

**REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD
01 MARCH 2023**

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER UPDATE BRIEFING 2022

1 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Integration Joint Board (IJB):

- 1.1 Consider and comment on the Chief Social Work Officer Update for 2022 in relation to Children and Adult Social Work Services:**
- 1.2 Acknowledge the commitment of social work staff in the consistent delivery of high performing services.**
- 1.3 Receive a full CSWO Annual Report for 2022/23 in August 2023**

2 Directions

- 2.1 No direction requires to be issued to Aberdeenshire Council or NHS Grampian as a result of this report.

3 Risk

- 3.1 IJB Risk 1589 (Risk of failure to deliver standards of care expected by the people of Aberdeenshire in the right place at the right time)

4 Chief Social Work Officer - Brief Update Report over 2022

4.1 Introduction

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 An annual report is requested by 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 32 CSWO reports the Chief Social Work Advisor prepares a national overview.

- 4.4 The CSWO annual report for 2021/22 was presented to the IJB on 24 August 2022 and it was agreed that the CSWO would provide a brief update mid-year to the IJB prior to presentation of the full report for 2022/2023 in August 2023.
- 4.5 This report therefore provides a brief summary of the some of the key issues impacting the delivery of social work services to date.
- 4.6 In order to inform the delivery of the role, the CSWO continues to have direct or delegated involvement in:

Structure	Role
Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Leadership Team • Heads of Service meetings • Corporate Leadership Group • ECS Leadership Team • ECS Committee
Integration Joint Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing member of the IJB • Clinical and Adult Social Work Governance Committee
Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Services Management Team • Social Work Continuous Improvement Children's Services Group
Public Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Group for Public Protection • Child Protection Committee • Adult Protection Committee

- 4.7 Lindsey Flockhart, Lead Social Worker and Jeff Shaw, Partnership Manager North continue to deputise for the CSWO as and when required.

4.8 Summary & Reflections

4.9 Winter Pressures

- 4.10 The impact of winter pressures for Aberdeenshire has been well documented in papers to the IJB including scrutiny of Winter Resilience and Surge plans presented to the IJB on 7 December 2022. As CSWO, I am reassured that our commitment and approach to minimising delayed discharges, planning for winter and responding to service pressures is robust and one that continues strive to place the rights and needs of the individual at the heart of planning.
- 4.11 Data and feedback has ensured a live response to changing and completing demand/priorities and whole system approach to reviewing the delivery of social work service in the current challenging landscape.
- 4.12 As CSWO, I currently chair the Social Care Sustainability Programme Board.



4.13 The overarching aim of the Sustainability Programme is:

To reduce the level of unmet need in social care services for residents in Aberdeenshire and improve outcomes and experience for those who use social care services and for the staff delivering those services.

4.14 This will be achieved by:

Creating self-improving and sustainable social care services through cultural, systems and transformational change.

4.15 The Social Care Sustainability Programme Board will do this by overseeing, contributing to, and monitoring the strategic direction and delivery of the improvement objectives, with a distinct focus on Social Care Workforce Sustainability. Specifically, this will relate to the following current priorities and may evolve over time:

- In House Care At Home: The Future – led by Janine Howie
- Rehabilitation & Enablement – led by Shona Campbell
- Effective Support for Unpaid Carers & SDS – led by Lindsey Flockhart
- Maximisation and mobilisation of the Care at Home Framework (commissioned care) – currently paused
- Very Sheltered Housing – led by Jason Strathdee (early stages)

4.16 The Board meets monthly, commenced in August 2022 and provides scrutiny and challenge as well as removing barriers to improvement alongside tracking activity and improvement across the above workstreams.

4.17 Recruitment across social care continues to be a real challenge for the HSCP which is also well documented. This has had an impact on delayed discharge if the care package is unavailable but also has a significant impact on managing risk within our communities. For example, at the time of writing, there are 79 adults in hospital assessed as requiring a total of 34.5 hours care compared to around 2292 hours of unmet need in the community i.e., adults assessed as requiring care at home which is not available. Unmet need in the community can be better understood as equivalent to a ratio of 'for every 1 hour that is unmet, there are 21.5 hours being delivered' or 4 % of the overall assessed care at home need is unmet.

Whilst the figures relating to delayed discharge are low, practitioners have to make decisions based on level of risk and there is a constant pressure to balance the risk associated around individuals in hospital versus individuals at home when it comes to prioritising care.

4.18 While winter pressures funding has been allocated to recruit home carers, the majority of vacancies remain unfilled. The lack of flexibility in the rotas and availability of alternatives requiring access to your own transport for the home carer role is not attractive for recruitment, particularly with the recent rise in fuel costs. The Service has a lack of opportunities for succession planning as there



are only three posts – home carer, care team co-ordinator (CTC) and team leader. Despite the increase in the complexities of service delivery, there are no formal opportunities for an experienced and competent home carer to support home carer development while remaining in a front-line caring role.

4.19 The In-House Care at Home workstream is working towards creating new and innovative ideas to create posts that enable adaptability across the health and social care system and allow the opportunity for carers to learn different skills and experiences.

4.20 The funding of Social Care and subsequently the salary presents a real barrier to recruitment and sustainability of the workforce. It is significant that the salary difference between working in for example retail and social care is negligible and at times payment in retail is higher. However, the individual in social care is likely to hold a greater level of risk and potentially responsibility for an individual’s care and safety.

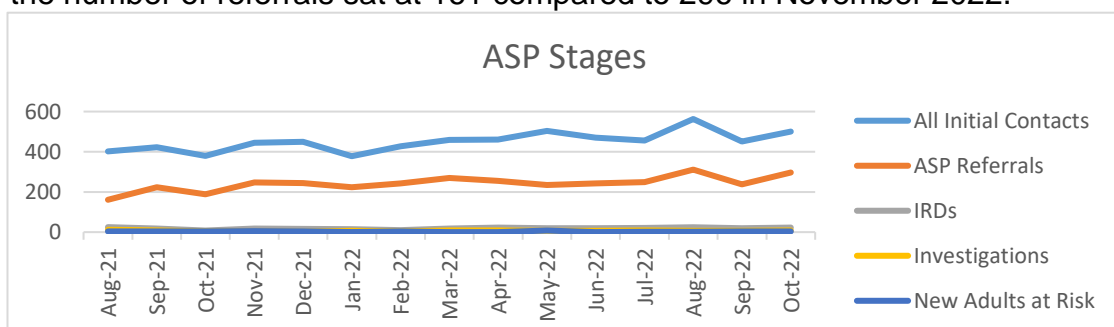
4.21 The Sustainability Board by driving forward the above workstreams recognises the complexity of the issues and that a multi-faceted approach is required to begin to reduce pressures on the system and this will only be successful through transformational change. This change requires to continue to promote human rights and offer high quality, compassionate, trauma informed and safe care which promotes enablement and a whole system approach to the delivery of social work services.

4.22 Examples of change in place/being progressed following consultation with staff include:

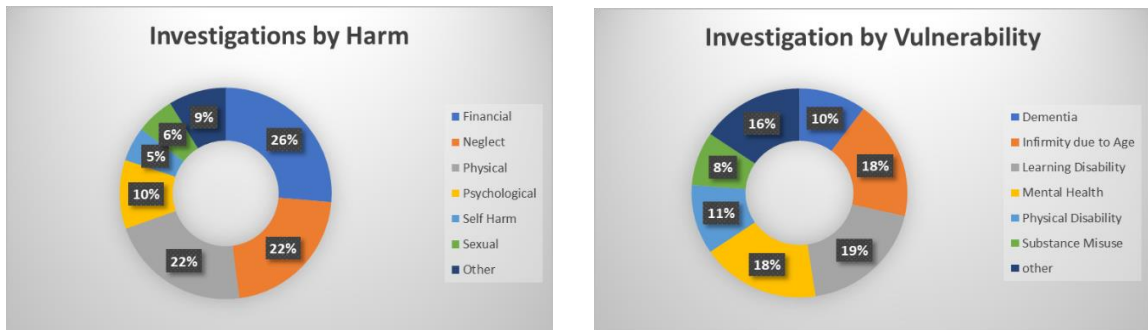
- Introduction of geographical mileage for home carers,
- Weekly mileage claims
- Change in uniforms
- Opportunities for promotion
- Revised training
- Increased support for social care staff

5.0 Adult Support & Protection (ASP)

5.1 The Adult Protection Network acts as a single point of contact for all Adult Support and Protection concerns. Over the past 18 months, the number of initial contacts and referrals has continued to increase. For example, in August 2021, the number of referrals sat at 161 compared to 296 in November 2022.



- 5.2 Over the past two years, data indicates a 195% increase in referrals and a 185% increase in the number of referrals that had an outcome indicating additional Adult Support & Protection work.



- 5.3 Financial harm remains the most prevalent investigated type of harm over the past two years.

- 5.4 When combining infirmity due to age and dementia it is noted 'Older People' remain the most prevalent vulnerability group.

- 5.5 Challenges for Adult Support & Protection include:

- Adult Support & Protection Network and Council officer capacity
- Complexity of need
- Impact of unmet need resulting in vulnerable individuals becoming at risk of harm

- 5.6 Examples of good practice include:

- The involvement of the adult at risk, family and carers is embedded in our ASP process
- Significant increase in the level of advocacy support provided. ASP is one of the key priorities associated with the HSCP contract with Advocacy North-East (ANE) who provide independent advocacy provision, enabling ASP requests to be allocated as soon as possible. This includes advocacy in relation to Large Scale Investigations pertaining to residential/care home.

6.0 Care Home Oversight

- 6.1 From 18 May 2020 each area was directed to put in place a multi-disciplinary team (Oversight Group) comprised of nursing, public health, social work, and clinical representatives. The Oversight Group's remit includes discussions about the quality of care in each Aberdeenshire Care Home and Very Sheltered Housing, with the particular focus on resident welfare, infection prevention and control measures, support for COVID outbreaks within staff and resident population, management and leadership matters, workforce challenges and promoting positive outcomes for people experiencing care. Intensive support



has also been provided where concerns have been raised regarding the standard of care provided.

6.2 As part of the direction from Scottish Government care homes and as a local arrangement Very Sheltered Housing have regular, scheduled assurance and support visits which are held every 16 weeks as a maximum. The oversight operational assurance team also support the providers with any specific training needs as well as support during any significant events including COVID or other outbreaks.

6.3 Challenges include:

- Increase over the winter period of instances of covid, flu and D+V throughout the care homes requiring additional support to the care homes to maintain good IPC measures
- Commissioning of interim beds within the private care homes due to capacity within the third sector being limited.
- Increase in costs for commissioned services
- Increasing requests for 1:1 support within the care homes indicating that people's needs are becoming more complex and/or the standard National Care Homes Contract rates are not sufficient to cover the staffing required to meet people's needs.
- Sustainability of providers is becoming an increasing concern as the cost-of-living crisis deepens. Real risk that providers prioritise self-funding referrals over financially assessed support funded referrals.

7.0 CSWO Analysis

7.1 During the past 6 month period, the CSWO was pleased to witness many positive developments across all social work and social care services including an ongoing focus on developing trauma informed service delivery, effective engagement and listening to the voices of those with lived experience.

7.2 However, the context of need in our communities and across our workforce continues to be challenging, has not changed since previously reported and includes:

- Higher than average referrals for social work services including Adult Protection, Mental Health, Justice Services, Substance Misuse, Care at Home, Child Protection and Older People's services.
- Increased complexity in need and demand for specialist services.
- Overall increase in psychological and social support needs across all areas of society impacted by loneliness, wellbeing, and mental health as well as physical health and poverty.
- Increased unpaid carer stress and requests for support.
- Demographic and socio-economic pressures including food and fuel poverty and loss of income.



- Staff resilience, recruitment and retention of staff particularly around social care.
- Managing capacity, demand and pressures across services.
- Continuing to identify and meet current unmet need.
- Increased pressure on the NHS and drive to reduce delays in discharge

7.3 All of the above requires careful consideration, balance and response based on compassionate, trauma informed care which maintains a focus on the individual and their outcomes, rather than a focus on service provision. The CSWO is also assured that whilst there are no quick fixes, the Health & Social Care Partnership delivery of social work services continues to be flexible each and everyone of the challenges noted above have improvement actions which are monitored, reviewed and shared with the CSWO. A full, more detailed statutory report will be available to the Integrated Joint Board on 2022/23 in August 2023.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 In conclusion, CSWO is assured that services are performing well in most of the key areas of social work delivery despite the pressures.
- 8.2 In those areas where improvement has been required, timely and effective remedial measures have been put in place.
- 8.3 Currently there are no specific areas that require additional scrutiny beyond that provided by existing processes.
- 8.4 The Chief Officer, along with the Chief Finance Officer and the Legal Monitoring Officers within Business Services of the Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated within the report.

9 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for the Update Briefing Report as its purpose is to report on social work and social care provision over the most recent financial year. There will be no differential impact, as a result of the report, on people with protected characteristics.

Leigh Jolly, Chief Social Work Officer

Report prepared by Leigh Jolly
Date 26 January 2023