdeenshire Headcount and Whole-time Equivalent (WTE) of Practicing Social Workers (PSW) and Social Work Assistants

Year	Practicing Social Workers (Headcount)	WTE	Social Work Assistant (Headcount)	WTE	Total (WTE)
2013/14	421	368	125	93	461
2014/15	428	375	188	143	518
2015/16	409	329	181	133	462
2016/17	385	333	180	147	480
2017/18	402	351	173	145	496

Figure 10: Number of PSWs by age band

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Under 26	0	1	1	5
26 - 35	62	73	85	88
36 - 45	80	91	87	81
46 – 55	121	117	117	109
56 – 65	132	132	110	97
Over 66	26	14	9	5

Scottish Social Services Council Pilot

Aberdeenshire has had a long-standing Social Work Professionals Support Programme (SWPSP) for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW), providing additional support and learning opportunities to SW graduates, in their post qualifying year. In 2018/19 the programme was adapted to become one of 3 Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) pilot studies to identify best practice for the post qualifying year of practice.

The three national pilots began in November 2018. Scottish Government funding, via the SSSC, enabled the service to employ a part-time Practice Placement Development Officer to work specifically with NQSW, their line managers and the facilitators of the SWPSP. The role was to support colleagues and enable the objectives of the pilot. This included a series of face to face meetings to share, and discuss, the rationale, core expectations, guidance and working templates related to the pilot.

The requirements of the pilot included; a commitment to protected time, a protected workload, regular supervision and for team managers to be involved in the assessment of NQSW first year in practice. The pilot required additional time for peer supervision sessions and a specific focus on professional development and reflective practice within supervision sessions.

These additional requirements are ways of supporting NQSW to be better prepared for an employer-based assessment of post registration learning & development. Aberdeenshire Council's response to the national consultations on the introduction of a formally supported year was unambiguously that this should be undertaken in the workplace as opposed to a more academically based university assessment.

The care market in Aberdeenshire continues to experience many challenges to both commissioners and providers. The biggest issue is recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of care staff, within some parts of social work and social care, an ageing workforce and fewer young people choosing care and support work as an occupation. The policy of paying Scottish Living Wage to care staff has been welcomed. In addition, the development work on the National Care Home Contract is helping to address the 'fair price for care' issue, however recruitment within care homes remains challenging. In non-residential care, there is increasing demand, partially because of demographic changes and the increasing complexity associated with vulnerability, frailty and long-term health conditions.

The key themes which arise across the sector are:

- Maintaining sustainable levels of staffing to deliver services safely and in particular to meet the challenges associated with a growing dependency on external staffing agencies.
- The uncertainty associated with the UK's exit from the European Union is causing concern in the sector, especially those associated with sustainability of workforce.

- Services across Aberdeenshire are provided in the main from buildings which are not purpose built. Whilst staff within these resources are flexible and utilise the space to good effect, some of these buildings are no longer compliant with relevant national standards.

Engagement: Third Sector, Independent Sector and Workforce Planning

Following on from engagement activity in 2017-18, over the last 12 months another round of consultation with colleagues across the Third Sector in Aberdeenshire has been carried out.

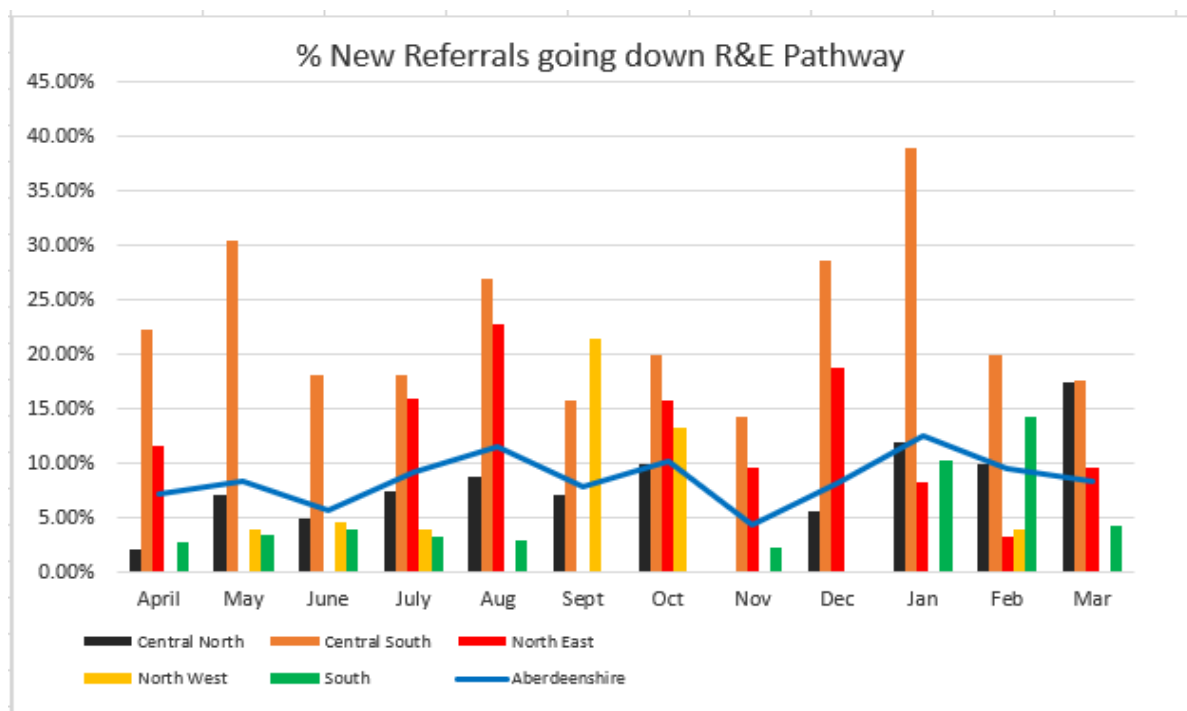
Two Third Sector forums took place in Maud and Banchory, with support from Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA) in enabling representation from a broad range of our local Third Sector organisations. The focus of each forum was to explore challenges facing the Third Sector in relation to training, recruitment and finance and look at opportunities for the HSCP to develop ways of working which supported Third Sector colleagues to operate effectively. As a result, it is being considered how contracts are awarded to enable greater financial security to Third Sector organisations and how the HSCP and Third Sector can share training which provide development opportunities for a broader range of staff.

Some very positive work has commenced between commissioners and providers, taking a collaborative approach to designing services that will be sustainable and cost effective for all. An example being the collaboration on a test of change to develop the co-production of solutions to achieve more flexible, outcome-focussed contracting arrangements. This includes the commissioning of supported living services within a four-person house of multiple occupation, to provide accommodation to adults with learning disabilities. Other areas of successful collaborative working relate to the re-provision of services following the sale of an external provider; progress to redesign overnight care. The completion of the Market Position Statement for accommodation with learning disabilities is also a positive step to inform the planning and commissioning of service developments.

Much work is being undertaken to innovate services across the area and in particular to develop new ways of delivering services in a way which maximises a person's independence. This in turn allows services to focus on those people in our community who have high levels of need which require ongoing care and support. The Rehabilitation and Enablement work being undertaken with the HSCP has been an area of focus for some time and whilst the outcomes to date have been modest, the indications are encouraging.

Rehabilitation, Enablement & Intermediate Care

The aim of the rehabilitation and enablement pathway is to use the skills of all team members effectively to support the person to recover and regain their abilities following a period of illness, injury or increase in frailty. The data available suggests there is some progress in embedding the principles of rehabilitation and enablement in practice, albeit the objective of all new referrals to care management being directed first through this pathway are some way from being achieved. The percentage of new referrals to care management which were directed through the rehabilitation and enablement pathway from April 2018 to March 2019 is summarised below and shows that only between 5% and 10% of referrals follow this route.



9. Conclusion and the Year Ahead

The staff in social work services, including those commissioned should be commended for the support and protection they have provided to our vulnerable children, young people, and adults throughout 2018/19. This report has highlighted several challenges, including increasing demand across all service areas alongside financial constraints, but also focused on a range of excellent projects and developments. As in previous years, the focus ahead will be to continue providing high standards of delivery and innovating the way services work to improve future sustainability.

This report has laid out the challenges and achievements throughout 2018/19. During 2019/20 the CSWO will continue to focus on a range of areas, the intention being to build on the 2018/19 programme of work. This work will include:

- There is a growing role for the author in determining the resources invested in social work and social care services are sufficient to allow for the proper discharge of the local authority's statutory responsibilities. The risk being, as resources including

budget and availability of staff become more constrained there is an erosion of services leading to both acknowledged and unintended consequences.

- Increases in demand and expectations, new legislation, both national and local policy drivers all necessitate a continuing need for innovation. It is imperative that at this time of rapid change there remains a clear focus on the objective of caring, supporting and protecting people, groups, and communities who require social work and social care services.
- Continue to develop linkages between children and adult services to build strong professional relationships between those involved in all aspects of social work and social care services.
- Monitor the impact that a growing use of eligibility criteria has across all social work and social care services and in particular the wider consequences to children, adults and communities.
- Promote a culture of professional identity and a clear individual and organisational understanding of the unique role of social work within an ever-changing world.
- Raise visibility of social work ensuring the area is well represented nationally to influence policy and raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities which exist in Aberdeenshire.
- Through the use of internal and external scrutiny, consider social work's current approach to risk and the balance between statutory and non-statutory provision, in particular when considering the allocation of resources.
- Promote a move to a digitally enabled workforce which appropriately uses technology as an enabler, both in terms of recording/storing information, and as a tool for engaging with individuals. Progress in this area is slow and requires both national and local impetus.

**Report prepared by Iain Ramsay, Aberdeenshire Chief Social Work Officer
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