

Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2020 | 21

EAST AYRSHIRE

**Health & Social Care
Partnership**



Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Purpose and Background	4
3	East Ayrshire Profile	5
4	Governance and Accountability	7
5	Service Quality and Performance	10
6	Resources	26
7	Workforce	29
8	Covid-19	34
9	Looking Forward	40

1 Introduction



It gives me great pleasure to present my third Annual Report as Chief Social Work Officer for East Ayrshire, reflecting the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

I noted in my introduction to last year's report that it was important to acknowledge the scale of the impact of caused by Covid-19, and in reflecting on the past year I start in the same place. I suspect that few of us appreciated the scale, duration and impact that the pandemic has had on every sphere of society over the last year. We have all been touched by trauma, loss and disruption and the consequent impact will no doubt be felt for many years into the future. I reflect in this context on the role of the social work professionals which is as defined by the International federation of Social Work to:

"...promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. ...social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing."

(International federation of Social Work)

There is little doubt that social work and social care practitioners across East Ayrshire rose to the challenge of fulfilling their role in supporting people to have the best lives that they possibly can in the most challenging, restrictive and unprecedented of circumstances. Working in partnership with a range of agencies in the NHS, Council, the Third Sector and communities, they have taken this challenge on and have continued to deliver, where it has been possible, high quality, direct, face to face support to the people who need it across East Ayrshire. In response to Government guidance and directions, some services did need to be suspended. However in suspending services, social work practitioners sought to support those affected in different and often more creative ways. All who work in social work and social care have my appreciation for all that they have done over the last year. The nature of their role has meant that for many they have adapted to using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to deliver direct personal care to those in need and to ensure that we continued to support people in their own homes.

Supporting our partner care homes has been a key function of the CSWO across Scotland. Working in partnership with leaders in East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, East Ayrshire Council, NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Scottish Care, we sought to work collaboratively to support our local care homes and be assured about the level of care that they were providing to people.

As I reflect on the past year, it is important to acknowledge that the pandemic has had a profound impact on those people living in nursing and care home settings, with some experiencing the loss of people as a direct result of contracting Covid-19. Carers across the sector have made personal and professional sacrifices in striving to keep people safe and well cared for and they all have my appreciation and admiration for what they have given. This has been incredibly distressing for families, carers and others within the home. All who grieve a lost relative or friend have my sincere condolences.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marion MacAulay'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Marion MacAulay

Chief Social Work Officer / Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice Services

2 Purpose and Background

This report is produced to satisfy the requirement to prepare and publish an annual report in relation to the Chief Social Work Officer's (CSWO) role in professional leadership, oversight of practice, governance, values and standards as specified in national guidance. The report also relates to the specific areas of decision-making and practice where legislation confers functions directly on the Chief Social Work Officer.¹

The report refers to the contribution of social work and social care in working in partnership with others to safeguard and improve the safety and wellbeing of our residents. A wide range of local developments achieved and activities delivered within the reporting period, in addition to performance information, are highlighted within the report to demonstrate the impact of such contributions in relation to improving outcomes for people in East Ayrshire. The period reflected in this report is from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The Chief Social Work Adviser (CSWA) to the Scottish Government provides guidance on CSWO annual reporting to ensure a degree of consistency nationally. With consideration given to the significant implications caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, a more focussed reporting template reflecting activity during the 2020/21 period was provided by the CSWA to ensure local reporting arrangements continue whilst giving due regard to pressures experienced across the sector.

The report for East Ayrshire adheres to the proposed guidance and comprises the following structure:

- Purpose and Background
- East Ayrshire Profile
- Governance and Accountability
- Service Quality and Performance
- Resources
- Workforce
- Covid-19
- Looking Forward

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/role-chief-social-work-officer/pages/4/>

3 East Ayrshire Profile

The infographics below present various characteristics of the East Ayrshire population, in addition to displaying socio-economic circumstances within the authority.

To access a wider range of similar statistical information relating to East Ayrshire, please see the East Ayrshire HSCP's [Strategic Needs Assessment](#).



- 490 square miles in South West Scotland
- Incorporates urban and rural communities
- Population 122,010 - 2.23% of Scotland's total population
- Population expected to fall by 2.2% in the next 10 years

Age/Gender Composition



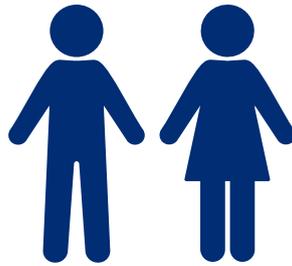
0 - 15 year olds

21,053

17% of population (Scotland 17%)

Population estimated to fall 9.4% by 2031

16% of the population by 2031 (Scotland 15%)



16 - 64 year olds

76,005

63% of population (Scotland 64%)

Population estimated to fall 6% by 2031

59% of the population by 2031 (Scotland 62%)



people aged 65+

24,952

20% of population (Scotland 19%)

Population estimated to rise 16.8% by 2031

25% of the population by 2031 (Scotland 23%)



76 years

(Scotland 77.1 years)

Healthy life expectancy

57.8 years

(Scotland 61.9 years)

76% of life spent in 'good health' (Scotland 80%)



80 years

(Scotland 81.1 years)

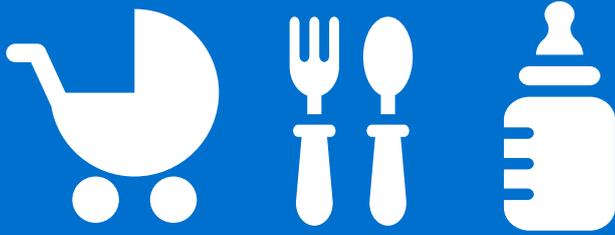
Healthy life expectancy

58.8 years

(Scotland 62.2 years)

73% of life spent in 'good health' (Scotland 77%)

Early Years



5.8% of mothers in East Ayrshire smoke during pregnancy (Scotland 13.8%)

17.8% of East Ayrshire babies are exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks (Scotland 31.6%)

20.2% of children in East Ayrshire had at least one developmental concern noted at their 27- 30 month review (Scotland 14.3%)

72.7% of East Ayrshire children are a healthy weight in Primary 1 (Scotland 76.3%)

Deprivation



East Ayrshire has the 7th highest level of deprivation amongst Scottish Local Authorities

27.9% of East Ayrshire children are estimated to live in economically deprived households (after housing costs) (Scotland 24%)

15.2% of East Ayrshire residents are income deprived (Scotland 12%)

Long Term Health Conditions



More than a quarter (26%) of the East Ayrshire population have at least one physical long term health condition

The five most common long term conditions are asthma, arthritis, coronary heart disease, cancer and diabetes

21.4% of East Ayrshire residents are prescribed medication for anxiety/depression/psychosis (Scotland 19.7%)

Harmful Behaviours



20.8% of East Ayrshire residents aged 16 or over are estimated to be current smokers (Scotland 19%)

The rate of alcohol related hospital admissions in East Ayrshire is 662.4 per 100,000 (Scotland 673.4)

During 2019, there were 41 drug related deaths in East Ayrshire, a rate of 36.9 per 100,000 (Scotland 24.3)

4 Governance and Accountability

Role of the Chief Social Work Officer

Local authorities are required, under Section 3 (1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 as amended, to appoint a Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO). The role of CSWO in East Ayrshire is fulfilled by the Head of Children’s Health, Care and Justice Services.

The role of the CSWO is to ensure professional oversight of social work practice and service delivery. This includes professional governance, leadership and accountability for the delivery of social work and social care services, whether provided by the local authority or purchased through the third sector or independent sector.

In July 2016, the Scottish Government issued revised national guidance on the role and function of the CSWO (The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer: Principles, Requirements and Guidance pursuant to Section 5 (1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968), replacing the guidance issued in 2009.

The role of the CSWO within the context of the pandemic has been amplified. The leadership aspect of this role gained a level of prominence perhaps not previously experienced. As CSWO there were key responsibilities about supporting a workforce navigate their way safely through a global pandemic. This involved a delicate balance of public protection and safety whilst ensuring the safety of the workforce within an unprecedented, novel and changing landscape in terms of guidance, lockdown and further tier based restrictions. At the heart of all decision making was the needs of communities and how within this challenging context they could be met. A key function was to ensure that the voice of social work and social care was heard locally and nationally to ensure that a workforce who continued to visit and support people in their own homes were supported and equipped to do this safely and effectively.

Additional responsibilities in supporting our partner care homes through multi-agency Care Home Oversight and Support was important in ensuring that those living and working in care homes were well supported; practically and in terms of wider wellbeing. The CSWO was a key multi-agency partner with a focus on the human rights of those affected balanced with the need to keep people safe.

Delivery of Statutory Functions

The CSWO has specific responsibilities in regards to statutory decision making and ensuring the provision of appropriate advice in the discharge of a local authority’s statutory functions. This work is supported by the arrangements set out in the Social Work and Social Care Governance Framework (revised August 2017), and through existing partnership arrangements, specifically the public protection arrangements.

The CSWO has oversight of practice standards relating to services delivered by registered social workers, which will involve public protection and / or the restriction of individual liberty. This requires consideration of individual circumstances, with regard to rights, risks, needs and capacity. These judgements are often complex, and require to take account of a range of issues, including risks to the wider community.

These legislative provisions include: the placement of children in secure accommodation, transfers of children subject to supervision requirements, adoption, fostering, community payback orders, statutory interventions linked to the mental health officer role, adults with incapacity measures and the protection of children and adults at risk.

Key legislation relevant to the Chief Social Work Officer’s responsibilities include:

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968	Children (Scotland) Act 1995
Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1995	Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003	Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011	Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013
Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014	Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014
Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015	Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016
Carers (Scotland) Act 2016	Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018
Duty of Candour (Scotland) Regulations 2018	Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019

Social Work Professional Governance

The Social Work Service in East Ayrshire is commissioned by the Integration Joint Board (IJB) from East Ayrshire Council and delivered through the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Our Partnership is responsible for a wider range of services than is required by legislation, with the decision made in 2014 to maintain all social work and social care services under the Health and Social Care Partnership in East Ayrshire. The CSWO is accountable and reports to the Chief Executive of East Ayrshire Council (to the Director of Health and Social Care as Head of Service).

The Social Work and Social Care Governance Framework sets out arrangements which clarify the governance of the social work and social care profession and services operating within the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership. The framework states that the CSWO:

- is a member of the Council's Executive Management Team, the Corporate Management Team and the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Management Team;
- is a non-voting member of the Integrated Joint Board;
- attends full Council and presents the annual CSWO Report to Council every year;
- reports to Council committees as required;
- is a member of the Chief Officers Group (Public Protection);
- has access to elected members, the Chief Executive and senior officers as required.

The East Ayrshire Social Work and Social Care Leadership Forum maintains oversight of social work and social care professional practice matters in East Ayrshire. The work of the Forum supports the CSWO in delivering statutory functions and fulfilling the professional leadership role.

At a national level, CSWOs have a key role in influencing, promoting and supporting matters relevant to social work and social care practice. In recent years, there has been a particular need for CSWOs to fulfil national leadership roles in taking forward work within the Vision and Strategy for Social Services in Scotland 2015-20.

Organisational Governance

In East Ayrshire, the Social Work Service (and CSWO) operates in the context of the following core governance structures:

- East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Board;
- East Ayrshire Council;
- East Ayrshire Integrated Joint Board.

East Ayrshire Community Planning Board

The East Ayrshire Community Planning Board is responsible for the development and oversight of the [East Ayrshire Community Plan \(2015-2030\)](#), which is the sovereign planning document for the East Ayrshire area, providing the overarching vision and strategic planning policy framework for delivery by all partners. The Community Plan sets out how service delivery and outcomes for people in East Ayrshire will be improved in working towards achieving a vision of:



“East Ayrshire is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs.”

The Community Plan is delivered through three Delivery Plans (2018-2021): [Economy and Skills](#); [Safer Communities](#) and [Wellbeing](#). Social Work Service and wider HSCP work contributes significantly towards each of these delivery plans, with a particular focus on wellbeing.

At the East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Board on 29 March 2018, partners agreed the following key strategic priorities for 2018-2021:

- Improving outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, with a particular focus on looked after children and young people and young carers;
- Older People: adding life to years – tackle social isolation; and
- Community led regeneration: empower communities and build community resilience.

East Ayrshire Council

The Council regards the East Ayrshire Community Plan (2015-2030) to be the overarching strategic policy framework for delivering services in the area. This is underpinned at a service level by Service Improvement Plans, which include services within the East Ayrshire HSCP.

In recent years and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has experienced a number of growing challenges including: increasing demand for services, demographic shifts, policy / legislative changes and declining revenue. In response to these significant drivers, East Ayrshire Council's second Transformation Strategy 'Closing the Gap', was approved by Cabinet on 25 October 2017, which sets out proposals for achieving transformational change in local authority services between 2017-2022.

The Transformation Strategy comprises six core workstreams with progress reported quarterly through East Ayrshire Performs:

- A fairer, kinder and connected East Ayrshire
- A vibrant and empowered East Ayrshire
- Property and estate rationalisation
- Workforce Planning
- A digitally connected East Ayrshire
- Income and commercialisation.

Integration Joint Board

The Integration Joint Board (IJB) is responsible for the planning and operational oversight of Integrated Services, in addition to the operational management of Integrated Services through the Chief Officer. All social work services are located within the East Ayrshire HSCP.

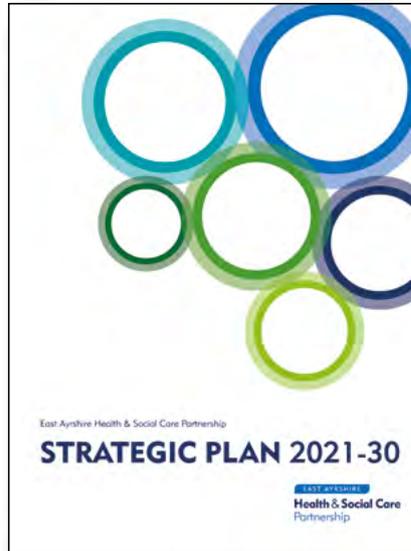
The IJB delegates responsibility to the following sub committees and groups as detailed in the governance structures and terms of reference:

- Strategic Planning Group;
- Audit and Performance Committee (sub-group Strategic Commissioning for Sustainable Outcomes Board);
- Health and Care Governance Group (sub-group Adverse Events Review Group);
- Partnership Forum (sub-group Health Safety and Wellbeing Group);

- Risk Management Committee; and
- Resilience and Civil Contingencies.

The CSWO is a member of all of the above noted groups, with the exception of the Audit and Performance Group.

East Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Plan 2021-30



The East Ayrshire HSCP [Strategic Plan 2021-30](#) was approved at the Integration Joint Board on 24 March 2021 and at Council on 1 April 2021. The Strategic Plan sets out local ambitions and shared priorities for health and social care between 2021–24 and towards 2030, in delivering the vision of:

“Working together with all of our communities to improve and sustain wellbeing, care and promote equity”.

The Strategic Plan comprises a focus on recovery and renewal following the challenges experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to focussing on the 'triple aim' of better care, better health and better value, in line with the national Health and Social Care Delivery Plan. The core themes of the Strategic Plan 2021-30 are:

- Starting Well and Living Well
- Caring for East Ayrshire
- Safe and Protected
- People at the Heart of What We Do
- Caring for Our Workforce
- Digital Connections

5 Service Quality and Performance

Performance in 2020/21

An established framework is in place to monitor the ongoing performance and improvement of services delivered across the HSCP portfolio to ensure the provision of high quality services that meet the needs of and improve outcomes for people in East Ayrshire. A comprehensive suite of performance measures aligned to local and national strategic priorities, alongside identified service improvement actions, comprise core elements of this framework. Much of this information is sourced from the Liquidlogic social work information management system and is managed on our local Pentana performance system.

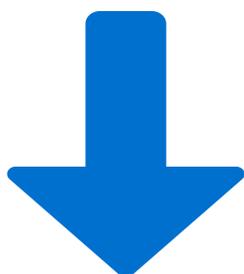
The infographics below highlight key aspects of performance across social work services delivered in East Ayrshire.



There were **122 child protection registrations** this year, 9.9% higher than 111 registered during 2019/20. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased vulnerability in communities.



6.6% of child protection registrations were reregistrations within 12 months, minimally different from the 8.1% recorded in 2019/20 (-1.5%).



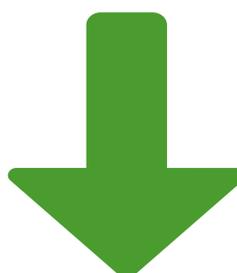
93 reports were submitted to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, a notable **fall of 65.4%** from 269 during 2019/20. During the period the impact of COVID led to a reduction in referrals.



67.7% of reports were submitted to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration **by the due date**, improved from 2019/20 when 65.4% of reports were submitted in time.



181 children were Looked After and Accommodated at 31 March 2021, 7.1% higher than the 169 on the same date in 2020. COVID has highlighted some new emerging risks for children.



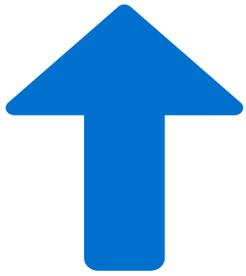
57 Looked After and Accommodated children had 3 or more moves, **down** from 76 in 2019/20. This represented 31.5% of Looked After Children, a positive drop in children experiencing such disruption of 13.5% from 45% in 2019/20.



484 Social Work reports were submitted to the courts, a **significant fall** (30.1%) from 692 during 2019/20. Operations were focused on bringing only the more serious cases to court this year.



96.5% of Social Work reports were submitted to the Courts **by the due date**. This was 2.8% lower than for 2019/20 (99.3%) as a result of the due date being reduced from 28 days to 21 days or even shorter.



There was a significant **increase** of 20.1% in the unpaid work requirement completed on time, up to 94.6% from 74.5% in 2019/20.



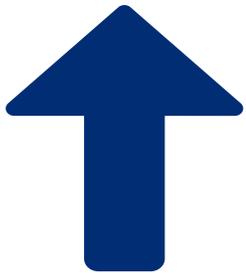
88% of Community Payback Orders were **successfully completed** within the year, notably 20% higher than the 68% successfully completed within the year during 2019/20.



3,826 bed days were lost as a result of delayed discharge, 3.4% higher than during 2019/20 (3,701) and a positive performance considering the impact of COVID-19 (especially on Code 9 reasons).



There were **no hospital discharges over 2 weeks** during the reporting period. This remains unchanged from 2019/20 and represents a sustained **excellent performance**.



Readmission to hospital within 28 days was **12.5%**, an increase of 1.2% from 11.3% in 2019/20.



Foster carer recruitment as at 31 March was **67, up 6%** from 63 as at 31 March 2020.



67% of personal carers are **qualified to Scottish Social Services Council standard**, an increase of 0.7% from 66.3% in 2019/20. This reflects a stable position and lack of opportunity to progress with qualifications.



The percentage of older people aged 65+ who live in housing rather than a care home or hospital setting is **unchanged** from 2019/20 at 97.4%.



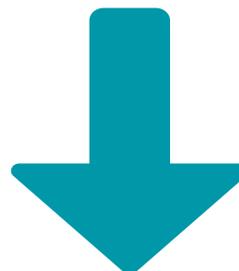
The unit cost of **home care increased by 2.8%** to £17.76, consistent with the trend in previous years (2019/20 £17.27).



396.4 homecare hours per 1,000 population aged 65+ were used, down 3.9% from 412.7 hours in 2019/20 mainly due to COVID-related suspension and cancellation of services.



As at 31 March, there were **1,383 Care at Home service users** aged 65+, virtually unchanged from 1,386 the previous year.



618 care home residents aged 65+ at 31 March represents a **4% decrease** from 644 the previous year.

Service Experience

The 2020 Scottish Health and Care Experience Survey asked people (prior to the pandemic) about their experiences of health and care services delivered in local areas. Results reflect various aspects of service delivery and are useful for identifying specific areas for improvement. There were 3,127 East Ayrshire responses with a 27% response rate and mixed results across the survey themes.

The table below sets out East Ayrshire results against national figures in relation to key themes within the 2020 survey. Comparisons with previous survey results are not possible due to changes in the way data was collected and analysed.

Health Care Experience Survey 2019/20			
	East Ayrshire	Scotland	Benchmarking Group Average
Care, Support and Help with Everyday Living			
I was aware of the help, care and support options available to me	61%	62%	63%
I had a say in how my help, care or support was provided	64%	63%	64%
People took account of the things that mattered to me	72%	69%	71%
I was treated with compassion and understanding	75%	76%	76%
I felt safe	72%	73%	74%
I was supported to live as independently as possible	70%	70%	71%
My health, support and care services seemed to be well coordinated	65%	62%	65%
The help, care or support improved or maintained my quality of life	69%	67%	68%
Overall, how would you rate your help, care or support services?	66%	69%	70%
Caring Responsibilities			
I have a good balance between caring and other things in my life	62%	64%	64%
I have a say in services provided for the person(s) I look after	45%	45%	46%
Local services are well coordinated for the person(s) I look after	39%	38%	39%
I feel supported to continue caring	36%	34%	36%

East Ayrshire results across the various topics are generally comparable with national levels.



STRENGTHS

taking account of the things that matter
(72%)

improving / maintaining quality of life
(69%)

co-ordination of support and care services
(65%)



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

overall rating of help, care or support services
(66%)

providing carers with balance in life
(62%)

awareness of help, care and support options available
(61%)

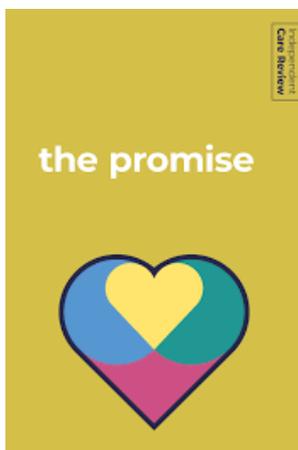
Covid-19 related pressures and the continued implementation of the new social work information management system, Liquidlogic, during the time of reporting have impacted on the availability of certain data which is used to populate some measures. As a result, the statistical information included within this report is more concise than in previous years.

Developments and Activity in 2020/21

Over the last year, a strong commitment to learning, progression and person-centred provision was maintained in East Ayrshire despite the significant challenges encountered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. An ongoing cycle of self-evaluation, review and reflective discussion continued to take place throughout the year across all care settings to inform our key areas for focus and development.

The nature of the pandemic necessitated changes to the way in which services were delivered to ensure the safety of service users and staff. However, the examples provided below of key developments achieved and activities delivered in 2020/21, exemplify the dedication of our staff and partners in delivering and improving vital social work services throughout an extremely challenging period.

A number of these activities reflect key elements outlined by Independent Care Review reports published in February 2020, particularly in relation to embedding the aspirations and values of 'The Promise' in our social work practice. The East Ayrshire HSCP will continue to embed the key messages from these reports in service delivery.



We have also reflected on the findings and recommendations from the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland, published on 3rd February 2021. The report shares the findings from a comprehensive programme of engagement and sets out 53 recommendations to secure better outcomes for people who use services, their carers and families, and those who work in adult social care, across core themes, including: unpaid carers; establishing a National Care Service; implementation gaps; models of care; commissioning; fair work; and finance.



The strategic approach and values of the East Ayrshire HSCP reflect a strong local position in relation to several of the recommendations made, articulated in the organisational vision of:

'working together with all of our communities to improve and sustain wellbeing, care and promote equity'.

Locally there is strong commitment to: putting people at the heart of decisions, delivering person-centred and community-based care, providing people with access to social care or support in the right place at the right time and prioritising prevention and early intervention. The Partnership is also committed to fostering a culture which promotes equality and diversity, protects human rights and social justice, and tackles discrimination for both our workforce and our residents. A number of these commitments are reflected in our social work development and provision activities over the last year.

Fostering

We are extremely proud of the level of commitment and resilience shown by our foster carers throughout the pandemic. Many carers have gone above and beyond in their role, having adapted to perform a number of different duties including home-schooling, amongst the other demands of being a foster carer.

The Fostering Service has continued to operate and deliver key functions throughout the pandemic. The team has expanded during the reporting period, with the Supported Care Service now sitting alongside the Fostering Service. This has allowed the two services to share resources and knowledge relating to recruitment, training, and support for carers. Nine foster carers were approved by the Service in 2020/21, which is a positive number considering the impact of Covid-19.

During this period, the service has attracted foster carers from external agencies in addition to those who are new to foster care. Recruitment activity has been key to this and has continued throughout the year with a mixture of online and radio advertising. Preparation groups were converted to online formats due to social and travel restrictions to allow our recruitment activity to continue. A healthy level of fostering enquiries has been maintained over the last year, with a number of candidates waiting to join preparation groups at the time of reporting. Our recruitment continues to centre on attracting families who can offer homes to older children or larger sibling groups.



The Fostering Service strives to keep brothers and sisters together. We were pleased to achieve this when we brought together four brothers and sisters into one fostering home in the last year. This will hopefully be the children's' permanent home and is a great outcome for them as a family, ensuring that they grow up living together. We continue to work to achieve similar outcomes for young people in similar circumstances.

Adoption

We have continued the work of the Adoption Service throughout the pandemic by placing children with adoptive families across Scotland, in addition to identifying practice improvements in some areas with innovation driven by the necessity of adapting to Covid-19 restrictions.

During 2020/21, five adoptive families were assessed and approved, including one family who were assessed to adopt a group of three young brothers who would have otherwise had to grow up apart. This is a similar number of adoptive families approved as in previous years, despite the ongoing challenges experienced as a result of the pandemic.

We have also supported five children to move from foster care to live with adoptive families throughout this period. We have adapted our way of managing these transitions due to travel / social restrictions and this has led to innovation which improved how we support children to move. An example of this includes the introduction of daily video calls from adoptive families in the week before they meet the child for the first time, which involved video calling young children to read them a good night story. All children who received video calls enjoyed the experience and this was found to reduce anxiety levels for all involved.

Kinship

A new Kinship Support Team was developed during 2020/21 to offer enhanced support to kinship carers throughout East Ayrshire. The team comprises three experienced social workers who are available to provide dedicated support, advice and guidance to kinship carers looking after vulnerable children.

The team have provided bespoke support to kinship carers throughout the pandemic. Our kinship carers



have responded positively to the support offered and it has helped some families to move out of crisis situations during this period.

M is a kinship carer for her niece (L) for whom she has cared since birth due to L's parents' learning difficulties and misuse of alcohol. Caring for L has been stressful for M at times, with a new born baby coming into the family, L having a period of illness, managing abusive phone calls from L's father and the complicated legal processes. M has managed these challenging circumstances well and contacted the team manager to express her gratitude and appreciation of the social worker who she described as kind, thoughtful and dedicated, adding that during L's illness, she called M every day (including weekends) for an update and to offer support. She spoke of the social worker's persistent calmness when M felt frustrated or upset about events and that she 'would be lost without her input.' L is thriving in this kinship placement.

Children's Houses

2020/21 has been a particularly challenging and stressful time for both the young people and staff within the children's houses, with some having experienced active Covid-19 outbreaks.

There has been a strong sense of solidarity during this difficult period and the young people in our three children's houses have shown how resilient and strong they are. This service has been available 24/7, 365 days throughout the year and we are proud of the continued dedication displayed by our teams and partners, who have responded magnificently to care for our young people with love, empathy and compassion.

Throughout 2020/21, our children's houses have been heavily involved in aspects of the transformation agenda in terms of service delivery and embedding the aspirations and values of 'The Promise' within their practice. We continue to work to ensure that the care and support we provide to each young person is person-centred, coordinated, engaging and empowering, with children's rights being central to every aspect of our practice and future developments.

"Lockdown has been hard at times...people have had their ups and downs...we can get through this together"
Young person

We have been developing a wellbeing and therapeutic approach to our practice with partners during the reporting period, which will be trauma informed and responsive, led, and holistic in its approach and investment will be made in 2021 to develop our workforce by providing training, learning and development in social pedagogy. As part of our advocacy and rights agenda, as well as having access to 'Who Cares', our children now have access to 'Mind of my own', a fully accessible pool of apps designed for young people that make their voice and involvement stronger and more meaningful.

We have been considering how to develop our outreach services on an individual and collective basis, ensuring our young people move forward, if and when they are ready and that transitions and preparations for any move are carefully planned and supported. Going forward, we will be developing our portfolio of supports to help young people move through a period of change and potential uncertainty. By doing this work, we will create more flexible and dynamic approaches to care that better supports relationships, connections and transitions.



Corporate Parenting Best Value Service Reviews

Best value reviews of several Corporate Parenting services including: Fostering, Adoption, Children's Houses and Kinship Care continued throughout the reporting period with the aim of securing ongoing improvement through identifying more effective and efficient ways of delivering the services. This process included comprehensive engagement with people who use the services, their families and carers, and other key stakeholders. The implementation of these reviews was delayed due to Covid-19 related pressures, however all were near completion at the time of reporting.



A number of shared improvement themes were identified across the reviews, including:

- Practice reflects the principles of 'The Promise';
- Develop a targeted approach to meet demand for 'continuing care' placements;
- Establish a proactive wellbeing and therapeutic approach;
- Increased support to ensure children and young people participate in key decisions;
- Increased flexibility and capacity; and
- Improve the quality of services.

Justice Services

Throughout the reporting period, Justice Services have adapted to ensure that effective provision continued despite challenging circumstances. In December 2020, the Scottish Government provided additional funding for Justice Services with a focus on engaging with third sector services to address outstanding unpaid work hours and the limited ability to provide unpaid work as a result of social restrictions.

Justice Services furthered relationships with Apex Scotland, Street Cones and East Ayrshire CVO to ensure that during the months of January to April 2021 when unpaid work was suspended by Scottish Government, we were still able to provide the 'other activity' element (promoting desistance from offending; improving awareness, literacy and work skills) of unpaid work. In partnership with Apex Scotland, the following areas have been covered with service users: money management, healthy eating and stress and anxiety. Free online learning courses through the Open University have also been utilised, which have benefited people's work and life skills.

Through accessing these resources, there is evidence to suggest that people have developed their interpersonal, vocational and employability skills, in addition to reducing the risk of reoffending and improving individual outcomes, with some gaining employment through unpaid work placements at East Ayrshire CVO. Due to this success, we will look to continue these links and progress further online learning with third sector agencies as we move forward. Individual work has also been undertaken with Case Managers for people who cannot or do not wish to participate in online learning, including: alcohol education, healthy relationships, stress Management and alternative coping skills.

Care Homes

Our partner care homes represent a core element in the social care system, providing accommodation, personal and nursing care for people who need additional support in their daily lives. East Ayrshire regards our Independent Sector as key partners in achieving the objectives outlined in the HSCP Strategic Plan. Throughout the reporting period, this has been an area of unprecedented focus and as part of the oversight and support arrangements we have worked with the Independent Sector Lead who has continued to represent, collaborate, support innovation and secure equity of opportunity for the Independent Sector, such as ensuring that all supports were offered equitably and inclusively to partners.



Over the last year, the staff in our nineteen partner care homes have overcome significant challenges to care for and support over 650 people in very difficult circumstances, having demonstrated tremendous commitment, resilience and compassion in doing so. This care provision has involved considerable personal investment over a long period of time, with some staff making personal sacrifices to protect our services and vulnerable people. Like other frontline services, our care home staff have worked differently during this period in line with national guidance, with infection control measures being a key example.

Throughout the last year, our partner care homes have received a remarkable range of supports from East Ayrshire Council, HSCP, partners and from communities. This collaborative approach has made a significant difference to both staff and residents. More detail in relation to these supports is provided in section 8 within this Report.

The HSCP on behalf of our partner care homes secured funding for an online management development course 'Grow As We Go'. This course commenced in 2021 and care home providers have been learning together, supporting each other and sharing experiences on a virtual basis. Such collaborative working and strong supportive relationships will be key to recovering from the pandemic.

Mental Health Officer Service

Mental Health Officers (MHO) maintained a full and responsive service throughout the pandemic. Our MHOs have provided an efficient response to Adults with Incapacity referrals received and as at April 2021, have no waiting list for appointment of an MHO to support Welfare Guardianship applications.

The service has adapted to legislative changes in line with the Coronavirus Act and has ensured that all safeguarding measures have been implemented in line with the MHO's duties and responsibilities. Our MHOs have adapted to a new way of engaging with service users and families, in addition to maintaining professional networks via digital platforms. This has been challenging in terms of securing appropriate technical support and equipment, as well as supporting a vulnerable population to engage in a different way. However, the MHO service has overcome these challenges with enthusiasm, flexibility and a commitment to maintaining professional standards.

Social Work Information System and Finance System

The continued implementation of a new Social Work Information System (Liquidlogic), has been an ongoing development during 2020/21, with the system being integral in the management and storage of records for individuals in contact with Social Work.



Due to ongoing restrictions throughout the pandemic, some areas of development were postponed, with a focus placed on supporting colleagues through this change and making improvements where required. The restricted ability to provide face to face training and initially limited remote I.T solutions made this process challenging for all involved, however colleagues have been resilient and worked collaboratively during this period. This was further enhanced via the implementation of Microsoft Teams at the end of 2020 which increased our ability to support users.

Constructive feedback is frequently received from system users and enhancements to reflect business requirements and to simplify recording processes will continue in the coming year. The implementation process was an extensive piece of work, ensuring that the system would provide benefits to users, including reducing recording time and duplication, improving accuracy and enhancing workload management

In addition, a new finance system (ContrOCC), was implemented and integrated with Liquidlogic in the reporting period, which has provided a number of operational benefits, particularly in respect of Self Directed Supports and Residential Accommodation. This means that the electronic financial assessment is completed within 4 weeks, whereas previously the re-assessment process could take months to finalise, reducing anxiety in relation to completing the process

We are aware that the pandemic has significantly impacted on the implementation and embedding of Liquidlogic, meaning that people who use the system do not utilise all its functions and lack confidence. A Development Board has been established to oversee and agree ongoing service priorities in the development of Liquidlogic and ContrOCC in order to realise its full potential.

Connecting Scotland Initiative



The Connecting Scotland Initiative aims to provide every citizen in Scotland with online access. In December 2020, Children's Services received a number of tablet devices and MIFI connections for care

leavers and vulnerable families following a successful bid, with almost 1000 people benefitting by January 2021. This has been particularly important throughout the pandemic in terms of keeping: connected to friends and family, informed and entertained, and able to learn, work, shop and access health information and other key services.

Feedback has been positive and illustrates how young people's lives have improved since receiving their devices. Key themes have been: maintaining connections with friends and family, having fun, access to learning, training and employment opportunities, maintaining connection to their workers and making contact with family overseas while seeking asylum.

"I have a better chance of finding a job now that I can search online for work and complete applications"

Care experienced young person

A 16-year-old care experienced young person is living at home with her mother. She is a resilient, good-natured and talented young person. However there are a number of significant risk factors present in her life with concerns surrounding her mental health, substance use, exposure to her mother's substance issues and drug culture, and potential exploitation.

Receiving the iPad device from the Connecting Scotland Initiative has been invaluable for her. Since receiving the device, she has engaged with an employability course which is taking place mostly online due to lockdown restrictions. She has been able to keep in frequent contact with the team of professionals that support her, and has also been in more frequent contact with her family and friends. She has also stated that this has had a positive impact on her wellbeing and has helped her feel less isolated.

Technology Enabled Care

In August 2020, Mind Of My Own went live within Children's Services, which is an app used to gather the views of children and young people. Children can use it independently or be supported to use by practitioners to express their views on their wellbeing and on a wide range of issues that are important to them. Mind of My Own empowers young people to have a voice and to ensure their views and feelings are heard in a way that is important to them, whilst providing an attractive way for children and young people to start the conversation. It also helps workers capture and evidence their views, ensuring they are being heard and considered, meeting quality standards around the voice of the child.

A care experienced young person started using the Mind of My Own app and finds this helpful in order to express her feelings and share her views with workers. She currently struggles with self-harming behaviours, particularly at night, and has been encouraged to use the app as an alternative activity to express her thoughts and feelings, which can then be discussed with whomever she chooses to share these with.

"I really like it. It gives me the chance to think about what I am feeling"

Young person

"It's great that I can use it at any time. It helps me remember what I want to say"

Young person

"It [Pathfinder] helps people feel listened to. It feels like something will be done about my concerns"

Participant

Engaged with over 160 people in the Irvine Valley

The East Ayrshire Technology Enabled Care (TEC) Pathfinder Programme continued throughout 2020/21, with the aim of utilising TEC as a key enabler to transform support for people aged 65 and over and people with long term conditions living in the Irvine Valley. The programme adopted the Scottish Approach to Service Design to engage with those living and working in the Irvine Valley to gain an understanding of local issues and views on: health, social care and wellbeing services, technology and TEC.

The core Pathfinder team have been working remotely since March 2020 and during this period, a variety of community and stakeholder engagement has continued via socially distanced means, including online interviews, an internet smart survey and paper questionnaires. To date, the Pathfinder Programme has engaged with over 160 participants in the Irvine Valley. Analysis of all research and data collected to date and a number of core insights were collated to feed into the outputs of the Pathfinder Programme.

Throughout the pandemic, care homes faced the challenge of supporting vulnerable residents who were shielding or self-isolating within their own rooms. There was particular concern for those at risk of falls, living with dementia and epilepsy. In response, the East Ayrshire Thinking Differently team installed various telecare devices within resident's rooms, including 'care assist' pagers linked to bed/chair occupancy sensors, fall detectors and epileptic seizure monitors. The equipment enabled staff to respond swiftly when needed and also to avoid unnecessary physical checks, allowing for a quicker and safer response during a time when infection control was of the utmost importance.

"We really struggled to get equipment and supplies during the pandemic. Accessing the equipment and advice was fantastic. I don't think we would have been able to access things like this for months and that could have impacted on the residents wellbeing and on how I would have staffed the home"

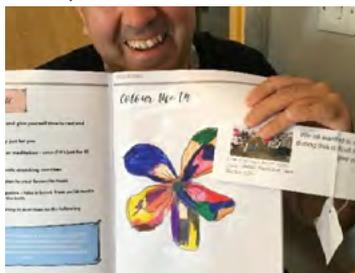
Care Home Manager

Day Opportunities for Adults with Learning Disabilities

There are three day service centres in East Ayrshire: Balmoral Road (Kilmarnock), Riverside (Cumnock) and the Sir Alexander Fleming Centre (Kilmarnock), which work with people to identify their personal interests and skills to introduce person-centred support, activities and learning opportunities which enable them to meet their personal outcomes. All three day services work collaboratively and regularly share key information, in addition to providing support for each other.

Due to restrictions introduced, staff required to be creative and flexible to deliver services in a different way, ensuring that people remained safe. Over the last year, a blended model of care has been implemented, incorporating building based, community based and technology based provision. Examples of such activities delivered throughout the reporting period include:

- developing action plans to ensure people continued to feel connected valued, respected, reassured, supported, informed, resilient and positive;
- working with people in their own homes;
- delivering 1:1 and group sessions remotely through teleconferencing software, including: yoga, meditation, various exercises, armchair aerobics and quizzes;
- weekly telephone contact to check people are safe, well and if they require support;
- delivering activity packs to people's homes;
- involving people in fund raising activities;
- numerous projects and recognising various events: making Christmas packs and cards and participating in competitions and East Ayrshire Council's Action for Happiness Calendar and 'Love is...' activities;
- partnership working with third sector organisations to deliver activities / supports;



- delivering wellbeing packages and afternoon teas to service users and families;
- supporting community resilience groups and other local services by providing hot meals, homemade baking and sweet treats.

A best value review of our Day Opportunities service for adults with learning disabilities was undertaken during the reporting period. A key part was extensive engagement with people who use the services, their carers, family members and other stakeholders. The review identified a number of key areas for improvement and following an options appraisal, it was agreed that the service would deliver a flexible adult day care model from the existing three locations, offering both centre based activities and a much wider range of community based activities, in addition to introducing innovative TEC solutions.

"D is extremely happy with the level of support she has received and feels fully supported with a combination of home support and day service building based"

Public Protection

An extensive framework for assurance and oversight of all public protection activity was established in April 2020 in response to heightened levels of vulnerability during the pandemic. The Protection Team led on this oversight work and established six multi-agency oversight groups with reporting and governance directly through the East Ayrshire Chief Officer Group. The groups identified and shared information on new or emerging risks faced by our services and people who may be vulnerable to harm due to the impact of isolation, unemployment or poverty.

The oversight groups have met on a weekly basis to receive data, review multi-agency responses, escalate areas of concern and identify cross-cutting protection issues requiring attention because of restrictions. The pandemic oversight work also evolved and adapted over the course of the year, with the focus shifting from operational and safety planning towards horizon scanning and support for recovery. This currently remains in place to support real-time risk assessment and mitigations to prevent harm and ensure multi-agency responses adapt to new needs. This has been an excellent example of social work leadership supporting multi-agency protection practice.

Supporting Independence

The Intermediate Care Team (ICT) has continued to deliver essential care and support to older people to facilitate hospital discharge and promote independence at home, contributing towards the avoidance of harm, hospital readmission and long term care home admission. The multi-disciplinary service has consistently enabled individuals to achieve their own personal care and support needs with the appropriate assistance required.

Throughout the last year, the Community Alarm Emergency Response Team have continued to provide a 24 hour emergency care service to East Ayrshire residents in the event of a fall, an unplanned care need and technical emergencies to maintain equipment. This service has supported a significant number of people to live safely and independently within a range of community settings, contributing towards improved personal outcomes and quality of life. During the pandemic, effective partnership working with Risk Management colleagues, administrative staff and the Facilities team, allowed protocols to be quickly established to enable staff to manage and adhere to the additional health and safety protocols, safeguarding the wellbeing of our service users and workforce.

A service user's daughter has expressed how grateful she is to us all and can't praise us enough for the high quality of care her mother received. The daughter made reference to being sceptical about having a male carer for her mum, however she was left 'blown away' by the level of compassion and professionalism displayed.

"what an asset all your carers are... it really is a super service that is provided to give people confidence getting out of hospital and back home. They are all so bright and bubbly and put a smile on my mother face each time they are in"

ICT Service user

"You all made my life so much easier. You are an amazing team and my family thanks you so much"

Family member

"We would like to thank everyone involved in dad's care at home. We all valued you so much for all that you did to help...the carers are worth their weight in gold and showed such care and compassion"

Family member

Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

Like other areas across Scotland, East Ayrshire has experienced an increase in drug-related deaths in recent years, with evidence indicating that local drug-related deaths mainly occur in males aged 35-44 and are often related to a combination of drugs and/or health conditions and difficult circumstances. The East Ayrshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of East Ayrshire residents by reducing harm caused by alcohol and drugs. The ADP is chaired by an independent chair who provides constructive challenge, leadership and direction.



The East Ayrshire ADP published its [Strategic Improvement Plan 2020-2024](#), which outlines actions to develop a Recovery-Oriented System of Care by 2024, in addition to highlighting six key improvement areas that the ADP will fulfil.

Throughout the pandemic, key partners from the ADP came together on a weekly basis via the Chief Officers Group, to identify and mitigate risks for vulnerable drug/alcohol users to support and protect them. This oversight group adopted a partnership 'solution focussed' approach to mitigate protection risks with practical solutions such as providing access to phones, internet, foodbanks and community support. In addition, a local substance related death group continued to meet regularly throughout 2020/21 to examine the circumstances surrounding each death to identify patterns, trends and support learning.



A number of additional alcohol and drug support developments have taken place. The Rapid Access Drug and Alcohol Service (RADAR) was established enabling quick access to both treatment and opiate replacement, thereby reducing drop out rates and the associated risks. East Ayrshire's Peer Recovery Network was also developed with a local group 'Patchwork' becoming registered as a Scottish Charity. The Peer Providers offer valuable guidance, help to build skills and assist with specific needs, to support people on their recovery journey. With funding from the Drug Death Task Force, East Ayrshire has expanded its supply of the life-saving drug Naloxone significantly, with 980 kits distributed within the community between April 2020 and March 2021.



East Ayrshire Advocacy

Through Scottish Government funding, Children and Young People aged 5-18 have been given access to independent advocacy to support them to make their views and wishes known in their hearing and to ensure that their rights are upheld. East Ayrshire Council have also granted additional funding for the provision of independent advocacy for looked after and protected children who require support to attend meetings out with the Children's Hearing System. This will ensure that their voices are heard when decisions are being made about their lives, in addition to providing continuity of support.

East Ayrshire Advocacy Service continued to provide one-to-one advocacy for care home residents when decisions were being made about their lives. Listening to people is important to us as such, at the end of 2020, a consultation exercise was undertaken with residents and staff to gain views on their experience within the care home during Covid-19 restrictions. The service has also supported people to access alcohol and drug services to assist them to maintain their recovery and improve their health and wellbeing. Throughout the pandemic, Peer Advocates have also chaired online support meetings to encourage others to think about recovery.

Social Work Out of Hours Service

East Ayrshire provides an Out of Hours Social Work Service OOH SW for the whole of Ayrshire. In October 2020, the social work governance and support for the out of hours service was reviewed and moved to the Chief Social Work Officer's portfolio. A review of the service also commenced in 2020-21 to support service improvements and identify

a sustainable staffing model moving forward. The service review is expected to conclude in September 2021.

The OOH SW Team deliver vital support for our residents such as providing food and utilities to individuals who find themselves in financial hardship. The pandemic presented various challenges, which required team members to be creative and flexible in their approach to individual pieces of work as they continued to ensure people's safety and wellbeing. The team undertook research and benchmarking activities in relation to similar support delivery in other areas and considered how our local provision could be improved to ensure positive outcomes for people and to alleviate pressure on team members.

A carer was admitted to hospital and her sister could not remain at home on her own. She received 3 visits weekly from homecare and there was no extended family identified. A risk assessment was quickly completed by the OOH SW Team and it was agreed that full time care was required to keep the individual safe. In the interim, the Community Alarm Team provided cover from early evening, and overnight this staff group worked over their shift times to allow for additional cover to be sought the following morning. Locality Community Care Officers then provided support throughout the daytime, supported by various day time teams and staff members. All parties involved communicated frequently to ensure this robust care plan fully supported her needs.

East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership



The East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership (EAVAWP) is currently chaired by the CSWO. The EAVAWP continued to work to achieve the outcomes set out in the national

Equally Safe Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls. This continues to be a proactive and vibrant partnership, with extensive sector wide membership.

The EAVAWP's [Strategic Plan for 2021-24](#) identifies key issues surrounding violence against women and outlines the actions collectively agreed to tackle them. The Plan highlights key national and local context and sets out the Partnership's vision of:

'Working together to improve safety, wellbeing and equality for all women and girls in East Ayrshire'.

The EAVAWP has monitored and responded to increasing levels of need over the last year, which is associated with circumstances relating to Covid-19 restrictions. Services quickly adapted to new circumstances and found different ways to support families affected by domestic abuse. This included ensuring refuge and temporary homeless accommodation was available, securing PPE for staff, supporting staff working from home and providing digital, safety, financial and wellbeing resources to families. Sharing information, insight and resources was central to the response.

Similar to all the protection committees and in response to the pandemic, the Violence Against Women Operational Oversight Group was formed in April 2020. This group was established to ensure that multi-agency public protection activities retained a focus on violence against women and girls' issues during the pandemic. The group initially met weekly, moving to fortnightly and brought together key operational members to provide agency/service updates.

Numerous pieces of innovative and collaborative multi-agency work to enhance the support available to vulnerable people took place during the pandemic, such as:

- 16 Days of Action to Eradicate Violence Against Women;
- Various Equally Safe workforce developments;
- Information on how to conduct telephone counselling were circulated to assist practitioners in ensuring the safety of vulnerable women and girls;
- All Head teachers were advised of the Women's Aid supports available for pupils;
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation information circulated via Vibrant Communities;
- NHS produced a flier on how to access sexual health services;
- NHS Contact and Trace staff made aware of domestic abuse matters, coercive control factors and supports available;
- Safe Spaces initiative progressed with training around the pathway for dental staff, with a pilot 'Smile on' service implemented;
- Promotion of the 'Ask for ANI' scheme at Emergency Departments and via wider Health staff, to raise awareness of the new scheme; and
- Ayrshire-wide communications campaign developed regarding hidden harms, promoting that services were open, accessible and support was available.

Third Sector Commissioning (Children and Families)

Throughout the lockdown period, our Children and Families commissioned Third Sector partners to implement innovative means of delivery for their much needed services. Our vulnerable children and families required more reassurance during this challenging time, and through close working relationships and collaboration, service provision continued via different methods of delivery. This included providing mobile phones and tablets to allow remote contact, facilitating "walk and talk" visits where personal support was required, and supplying food, furniture and utilities support where needed.

Feedback from people using the services has been largely positive. A number of people have reported that they now find it easier to have their counselling sessions held remotely, with some stating that not having to attend face to face meetings has greatly reduced their anxiety, and that they would prefer to continue with virtual communications. We recognise a mixed model will develop as we emerge from the pandemic.

All of our Children and Families commissioned services have worked closely with the HSCP throughout this difficult period, sending weekly updates and devising new means of engaging with people. Many services are planning for how they will recover and renew following the pandemic. The majority will adopt a blended approach between face to face and remote contact and where people are telling us that they prefer remote contact, we will consider the future implications for service design and delivery.

Refugee and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Resettlement

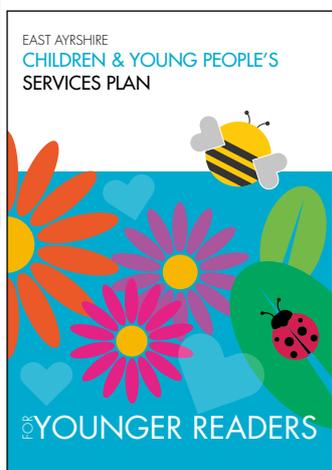
A housing support model was developed in the last year which will provide up to six resettlement placements for asylum seeking 16/17 year olds through the UK Government's National Transfer Scheme. We have a number of young people now placed in East Ayrshire as a consequence of this development. Support staff have worked closely with other agencies to ensure those being re-settled in East Ayrshire are coached with the appropriate skills in: managing a tenancy, accessing health services, accessing education / English language classes and accessing community resources to facilitate integration within our local communities, in addition to being provided with emotional support to manage previous trauma experience. This model connects families and young people to local services and assets that will help them thrive, grow and build a network of support that enables freestanding and sustainable independence. This has been a fabulous collaboration with colleagues in Housing Services.

East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Service Plan 2020-2023

The [East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Service Plan 2020-2023](#) sets out our local long term aspirations, ambitions and services plans for children and young people in East Ayrshire. The Plan celebrates a number of our young people's achievements, perspectives and contributions, in addition to sharing examples of successful partnership working and improved outcomes.

The Plan recognises children and young people as experts and our strongest assets, and states that shared responsibility, leadership and collaborative action to address key issues, will enable the achievement of its vision: "in East Ayrshire, our children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential". Central to the plan is implementation of the promise and it identifies key areas that will make a meaningful difference to the lives of our children and young people, their carers and families, and over the lifetime of this plan, the focus will be on:

- recovery and renewal from the impact of COVID-19;
- tackling poverty;
- respecting and promoting children and young people's rights;
- improving wellbeing;
- helping children and young people achieve; and
- keeping children and young people safe.



Adult Support and Protection

A total of 268 adult protection referrals were received throughout 2020/21, which is a reduction of 29% (110) from the previous year. 2,398 adult concern referrals were received in the same period, an increase of 6% (140). Overall, this represents an annual reduction of 23% in referral figures. Analysis of this data highlights how some operational decision making impacted on how referrals were managed.



There is no doubt that the past year has been very different for everyone due to the pandemic and this has been reflected in the types of harm and risks people have experienced. East Ayrshire's Covid-19 multi-agency public protection oversight structure established the ASP Operational Oversight Group in April 2020 and this group became central to real-time decision making to support the required changes to ASP processes and practice during the pandemic.

Over the past year there has been a strong focus on partners coming together to support our communities during the pandemic. Examples of the work undertaken to protect people from harm and increased risks in this period includes:

- establishing a team dedicated to supporting individuals who were shielding, providing 7 day support and ensuring an immediate response to urgent needs;
- multi-agency guidance produced in relation to hoarding to support members of the community and our Workforce;
- the Financial Health and Wellbeing Partnership established 7 focus groups to address: fuel poverty, child poverty, alternative finance/debt, employability and training, health awareness, food insecurity and housing issues;
- the East Ayrshire HSCP Thinking Differently Team worked with East Ayrshire Carers Centre to mitigate Carers' stress by refreshing and communicating the Carers Centre Information Leaflet to ensure Scottish Government additional funding was accessible;
- the Trading Standards service has continued to alert the public to the latest scams; and
- in partnership with East Ayrshire CVO, public protection partners produced a 'Here to Help' brochure which provides advice and tips on how to stay safe and well over the winter months.

Risk Management

Service level risk registers are in place across the HSCP, which are managed on the Pentana Performance system and incorporated within our [Service Improvement Plans](#). The registers comprise pertinent information relating to key risk areas, including: detailed descriptions, risk matrix scores (likelihood vs. severity), risk status and mitigating actions.

The identified risks reflect both strategic and service related issues, and are reviewed on a quarterly basis at management meetings. There is an established process for escalating risks that cannot be tolerated, treated or transferred through to service level registers, the partnership register and corporate risk registers. The Risk Management Committee and Audit and Performance Committee oversee an annual Partnership Assurance Report.

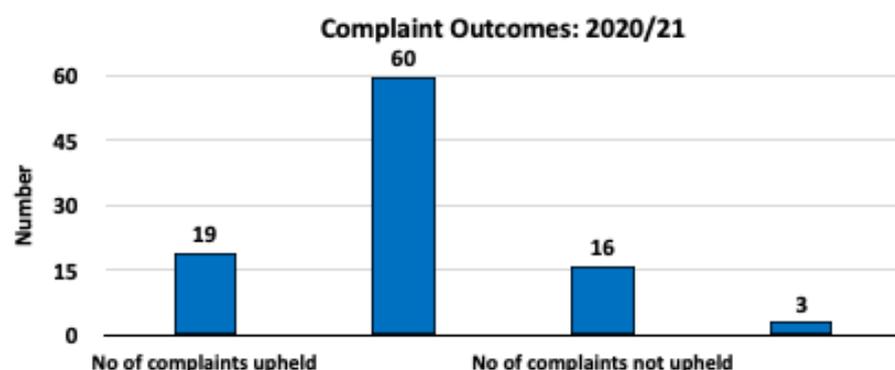
Complaints and Feedback

Our Complaints Handling Procedure is based on the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman's standard model. The table below displays complaints closed at each stage over the last four years.

Complaints Closed At Each Stage as % of All Complaints

	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Stage 1	90	72.6%	60	46.2%	63	48%	44	43.6%
Stage 2	28	22.6%	67	51.5%	61	46%	54	53.5%
Escalated *	13	(10.5%)	28	(21.5%)	3	2.3%	20	(19.8%)
Total	118	95.2%	127	97.7%	124	93.9%	98	97.1%
Open Complaints**	6	4.8%	3	2.3%	8	6.1%	3	2.9%

* These are complaints 'escalated' from Stage 1 before being resolved at Stage 2. They are a subset of all Stage 2 complaints. For the purposes of calculating totals, only discrete Stage 1 and Stage 2 figures are required.



As at 31 March 2021, 3 complaints remained open and 98 complaints were reported as being closed against a total of 101 for the period. Across all stages, 18.8% of complaints were upheld, 59.4% partially upheld, 15.8% not upheld and 2.9% were withdrawn.

Our proactive approach to dealing with complaints has been embedded across all services, with arrangements developed to effectively handle and learn from feedback to inform our continuous improvement.

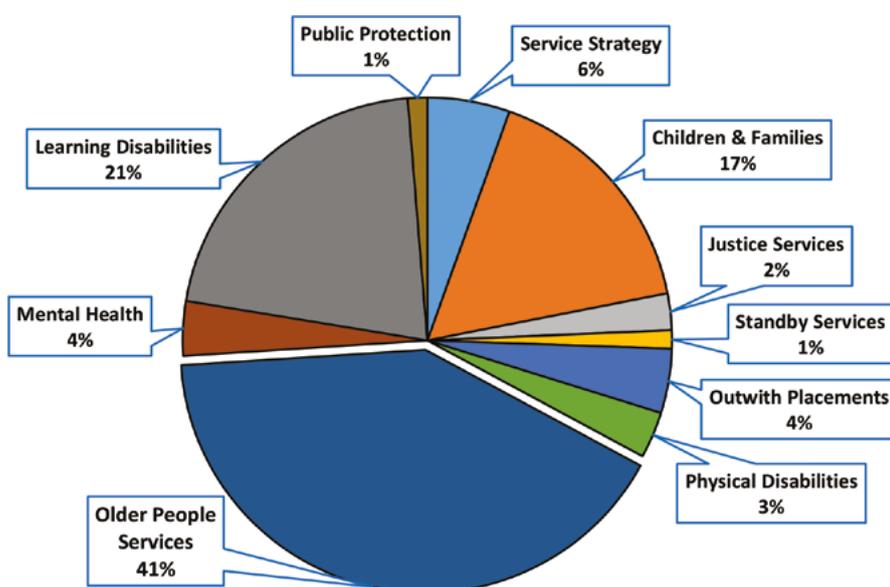
Key to complaints is reflection and ensuring that lessons learned contribute towards improvements in our services more generally and in our complaints handling procedures. Some learning identified is to ensure that we are clear about what the complaint is specifically relating to, particularly where a complaint is complex and references multiple related issues.

As of 1 April 2021, the Social Work Complaints Handling Procedure has been discontinued by the Ombudsman, with all social work complaints now using the Local Authority Complaints Handling Procedure.

6 Resources

The overall net social work budget within the Health and Social Care Partnership is £85.974 million. The gross spend (after income from NHS and service charges) is £113.172 million, which breaks down into the following services:

Gross Budgeted Expenditure 2020/21



The table below highlights gross budgeted expenditure over the last three financial years:

Service Area	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m
Community Care	70.270	73.063	79.374
Children and Families	22.675	23.317	23.463
Justice	2.466	2.671	2.762
Public Protection (2019/20 onwards)	0.000	1.440	1.459
Service Strategy	6.673	6.904	6.114
Totals	99.619	107.395	113.172

Community Planning Partners recognise the current and forthcoming period as an enormously challenging one due to the extent of public sector budget reductions. This necessitates essential services to be secured with less money, while maintaining service quality and coping with rising and diverse demands.

The Social Work Service has achieved significant savings totalling £27.570 million between 2010/11 and 2020/21. Approved savings achieved over the last five years by service area are displayed below.

Service Area	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m
Community Care	0.560	5.090	3.191	0.860	1.345
Children and Families	1.157	0.235	0.436	0.337	0.455
Justice	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Service Strategy	0.000	0.107	0.118	0.233	0.116
Totals	1.717	5.432	3.745	1.430	1.916

In 2020/21, the East Ayrshire Social Care Service was £2.903m under the approved annual budget.

- Going forward into 2021/22, the challenges remain consistent, particularly:
- Unpredictable pressures on Outwith Placements;
- Core service dependency on non-recurring budgets;
- Increasing demand that cannot be funded;
- Required high levels of cash releasing efficiency savings; and
- Impact of the pandemic.

The ongoing challenge for delivering Social Work services is evident across Scotland. Within East Ayrshire, there has been sustained effort in maximizing all opportunities to make savings which have minimal impact on front line service delivery and staff. Our work is evidencing the potential for reducing demand pressures. Many of these approaches are dependent on the practice and approaches of partner agencies, and partnership approaches are essential in achieving the provision of quality services within the resources available.

The CSWO has involvement in aspects of budget setting and financial decision-making related to the social work element of the East Ayrshire HSCP budget. The CSWO seeks to identify and advise on any budgetary issues affecting the operational delivery of statutory Social Work services and any challenges facing the profession, including the impact on statutory duties and the impact of financial decision making on the workforce.

In total, a revenue budget of £91.376m was delegated to the East Ayrshire IJB for 2021/22:

Integration Joint Board	£m	£m
2019/20 Approved budget allocation		89.922
Adjustment to Scottish Government funding		(0.149)
Baseline Adjustments		(0.025)
2020/21 Baseline allocation		89.748
Pay, prices and other uplifts	1.847	
Demand and demographic pressures	1.245	
Savings target	(3.390)	
Subtotal: A	(0.298)	
Additional Scottish Government funding:		
Carers (Scotland) Act 2016	0.680	
Free Personal and Nursing Care uprating	0.137	
Living Wage	0.811	
Subtotal: B	1.628	
Additional resources to match pass through requirement	0.298	
Subtotal: C	0.298	
Additional delegated resources: A+B+C		1.628
2021/22 Budget allocation		91.376

Work has been undertaken to identify spending commitments against the £1.628m additional delegated resources for 2021/22. Commitments include cost of care impact. There are various earmarked commitments which require to be funded, as well as national and local cost pressures. A summary of pressures against the additional funding allocation is presented below:

	£m	£m
Additional delegated resources		1.628
Indicative commitments:		
2019/20 Earmarked elements (must do):		
Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 extension	0.300	
Free Personal Care uprating	0.137	0.437
National cost pressures (must do):	1.245	
Pay uplifts	0.708	
Scottish Living Wage – external contracts including sleepovers	0.390	
National Care Home Contract (indicative)	0.604	
Out with / secure contract inflation (indicative)	0.162	
Adult Placements	0.153	2.017
Local cost pressures		0.905
Resource Transfer uplift		(0.155)
Total indicative commitments		3.204
Indicative funding gap		1.576

It is clear that the “must do” commitments which total £3.057m outweigh the additional delegated resource £1.628m. The indicative funding gap is £1.576m. This gap will require to be met from additional cash releasing efficiency savings in 2021/22.

Given all social work services are delegated to the HSCP it is important to note that it is a legal requirement under Section 93 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for IJBs to set a balanced budget in line with strategic planning priorities for the forthcoming year. To ensure that all identified cost pressures can be met, a range of proposed cash releasing efficiency savings for Council commissioned services totalling £1.576m have been developed and are presented in the table below:

Service Area	2021/22 £m
Community Health & Care Localities	0.954
Wellbeing, Mental health, Learning Disabilities, Drugs & Alcohol	0.438
General – all Service areas	0.184
Total	1.576

Against a backdrop of significant increasing demand for social care services, in addition to the requirement for the IJB to approve cash releasing efficiency savings totalling £14.240 between 2016/17 – 2020/21, this additional savings target will be challenging. Service implications will need to be managed in delivering these additional savings.

7 Workforce

Workforce Planning

The social work and social care workforce is our greatest asset and effective workforce planning is vital to ensure we have the right people in the right place with the right skills at the right time to deliver sustainable and high quality health and social care services for the people of East Ayrshire, and the HSCP has a dedicated Workforce Planning Lead to oversee this process.

Our social care services have produced detailed workforce plans to prepare for the short, medium and long term, to focus on the skills and roles required, and to enable proactive procurement either within our current workforce (existing or through training and development) or by external recruitment. This allows us to plan for growth, known turnover and succession planning. It also allows us to proactively plan with our partners, particularly to influence the qualifications and skills needed in the future.

There is no doubt that the pandemic has adversely effected our workforce. We have invested in mental health and wellbeing support, offering a variety of support options to reach as much of the workforce as possible. The health and wellbeing of our workforce is a key priority and we are committed to providing timely and effective support where necessary. As we move forward with our recovery and renewal, it is only with a healthy, skilled and sustainable workforce that we will be able to progress our transformational change strategies.



The table below sets out our current workforce as at January 2021. The majority work directly with people to promote early intervention and prevention. The Partnership comprises more than 150 Social Workers and over 680 Community Care Officers (Personal Carers).

WTE by Employer as at January 2021

	EAC	NHS	TOTAL
Children	251.12	105.91	357.03
Adults	700.46	612.82	1313.28
Public Protection	14.11		14.11
Primary Care	0.50	183.24	183.74
Support Services	160.55	16.73	177.28
Total:	1126.74	918.70	2045.44

Key considerations relating to social work recruitment and staffing levels include:

- Maintaining an adequate level of Mental Health Officers has been challenging and more robust investment and workforce planning was introduced to support this. Unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions, there has been an increase in demand which outstrips availability and this requires attention to find a new solution.
- Despite concerns about Social Work students being able to qualify due to lack of placement availability, arrangements between partners have been agreed to mitigate this and although placements may take longer, it is expected that students will be able to undertake the required placement hours in time to graduate. This is essential to ensure a supply of qualified social workers.
- Due to the pandemic, we have been unable to host placements within our Care at Home service for our local students studying for HSC qualifications. This caused concern in relation to the impact on our workforce availability, however partners again came together to address this and there will be ongoing support available from Ayrshire College to support students to finalise their placement requirements should they be successful in obtaining employment within the HSCP.
- The HSCP has experienced a reduction in staff turnover during the pandemic. We have adapted our recruitment processes to be more virtual, enabling us to continue to recruit as required.

The following workforce challenges, solutions and achievements were identified within the reporting period:

- Our advanced recruitment planning and twice yearly recruitment days for Community Care Officers created capacity in the early stage of the pandemic, allowing a swift and effective community response. The induction and training process was adapted to an online function at an early stage to support the readiness of this new workforce. We were also able to proceed with our second recruitment event, adhering to infection control procedures, which allowed the Partnership to recruit further staff.
- Various proactive actions were taken to support the workforce during the pandemic, including redeployment of staff from non-essential services, increased utilisation of bank staff, exploration of 'the Portal' and numerous wellbeing initiatives. Our ability to provide essential services to those most vulnerable in our communities throughout the pandemic was due to the commitment, flexibility and efforts of our workforce.
- A Best Value Service Review of our Care at Home Service was conducted, resulting in the implementation of a new delivery structure;
- The Partnership's utilisation of technology was expanded and improved to better support agile working. This has been linked with improved recruitment and retention, particularly in our rural areas.

The following social work workforce planning activities will be delivered going forward:

- Continued commitment to invest in the development of our workforce. Under the portfolio of the CSWO our Learning Academy is currently being designed to provide bespoke training to our Social Care workforce (predominately within Care at Home). This will enhance the skills and knowledge within the service and accompanied with career path development, will improve retention within the service.
- Reviewing Social Worker recruitment in respect of being more proactive and supporting retention, particularly in rural areas where the turnover is higher.
- Existing workforce plans will be updated to reflect the new landscape and new ways of working.
- The Independent Care Review 'The Promise' and the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland will influence how we deliver services in the future. Workforce planning will form a vital role as part of this transformational change.

In terms of Mental Health Officer recruitment, there are currently (as at April 2021) two Social Workers nearing completion of the Post Graduate Certificate Mental Health Social Work (MHO) Award (2020-21 cohort), with two Practice Assessors appointed to support the candidates' practice element of the programme.

East Ayrshire Council has committed to supporting a further two candidate applications for the 2021-22 cohort of the Mental Health Award, with applicants based across Children and Families and Justice services (which currently do not have MHO representation), with two Practice Assessors again identified to support the practice element of the programme in line with the Council's commitment to investment in a sustainable MHO workforce.

The distribution of prospective candidates reflects East Ayrshire Council's commitment to supporting the MHO qualification across a range of services to meet the statutory demand associated with both Adults with Incapacity and Mental Health Act legislation and to support professional development within Social Work.

Workforce Support and Development

Organisational Development

East Ayrshire Council continues to provide Organisational Development (OD) support to HSCP employees. A number of bespoke OD sessions were delivered to Social Work and wider HSCP teams throughout the reporting period.

The workforce is supported to identify and access all relevant learning and development opportunities during supervision and within the Council's annual review and development process (FACE). All employees have access to a suite of development modules and leadership / management courses are available to new and aspiring managers.

It is recognised that working with service users and communities in an asset-based and person-centred way, requires a cultural change. The Council's framework to embed the FACE qualities and behaviours (Flexible, Approachable, Caring and Empowered), in the workforce and communities will promote a relational way of working, by empowering people and communities, which in turn will help to reduce demand on services.



594 employee essentials training completions

220 management essentials training Completions



Public Protection and Learning Team - Social Work Learning and Development

The Social Work Learning and Development Team was brought together with the Public Protection Team to form the Protection and Learning Team.

The impact of the pandemic resulted in a near cessation of traditional face-to-face social work and social care learning and development activity due to the infection control and physical distancing measures established.

This challenged East Ayrshire Council's employer responsibilities to staff in achieving the learning and development standards set out in the SSSC Code for Social Service Workers through face-to-face training opportunities. However the CSWO in linking with the SSSC, was able to negotiate additional time for those affected through no fault of their own.

In moving towards a new, blended model of learning and development, there was a shift to online e-Learning and virtual development sessions such as webinars.

However, there remained a requirement for some face-to-face activity as the most effective method to support certain aspects of staff development in facilitating professional critical reflection. Work continues to be progressed in developing a recovery plan which will embed hybrid learning methods moving forward. It is recognised that this transition of learning and development format and methodology will be resource intensive and will require a considerable amount of development work to be undertaken in designing online e-Learning module content to replace some aspects of training which previously would have been delivered via classroom based approaches.

Practice Learning

A Practice Development Coordinator post was created with specific responsibility for practice learning, with the post being recruited to in August 2020. This has supported our Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). NQSW recruitment and retention continues to be key to sustaining quality social work practice in all service areas. The past year has been a particularly challenging time to begin a career as a Newly Qualified Social Worker, with many of the NQSWs who joined in the early months of 2020 affected by placement terminations and delayed graduations, coupled with uncertainties in the job application and recruitment process. We must be mindful that their early experiences are significantly different to all their colleagues and they will likely require support past their first supported year. Student Social Workers were recruited on to the temporary register at the onset of the pandemic to cover specific care roles including working in children's houses, and some NQSWs came into employment with the partnership via this route.

As at March 2021, there were 25 NQSWs involved in the supported Continuous Professional Learning First Year in Practice programmes across the Partnership.

All placements for social work students were suspended with immediate effect from mid-March 2020, resuming in late August. In recognition that students would require to follow work patterns of their placement teams, students were resourced with laptops and mobile phones to support home working. Teams have shown resilience and creativity in providing learning opportunities to students throughout the pandemic, adapting to ways of working that have facilitated learning and supporting students to complete placements successfully. We are mindful that this is a very different experience to what we would wish and work to mitigate this.

Despite the various challenges experienced, students greatly valued the opportunity to practice skills learned at university on placements, which is a vital experience in becoming a qualified social worker. With the support of operational practice supervision, social work students provide an important service within the teams they are placed in and many students who undertake their practice placements within East Ayrshire, go on to become qualified social workers within the service.

“social work doesn’t stop for anything, we are working with human beings... I hope in the future in my work as a social worker, I can take what I have learned under these difficult circumstances to stand me in good stead in the future”

Social Work student

“I’m really impressed with the warmth and team working spirit during the pandemic”

Course Tutor

“I wouldn’t change anything about the placement. I have had amazing learning opportunities and I feel very grateful that I have had the opportunities that I have during my placement”

Social Work student

Child Protection

The Qualified Social Worker (QSW) Child Protection Professional Development Programme is a statutory requirement which must be completed by QSWs who are a minimum of one year post-qualified. This year, during very difficult service demands and physical restrictions, the course was adapted to utilise face-to-face, virtual and self-directed learning opportunities to support nine social workers into the next stage of their career development. Those who attended acknowledged the difference and difficulties with this new and challenging way of learning but each were committed to the process. It is vital for service delivery that this learning is undertaken to ensure the children and families of East Ayrshire are sufficiently supported and that risks are assessed by staff with the appropriate skills.

Safe and Together

The Safe and Together Model Suite of Tools and Interventions is a perpetrator pattern-based, child-centred, survivor strengths approach to working with domestic violence. Developed originally for child welfare systems, it has policy and practice implications for a variety of professionals and systems. The model has a growing body of evidence associated with it, including recent correlations with a reduction in out-of-home placements in child welfare domestic violence cases.

The East Ayrshire HSCP has sought to embed the model by investing in staff development in undertaking the initial CORE training programme and the training for trainers programme. This allowed for delivery of an internal programme of information sessions / 1-day overview and 4-day CORE training to be delivered to a range of multi-agency staff throughout 2020/2021.

Social Care Learning Hub

Following a best value review of care at home services, significant investment has been made in establishing a dedicated team of staff to deliver workforce development activity to our social services workforce. The team consists of learning and development officers and assistants working with a practice development manager. The staff have skills and expertise in the delivery of training and development in addition to specialist knowledge. This includes: moving and handling, dementia skills, SVQ learning, end of life care, enablement, medication and a wide range of learning areas which are essential for enabling the social care workforce to deliver high quality services.

There will be a wide range of training opportunities offered such as: comprehensive induction programmes, palliative / end of life care, skilled level dementia, caring about physical activity (CAPA), moving and handling training, medication, enablement and food hygiene, in addition to SCQF Level 6 / SVQ2 qualifications. The Learning Hub will respond to training requirements identified by operational team managers and staff. The training provided will address Care Inspectorate inspection findings and will be in line with the Scottish Social Services Council requirements of registration. The Learning Hub will provide a flexible approach to learning and will offer bespoke training activity where specific needs have been identified by social care staff.

Adult Support and Protection

Following the establishment of the Protection and Learning Team in 2020-2021, a more focused approach is now undertaken in respect of Adult Support and Protection (ASP). This involves the Protection element of the team focusing on key, current and practice issues for the workforce which are then shared with the Learning and Development section in order to inform and develop both the single and multi-agency training agenda.

Since January 2021, the training agenda has been delivered via Microsoft Teams for participants. The training currently being delivered includes: ASP Levels 1 and 2, a revitalised Role of the Secondary Worker, a newly developed ASP Initial Inquiry Training, ASP Hoarding and Principles of Social Work Practice.

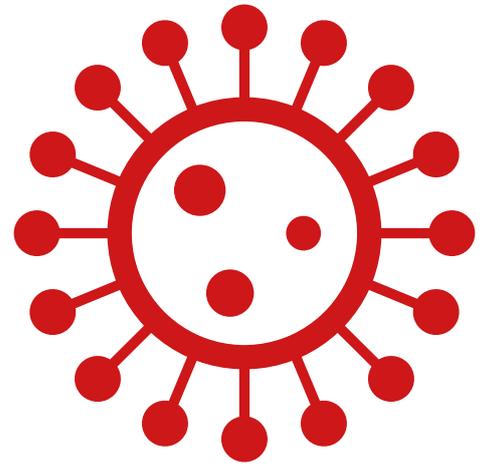
Self-Directed Support Learning Module

A new learning module was created which provides a comprehensive overview of Self-Directed Support (SDS). This course has been particularly valuable to social workers and support assistants in helping them refresh their knowledge and also for those who are new to the service. The module incorporates numerous key learning objectives, such as an overview of the four SDS options and East Ayrshire's approach to SDS.



8 Covid-19

Covid-19 is the most significant challenge many of us have ever faced. The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on all aspects of life, causing disruption to relationships, daily routines and personal loss having a profound effect across all age groups. The wellbeing of our population has been, and will continue to be at the heart of our Ayrshire's response to and recovery from the pandemic, with a focus on providing essential services to those most in need.



The impact of the pandemic has also been endured at an operational level, with social distancing measures introduced to protect wellbeing, having significant implications for service delivery. Despite experiencing a range of challenges, our workforce across the Partnership has demonstrated resilience, innovation, flexibility and a strong commitment to supporting service users and those most vulnerable in our communities to safeguard their wellbeing throughout this very difficult period. Some examples of this work are provided below, in addition to being highlighted in sections 5 and 7 within this report.

Service provision throughout the pandemic

Social work services have played a vital role in the local response to Covid-19, with teams continuing to deliver critical frontline services to support and achieve positive outcomes for vulnerable people.

Due to the nature of the pandemic and the considerable risk to wellbeing, a swift, proactive and coordinated response was implemented across services to ensure service users and our workforce were kept safe. A range of operational changes were quickly established to support infection prevention and control, including: the use of PPE to maintain face to face contact where required, enabling staff to work from home in line with Government directions, weekly team meetings held remotely using teleconferencing platforms and alternative methods of delivery were utilised to maintain contact with service users, including digital solutions, telephone contact and home support. Oversight groups were swiftly established with service management representation and frequent meetings to coordinate our local response to the pandemic.



A small number of services were initially suspended to prioritise high impact provision areas and some offices were closed to the public, with others remaining operational with a reduced workforce, implementing strict social distancing procedures. All changes to service delivery were communicated in a clear and timely manner to supported people, families, carers and staff through external and internal communications.

Throughout the last year, our services at all levels have overcome significant challenges on a scale which has not been experienced before, including: communication barriers, workforce gaps, equipment supply/provision and various operational pressures,

to continue to deliver key services. In doing so, our social work and social care staff have successfully adjusted to new and different ways of working, including working remotely utilising new technologies and virtual platforms to communicate and engage with service users, and adhering to health and safety guidelines, for example wearing PPE and office based restrictions. Social work and social care is an inherently relationship based profession and it was important to maintain these relationship and for many that involved the need for direct, face to face contact undertaken in a safe way.

There has been some great examples of our staff working differently for another team to support service capacity and deliver positive outcomes for people during the pandemic:

Community Alarms

A number of staff were unable to work in their current teams or in usual roles for various operational reasons. Some of these staff have been contacting service users on the community alarm caseload to check and update the information we hold. As part of these contacts, a retired school teacher was phoned for an alarm check call. The elderly lady was very grateful for the call, advising that the member of staff was the only person she had spoken to that day. After checking the community alarm details, the staff member also called the pharmacy to check on prescription medication delivery and passed on details of the Connect Call service to keep a regular contact with her.

Community Payback Justice Services

Our unpaid work supervisors adapted their role throughout the pandemic to provide ongoing support to essential services. During the reporting period, unpaid work supervisors have worked to ensure people in our communities were safe and that individuals' essential needs were provided for. The team have uplifted many supermarket donations for the local foodbank and made thousands of doorstep food and care package deliveries. They also assisted the Roads Alliance with the winter grit programme by replenishing hundreds of grit bins across East Ayrshire, including areas in and around the community vaccination centres.

Examples of continued social work provision during the pandemic are included in section 5 in this report, with some notable examples including:

- Care at home service provided to over 1,700 people across East Ayrshire, meeting the daily support needs of many people and also contributing towards the wider health and care system within challenging circumstances;
- Our Fostering and Adoption Panel met throughout the pandemic, which allowed for the approval of 9 foster carers and 5 adoptive families in 2020/21, along with continued permanence planning for children;
- Our children's house service has continued to be available 24/7, 365 days throughout the year during very difficult circumstances, providing essential care and support for vulnerable young people in East Ayrshire and in managing an outbreak carers chose to move in with the children in an outstanding demonstration of commitment;

- A range of day opportunity activities were provided for adults with learning disabilities, including: weekly telephone contact, provision of activity packs and delivering 1:1 / group sessions remotely through teleconferencing platforms, such as: yoga, meditation, various exercises, armchair aerobics and quizzes;
- The Out of Hours Social Work Team continued to deliver vital supports for our residents during a period of increased demand, including providing food and utilities to individuals who were experiencing financial hardship;
- The Intensive Support Team continued to meet with up to 80 vulnerable young people who were in need of a high level of support and often isolated on a weekly basis, in one notable instance in excess of three times each day resulting in keeping this young person from being hospitalised;
- The Public Protection and Learning Team implemented an operational oversight process to support multi-agency public protection and to mitigate the additional risks caused by lockdown; and
- Teams across social work services regularly contacted shielding individuals to provide additional support and to arrange for the delivery of essential provisions if required.

Care home oversight

The impact of Covid-19 on all frontline social care staff has been significant over the last year. The staff in all of our partner care homes have shown incredible dedication to safeguard residents' wellbeing and partner care home managers have fully supported their teams throughout the pandemic, while being accountable and responsible.

A number of our care homes have experienced extremely difficult circumstances and the trauma of having an outbreak of Covid-19 within their homes. Feedback from experienced managers denotes feelings of: fear, devastation, anxiety, personal loss, bravery, despair and overwhelming pain, with some highlighting that the demands and relentlessness of the situation have made this the most difficult period of their career.

Despite being faced with a range of unprecedented challenges, our partner care home staff have continued to demonstrate unwavering resilience, kindness and compassion in supporting the people who they care for.

Responding to the significant challenges and pressures that were being experienced across our partner care homes, in addition to the difficult circumstances faced by people living in care homes we provided various forms of vital support throughout the pandemic, including:

- weekly conference calls / virtual meetings held between the HSCP and care home managers to provide support;
- extra-ordinary meetings arranged to have more dialogue about specific guidance documents if required;
- support from the East Ayrshire Council Health and Safety Team in relation to risk assessment templates;
- provision of various practical supports, for example sourcing PPE through links with the East Ayrshire Education Department at the start of the pandemic;
- volunteers came forward via Vibrant Communities to provide support with collecting prescriptions and personal provisions;
- East Ayrshire's Buns Are Us group prepared and delivered over 1,000 treat bags to care home staff;
- donations from community members to lift the spirits of frontline staff, including, hand knitted nurses and carers packaged beautifully with hand gel / cream;
- sourcing of technology / communication devices for people identified as requiring support to connect to loved ones; and
- Health and Wellbeing Team members came together to reach out to communities, including making up and delivering hampers and gift bags for care homes and arranging for school pupils to connect with local care home residents.

The wide range of supports provided collaboratively to our partner care homes throughout the pandemic have made an outstanding difference to both staff and residents, demonstrating the opportunities and significance of partnership working across organisations and the community in delivering positive outcomes for people.

Going forward, continued prioritisation of and commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of management and staff within frontline social care services will be required to enable our communities to fully recover from the impacts of the pandemic.



Supporting wellbeing during the pandemic

Wellbeing Check Calls

People with underlying health conditions were required to shield as a result of the pandemic in order to protect themselves from the virus. It was important that people had the support in place that they required such as access to food and prescriptions.

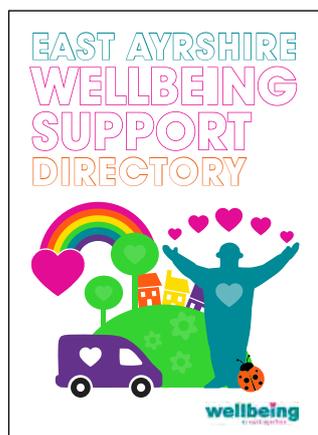
As at March 2021, between 40 and 50 wellbeing calls were carried out each week, which have:

- arranged for emergency food parcels to be delivered;
- signposted to the Financial Inclusion Team;
- organised prescription collection and deliveries;
- arranged for energy meters to be topped up with credit;
- encouraged people to make contact with their GP over health issues;
- arranged house calls to check on the welfare of individuals that may not be answering their regular check call;
- encouraged people who have lost loved ones to consider grief counselling;
- eased feelings of social isolation; and
- promoted mental health practitioners within GP practices.



Support Information

Wellbeing support information sources were developed and made accessible for people in East Ayrshire throughout the pandemic. A bespoke Wellbeing Pack was created and distributed to everyone in East Ayrshire who required to shield, sent in hard copy and made available digitally. The pack contained information about resources available locally to support people while they shielded.



A 'Wellbeing in East Ayrshire' website was also created to support all residents to look after their physical and mental health during the pandemic. The website contains a range of useful content and links in relation to various areas such as wellbeing, mental health, financial assistance, activities and supporting children and young people.

East Ayrshire Wellbeing Community Conversation

The East Ayrshire Wellbeing Community Conversation was a significant piece of community engagement which took place between July and October 2020, giving East Ayrshire residents an opportunity to share: what matters most to them, how they are feeling, the impact of Covid-19 on their health and wellbeing and their experience of using health and care services during the pandemic.

The key themes identified from this engagement are set out below, along with a word cloud displaying some common responses. More detailed summaries of responses are presented in the HSCP's [Strategic Needs Assessment](#).

- Mental Health
- Physical Health
- Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Substance Use
- Finances / Economic Status
- Bereavement / Loss
- Communities
- Digital Access / Utilisation
- Caring Responsibilities
- Health and Care Services



Self-Directed Support Winter Covid Recovery Fund

We recognise the significant difficulties that the pandemic has presented for our children, young people and families, acknowledging that these challenges have been intensified for those living in poverty. We wanted to ensure that families in need of support from social work services during this difficult period were in control of their own lives and able to direct the support they received. Relatively modest contributions and support packages have made the biggest impact to people, evidenced through the use of small grants and self-directed support methods funded by Scottish Government Covid recovery monies.

Through this support, families could apply for up to £500 to shape their plans with their own ideas and people who received this support have described themselves as feeling more empowered, trusted and valued, with some now having a more positive view of social work services. Our social workers have also stated that these options have helped people think differently, with a focus on support that is strength and asset based.

Workforce

The flexibility, commitment and resilience of our workforce has been fundamental to the continued and effective delivery of social work and social care services in the local response to the pandemic. The use of workforce data to predict absence rates and increased demand, contributed towards the early planning stages of the response phase to support focussed service delivery.

Our main planning and operational challenges during the reporting period have been resuming paused / scaled down services, understanding the impacts of Covid-19 on

"Thank you so much for the small amount of funding you gave us. It has helped us get together as a family and enjoy time together and rebuild relationships. We bought a trampoline which we normally wouldn't have afforded... We also spent the day at Blair Drummond Safari park. Without this funding we wouldn't have been able to afford these things. I hope other families are getting the chance to make good memories in these difficult times"

Service user

our communities and workforce, and managing a second wave during the winter period. Our workforce plans have been reviewed, considering new landscapes and priorities, lessons learnt and recent innovations, in addition to the skills and experience available. Workforce planning will continue to shape the future of our social care services in delivering local recovery and renewal ambitions.

Additional workforce requirements were met through induction of staff and redeployment with support from Human Resources and Trade Union involvement.



The mental wellbeing of our workforce, and communities is a key priority. A working group developed, numerous measures to proactively support staff, including: distribution of a Mental Wellbeing Toolkit for managers, access to digital platforms to maintain regular supervision remotely, frequent internal communications with detailed support information, access to 'Spaces for Listening' sessions, creation of the 'Wellbeing in East Ayrshire' webpages and a dedicated financial advice resource.

A Health and Wellbeing Coordinator was recruited to provide bespoke wellbeing support for the workforce and wider partners. The supports available are wide-ranging and include: management, team and 1:1 level supports, ad hoc wellbeing advice/guidance, tailored health and wellbeing training programmes and signposting to resources/services. The Coordinator worked with colleagues to develop a programme of health and wellbeing supports for staff, to be delivered in a safe, accessible way. In addition to the supports above, this programme incorporates Mindfulness sessions, a 12 week programme of health and wellbeing workshops (including: yoga, guided relaxation, emotional freedom tapping and self-massage activities) and a 4 week 'Finding Inner Calm' programme to manage anxiety.

Recovery and Renewal

Following initial responses to the pandemic, a key focus for social work and social care services throughout 2020/21 has been on the recovery and renewal from the wide-ranging impact of Covid-19. We have adopted a flexible, empowered and place-based approach to recovery and renewal, ensuring the right supports are in place to protect our communities. Our local recovery and renewal efforts are still ongoing and will continue into 2021/22.

Three cross-cutting priorities were identified by the Council Management Team in June 2020: Children and Young People, Economy and Environment and Wellbeing. Supporting governance structures were established for each of these priorities, either through existing Community Planning Partners, IJB networks or groups that emerged in the response phase of the pandemic. These priority areas have been central to transformation work planning and in achieving the Council's vision to:

“Learn from our response to Covid-19, viewing recovery and renewal through the lenses of our emerging priorities and accelerated transformational aspirations, to re-imagine and positively challenge what and how we deliver safe and sustainable services, ensuring our vibrant communities remain at the heart of everything we do.”

Children and Young People services will focus on the following short and long term aims as part of its recovery and renewal agenda and longer term aspirations for children and young people in East Ayrshire:



Short term recovery and renewal aims

- Reduce the impact on children and young people's emotional and mental health
- Minimise the impact on children and young people's education
- Focus on vulnerable and care experienced children and early years
- Ensure connections and relationships are maintained



Long term priority areas

- Respecting and Promoting Children and Young People's Rights
- Improving Wellbeing
- Tackling Poverty
- Achieving
- Keeping Safe

In working towards recovery and renewal from Covid-19, our social work and social care services will continue to focus on: meeting current need, addressing new priorities and progressing transformative resilience. The following elements have been key to recovery and renewal transformation in delivering Locality Health and Care services over 2020/21:

- Safe customer contact;
- Flexible roles;
- Digital approach;
- Alternative delivery models;
- Home working;
- Community empowerment; and
- Place / empowered teams.

Specific actions relating to recovery and renewal from Covid-19 at a service level can be found within our [HSCP Service Improvement Plans](#).

9 Looking Forward

In reflecting on the last year and how social work and social care services have responded to the pandemic, it is also important to look forward. The report has highlighted the challenges that people who deliver and receive services have experienced over the past year, challenges that have been met head on with remarkable commitment and creativity in ensuring that people in communities who need support received it. In meeting these challenges outlined in the report, there are some excellent individual stories about the positive impact that social work and social care has had. Whilst the way in which services were structured and delivered required to change and change quickly due to the nature of the pandemic, the report has highlighted how social work and social care services have continued to develop and evolve in creative, and progressive ways.

As we look to the future, significant uncertainties as to the trajectory of the pandemic exist, however we have the optimism of excellent vaccine development and administration to communities at pace. It is with optimism and hope that we look to the future and consider our priorities, both opportunities and challenges, for the next year. To the fore will be recovery from the pandemic, from a personal, professional, service and organisational perspective. Given the pace of change in how we organised people and services, careful consideration will be required to take forward positive learning and not revert to traditional ways of working. Never before has it been so apparent that Social Work and social care practice is founded on the development of positive, open and transparent relationships built on direct face to face contact. The new and creative ways of working, utilising digital technologies, have been invaluable throughout the pandemic in supporting people to remain connected. These technologies have been used alongside face to face contact in sustaining relationships and supporting people and will undoubtedly feature in the future as we develop a more hybrid approach to working.



Some key areas of work will include:

- In the last year the Review of Adult Social Care was published with East Ayrshire being well placed in respect of many of the recommendations, however we will require to consider how we develop on the recommendations made;
- We welcome the Scottish Parliament legislating to incorporate the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scottish Law and we will work with our children to implement and embed this approach across all our services;
- Further develop our approach to implementing the key principles set out in the Promise, through recruitment of our Implementation lead, participation Leaders and following investment from East Ayrshire Council, two participation lead apprentices;
- Take forward our multi-disciplinary wellbeing model to support all our children and young people at the earliest opportunity;
- Full implementation of the Learning Academy which will support our care at home workforce;
- Continue to support social work students access excellent placements within East Ayrshire, recognising that this is an excellent way of recruiting high quality staff;
- Continue to develop our supported first year in practice for our newly qualified social workers, recognising the positive feedback received and noting longer term benefits in terms of staff retention;

- Continue to develop our approach to supporting people who use drugs. This is an ongoing area of concern given the high number of drug related deaths. In seeking to tackle this issue, East Ayrshire Council has provided significant additional funding which is welcomed and creates an opportunity to develop progressive ways of working with and supporting people;
- We recognise the impact that the pandemic has already had on the mental and emotional wellbeing of people and acknowledge the need to develop services across the lifespan to meet the likely increase in demand and to support people recover and be mentally well;
- We will continue to support our partner care homes to recover from the impact of the pandemic through our oversight and support arrangements, recognising that as we exit from the pandemic the impact of loss and associated trauma may significantly impact on this workforce;
- Continue to focus on the wellbeing of the social work and social care workforce, recognising that they are our most valuable asset and key to progressive service development;
- Reflect on our pandemic response public protection operational oversight arrangements and how they may be developed for more normal times, given acknowledgement by chief officers as providing high levels of assurance and real time service response to emerging challenges;
- Work with our local courts as they remobilise and start to work through the huge backlog of cases, given the impact that this work will have on our justice social work services in terms of demand and likely increase in community based outcomes; and
- Progress our development and implementation of Liquidlogic through maximising the functionality of this excellent system and supporting the workforce with training and development and their confidence in using the system.

EAST AYRSHIRE

Health & Social Care Partnership

For further information

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