



Chief Social Work Officer **Annual Report**

**2023
2024**



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1. Introduction



It gives me great pleasure to present the Annual Chief Social Work Officer Report (CSWO) for East Ayrshire, reflecting on the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report provides an overview of social work and social care services and practice within the context of the delivery of statutory functions.

Over the last year the national context for social work has been dominated by work around the proposed National Care Service. There has been ongoing negotiations between key parties that have included engagement and consultations at different levels. The continued demand for engagement and uncertainty about final outcomes can create feelings of uncertainty by those affected and delivering frontline services.

East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, where all social work and social care services are hosted, has continued to strive to deliver for the people and communities of East Ayrshire. The report sets out some of the key highlights of the last year, however it is not possible to capture all the activity that takes place due to its range and scale. The reports sets out a range of performance data, highlighting areas of good performance, but also areas where performance requires to improve.

The last year has been a challenging one and I anticipate that the coming year will be equally, if not more, challenging as we strive to manage the financial environment that services are operating within. We have a fantastic workforce who have a great pride in the services that they deliver, with a strong desire to be better and more effective. Within this context it is a real privilege to represent them as Chief Social Work Officer. There is no doubt that over the coming year there is once again much to do, but with a committed, capable and valued workforce I am optimistic that we will face each challenge that comes by working in partnership, listening and responding to what people tell us they need.

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



2. Purpose and Background

This report is produced each year to fulfil the requirement to publish a local annual report in regards to the Chief Social Work Officer's (CSWO) role in professional leadership, governance, oversight of practice, values and standards as outlined in national guidance. The report also reflects on the specific areas of decision-making and practice where legislation confers functions directly on the [Chief Social Work Officer](#).

The report illustrates and celebrates the contribution of social work and social care in collaborating with partners to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our residents. A wide range of operational developments, activities delivered, and examples of positive outcomes achieved by services within the reporting period, in addition to pertinent performance information, are included throughout the report to demonstrate the impact of such contributions in safeguarding and improving circumstances for people in East Ayrshire.

This report and the content within relates to the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The Chief Social Work Adviser (CSWA) to the Scottish Government provides guidance on the CSWO annual report composition every year to ensure consistency in reporting nationally.

The East Ayrshire Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2023-2024 observes the guidance outlined and is comprised of the following sections:

- Purpose and Background;
- East Ayrshire Profile;
- Governance and Accountability;
- Service Quality and Performance;
- Challenges and Improvements
- Resources;
- Workforce; and
- Looking Forward.

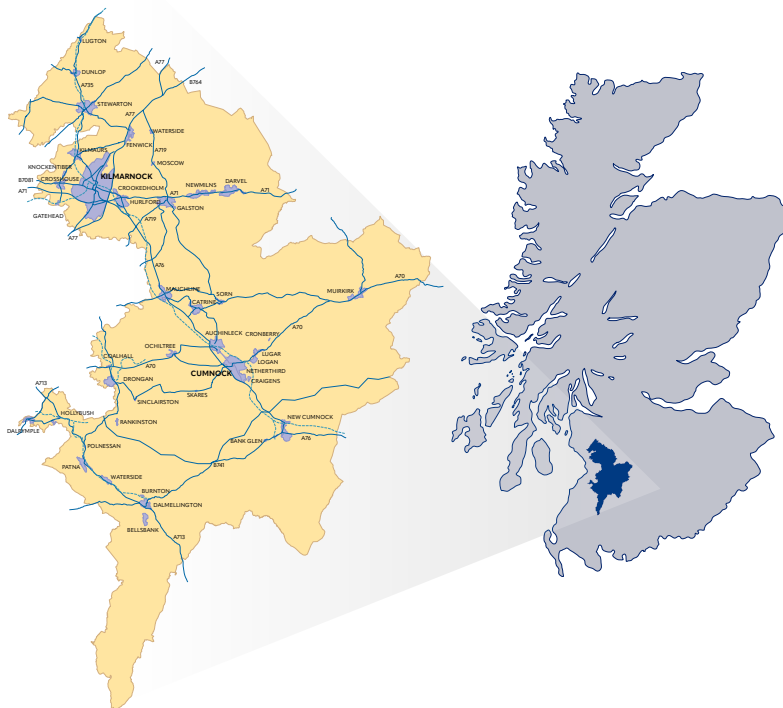
3. East Ayrshire Profile

A range of health and wellbeing, demographic and socio-economic information is presented in the infographics below to display characteristics of the East Ayrshire population and various circumstances within the authority.

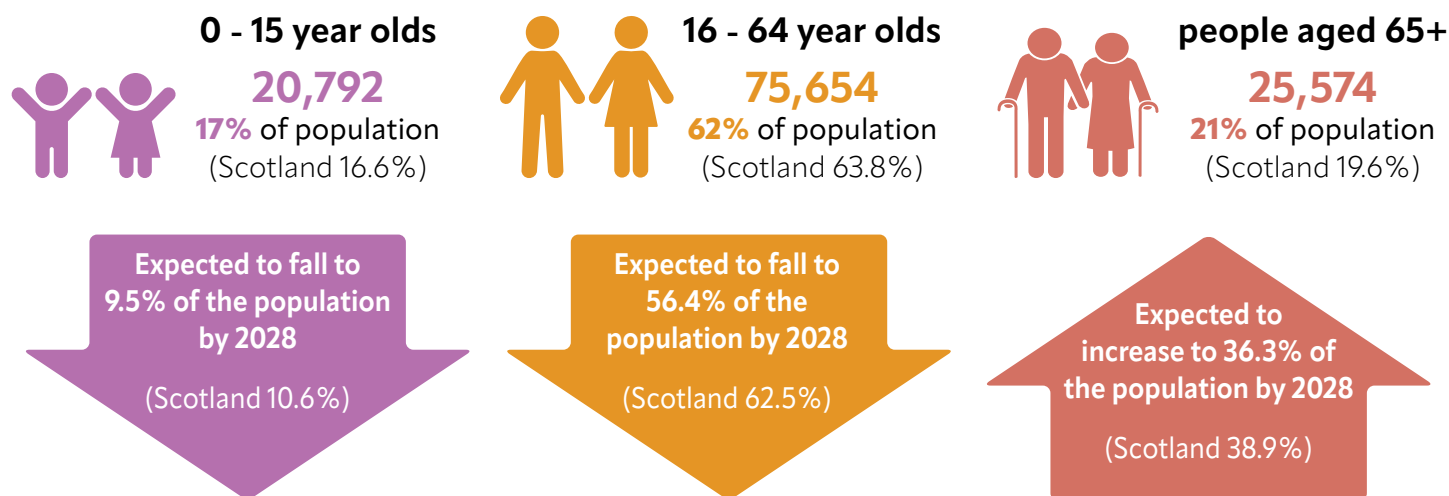
To view a more expansive range of statistical information relating to East Ayrshire, please see the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership's [Strategic Needs Assessment](#).

About East Ayrshire

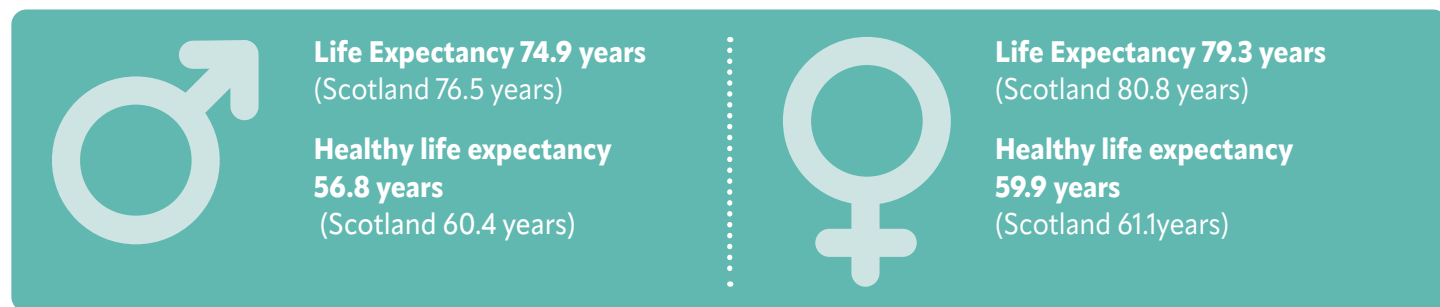
- Spans 490 square miles in South West Scotland
- Incorporates urban and rural communities
- Population 122,020 - 2.23% of Scotland's total population
- Population expected to fall by 1.8% by 2028



Age Profile



Life Expectancy



*Information above provided by Public Health Scotland for the most recent time period available, 2021/22.

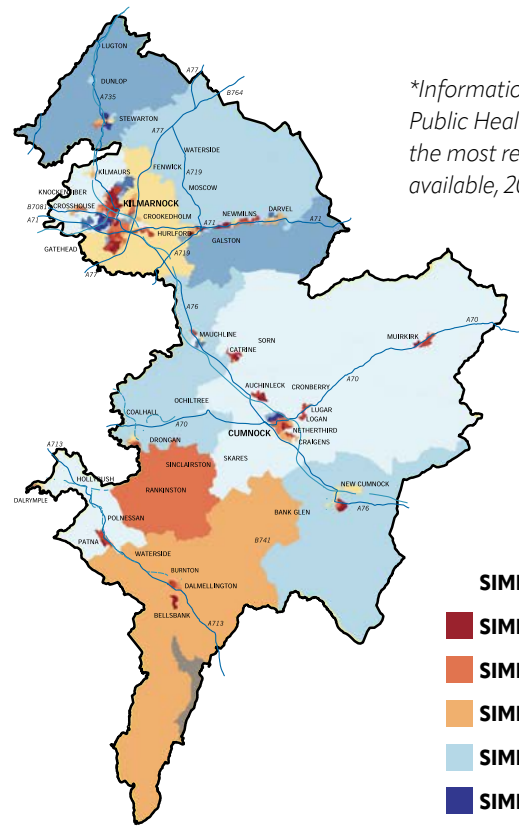
Deprivation

30.6% of the population of East Ayrshire live within the most deprived Scottish index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile (SIMD)



The table below details the percentage of the population within East Ayrshire living in the 2020 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) most deprived quintiles for each domain and the ranking of East Ayrshire amongst the 32 Scottish Local Authorities for each domain.

East Ayrshire	Income	Employment	Education	Health	Access	Crime	Housing	Overall
% of population	28.8%	32.5%	25.8%	28.2%	24.5%	22.7%	2.45%	31.3%
Rank	7	6	8	8	13	8	25	7

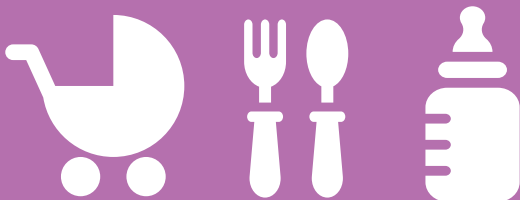


**Information provided by Public Health Scotland for the most recent time period available, 2020.*

SIMD Quintile

- **SIMD 1** (Most deprived)
- **SIMD 2**
- **SIMD 3**
- **SIMD 4**
- **SIMD 5** (Least deprived)

Children in East Ayrshire



The rate (per 1,000) of children on the Child Protection Register increased slightly from a figure of 3.6% in 2023 to a figure of 3.7% in 2024. (Scotland 2.3) – Scottish Government, Children's Social Work Statistics 2022-23

The percentage of young people eligible for aftercare services who received services increased significantly from a figure of 26% in 2022 to 43% in 2023 (Scotland 49%) - Scottish Government, Children's Social Work Statistics 2022-23

The number of Children referred to the Children's Reporter reduced from a figure of 384 in 2023 to a figure of 373 in 2024 (Scotland 10,197) – SCRA Statistical Dashboard 2023-24

Health in East Ayrshire



6,110 people received social care services or support in 2020/21, a rate of 50.1 people per 1,000 (Scotland 42.8) – Public Health Scotland 2022/23

25% of people aged over 65 years with high levels of care needs are cared for at home (Scotland 36.7%) – ScotPHO 2022/23

21.81% of residents are prescribed medication for anxiety/depression/psychosis (Scotland 20.14%) – ScotPHO, 2021/22

The rate of deaths by suicide is 18.3 per 100,000 (Scotland 14.13) – ScotPHO, 2017-2021

Addiction in East Ayrshire



The rate of alcohol related hospital admissions is 540.6 per 100,000 (Scotland 611.1)

Public Health Scotland, 2021/22

15% of females and 35% of males in East Ayrshire exceed the weekly alcohol consumption limit (Scotland: Females 16%, Males 31%) –

ScotPHO 2018-2022

During 2021 there were 38 drug related deaths, a rate of 33.15 per 100,000 (Scotland 25.24) –

ScotPHO, 2021

17.1% of mothers smoked during pregnancy

(Scotland 12.9%) – *Public Health Scotland 2019/20-2021/22*

Economic Status of East Ayrshire



East Ayrshire has the 7th highest level of deprivation amongst Scottish Local Authorities – *Public Health Scotland, 2020*

19.4% of households are estimated to be workless (Scotland 17.8%) – *NOMIS, 2022*

26.1% of children are living in relative low-income families, East Ayrshire is 4th highest in Scotland – *UK Government Statistics, 2022/23*

53.2% of adults rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live (Scotland 59.1%) – *ScotPHO, 2020*

Crime in East Ayrshire



There were 129 incidents of domestic abuse recorded per 10,000 (Scotland 118.26) –

ScotPHO, 2021/22

There were 13.49 incidents of violent crime recorded per 10,000 (Scotland 16.41) – *ScotPHO, 2021/22*

4.19 children were referred to the Children's Reporter for offences per 1,000 (aged 8-15 years) (Scotland 4.97) – *ScotPHO 2021/22*

In 2022/23 the crime rate was 507 per 10,000 population (Scotland 524) – *Scottish Government, 2022/23*

In 2021/22 56.96 drug crimes were recorded per 10,000 population (Scotland 50.59%) – *ScotPHO, 2021/22*

4. Governance and Accountability

Role of the Chief Social Work Officer

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

The primary role of the CSWO is to ensure professional oversight of local 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 directly by the local authority or purchased through third or independent sector organisations.

The Scottish Government issued revised national guidance in relation to 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) in July 2016, replacing the previous guidance issued in 2009.

The leadership role of the CSWO has developed a prominence over the last number of years. The CSWO role is complex and touches on all aspects of social work practice. The role has further developed in the scale and depth of involvement in certain areas of practice, not exclusively but most notably the support provided to our partner care homes, where individual human rights are core to all decision making.

The CSWO has had a key role in supporting and advocating for the workforce at both local and national level, with a particular focus on workforce wellbeing. The CSWO has a significant leadership role in setting out practice expectations in challenging circumstances. In doing so, this requires a delicate balance of ensuring public protection duties and responsibilities are fulfilled, whilst safeguarding the health and wellbeing of the workforce within an unprecedented and complex landscape in terms of guidance and restrictions. Successfully meeting the needs of our communities safely within this challenging context has been and will continue to be at the heart of all decision making.

Furthermore, a key duty throughout this period was and continues to be promoting the voice of social work and social care locally and nationally, particularly the ongoing work that is taking place around developing a national care service for Scotland.

Delivery of Statutory Functions

The CSWO holds specific responsibilities relating to statutory decision making and the provision of appropriate advice in the discharge of a local authority's statutory functions. This work is underpinned by the arrangements set out in the Social Work and Social Care Governance Framework, and through existing partnership arrangements, specifically regarding public protection.

The CSWO maintains oversight of practice standards relating to local services delivered by registered social workers, which includes public protection and / or the restriction of individual liberty. This function requires careful consideration of individual circumstances, with particular regard to a person's rights, identified risks, needs and capacity. Such judgements are often complex, and require taking full account of numerous potential 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 CSWO's responsibilities include:



Social Work Professional Governance

Social work services in East Ayrshire are commissioned by the Integration Joint Board (IJB) from East Ayrshire Council and are delivered through the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Our Partnership is responsible for a wider range of services than is required by legislation, with all social work and social care services delegated to the HSCP 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 ensure and oversee the governance of the social work and social care profession and services operating within the East Ayrshire HSCP. The framework states that the CSWO:

- is a member of the Council's Executive Management Team, the Corporate Management Team and the East Ayrshire HSCP Senior Leadership Group;
- is a non-voting member of the Integration 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); and
- has access to elected members, the Chief Executive and Senior Officers as required.

The East Ayrshire Social Work and Social Care Leadership Forum has 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 in fulfilling the professional leadership role. The CSWO is also a member of all protection committees and is chair of the East Ayrshire Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership and a member of the South West Scotland Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements Strategic Oversight Group (MAPPA SOG).

CSWOs also have an important role in promoting, influencing and assisting with matters relating to social work and social care practice at a national level. Some key areas of work being taken forward at a national level are developments around social work education and advanced practice pathways, implementation of the new Self-Directed Supports standards and extensive and active involvement in the consultation and engagement around the proposals to develop a National Care Service for Scotland.

Organisational Governance

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



East Ayrshire Community Planning Board

The East Ayrshire Community Planning Board is responsible for the development and oversight of the [East Ayrshire Community Plan \(2015-2030\)](#). This is the sovereign planning document for East Ayrshire and provides the overarching strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by all partners.

The Plan has a focus on tackling poverty and inequality and promoting recovery and renewal, and sets out how outcomes for people and service delivery in East Ayrshire will be improved in working towards achieving the following vision:

“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 underpinned by three thematic Delivery Plans: [Economy and Skills](#), [Safer Communities](#) and [Wellbeing](#). The Social Work Service and wider work of the HSCP continues to contribute significantly towards each of these Delivery Plans, with a particular focus on wellbeing.

East Ayrshire Council

The Council recognises the East Ayrshire Community Plan (2015-2030) as the overarching strategic policy framework for delivering services in the authority.

East Ayrshire Council has experienced a number of challenges in recent years, including: rising demand for services, demographic shifts, policy / legislative changes and reduced revenue. [East Ayrshire Council's Strategic Plan 2022-27](#) was approved by Cabinet on 29 June 2022, and sets out how services will be delivered, with and for our communities, over the next five years. The Plan comprises of six key strategic themes:

- Building a fairer economy
- Tackling poverty and inequality
- Improving community wellbeing
- Supporting children and young people
- Delivering a Clean Green East Ayrshire
- Ensuring financial sustainability and resilience

Integration Joint Board

The Integration Joint Board (IJB) is responsible for the planning and operational oversight of Integrated Services; all social work services are located within the HSCP.

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

- Strategic Planning Group;
- Audit and Performance Committee (sub-group Strategic Commissioning 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 the groups highlighted above.

East Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Plan 2021-30

The [East Ayrshire HSCP Strategic Plan 2021-30](#) sets out our local ambitions and shared priorities for health and social care between the 2021-24 period 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 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.

The statutory three-year review of the Strategic Plan 2021-30 concluded in June 2024, it focused on progress made to date, our outcomes for 2024-27, as well as progress towards our 2030 outcomes.

East Ayrshire Children and Young People’s Service Plan 2023-2026

The [East Ayrshire Children and Young People’s Service Plan 2023-2026](#) sets out our long term improvement aims for all children and young people in East Ayrshire. The Plan aims to provide the best possible services for our children, young people and their families so that they are able to flourish and experience the best possible outcomes. It celebrates our young people’s achievements, and key successes from 2020-2023, alongside sharing examples of our partnership working successes and positive outcomes achieved for people. The following priorities have been identified as key areas of work for the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership:

- Our children and young people feel respected, listened to and influence change
- We are working collaboratively, reducing the impact of social and economic poverty on our children and young people
- Our children and young people feel safe
- Our children and young people have the best start in life and achieve their potential
- Our children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing is improving



5. Service Quality and Performance

Performance in 2023/24

A well-established framework is in place to monitor the performance and improvement progress of services delivered across the HSCP portfolio on an ongoing basis. This framework supports our operational development ambitions and ensures the provision of high quality services to meet needs and contribute towards positive outcomes for people in East Ayrshire.

A comprehensive suite of performance measures aligned to local and national strategic priorities, in addition to key service improvement actions identified, comprise core elements of this framework. This content is updated on a regular basis (monthly and quarterly) and is refreshed annually to ensure the information remains reflective of current circumstances. Much of this information is sourced directly from our local social work case record management system (Liquidlogic) and is thereafter collaboratively managed on our real-time performance reporting system (Pentana).

The statistics below reflect key aspects of social work service performance in East Ayrshire throughout the reporting period:



During 2023-24 there were 88 child protection registrations, 42.5% lower than 153 registered the previous year.

(Statutory Performance Indicator 39)



4.5% of child protection registrations during 2023-24 were re-registrations within 12 months, a decrease of 4% from the previous year when 8.5% of child protection registrations were re-registrations.

(Statutory Performance Indicator 39)



112 reports were submitted to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, a decrease of 13.8% from 130 during 2022-23.

(Statutory Performance Indicator 40)



61.6% of reports were submitted to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration by the due date, an increase of 16.2% from 2022-23 when 45.4% of reports were submitted in time.

(Statutory Performance Indicator 40)



182 children were Looked After and Accommodated at 31 March 2024, 1.1% lower than 184 on the same date in 2023. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 42)*



44 Looked After and Accommodated children had 3 or more moves, a decrease of 17% from 53 in 2022-23. This represented 24.2% of Looked After Children, which is 4.6% lower than the 28.8% of children experiencing such disruption in 2021-22. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 42)*



864 Social Work reports were submitted to the courts during the year, a decrease of 2.4% from 885 submitted during 2022-23. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 27)*



97.6% of Social Work reports were submitted to the Courts by the due date during 2023-24. This was 0.7% lower than for 2022-23 (98.3%). *(Statutory Performance Indicator 27)*



97.8% of the unpaid work requirement was completed on time during 2023-24, down 1.2% from 99% the previous year. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 28)*



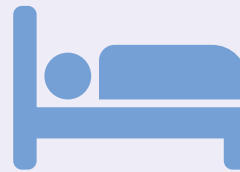
92.5% of Community Payback Orders were successfully completed within the year, 3.7% lower than the 96.2% successfully completed within the year during 2022/23. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 28)*



Readmission to hospital within 28 days was 10.9%, an increase of 0.6% from 10.3% in 2022/23. *(Public Health Scotland)*



Foster carer recruitment as at 31 March was 65, up 6.6% from 61 as at 31 March 2022. *(Pentana Performance System)*



10,767 bed days were lost as a result of delayed discharge during 2023-24, an increase of 8.3% from 2022-23 when 9,943 bed days were lost. *(Public Health Scotland)*

There were no hospital discharges over 2 weeks relating to Health and Social Care or family reasons during 2023-24. This remains unchanged from 2022-23 and represents a sustained excellent performance amidst considerable pressure. *(Public Health Scotland)*



61.5% of personal carers are qualified to Scottish Social Services Council standard, down 1.6% from 63.1% during 2022-23. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 26)*



97.3% of older people aged 65+ lived in housing rather than a care home or hospital setting during 2023-24, very slightly lower (0.1%) than 97.4% recorded the previous year. *(Statutory Performance Indicator 25)*



The unit cost of home care increased by 7.6% to £24.81 during 2023-24, from £23.06 previously.

An improved pay offer to staff was the main reason for the increase.

(Statutory Performance Indicator 6)



375.7 homecare hours per 1,000 population aged 65+ were used during 2023-24, down 1.4% from 381.2 hours the previous year.

(Statutory Performance Indicator 23)



As at 31 March 2024, there were 1,373 Care at Home service users aged 65+, slightly higher than 1,331 from the same date the previous year (3.2%). (1.9%) *(Social Work Case Record Management System)*



686 care home residents aged 65+ at 31 March is 7.2% higher than same date in 2023 when there were 640 residents. *(Social Work Case Record Management System)*

Service Experience

[The Health and Care Experience Survey](#) has ran every two years since 2009 and asks about people's experiences of health and care services delivered in local areas. Results reflect various aspects of service delivery and highlights areas where we can improve, as well as the areas where people's needs are being met. In the 2023-24 survey there were 1,877 East Ayrshire responses, with a 21% response rate, a 4% decrease from 2021-22. The response rate for the survey as a whole has decreased year on year. There were generally positive results in East Ayrshire related to care, support and everyday living. Results were less positive on questions relating to caring responsibilities, detailed below. Overall, people using services in East Ayrshire responded more positively than in the previous survey carried out in 2021-22, and results again were more positive or the same as the overall Scotland average in all areas.

Care, Support and Help with Everyday Living

	Scotland	East Ayrshire 2019/20	East Ayrshire 2021/22	East Ayrshire 2023/24
I was aware of the help, care and support options available to me	51%	61%	55%	63%
I had a say in how my help, care or support was provided	53%	64%	57%	62%
People took account of the things that mattered to me	60%	72%	66%	68%
I was treated with dignity and respect*	74%	75%	70%	76%
I felt safe	66%	72%	67%	70%
I was supported to live as independently as possible	64%	70%	65%	71%
My health, support and care services seemed to be well coordinated	54%	65%	55%	62%
The help, care or support improved or maintained my quality of life	61%	69%	64%	65%
Overall, how would you rate your help, care or support service?	63%	66%	64%	67%

*Worded as "I was treated with compassion and understanding" pre 2023-24

Caring Responsibilities

	Scotland	East Ayrshire 2019/20	East Ayrshire 2021/22	East Ayrshire 2023/24
I felt supported to continue caring	31%	36%	28%	36%
Local services are well coordinated for the person(s) I look after	31%	39%	28%	31%
I have a say in the services provided for the person(s) I look after	42%	45%	38%	45%
I have a good balance between caring and other things in my life	62%	62%	60%	63%

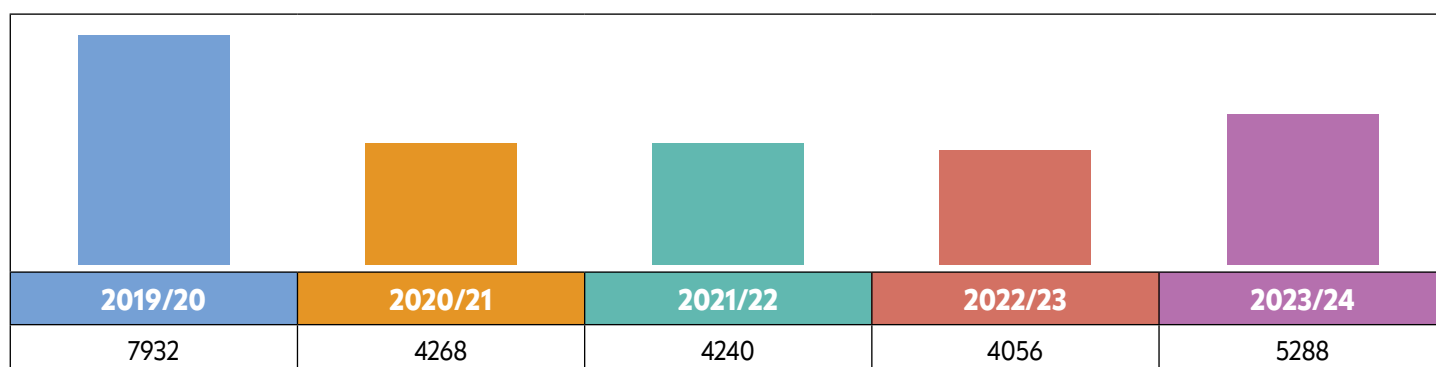
We have continued to maintain a strong commitment to person-centred provision, best practice learning and ongoing progression in East Ayrshire over the last year despite continued system pressures, challenges and financial constraints. This commitment is reflected in our continual cycle of self-evaluation, reflective discussions, audits and reviews, which continued to be implemented throughout 2023-24 across all social care settings to identify key areas for focus and improvement.

Many of the following examples in this section align with key themes identified in the Independent Care Review Reports (February 2020), particularly in regards to embedding the aspirations and values of 'The Promise' in our social work practice. Additionally, having reflected on the findings and recommendations from the Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland (February 2021), we passionately believe that our values and strategic approach to health and social care delivery in East Ayrshire demonstrate a strong local position in relation to numerous recommendations made, as evidenced in the following examples.

Overview of Children and Families Services in 2023-24

Our Children and Families Services provide compassionate and caring support to children, young people and families who require help. Demand for support has increased significantly, with the Children and Families Service receiving 5,288 referrals in 2023-24, up from 4,056 in the previous year, and our practitioners work hard to ensure that they work to the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and The Promise so that children in East Ayrshire grow up happy, loved and safe. The reduction in years 2020 – 23 are both pandemic related and linked to the GIRFEC single point of contact that was in place but following review by Police Scotland ended; it is likely that 2024-25 will see the number increase to the 2019/20 level.

Number of referrals received 2019-2024



Our locality services are the primary point of contact for people who need support, assessing needs and providing services to meet those needs. We also have a number of specific services which are detailed below.

Fostering

The fostering service in East Ayrshire has 69 households offering a range of care to our young people and a further four household were approved during the reporting period. There has been an overall reduction from 74 approved households in the previous year. Recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a key priority locally and nationally. Early 2024 has already seen several fostering households undergo the 'Skills to Foster' training who will then progress to assessment to become foster carers.

Number of Foster Carer approved households

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
72	72	70	74	69

Embedding 'The Promise' continues to be a priority for the service as such we have focused on how we assess, support and review foster carers in a way that will have the best possible outcomes for children.

In October 2023 the fostering service was inspected. It was assessed to be performing strongly across all indicators. Inspector feedback commented that "children experienced high standards of care" and that caregivers were providing nurturing, trauma informed, care. Staff were seen as skilled, knowledgeable and responsible, and that the service overall has been creative and proactive in their efforts to reduce delays for children requiring permanent care. Areas for improvement from the previous inspection around carer approval and annual carer reviews were determined to have been met, with the service now exceeding its target of 80% of carers being reviewed on an annual basis. New improvement recommendations asked that the service closely monitor and review foster carers at panel within necessary timescales, ensuring that all statutory regulations are met and external management have a greater role in quality assurance of this.

Ensuring that our foster carers are looked after is a priority and in the 2023-24 period we established a new working group of current carers to help us support the wellbeing of foster carers as we move forward. We also held our annual Foster Carer Recognition Event in 2023. This event celebrates the contribution our foster carers make to the lives of the children they care for and gives us the opportunity to thank them for all they do.

Skills to Foster Feedback:

80% of participants strongly agreed and 20% agreed that the training was easy to understand

80% of participants had a clearer view of whether they wanted to foster

"I enjoyed how in depth everything was explained and what goes into being a foster parent"



Foster Care Fortnight 2023 gave us an opportunity to share the work we do and recruit new foster carers. The highlight of this year's events was our Fun Day where our carers and young people came together for food, fun and entertainment.



Another priority area for the service over the past year has been the provision of good training to foster carers, offering diverse training led by Occupational Therapy, British Sign Language, Trauma trainers, The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, dentistry and other social care professionals. As a result of the BSL training one of our carers has been able to promote language development with a child in her care through the use of signed nursery rhymes, demonstrating the value of offering these opportunities and working in partnership with our other services to deliver training.

Kinship

The Kinship service has a particular focus around assessing and supporting kinship carers. The have provided opportunities for carers to come together for social interaction and training. Kinship carers deal with some of the most complex scenarios as they care for our children and young people who have experienced trauma and loss. Offering them support, guidance and training remains a key priority for the service. One of the ways this is done is through monthly carer coffee mornings, held in the North and South of the authority. Support from the Financial Inclusion Team has been an area of focus.

We have supported kinship carers access to training, with trauma training being particularly well received over the past year. Kinship carers now have access to ongoing training through the service to support them in their role.

The Kinship service have focused on service development over the past year, following completion of a Best Value Service Review (BVSR). The service has worked to embed the implementation plan of the BVSR and focus on developing new Kinship procedures; training and development for the workforce and for carers; and building engagement with kinship carers.

The number of kinship carers has continued to increase since 2019, with higher numbers recorded during the pandemic period (2020-2021). There are currently **239** kinship carers in East Ayrshire, up slightly from **234** in the previous year.

Total number of Kinship Carers (as at 31 December)

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
226	251	242	234	239

As at 31 March 2024, there were:	
23	young people benefiting from continuing care, ensuring that they have the foundation of their current setting and consistent loving relationships to step into adulthood.
24	young people receiving compulsory aftercare support
65	young people receiving discretionary aftercare support

Adoption

The adoption service was also inspected in 2023 and was evaluated as ‘Very Good’ across all quality indicators. Inspectors reported that children and young people developed meaningful, affectionate and secure relationships with their caregiver families and received highly personalised care and support. They also fed back that families enjoyed the positive and supportive relationships with staff and recognised that the service comprehensively assessed caregivers.

The number of adoptions has continued to be lower than pre-2020, however, there were five adopters approved within the reporting period and eight children matched with adoptive families (an increase on three children adopted in the previous year). The service continues to support families after adoption orders are granted, operating on the understanding that adoption is a lifelong undertaking with a lifelong impact which means that we holistically support the needs of infants through to older adults who are affected by adoption.

Children's Houses

Alongside the Fostering and Adoption services our three Children's Houses were inspected between October 2023 and January 2024. Inspectors noted that young people experience warm, positive and trusting relationships with those caring for them and that support provided young people with "a sense of safety and security within a safe base". A number of improvements were identified across the three houses relating to risk assessments; evidencing decision making with young people; and staffing levels.

There has been a strong focus on quality improvement over the past year with the service carrying out a range of development activity:

- As part of our children's houses commitment to implementing The Promise, practitioners have undertaken work to ensure that written records about children is trauma-informed and takes into account how it will feel for them to read the information.
- Training on trauma, environment and planning, and communication styles have been provided to teams providing care in our houses, ensuring they are able to meet the needs of young people.
- Preparing our young people for adulthood has been a key focus and our carers have been able to reconfigure a space to enable one of our young people to experience having their own home within the house, complete with own front door and key. This includes introducing budgeting, cooking, cleaning and planning responsibilities for the young person to grow their skills for independent living.



Our young people have had the opportunity to enjoy a range of holidays this year visiting various Ayrshire locations, Flamingo land, Blackpool, Palma, Barcelona and Paris!

Since 2019 the number of looked after children overall has steadily increased each year, with the exception of the pandemic period where numbers were higher than normal. Between 2018/19 and 2022/23 the number of looked after children increased by 4.8%.

Looked after Children: 2018-2023

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
375	382	399	387	393

Promise Participation and Engagement Team

The Promise Participation team have continued to support 'ArtClub?', a co-curated group led by care-experienced young people with an interest in contemporary visual art and activism. The group enables young people from a range of care backgrounds to creatively engage with the issues and interests that affect them, providing a pathway into other participation work, such as the Care Experienced Cabinet (formerly 'Pizza and Coke').

The ArtClub? held their first exhibition at the Dick Institute in 2023, entitled 'Agora', which displayed artwork inspired by the artists' experiences of care. The group also held an open day at the SL33 hub to raise awareness of care leavers, and they developed a calendar showcasing their artwork, with proceeds being used to further develop youth-led participation events and projects.

The Participation team also held reading and wellbeing sessions for our care experienced young people at a local book shop. These sessions gave young people access to books and reading opportunities alongside the opportunity to take part in creative writing and mindfulness.



ArtClub? has continued to gain widespread recognition in 2023-24 with our young artists nominated for several awards throughout the year:

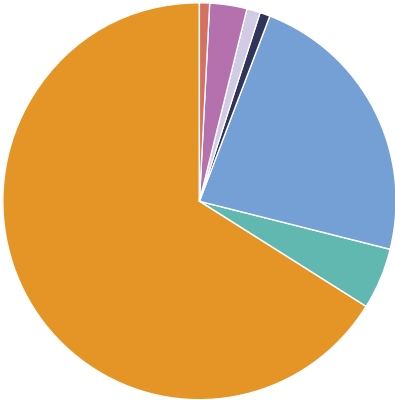
- *East Ayrshire Employee Awards – Collaborative Working with East Ayrshire Leisure Trust for the Agora Exhibition*
- *Dick Institute Open – Best Young Artist, Aimee Banks*
- *UK Parliament Speaker's Art Fund*

We worked with our care experienced young people over the past year to refresh the Corporate Parenting Board, which was previously known as 'Pizza and Coke', resulting in the Care Experienced Cabinet being formed. Meetings of the cabinet have taken place throughout the year, focusing on different themes including: 'feeling safe and being safe' and 'standing on my own two feet'. The meetings have been attended by care experienced young people and senior council officers.

The team has continued to work hard to promote The Promise and build strong relationships with other partners including, SL33, Vibrant Communities, East Ayrshire Leisure, Ayrshire College, East Ayrshire CVO, Action for Children, Active Schools and Columba 1400. Participation leads carried out a total of **201 Promise participation activities** during the reporting period which are detailed below:

Promise Participation Activities 2023-24

1-1	23%
External event	5%
Group Participation event	66%
Home Visit	1%
Meeting (eg Care Experienced Cabinet)	3%
Other	1%
Social event	1%



The Hope Hack

The Hope Hackathon was held in June 2023 in partnership with The Hope Collective and What Matters to You. The aim of this event was to create a listening space in which young people could use their voices to drive change and generate creative solutions to problems.

109 young people from across East Ayrshire attended the full-day event, engaging in interactive sessions that covered key themes including: education, employability and skills, youth activity, feeling safe in the community, physical and mental wellness, housing and the environment. The young people worked in groups around their chosen themes, exploring their hopes and ideas for delivering change in our local communities. The groups then presented their change ideas to leaders from East Ayrshire Council, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government, with feedback being used to inform and shape local service delivery.



Bairn's Hoose

The Ayrshire Partnership applied for Bairns' Hoose Partnership status in January 2024 and received notification in March 2024 that they had been awarded 'Affiliate' status, securing over £250,000 of funding to carry out extensive improvement programmes. Children 1st have supported the initial improvement design model and have secured funds for the engagement of recovery and participation workers, a Bairn's Hoose coordinator and other support. A further opportunity for Thematic Funding became available for use in 2024-25 and Children 1st has agreed to support the Ayrshire Partnership to secure this funding in order to create a Participation Worker post to undertake consultation and design work with children and young people to develop our trauma informed places and space.

Family Support Team

Over the last year the Family Support Team have embodied the principles of The Promise by ensuring that every child and young person grows up feeling loved, safe and respected. The team provides tailored, non-stigmatising support that responds to the unique needs of each family through a strengths-based approach.

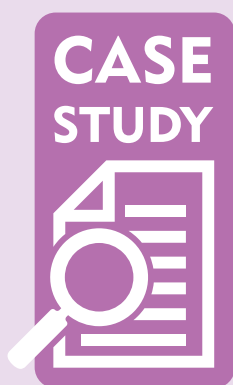
Some of the groups that took place in 2023-24 included:

- **Fun Family Connections:** Running for 6 weeks (March-April) bringing families with young children together to explore parenting and play, empowering parents, boosting confidence and reducing social isolation.
- **Dad's Group:** Delivered jointly with the Intensive Support Team, focusing on dads/father figures to build knowledge and confidence in play, child development and dealing with challenging circumstances in parenting.



- **Bumps and Bundles:** A test of change working with parents who are pregnant and have current social work involvement. The group explores topics including: growth and development; impact of environmental factors on baby; relationships; impact of addiction; safe sleeping; crying babies; safeguarding; and family and kinship connections. The group also supports good nutrition through the provision of health snacks during sessions.
- **Family and Sibling Family Time:** The team have facilitated a high level of family time and sibling family time over the past year, providing activities and guidance to help parents and siblings connect meaningfully. This allows families to strengthen bonds and build lasting memories.

Training has been of focus over the past year, with three individuals completing the HNC Social Care qualification and the team completing Safe and Together domestic abuse training. Wellbeing has been supported within the team through attendance at the Dumfries House Wellbeing Sessions to support individuals to meet their own wellbeing needs and improving team morale. 'Talk It Out' is also offered, allowing the team to have a safe and informal chat when they need support.



Marie and William were referred to the team following previous social work involvement as there were concerns about their ability to retain information. Marie had previously had her older child removed at birth and William had historical convictions. Both were scared and reluctant to trust social work due to their previous experiences.

The Family Support worker spent time with the couple to build a strong relationship and understand their needs and their strengths. Together they developed a plan and carried out focused work covering practical supports for babies; brain development and attachment, ensuring that the couple felt heard, respected and empowered throughout the process. They also explored both Marie and William's childhood experiences, healthy relationships and conflict resolution.

The Family Support worker could see that Marie and William were putting their learning into practice, especially in their approach to promote healthy brain development and attachment. The family attended the six week Fun Family Connections group and built relationships with other parents as well as thriving in the group environment.

The family now engage in a local play group and no longer require any support from social work. From being anxious about accepting support they both say that they "will never forget the amazing support" they received, stating "when our life was falling apart you came and believed in us."

Intensive Support

Over the last year the Intensive Support Team has continued to provide high quality support to our children, young people and families. The team continues to support a number of children and young people to remain in their communities, by offering a mix of tailored individual support, with group and activity opportunities for development and fun.

The team has continued to develop therapeutic approaches in working with children who have experienced trauma. Therapeutic Life Story training has continued to be rolled out to Social Workers, with five children and young people currently being supported by their worker to complete and explore their life story.

This approach aims to not only help the young person understand their story, but also make sense and create meaning from their trauma, loss and experiences, as well as building resilience.

We have also focused on developing the workforce in other areas including:

- **Talking Mats** – Talking Mats support children who struggle with communicating their feelings and experiences verbally. In conjunction with the Speech and Language service, training on the Talking Mat resource has been delivered to the Intensive Support team and by 2024-25 it is hoped that 75% of the workforce will have accessed this training.
- **Safe and Together** – Over the past year we have been working to ensure that all practitioners have been trained in this approach when discussing and working with domestic abuse survivors and their families.
- **AIMS3 Risk Assessments** – Our Social Workers completed this training to develop their risk assessment skills and support intervention plans with children who exhibit sexually harmful behaviour. This enables us to work with more children and young people who exhibit these behaviours and ensure interventions are targeted and effective.
- **START AV Risk Assessments** – Practitioners have also completed the START AV training to ensure that children who are in conflict with the law have an informed and holistic risk assessment which ensures again that interventions are targeted and effective.

Intensive Support Social Worker:
"I have been working with Sophie to help her understand her life story, along with her foster carer. Our therapeutic approach takes the form of weekly sessions where we have created a box of Sophie-centred tools, based on play and creativity, that help her unpick and understand her own emotions and the impact of her childhood experiences. We have focused sessions on specific aspects of Sophie's life that help provide context for her feelings and allow her to speak more freely about her trauma. The sessions have also positively impacted the relationship between Sophie and her foster carer, with her foster carer being able to recognise behaviours that are related to Sophie's trauma. This has resulted in Sophie feeling safe and supported to share her emotions and more able to choose healthy, prosocial responses when she feels unsafe or under threat."

Group work and seasonal activities have continued to have positive outcomes and have evolved in the past year, however, as a result of staffing capacity these have become more targeted.

Younger people in conflict with the law have been able to access bespoke group work opportunities through the team's partnership with Action for Children. Four young people who were subject to a number of Police concern reports were encouraged to access activities over a 6 week period which included Ayrshire Warriors Gym sessions, sessions with emergency services including Police, and animal based work activities with dogs that encourages the young men to explore their masculinity and show a more caring side. The group activities culminated in an awards ceremony which for some was the first attainment in several years. Following the group work there was a marked reduction in the number of concern reports being raised for these young people.

A programme of activities including gorge walking, tree top trials and costineering to support families over the summer period was provided. Cinema trips were also available to be accessed by the whole family and gym passes were made available for care experienced children and young people engaged with the team. There was more focus on providing family-based activities this year than in previous years to enable families who may struggle to access these kinds of activities the opportunity to have these experiences.

Whole System Approach

The Whole System Approach aims to divert children and young people away from formal Court processes and adult justice systems; recognising that these systems do not meet the needs of our children and young people. At a local level we have prioritised focusing on children's rights, supporting our 16 and 17 year olds and extending the Whole System Approach to young people up to the age of 21 years.

In East Ayrshire we have an established Whole System Approach multi-agency group consisting of partner agencies including Police, Health, Social Work, Education, SCRA, Housing and the Scottish Government. Over the past year we have undertaken various developmental opportunities with the support of the Children and Young Person's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) that focus on our commitment to the 'Working with children in conflict with the law 2021 standards' and the Whole System Strategic Group have also developed a plan in line with The Promise which outlines our commitment to working towards four key outcomes:

- The disproportionate criminalisation of care experienced children and young people will end.
- 16 and 17 year olds will no longer be placed in Young Offenders Institutes for sentence or on remand.
- There will be sufficient community-based alternatives to that detention is a last resort.
- Children who do need to have their liberty restricted will be cared for in small, secure, trauma-informed environments that uphold their rights.

Developing multi-agency partnerships has been a key focus over the past year to create pathways for children and young people in conflict with the law. This has led to establishing regular consultations with CAMHS and developing a way for CAMHS to support children and young people within local custody.



The Whole System Coordinator facilitated the 'feeling safe in the community' topic at the Hope Hack to find out what the current issues were for young people in the community and what they would like to see change, with most young people advising that they wanted a place to socialise with friends without fear of judgment of being stigmatised.

A further participatory group consisting of young adults with experience of the justice system explored the barriers for young adults with similar experiences, highlighting that employment was a key divisionary activity. Practitioners from employment services within East Ayrshire, including the private sector, were invited along to these sessions to listen to and take on board the suggestions made by the young adults.



Whole System Coordinator Support in 2023-24

200

Referrals to Early and Effective Intervention

38

Referrals to Diversion from Prosecution

73

Occasions where children and young people were supported at court



Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) Group Work

Over the year we seen an increase in Vandalism and Wilful Fire-raising charges through EEI. As a result of these concerns, an internal exploitation mapping exercise was conducted through Locality Children & Families Social Worker Services, Intensive Support and Whole System Coordinator. This undertook a Contextual Safeguarding lens and explored friendship groups and trends, patterns, gaps and concerns regarding the children's circumstances and multiagency plans. Information was collated through a multiagency approach which helped establish peer relationships and dynamics. Through support from the Fire and Rescue Service a bespoke group work programme was identified for one of the peer groups during the summer. This was a successful group and the children thrived through learning within the Fire Station. In response to the success of the group and the relationships built through this, one child asked to cook a meal for the Fire Service and was supported to do so as a measure of gratitude to the team.

Training and development are key to implementing the Whole System Approach. Throughout the reporting period our Whole System Coordinators took part in a range of training on topics such as restorative justice, exploitation and youth justice to improve their knowledge and practice. The coordinators have supported implementation of the Whole System Approach through facilitating training to foster carers, Children's Panel members, Campus Officers and practitioners, as well as developing practitioner friendly information around the process of EEI, Court Support and Youth Structured Deferred Sentences.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The UK national Government mandated Scotland to participate in the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). East Ayrshire has a maximum allocation of 23 children aged under 18 years. Due to the change in UK government approach, we required to quickly develop our approach to supporting children.

Currently, we are supporting 20 UASC (under 18) across fostering, residential and independent tenancy support arrangements. We are also providing aftercare support to 18 young people over the age of 18. The young people that we support have come to East Ayrshire from a variety of countries including, Vietnam, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Egypt, Iran, Chad and Syria.

Our UASC team have provided and coordinated support and services to young people, linking them in with ESOL language classes (employing dedicated ESOL staff), sports groups, summer programmes, health and care, cultural and religious connections, and community activities. We have also supported young people to manage their tenancies, daily living tasks and to access leisure activities in their local community.

The dedicated UASC team continue to advocate and provide support to meet the needs of our UASC population, including securing access to suitable housing, mental health services and providing support through legal processes. We will continue to work to ensure a trauma-informed service and improve delivery of mental health support for our younger children through transitions to adulthood and independence.

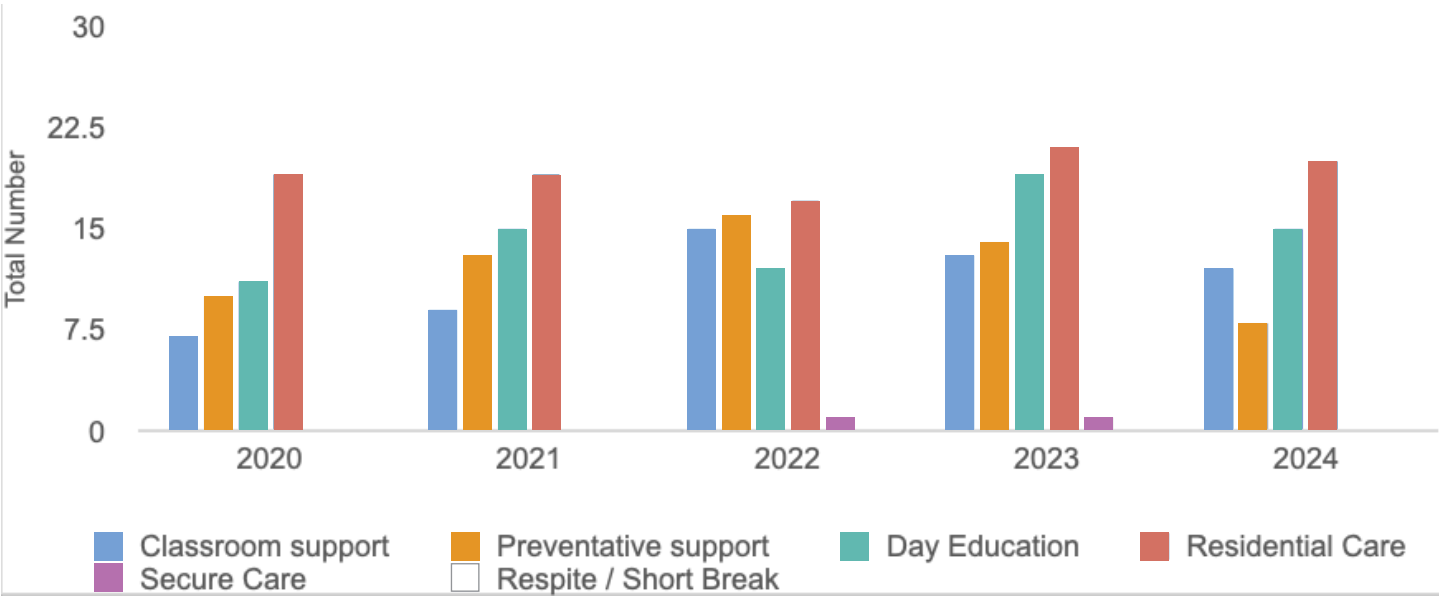
Outwith Authority Placements

The Outwith Placements Screening Group (OPSG) continues to meet monthly to consider recommendations from children’s professions, lead professional Social Workers, Educational Psychologists, and Named Person Head/Depute Teachers for access to provision outwith East Ayrshire Council, using the expertise of these individuals to review requests and ensure all internal/local resources have been accessed. The OPSG reflects the commitment to the role of corporate parent, and continues to develop and respond to the changing, and sometimes challenging, needs of our children and young people who may require an external resource to meet their care and educational needs.

The pressure on financial resources in relation to outwith placements is evident, and increasing, as we move into 2024-25. This is due to increasing costs of residential placements; the reduced availability of foster carers and the resources required to support young people with complex needs; and, the increasing need and complexity of children and young people and the pressure this places on the services that support them.

Outwith Authority Placements as at 31 March: 5 year comparison

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Classroom support	7	9	15	13	12
Preventative support	10	13	16	14	8



Outwith Authority Placements as at 31 March: 5 year comparison

Day Education	11	15	12	19	15
Residential Care	19	19	17	21	20
Secure Care	0	0	1	1	0
Respite / Short Break	0	0	0	0	0

Child Protection

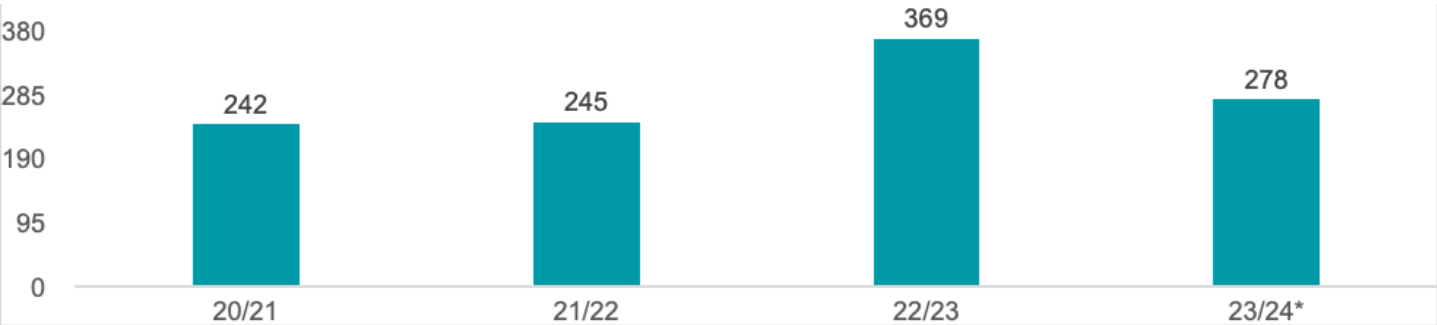
The Child Protection Committee has delivered numerous pieces of work over the past year, including implementing the Pan Ayrshire Child Protection Guidance (2023) and the continued investment and roll out of Safe & Together across the multi-agency workforce. The Committee has undertaken work to build multi-agency workforce confidence, awareness and partnership working relating to child exploitation, building awareness of contextual safeguarding through the High Risk Vulnerable Person sub-group. The committee has also continued to progress previously identified areas for improvement from Learning Reviews, sharing key areas across children’s services and the wider workforce.

The [Cherishing our Families Strategy 2023-2026](#) was developed by the East Ayrshire Children’s and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) during the reporting period. This was done in consultation with a wide range of children, young people, parents, carers and professionals in children’s services to establish what was important to them in relation to preventing and reducing child neglect in East Ayrshire. The Strategy is underpinned by Children’s Rights and focuses on tackling neglect and neglectful behaviours through listening to children; supporting families in the right way at the right time; working collaboratively across agencies; and, addressing poverty to ensure families are supported through times of hardship.

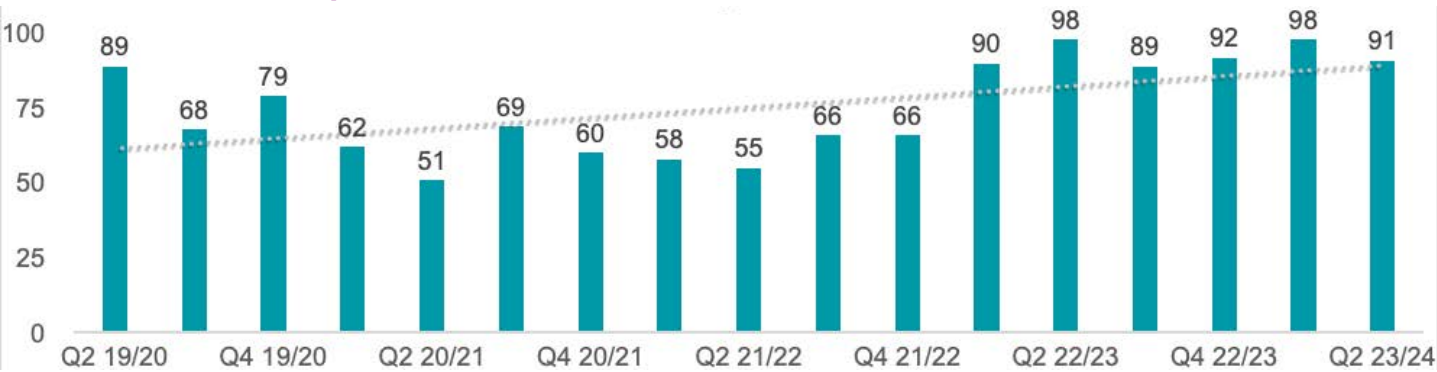
Key Child Protection Figures:

- During 2023-24 there were 88 child protection registrations, 42.5% lower than 153 registered the previous year.
- In 2022-23 the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) received 345 referrals from East Ayrshire on care and protection grounds, up from 280 in the previous year. The most common reasons for referral during this period were due to lack of parental care (109 referrals), an offence (53 referrals) and close connection with a person who has carried out domestic abuse (52 referrals).
- There were 14 children with a Child Protection Order (CPO), which is a 41.7% decrease from 2021-22.
- The number of Interagency Referral Discussions (IRDs) increased in 2022-23 by 50.6% to 369, with current quarterly figures for 2023-24 remaining above 90.

Number of IRDs 2020-2024

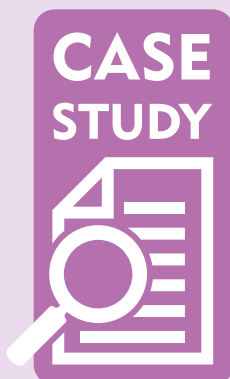


Number of IRDs by Quarter 2019-2024



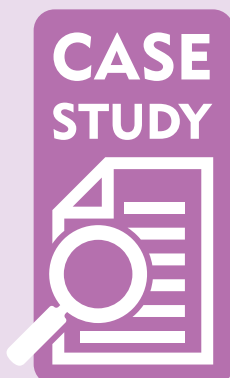
Self-Directed Support (SDS) in Children's Services

We continue to develop our approach to Self-Directed Supports in Children and Family Services. Currently, it is well embedded with our Children with Disabilities Services, and the last year has seen personal budgets allocated across Children and Family Localities to great effect.



A large family were referred to the Children with Disabilities team as three of the younger children had significant health needs, all requiring a range of treatments and operations. The level of support being provided by the parents was exceptional and constant, however, the family had never been in a position to experience a holiday together. Through the Dean Castle Country Park Treehouse Residential experience, the family were given the opportunity to try experiencing a local break together for two nights, giving them the peace of mind that medical support teams and the hospital were close by. Prior to the break one of the children had to be admitted to hospital, however, with the confidence that support was nearby Dad decided to take all of the remaining children where they all had a fantastic time.

As a result of this experience, the family felt more confident in taking trips away and through a small SDS budget they were able to take a weeklong break to a holiday park which had facilities to meet their needs and links to local hospitals. They were also able to visit relatives on the route home which extended their holiday. The family plan on attending the Treehouse Residential Experience again together and meeting up with the families they spent time with on their first trip.



Logan has Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and attends a communication centre within a mainstream Secondary school. Logan had expressed through the 'Mind Of My Own' digital app that he wanted to become more independent, take part in new activities and meet new friends. He was becoming more aware that his peers were taking part in activities and able to be with friends, whereas due to his high level of support needs Logan needed the full support of his parents to fully participate in activities. Logan's parents expressed that they would support him to become more independent as much as possible.

Logan completed an SDS assessment which outlined a clear plan to support him. He was keen to try out a smart watch as part of his plan to help build his confidence with travelling independently and also wanted to try out a music class at the local theatre group as he was a fan of musicals.

Logan has used his plan as a way to become independent and is now attending three musical theatre classes and performing in shows. He no longer requires a parent to attend activities with him and has been able to make friends that he keeps in contact with outside of the musical theatre classes. His confidence and skills have continued to grow, and he is now looking to take more steps into independence through joining a local community group.

Third Sector Commissioning (Children and Families)

Our commissioned services underwent a full review in 2022-23 to ensure that they aligned with the changing needs of families and communities, as well as the ambitions of The Promise and the EAHSCP Strategic Plan 2021-30. Significant consultation and engagement was carried out with the people who used our services, and an analysis of service usage and emerging need also took place. This highlighted that some of our services were no longer delivering a model that appealed to wider targeted communities.

To support the development of bespoke services the “Whole Family Framework” was designed, allowing providers the ability to join and be commissioned directly from the framework when required. The Framework opens in December each year to allow partners the opportunity to join and contains four “lots” for service provision:

Lot 1 – Children and Young People’s Safe, Well and Together Service

Lot 2 – Children and Young People’s Independent Advocacy Service

Lot 3 – Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Lot 4 – Specialist and Therapeutic Support Service

From the December 2023 tendering process, Barnardos and Who Cares? Scotland were successful in Lots 1 and 2 respectively and a further ten providers were successful in their bids to join Lots 3 and 4 with contracts due to begin April 2024. The Whole Family Framework is designed to encourage a diverse range of providers to join to allow for an agile response to meet a wide range of needs.

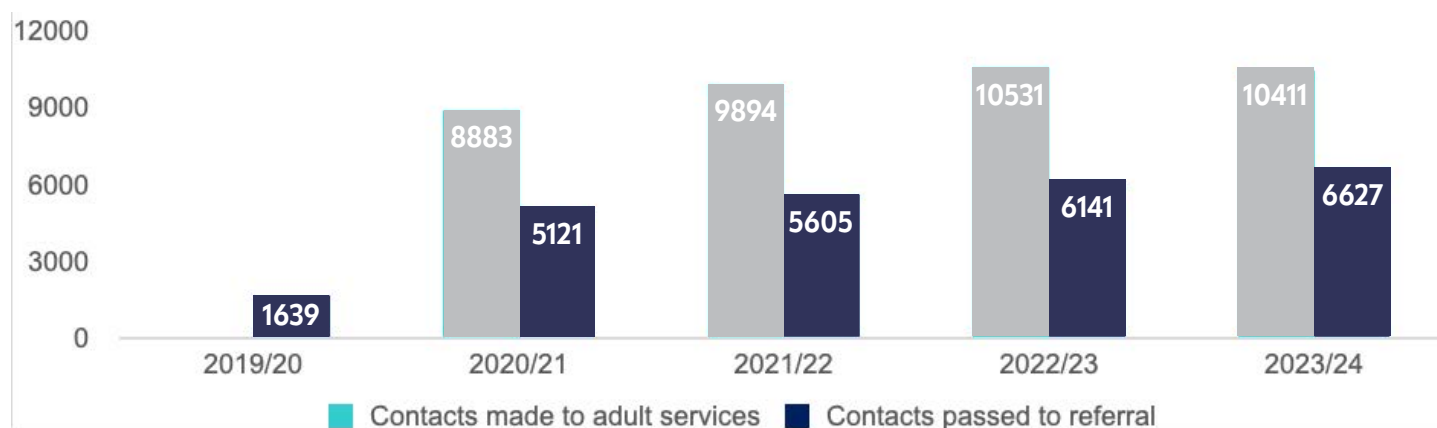
Overview of Adult Services in 2023-24

Our Adult Social Work Services provide support through our locality; mental health; learning disabilities; recovery; care home; care at home; and reablement teams to maximise independence and choice and control to people in receipt of support, as well as supporting families and carers. As with all services, demand for adult services has increased year-on-year with not only more requests for assistance being made but also more of these requests proceeding to referrals. In 2023-24, 64% of all contacts made to adult services resulted in a referral being made, compared to 58% in the previous year, and referrals increased overall by 7.9% between 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Contacts and referrals 2019-2024

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Contacts made to Adult Services	-	8883	9894	10531	10411
Contacts passed for Referral	1639	5121	5605	6141	6627

**Accurate figures for 2019/20 contacts made are unavailable due to system migration during this period resulting in a high number of historical contact records being closed during this time.*



Care Homes

Our care homes represent a core element of the social care system, allowing people to live in a homely environment where personal and nursing care are provided for those requiring support in daily life. As part of oversight and support arrangements, the Partnership continued to work closely with the Independent Sector Lead throughout 2023-24 to ensure that support was offered inclusively and equitably to our partner care homes.

Staff across the eighteen partner care homes continue to navigate challenges to care for, and support, over 650 residents in East Ayrshire. Year on year they demonstrate their ongoing commitment, compassion and resilience, as well as flexibility in the support they provide.

Care homes have had the opportunity to bring residents together in 2023-24 for the 'Great East Ayrshire Care Home Bake Off' and the Care Home Olympics. Residents taking part in the bake off were able to showcase their baking skills to the judging panel, made up of the Partnership director and local councillors, in an effort to be crowned top baker. The Olympics event saw each care home team take part in a number of sporting activities, from javelin to cycling, and be treated to lunch and musical entertainment from Elvis before receiving their awards. Both events proved to be incredibly popular and enjoyed by all, with organisers committing to these becoming annual events in the future.

There continues to be challenges in the care sector relating to recruitment, whilst auditing, reporting and scrutiny continues to increase and impacts on existing resources and capacity. Despite this, our care home providers continue to focus on developing their staff and utilising the resources that are available through the Partnership and Care Home Professional Support team. The relationship between care home providers and the Partnership also remains strong, supportive and collaborative.

Mental Health Officer Service

The Mental Health Officer (MHO) Service continues to meet statutory demand and requirements in regards to the local authority's duties in respect of the Mental Health Act and Adults with Incapacity (AWI) legislation. The service has experienced significant challenges during 2023-24, and have continued to see pressures relating to the back-log in MHO allocation to support with AWI renewals; incoming new referrals for AWI applications, supporting decision-making processes and ongoing team capacity limitations.



East Ayrshire also experiences above average demand for activity relating to the Mental Health Act and Adults with Incapacity Legislation. The Mental Welfare Commission annual report highlights the demands of East Ayrshire, with the rate of annual Short Term Detention Certificates currently 97.5 per 100,000 per head of population, which is above the Scotland local authority average of 84.8 per 100,000. East Ayrshire is also well above the 47% national average of Social Circumstances Reports completed following consent to detention, currently sitting at 68% of production. The report also notes that there has been a 9% increase in new/renewed AWI orders recorded, with East Ayrshire application rates being 93.8 per 1000 population, compared to the national average of 76.1. This places East Ayrshire as 4th highest for AWI activity out of all 32 local authority areas.

Despite the challenges, activity has remained high with the service completing 150 reports to support AWI welfare guardianship applications and 117 Social Circumstances Reports to support the care of individuals experiencing mental health concerns. MHOs have also responded to 122 Section 44 consent requests in the reporting period for individuals where their condition may have required a short-term detention under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 to meet their medical needs, and the service has lodged 27 applications for Compulsory Treatment Orders.

The MHO service continues to support annual recruitment to the Postgraduate MHO Award programme to support their recruitment and retention plan. One candidate is expected to complete their award in July 2024 and a further three applicants are expected for 2024-25.

Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

The Smart Supports team launched the East Ayrshire Smart Hub in September 2023. The space is based in the Ross Court sheltered housing complex in Galston and has been designed to showcase the latest smart home and digital telecare technology in a home environment. The Smart Hub aims to show practitioners, service users and their families the different ways that technology can be used to keep people feeling safe and independent in their own homes, as well as how technologies can be used as part of an early intervention and prevention approach. The hub was developed in partnership with the East Ayrshire Council IT team and supports delivery of the Digital Health objective of the [East Ayrshire Digital Strategy 2022-27](#)

Since the initial launch, the Smart Hub has been open every Wednesday for practitioners to book with over 50 Partnership employees visiting so far across 28 learning sessions in 2024. Partners from other local authorities, third sector and private sector organisations have also visited the hub to learn more about technology enabled care. Feedback on the Smart Hub has been positive with 89% of attendees rating their Smart Hub experience as 'excellent'.

Following the conclusion of the TEC Pathfinder Programme the preferred solutions were implemented in the 2023-24 period. Two Digital Health and Care Support Workers were recruited to support residents of the Irvine Valley in accessing and using technology to manage long-term health conditions and improve wellbeing.



The workers have bases in each of the Irvine Valley areas, operating from Darvel Medical Practice, local libraries and the Smart Hub. Outreach is also carried out in local groups, warm spaces and lunch clubs to raise awareness and build relationships with the community.

Since being recruited, the Digital Health and Care Support Workers have carried out extensive mapping of the local area, linking with local groups to deliver tailored sessions; showcased their 'TEC Backpack' on a national forum; and, have been accepted to the University of Strathclyde poster exhibition. Residents of the Irvine Valley have been supported by the workers to access prescriptions online, download health applications and improve their knowledge and understanding on how different technology can support health.

Moving forward the team are focused on increasing engagement through medical practices, multi-disciplinary teams and the wider health and social care partnership as well as developing the content of the 'TEC backpack'.

The Smart Supports Team has continued to be part of the intensive induction process for all new Community Care Officers (CCOs), providing a 'show and tell' session to allow new workers to see different types of telecare equipment they may encounter in people's homes when delivering care, and recognise what role the equipment plays in supporting people to be independent. In 2023-24 there were 12 training sessions delivered to 130 new members of staff. The team also delivered sessions at nine 'Best Practice' days; 'lunch bite' training with 30 staff in the Community Alarms nightshift teams and supported five team development days, reaching a further 120 employees.



Family feedback on TEC trial:
"Having the KOMP [video calling device] and changing Arthur's medication has made a huge difference to our lives, we intend on buying one as it is money well spent"

Learning Disability Service

As part of the Partnership's programme of Best Value Service Reviews (BVSr), Learning Disability and Mental Health commissioned services underwent a review to evaluate current service delivery and identify areas of improvement. The review was carried out in consultation with service users, families and carers, and relevant partners to gather feedback on current service provision. 185 service users provided their views through a survey, as did 15 providers and 15 carers/family members. Discussions and one-to-one interviews also took place with carers and service users to establish what they wanted to see from their learning disability and mental health services. Key themes from the consultation included:

- Improving the consistency of staff supporting service users;
- ensuring support is person-centred and flexible to service user wishes;
- considering alternative models of delivery to ensure effective oversight and
- review the current transition pathways for children into adult services to ensure early planning.

Following the review an improvement plan was developed by the BVSr working group and implementation is scheduled to take place throughout 2024.

The Empowerment Project was developed in 2022, aiming to **'empower people to make choices in relation to their lives; whilst promoting their own personal safety, happiness and healthy relationships'**, and was created in recognition of Adults with a Learning Disability in the local community, who may not have a safe place to talk about their lives, relationships, choices and other aspects of life that can be challenging. The group has remained well attended by ten women and have continued to explore different topics such as: good relationships vs poor relationships; breast examination; Women's Aid; diet; and managing low moods. These sessions have resulted in some of the group members recognising and letting go of poor relationships and building positive relationships through the group. Members have also taken part in the Reclaim the Night march to demonstrate the importance of women standing together and discussed doing sponsored walks in the future to raise money for mental health charities.

Participant feedback:

"You have helped me to get out of difficult situations as if it wasn't for you I would still be stuck there today. You still help me when I need it and you always seem to pick me up after I feel down. Thank you for the group, it makes me feel welcome and to know that the group is a safe space for us all."

Recruitment and resources have had an impact on the learning disability service, much like other areas, and as a result the Empowerment Project has remained a women's only group with the involved support assistant providing individual sessions to males on specific topics, such as online internet safety. The women attending the project have built a close relationship with project lead, which allows for discussion about sensitive topics in a safe, positive and caring environment.

Day Opportunities for Adults with Learning Disabilities

Our day services are suitable for adults over the age of 17 years who have been diagnosed with a learning disability and/or autistic spectrum disorder, as well as those with mental health needs or complex needs.

There are three adult 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 provide person-centred support, activities and learning opportunities to meet their personal outcomes. All three day centres work collaboratively, regularly share information and support each other.



In 2023-24 the centres have continued to support adults with learning disabilities to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health and social inequalities. The centres have worked closely with Local Area coordinators to deliver a wide range of activities in the local community including: karaoke, bowling, snooker and badminton. A range of activities were successfully delivered during the reporting period including:

- Updating the sensory room
- Animal therapy day
- Supporting positive school transitions
- Participating in Learning Disability Awareness Week 2023



The Balmoral Road Day Service focused on improvement in the reporting period, sending out questionnaires to gather feedback on their service delivery. They received positive feedback from service users and their families and have committed to carrying this out annually. They also received an unannounced inspection in November 2023 and received 'Very Good' evaluations in care and support planning and 'Good' in supporting wellbeing, leadership, staff team and centre setting. Areas for improvement included developing how feedback is gathered from service users and their families; audit processes being more effectively used to improve service quality; incident recording and more regular supervision to support reflective practice.

The service itself has also identified that technology has become an emerging area of improvement as the requirement for updated devices supports staff to be efficient in their role and also service users to access communication resources. Work is ongoing across East Ayrshire Council to migrate all employees to the latest software that will support collaborative working.

Parent:

"Would be lost without the centre, my daughter loves it and everyone is lovely "

Public Protection

Over 2023-24, the Protection and Learning Team has continued to support close integrated working across operational and strategic public protection work. The Protection and Learning Team has been central to the coordination and delivery of this work and it has been an excellent example of social work leadership supporting multi-agency protection practice.



In September 2023 the Team supported the first multi-agency public protection learning event since 2019 entitled **No Closed Door – Connecting & Protecting People** which focused on safeguarding and protecting people from harm. The purpose of the event was to share learning examples of good practice and to support staff wellbeing, with cross-cutting public protection themes combined to create learning opportunities across the programme. Spotlight sessions focused on areas such as MARAC, ProTECHting People (digital resources for safeguarding), and hearing the voices of people with lived experience. Frontline practitioners from all sectors were amongst the attendees with over 80 practitioners present on the day. This event was evaluated as a great success with appetite to deliver this annually.

The Protection and Learning Team led on an Ayrshire wide implementation of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), commencing August 2022. The Ayrshire MARAC has continued throughout 2023-24 to make a significant contribution to improving the safety of victims of domestic abuse at risk of significant harm or death across Ayrshire. The East Ayrshire MARAC have continued to support local meetings and a number of new Agency Representatives have been trained and supported to join the MARAC during the reporting period.

An Ayrshire wide MARAC Governance Group is in place which provides strategic direction from MARAC Leads. Additionally, a local Agency Representatives Group has continued to meet after every East Ayrshire MARAC to provide support to representatives and allow a two-way feedback process to the MARAC Coordination Team. This local Group undertook a review in December 2023 and will now meet quarterly moving forwards. The programme of local MARAC training has now become an integrated part of the Violence Against Women annual training calendar.

A number of developmental and improvement activities have taken place in 2023-24. The Ayrshire MARAC Procedures and operational Guidance were reviewed and updated to include a number of areas, including: 16-17 year olds, MARAC to MARAC transfers, conflicts of interest and arrangements around the interface with Adult Support & Protection.

A reflective learning and development session was held in June 2023 including all of the agency representatives from across Ayrshire. This session supported representatives to reflect on and provide robust feedback MARAC from a locality and Ayrshire perspective. The feedback and actions gathered at the session led to the development of an improvement plan.



Supporting Independence

The Intermediate Care Team (ICT) continued to deliver vital care and support for older people to facilitate hospital discharge, reduce unnecessary hospital admission and promote independence at home through agreeing and working towards person-centred goals. The team received 1,713 referrals, **up 42.8%** from 1,200 in 2022-23, with approximately 443 unnecessary admissions to hospital prevented and over 500 early discharges supported for individuals.



1,713
referrals
received

443
prevented
admissions

520
early
discharges

Our Experience with the Intermediate Care Team:

"It soon became apparent to my sister, mother and I that following my dad's discharge from hospital we could not give the care and attention he required despite our best efforts. My sister contacted the GP and they arranged for your team to visit that day. The practitioner who came assessed my dad and assured him all would be ok whilst explaining everything to my mother and I and what the next steps were, this was a Friday afternoon and somehow she managed to get the carers in by Sunday. She also arranged a community alarm and for other professionals to visit. The other team members were very helpful, arranging grab handles, bed frame, toilet frame and a high back chair to assist my dad's mobility. In the weeks to come they encouraged my dad with exercises and setting him small goals to achieve. They were a big help in getting my dad up and mobile again and kept encouraging him... The carers are brilliant, superb, always happy and encouraging. They saw my dad at his worst but never let his spirits drop or let him think he wouldn't improve despite his slow progress at first, always happy, pleasant and singing they made him smile."

The Community Alarm Emergency Response Team have continued to provide a 24-hour emergency care service for East Ayrshire residents in the event of a fall, unplanned care need and technical emergencies to maintain equipment. This service supports over 5000 people in East Ayrshire and frequently requires to work flexibly to support the most vulnerable residents. From April 2023 to March 2024 the service received 1,377 community alarm referrals, with 138 requested to support discharge from hospital. This has taken to total number of community alarm users in East Ayrshire to 5,541.

The Community Equipment and Adaptations Service has developed their digital systems to improve the referral process within the service. They are now able to offer an online self-referral portal for minor property adaptations which allows services users to make requests without the need for an Occupational Therapy assessment, resulting in a quicker response that supports people to access the equipment they need at the right time. The service also launched the online Equipment Loan Management Service (ELMS) which allows equipment to be ordered online. The accompanying Technician's App has replaced the paper-based process for completing jobs which has increased productivity and reducing backlogs across the service. As a result of these digital developments the service was nominated for the Digital Innovation Employee awards and have been successful in securing a place in the final, with the award ceremony due to take place May 2024.

The Sensory Impairment Service has continued to work hard to provide equipment, rehabilitation and habitation support to service users with a hearing and/or visual impairment. As part of the service's commitment to reducing rehabilitation wait times for people with a visual impairment, one member of the team has successfully completed a two-year university programme to become a qualified rehabilitation worker.

Implementation of recommendations from a Best Value Review of the Older People's Day Care Service concluded in the summer of 2023. A phased Improvement Plan ensured the delivery of various actions which has subsequently led to numerous improvements in service delivery, operational performance and processes, including reducing the waiting time between referral and placement as a result of closer monitoring through an improvement dashboard. Improvements have also been made to facilities within the centres to enhance service user experience with digital inclusion identified as a key area. There has been early success with using newly installed promethean boards to expand the activity options available in day services with the boards introducing many new opportunities for service users such as reminiscing activities using web based resources and have complimented existing activities including interactive quizzes and providing more variety into the chair based exercise programmes. Staff have been provided with training on using these devices from colleagues in Education and plans are also in place to develop Digital Champions to build a bank of digital resources that can be accessed by all day centres that have promethean boards, helping to share knowledge and reduce duplication.

The Reablement Service commenced in August 2023, focusing on supporting people to gain, or regain, their confidence, ability and necessary skills to live as independently as possible. The service takes a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting individuals, taking housing, telecare, family support, community nursing and home first reablement into consideration in developing support. Since August 69 services users were supported by the reablement service, with 44 completing their intervention, of those 87.9% had no ongoing care at home requirements following the support they had received. For the individuals who still required care at home, 67% were able to reduce their support hours by 50% or more by the end of their intervention. Moving into 2024-25 the service looks to establish a continuous flow between the reablement and locality service and develop more seamless access to reablement across both hospital and community referral routes.

The Care at Home service supports over 1,800 people to live independently and safely in their own homes, often in extremely challenging situations. The service continued to deliver high quality, compassionate and person-centred care, with this being reflected in positive feedback received from people receiving the service. 90% of service users and their relatives rated the service they received as 'good' or 'very good' in a recent survey and similar positive results were reflected in a recent spot check carried out where service users felt that Community Care Officers were respectful, consistent and offered choice in the care they received.

Family member:

"Thank you so much for all your effort to help G in the past year. We greatly appreciate the time you have taken to get to know him and want to let you know just how much of a difference your input has helped make him flourish. We are grateful that you will continue to be part of helping through his next steps in primary school!"



Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

Despite an overall decrease in drug related deaths in Scotland (down 21% from the previous year), East Ayrshire rates continue to remain above the national average and are currently ranked sixth highest out of all local authorities. The East Ayrshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) along with partners have supported the roll out of a new quality improvement framework for all suspected drug deaths in East Ayrshire which will allow data to be analysed and support the development of services.

The ADP has expanded and increased opportunities for individuals to engage in treatment, support and recovery in 2023-24. The EACH Recovery Matters Hub (formerly EA Recovery Hub) provides support and resources that people need to successfully navigate their recovery journey. It aims to promote and develop visible recovery groups within East Ayrshire, as well as opportunities for people in recovery to volunteer and obtain new skills. The Hub also provides space for other relevant partners to deliver focussed one-to-one and group work sessions, which so far has included: music groups, personal development opportunities, family groups, women/men only groups, housing support and digital inclusion. In addition, the Hub also employs lived experience Community Recovery Engagement Workers (CREW) and hosts two Peer Outreach Workers (POW) for the Peer Outreach Engagement Service who provide 'buddy' type supports, to assist people to engage and remain engaged in services, whilst supporting them to maintain and progress their recovery.

Other ADP activities over the past year have included:

- Supporting people with lived and living experience in 'getting ready to work' programmes through the ADP Recovery College;
- Developing updated Practitioners Guidance for services working with families impacted by alcohol and drugs; and
- Coordinating the annual ADP conference in December 2023, where over 150 practitioners; managers; members of the public; third sector providers, and people with living/lived experience met to discuss opportunities for extending and improving joint working to enhance service provision.



Feedback on the hub:

"Linking with a peer worker to help[ed] me access services. They welcomed me and provided the support and guidance I desperately needed. There, I became engaged in addiction services, where I was assessed that day and put on a prescription and allocated a chemist the next day."



Independent Advocacy

The East Ayrshire Advocacy Service continued to advocate for the most vulnerable people in our communities to ensure that their voices were heard and their views were considered when decisions were being made about their lives.

The [Independent Advocacy Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#) for East Ayrshire was approved by the Integration Joint Board in February 2024. This plan was developed in collaboration with partners, workforce and members of the community to ensure that everyone in our communities are able to have their voice heard.

The plan sets out our ambitions to widen access to independent advocacy; raise awareness of independent advocacy and people's rights; and, for independent advocacy to have strategic prominence in our Strategic Planning Group.

Demand for independent advocacy support has continued to exceed capacity, with new referrals increasing by 29% in 2023-24 compared to the previous year. The largest increase in referrals has been to Adult (46%), Parents (36%) and Older People's (27%) services. The most common reasons for referral were housing (17% of new referrals), care planning (12%), benefits (10%), financial (9%) and Mental Health Tribunals (7%).

Despite demand, the service has been able to reduce the average case length from 8.5 months in 2022-23 to 6 months in 2023-24, with 80% of cases being closed due to the advocacy issue being resolved.

CASE STUDY



Mrs M was referred to the Advocacy Older People service after being identified as being an adult at risk of financial abuse. Mrs M's bank statements showed several purchases costing thousands of pounds that family members had allegedly been making. Her Advocacy worker supported her through the Adult Support and Protection process, attending meetings on her behalf, as well as to hospital appointments that she had previously been missing.

Mrs M did not know how much money had been taken from her account and agreed with her worker that she would benefit from help through Access to Funds to manage her finances. Her worker was able to set up the Access to Funds arrangements and agreed that a set amount would be paid into Mrs M's own account each week to allow her to retain some independence.

The Advocacy worker has continued to visit and reassure Mrs M and has built a good relationship with her, so much so that they were able to spot the signs of financial abuse starting again and was able to deal with this quickly, highlighting the importance of long-term support and building trusting relationships.

Social Work Out of Hours Service

The Ayrshire Out of Hours Social Work (OOHSW) team continues to provide a 365 days per year cover, including evenings, weekends, and all public holidays to East, North and South Ayrshire. The team dealt with over 9,000 referrals during 2023-24 (a significant increase from 7,000 in the previous year), of these 3,160 being in respect of East Ayrshire residents, up 37.4% from 2,300 in 2022-23. The team works closely with other services and partners, including Police Scotland, Out of Hours Housing, Out of Hours GP services, District Nursing, Children's Houses and Community Alarms in order to protect vulnerable people.

Digital developments during the past year have resulted in a new web-based Child Protection database which will streamline the process of collating data from North, South and East Ayrshire Child Protection Registers, reducing the need for information to be shared via email as well as reducing administration tasks.

East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership

The EAVAWP's Strategic Plan for 2021-24 highlights core issues in relation to violence against women and outlines key actions to effectively address these. The Plan sets out national and local context and the Partnership's vision of: 'Working together to improve safety, wellbeing and equality for all women and girls in East Ayrshire'. A monitoring framework was developed to provide quarterly reviews and analysis of progress towards the key strategic themes and actions.





A highlight of EAVAWP's activities was the 16 Days of Action to Eradicate Gender Based Violence in November 2023. The EAVAWP, along with partners in North and South Ayrshire, launched a campaign on commercial sexual exploitation. The 'Imagine a Scotland without Commercial Sexual Exploitation' campaign included a practitioner event followed by the Inside/Outside exhibition, which promoted the voices of women with lived experience of child sexual exploitation. The aims of this event were to highlight the links between child sexual exploitation/child abuse and commercial sexual exploitation, and to establish a network of skilled professionals across Ayrshire to support women who sell or exchange sex. The event was attended by 150 people, including Elected Members.

There has been a steady increase of demands on specialist VAWG services since 2020-21, identified by the 'Equally Safe' returns, and across all age groups there has been a rise in the number of women and girls being referred to specialist VAWG services across East Ayrshire. The EAVAWP met with local specialist providers who support victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, rape and trauma to discuss the increase in demand, with providers welcoming the opportunity to share their experiences. It has been agreed that work in this area will be progressed further in 2024-25 to focus on the rise in demand.

Tackling Poverty

Tackling poverty and inequality is one of the six priorities identified in the [East Ayrshire Council Strategic Plan 2022-2027](#) and outlines the commitment to work with communities and partners over the next five years to tackle the causes and effects of poverty and inequality, as well as understand the impact that recent years have had on communities and services.

The Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) in collaboration with partners, continues to support East Ayrshire residents to maximise their benefit entitlement and provide holistic



£8,997,725 financial gains in 2023-24

£49,149,050 since November 2013

assistance to achieve positive outcomes, which has been particularly important due to the cost of living crisis. FIT have delivered a number of new projects within Education, Health and GP Practices, designed to reach out to and support vulnerable people in our communities.

The Health FIT team assists East Ayrshire residents with long-term illness and disabilities, and includes the Macmillan Team, the new Welfare Advice and Health Partnership (based within selected GP Practices) and the Community Team. A number of Child Wellbeing projects were also taken forward within the reporting period. This work supports families and staff within secondary schools, and their related primary and early childhood centre networks.

The Community team received 3,088 enquiries, with referrals then allocated for appropriate identified supports following triage. 684 residents received direct advice/support from the Community team to claim or challenge benefit decisions, which in total generated financial gains of £3,161,080. The FIT Employability project received 182 referrals and assisted 118 people and families, generating financial gains of £200,274. The In-Court Advice team received 125 referrals, assisting with 10 simple procedures and 116 repossessions, with the total amount of debt assisted with being £392,553, in addition to obtaining further financial gains of £37,884 for people. The Macmillan project supported 402 clients over the last year, resulting in financial gains of £1,647,134 for people. Over the same period, the FIT Welfare Advice and Health Partnership supported 199 clients, resulting in financial gains of £193,978. The FIT Early Years Project received 281 new referrals, generating £1,759,768 for families. Overall, the FIT achieved a total of £8,997,725 in financial gains for East Ayrshire residents in 2023-24, increasing by 80.6% from the previous year.

Unpaid Carers

East Ayrshire Carers Centre has continued to provide vital support to young and adult unpaid carers throughout 2023-24, offering individual and peer support; information and advice; advocacy; breaks away from caring; and benefit maximisation. Over the past year alone the centre has saw 502 new adult registrations and 165 new young people registrations and have supported the completion of 501 Adult Carer Support Plans and 91 Young Carer Statements to set out what support these individuals need to continue their caring role and look after their own wellbeing.

The Carers Centre holds weekly age-specific respite groups in Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Dalmellington that gives carers a chance to socialise with one another as well as the opportunity to access training and support. One-to-one support is also available with 9,138 instances of support for adults recorded in the past year and 14,982 for young people, demonstrating how high demand is in the service.

Other activities carried out in the reporting period include:

- Training sessions, self-help groups and carer-led forums;
- Provision of information, resources and signposting to other organisations;
- Outreach work, including home visits;
- Special events including day trips, garden parties, tea parties and festive celebrations;
- Gifting Christmas presents to 352 young carers and their siblings;
- Supporting 109 successful Blue Badge applications;
- Supporting 280 adult carers to access the Time to Live Fund to facilitate short breaks from their caring role; and
- Working with schools to address stigma faced by young carers and to raise awareness of the challenges they face and identifying 'Carers Champions'.



These supports have contributed towards a number of positive outcomes for our carers, including: reducing social isolation; increasing carers' confidence, resilience and self-esteem; improving health and wellbeing; reducing stress and anxiety and improving financial circumstances, collectively enabling carers to enjoy a better quality of life while caring.

The East Ayrshire Carers Centre continues to network with a range of local organisations including: Citizens Advice, The Zone, Yip World, Kilmarnock Railway Heritage Trust, CVO East Ayrshire, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Developing the Young Workforce, Ayrshire Colleges and Skills Development Scotland, which has led to established referral pathways.

The East Ayrshire Carers Centre also has Hospital Discharge Carer Link Workers based in University Hospitals Crosshouse and Ayr, in addition to regularly working from East Ayrshire Community Hospital and Biggart Hospital. Their role is to support carers to understand their rights under The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, ensuring they are fully involved in the planned discharge of their loved ones. Supporting carers to understand the discharge process also helps to identify what assistance they may require from statutory and voluntary services to enable them to provide effective care and support, and to live a full life alongside their caring role, which will support their wellbeing and help to prevent readmission.

CASE STUDY



John cares for his wife who has respiratory issues and arthritis. He doesn't think he deserves getting a break as there are many others in worse situations than himself. Through completing an Adult Carer Support Plan with John, staff were able to talk to him about the benefits of getting a short break away from the everyday that was meaningful to him and his wife. The Carers Centre Short Breaks coordinator helped him find a lovely place and they went away as a couple. John said in his plan that he wanted to get a change of scenery for his mental wellbeing and feeling looked after while away would help him feel more relaxed. Going with his wife meant they could share times as a couple again rather than as carer and cared for.

Adult Support and Protection (ASP)

As part of the 'Lived Experience Project' a dedicated Advocacy ASP Development Worker was funded by the Partnership and recruited to establish a mechanism to assess the support and protection services that adults at risk of harm and their families/carers have received. All information gathered is analysed anonymously and used to improve future services for adults and their families/carers. This feedback will also contribute to the annual multi-agency self-evaluation of Adult Support and Protection in East Ayrshire, with all improvement activity identified being built into the 2025-26 Improvement Plan for Adult Support and Protection.

In February 2024 the East Ayrshire Adult Protection Committee marked National Adult Protection Day by pledging to support and protect all adults at risk of harm, in all its forms. The Committee also asked everyone to pledge to zero tolerance of harm for all people in East Ayrshire on social media.

"[Advocacy worker] always listens to me and yes I did feel listened too, much more than before, I thought before people thought I was off my head"



ASP Referrals in 2023-24:

343

Adult at Risk referrals,
increase of 3.1%

2,728

adult concern referrals,
decrease of 0.2%

Overview of Justice Services in 2023-24

The Justice Social Work team provide a range of supports and services to those in conflict with the law as well as promoting community safety, including:

- Undertaking assessments and reports to assist decisions on sentencing;
- Providing court services to assist those attending court;
- Bail information and supervision services as an alternative to custodial remand;
- Supervising people on Community Payback Orders (CPO) to build relationships, providing support and assistance to reduce their likelihood of re-offending;
- Reducing the risk of harm in the community through being a key partner in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA);
- Organising work placements and other activities to ensure appropriate opportunities, supervision and support for people who have been required by the court to undertake unpaid work and deliver community benefits;
- Providing prison-based social work services to those serving custodial sentences;
- Preparing reports for the Parole Board to assist decisions about release from prison; and,
- Providing throughcare services to support people on their return into the community and to ensure public safety.

During the reporting period the service underwent a review, developing best justice practices for East Ayrshire and ensuring that relationships and person-centred practice are at the heart of service delivery. A key element of the review was ensuring that people accessing the service receive the right help and support that they need within their own communities, resulting in the service developing East Ayrshire local early intervention services, which was previously provided on a pan-Ayrshire basis. From April 2024 East Ayrshire locality justice social work teams will provide support to people on bail supervision, structured deferred sentences and diversion from prosecution.

HMP Kilmarnock transitioned from being privately ran by SERCO to becoming a Scottish Prison Service establishment in March 2024. This has required the negotiation of a new service level agreement as well as considerations of service delivery moving into the 2024-25 period.

With support from Community Justice Ayrshire, we have worked with partners to review our model of community reintegration for those being released from custody. This has linked with the Scottish Government's Getting It Right for Everyone (GIRFE) pathfinder programme and has involved extensive engagement with those with lived experience to help shape development. Work is currently taking place to develop a 'departure lounge' concept to support access to agencies at the point of release with further developments expected to take place later in 2024.

The Unpaid Work Team have continued to support people to complete community service hours given by the Sheriff over the past year. The team support individuals to learn key skills and access supports that they need to improve their life chances and desist from offending. The team aims to ensure that unpaid work is purposeful, has clear benefits to the community and is also meaningful to the individual undertaking the work.



Some of the work carried out over the past year has included:

- Maintaining community gardens
- Painting community spaces
- Supporting the winter gritting programme
- Grass cutting for vulnerable residents
- Supporting local foodbanks with food collection and deliveries

The unpaid work teams have also been focusing on kindness and have demonstrated random acts of kindness in the community. Individuals have selected of made gifts to people in receipt of the team's services over the year, this has included handmade Christmas trees made from recycled pallets which were gifted to schools, outdoor learning areas and community gardens. In spring the teams also delivered handpicked daffodil bouquets to elderly residents in receipt of grass cutting services.



People in Prisons - Getting It Right For Everyone (GIRFE)

East Ayrshire Health and Social Care applied to be a GIRFE pathfinder in 2022, focusing on Older people and frailty; People in Prisons; and Deep End GP Practices. In relation to People in Prisons we aimed to improve access to assessment and planning for those returning to the community with significant health and social care needs, to ensure a community-based care plan is in place at the point of release for people in custody.

Throughout the reporting period engagement activity took place with people with lived experience, practitioners and partners to inform the design process, with participants identifying peer support workers; social connections; clear first point of contact; resilience; and services working together as key areas of importance.

Improvement ideas included:

- One stop shop for prison release
- Practical group to attend the week before release
- Access to pharmacy/services at weekends and evenings
- Pre-release prescriber following up with the individual post-release
- Mental health support team
- Increased visibility of outreach services (particularly in rural areas)
- Whole Family approach such as childcare provision to allow people access services, arrange essentials etc.

From the improvements identified a number of prototypes were suggested to deliver these, such as creating a Care Coordinator role, providing individuals with support bags containing essentials for release, peer support training and a community hub. The prototype suggestions will be developed and tested moving into 2024-25 with a view to a national toolkit being created.

MAPPA

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) is the framework which joins up the agencies who manage individuals who are subject to the notification requirements created by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The fundamental purpose of MAPPA is public safety and the reduction of serious harm. The 2003 act places a statutory function on police, local authorities, and the Scottish Prison Service (the responsible authorities) to establish joint arrangements for assessing the risk from sex offenders including the effective sharing of information. Health Services are included in relation to Mentally Disordered Restricted Patients.

As a lead agency, East Ayrshire Social Work Justice Service is responsible for managing individuals while they are subject to statutory supervision. Once this ends the Police become the lead agency and together provide robust risk assessments and management plan to address the identified risks.

The 3 management levels in MAPPA are:

- **Level 1:** Routine Risk Management – mainly single agency;
- **Level 2:** Multi-Agency Risk Management;
- **Level 3:** Multi Agency Public Protection Panels (MAPPP).

Those managed under these arrangements may be in custody or community and the numbers of those subject to these arrangements are detailed below.

MAPPA Cases in East Ayrshire 2023-24

	Number of MAPPA cases in East Ayrshire at 31 March 2023	Number of MAPPA cases in East Ayrshire at 31 March 2024
Level 1	200 (116 community; 84 prison)	190 (148 community; 42 prison)
Level 2	24 (5 community; 19 prison)	5 (2 community; 3 prison)
Level 3	1 (0 community, 1 Prison)	0 (0 community; 0 prison)
Total	234	195

Justice social work services works with individuals to address their harmful behaviour to reduce the risk of future offending and through robust risk management plans along with partners enhance community safety.

There were a total of 18 MAPPA referrals received in 2023-24, of which one was not progressed and two were repeat referrals. Over the reporting period there were 114 Registered Sex Offender (RSO) notifications received, an average of 29 per quarter (a reduction on 55 per quarter in the previous year), of these, 78% were new cases to MAPPA.

Challenges and Improvements

There are a number of examples of good practice and success that demonstrate the commitment our workforce has to people who use our services, however there are still challenges facing our services and areas where improvements can be made. Our service improvement plans reached the end of their 2021-2024 lifespan during the reporting period. Work is now underway to identify emerging priorities for 2024-2027 in each of our services, with new Service Improvement Plans expected to be published August 2024.

The wellbeing of our residents and workforce have remained a priority in the past year as communities continue to grapple with the rising cost of living and the impact this has on health and wellbeing. We have seen demand for social work support increase in both children's and adult's service which has in turn increased pressure operationally. The current financial climate has also created significant challenges in the public sector due to the extent of budget reductions with pressure remaining on services to deliver more with less. We have remained focused on recruitment and retention to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, delivering the right care at the right time. Details of the steps we have taken in the past year to develop and care for the workforce are outlined in Section 7.

In 2022-23 we identified that The Promise was a key area of development, aiming to improve understanding and knowledge across the workforce. Work in this area has progressed with children's services continuing to embed the principles of The Promise in their work. Our Whole Systems Strategic Group developed a plan in line with The Promise in 2023-24 that aims to end the disproportionate criminalisation of care experienced children and young people.

Building on the multi-disciplinary focus of the previous year, we have now established 'Communities of Practice' in each locality area, bringing together different services to share knowledge and learning with a view to making improvements across East Ayrshire.

Our performance has shown improvements in a number of areas over the reporting period, including child protection registrations dropping considerably from the previous year; a consistently high proportion of Social Work reports to Court by the due date; unpaid work requirements being successfully completed within timescales, and a reduction in the number of homecare hours being delivered compared to 2022-23. We also recognise that there are a number of areas we need to focus on in 2024-25, such as the number of bed days being lost as a result of delayed discharge; continuing to focus on increasing the number of foster carers; and supporting recovery to reduce drug use in East Ayrshire.

It is evident that whilst all services across the Partnership are facing similar challenges, they are committed to continuous improvement, supporting the development of our workforce and supporting our communities in a holistic and person-centred way.

Risk Management

Detailed service level risk registers are well established across the Partnership portfolio and represent a key component within our Service Improvement Plans. The risk registers are managed on the Pentana Performance system and contain information relating to key areas of risk, including: detailed descriptions, risk matrix scores (likelihood and severity), risk status and mitigating actions.

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



Complaints and Feedback

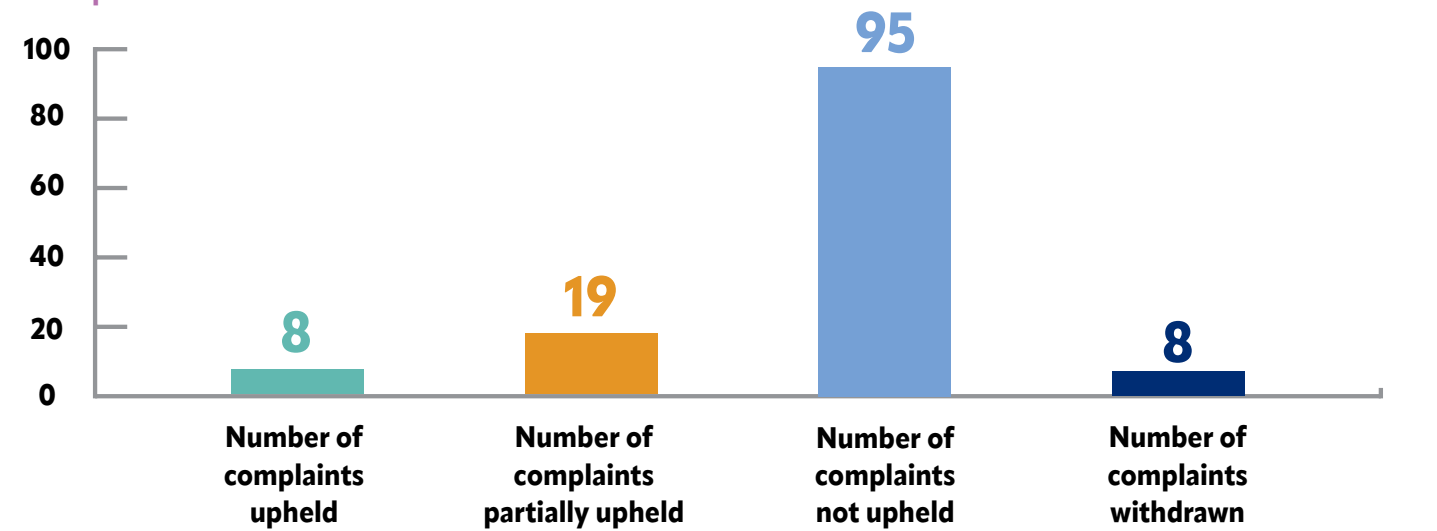
Our Complaints Handling Procedure is based on the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman’s standard model. The table below displays complaints closed at each stage over the last five years.

Complaints Closed At Each Stage as % of All Complaints

	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Stage 1	63	48%	44	43.6%	57	52.3%	70	58.3%	72	51.4%
Stage 2	61	46%	54	53.5%	33	30.3%	38	31.7%	48	34.4%
Escalated *	3	2.3%	20	(19.8%)	14	12.8%	5	4.2%	10	7.1%
Total	124	93.9%	98	97.1%	104	95.4%	113	94.2%	130	92.9%
Open Complaints**	8	6.1%	3	2.9%	5	4.6%	7	5.8%	10	7.1%

* 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. From 2021/22 onwards, escalated complaints are a separate category.

Complaint Outcomes 2023/24



As at 31 March 2024, 140 complaints were recorded: 10 (7.1%) complaints remained open, and 130 (92.9%) closed. Across all stages, 8 (5.7%) complaints were upheld, 19 (13.6%) were partially upheld, 95 (67.9%) were not upheld and 8 (5.7%) were withdrawn.

Of the complaints that were upheld or partially upheld these related to a range of areas including: Care at Home provision and expectations of care; expectations of family contact/communication; disagreements with assessments; support provision from Justice Services; and poor or inappropriate communication between practitioners and service users.

Complaints provide us with the opportunity to reflect on good practices and further build on them. We view complaints as a means of feedback and an opportunity for self-reflection as we investigate them, and they inform continuous improvement and learning.

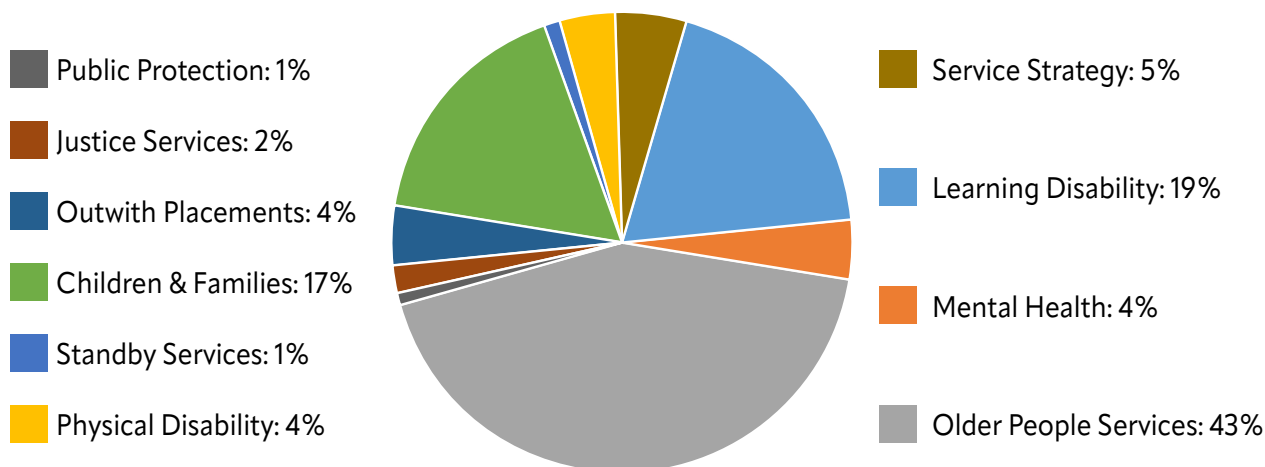
2023-24 is the third year of complaints handling under the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) revised approach whereby social work and social care complaints are handled under the Local Authority Complaints Handling Procedure. Two aspects of handling complaints, in 2023-24, have provided the following opportunities for learning:

- **Timescales:** The number of complaints has again increased in the last year, rising by 17% from 2022-23. Despite the increase in both the number and size of complaints, they have continued to be handled within the given timescales at each stage.
- **Reviews:** This reporting period as an increase in the number of complaints being escalated from 6 in 2022-23 to 10 in 2023-24. Of those that that were reviewed, nine were upheld and one was withdrawn. The SPSO also provided decisions on seven escalated to them, with one complaint progressing to formal review, resulting in a professional guidance note being issued to ensure that all professional views are considered in future complaints.

6. Resources

The overall net social work budget within the Health and Social Care Partnership is £111.858 million. The gross spend (after income from NHS and service charges) is £140.245 million, which breaks down into the following services:

Gross Budgeted Expenditure 2023/24



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

Service Area	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m
Community Care	83.757	93.209	98.181
Children and Families	24.202	26.732	28.914
Justice	2.802	2.953	3.492
Public Protection	1.687	1.937	1.995
Service Strategy	6.357	7.704	7.663
Totals	118.805	132.535	140.245

The current and forthcoming period is 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.

In order to achieve financial balance, whilst continuing to deliver on key outcomes and legislative requirements, the Social Work Service has achieved significant savings in excess of £33 million between 2010/11 and 2023/24. Approved savings achieved over the last five years by service area are displayed below:

Service Area	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m
Community Care	0.860	1.345	1.528	1.672	2.521
Children & Families	0.337	0.455	0.037	0.000	0.465
Justice	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Service Strategy	0.233	0.116	0.011	0.000	0.070
Totals	1.430	1.916	1.576	1.672	3.056

In 2023/24, the Social Care Service was £6.623m over the approved annual budget. Going forward into 2024/25, the challenges remain consistent, particularly:

Risks	Potential Consequences:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing demand / complexity of care Demographic changes Inflationary pressures (pay / contractual) Non-achievement of savings Lead Partnership pressures impact Revisions to the Integration Scheme Wider political / economic uncertainty Impact on performance / strategic planning priorities Impact on services and people who use them Managing public expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased waiting times to access care Delays in hospital discharge Greater risk to those unsupported in community Additional strain on unpaid carers Impact on ability to respond to pressures Impact on IJB Reserve balances

These key risks and potential consequences represent a challenging position in 2024/25 and going forward. It is important however to recognise opportunities in terms of reset and future planning via the transformational change programme to ensure financial sustainability going forward. This will ensure alignment of budget with strategic planning priorities, with commissioning of services that not only meet immediate need, but also facilitate preventative activity that supports population wide health improvement and addresses inequalities. Seeing this in the context of longer-term demographic change will be important.

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 £109.634m has been delegated to East Ayrshire IJB for 2024/25.

Integration Joint Board	£m	£m
2023/24 Approved budget allocation		108.040
Baseline adjustments		1.077
2023/24 Revised budget		109.117
Additional Scottish Government funding (£241.5m):		
Adult Social Care Workers Living Wage baseline to £12.00 (£100m)	0.000	
Free Personal and Nursing Care uprating (£11.5m)	0.156	
Sub total: A	0.156	
Other Scottish Government funding adjustments:		
Kinship and Foster Care (£16m)	0.420	
Self-Directed Support (£0.176m)	0.005	
Scottish Disability Assistance	(0.103)	
Sub total: B	0.322	
East Ayrshire Council Funding:		
Protection and Learning Reviews	0.025	
Independent Protection Chairs Uplift	0.004	
Prevention of Violence Against Women	0.010	
Sub total: C	0.039	
Additional delegated resources: A + B + C		0.517
2024/25 Budget allocation		109.634

The £230m uplift for Adult Social Care Workers Living Wage was not distributed to Councils for pass through to IJBs as part of the Local Government December 2023 settlement figures. As a consequence, the Council's 'Setting the Revenue Budget 2024/25' report highlights that this funding will be passed across additionally once the figures had been confirmed. The East Ayrshire share of this funding has now been confirmed by the Scottish Government as £5.497m and will increase the £109.634m approved delegated budget to £115.131m. This pass through of funding to the IJB will be actioned as an in-year adjustment in 2024/25.

Work has been undertaken through the Budget Working Group to identify spending commitments for 2024/25. Commitments include "must do" commitments, which require to be funded, as well as a range of unavoidable national and local cost pressures. After taking account of the various pressures, partially offset by additional funding, there are net identified pressures totalling £3.768m. This is after taking account of anticipated reductions in 2023/24 baseline pressures. These net budget pressures will be offset by additional savings proposals totalling £2.693m, as well as an anticipated draw on uncommitted balances of £1.075m. It is important to highlight that any draw on uncommitted balances will be non-recurring and without further action will represent a baseline budget pressure going forward into 2025/26.

A summary of commitments / pressures against the additional funding allocation is presented below:

	Council Commissioned Services (£m)
Pressures:	
Baseline pressures	2.201
Additional cost pressures	7.976
Third Sector grant funding	0.017
Cross Charging uplift (Resource Transfer / JP)	(0.332)
Total identified pressures (gross)	9.862
Charges uplifts:	
Uplifts on charges for services	(0.080)
	(0.080)
Funding:	
Scottish Government "pass through" funding	(5.653)
Scottish Government funding – other	(0.322)
Partner funding contributions	(0.039)
Total funding	(6.014)
Total identified pressures (net) (A)	3.768
Savings proposals:	
Children's Health, Care and Justice	(0.296)
Community Health and Care – Locality	(1.034)
Community Health and Care – Wellbeing and Recovery	(1.297)
Service Strategy	(0.066)
Total savings proposals (C)	(2.693)
Uncommitted balances (non-recurring) C	(1.075)
Balance (A+B+C)	0.000

The £109.634m approved budget allocation increases to £111.755m when delegated functions managed out with the Partnership are included:

	£m
2024/25 Budget allocation	109.634
Delegated functions:	
Equipment and adaptations (HRA)	1.285
Health Improvement (Vibrant Communities)	0.338
Social Work Transport (Facilities and Property Management)	0.498
2024/25 Total budget allocation	111.755

Service reconfiguration/transformation work is being taken forward through the Strategic Commissioning Board, which provides oversight and direction of the transformation programme. Transformational change is a key aspect of the IJBs response to managing increasing demand and this will continue, with services being shaped around remobilise, recovery and redesign principles and delivered within delegated resources. The IJB will continue to work with its partners as part of a collegiate approach to ensure whole system viability.

The transformational change programme will be progressed further during 2024/25, with funding deployed where business cases justify short-term investment to design more cost-effective service models which will be a key requirement given the challenges underlying the balanced budget proposal for 2024/25, and going forward, including reduced flexibility within uncommitted general reserve balances. Cross-cutting reviews and service transformation aligned to investment cases and service re-design key components of the transformational change programme. Where proposals require changes to policy or services, they will be presented to the IJB for approval. This principal applies both to NHS and Council commissioned services.

A significant sum of money has been set aside by East Ayrshire Council that can be accessed for innovation, and early intervention and prevention opportunities. There will be strict criteria around this funding with an over-riding aim to support proposals to reconfigure services, reduce costs and ensure financial sustainability, through a reduction in demand for services, while recognising the demographic changes we are seeing across the Council area.

Ongoing monitoring and review are key components of the transformational change programme. Any proposals to further reduce costs and deliver savings, which require changes to policy, or service provision, will be presented to the IJB for approval during the financial year. This will require to be viewed in the context of delivering the Strategic Plan.

Whilst there is currently no anticipated impact on the Strategic Plan in 2024/25, consideration of how financial sustainability impacts on the Strategic Plan 2021-30 in its current form, will require to be reviewed during the course of the year given the medium / longer term financial position outlined previously.

7. Workforce

Workforce Planning

The social work and social care workforce is our greatest asset. Planning for the workforce is critical to achieving the right workforce, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time. The Partnership has a dedicated Workforce Planning Lead to oversee this process.

Workforce planning is directed towards supporting the delivery of the Partnership's Strategic Plan 2021-30 and meeting the challenges of recovery, growth and transformation identified in the National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland.

As we continue to move towards the growth and transformation of our workforce, we aim to build staffing capacity, develop knowledge and skills, and provide enhanced opportunities for career entry and progression.

The Partnership's Workforce Plan 2022-25 sets out the vision for our workforce and supports the ambitions for recovery, growth and transformation. The Plan is based on the five pillars of the workforce journey: Plan, Attract, Train, Employ and Nurture.

The key priorities of the Workforce Plan 2022-25 are:

- To ensure that workforce planning is evidence based, that we are investing in a talent pipeline to meet future workforce needs;
- To equip our workforce with the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver high-quality health and social care services, and;
- To be an inclusive, empowering and supportive employer.

Our current workforce challenges mirror other areas of the country, in recruitment, absence and retention. Work is ongoing to ensure that the Partnership is an employer of choice offering competitive terms and conditions, career progression opportunities and a strong emphasis on workforce wellbeing. A programme of recruitment campaigns and events is well underway to meet these challenges.

Caring for our Workforce is defined as a strategic priority, with key actions around the provision of training and support to enable our workforce to do their jobs well. Through our comprehensive programme of wellbeing support we are also committed to meeting the wellbeing needs of our workforce.

The Health and Social Care Partnership Workforce Planning Board is now well-established as a forum for discussion, information, professional guidance and decision making on workforce planning. The Board is leading on delivering the Workforce Plan 2022-25 to shape our workforce and ensure that planning is robust, evidence based and linked to service and financial planning.

Significant investment has been made to enhance and promote new career pathways. The Social Work Trainee Programme, for example, is supporting employees to undertake accredited training, leading to new career opportunities. The Graduate Intern and Modern Apprenticeship Programmes are also contributing towards developing the young workforce, providing new routes into employment and training within health and social care.

A Career Pathways Framework has been developed for the Care at Home workforce, aimed at both internal employees and external service providers. The development of training materials, including online modules, is also underway to support career progression.

Arrangements are currently underway across services to support the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019, applying the Common Staffing Method pyramid to support professional judgement and data-driven tools.

WTE by Employer as at January 2023

At January 2024 our workforce stood at 2316.9 WTE across 7 service delivery areas; Business Support, Children’s Health Care and Justice Services, Directorate, IJB Finance, Locality Health & Care Services; Wellbeing & Recovery and Primary Care. Locality Health and Care is the largest service delivery area with 1020.5 WTE, however this has decreased by 18.5% from the previous year (1252.0 WTE at January 2023).

	EAC	NHS	Total
Allied Health Professionals		224.4	224.4
Business Support	96.9	25.1	122.8
Children’s Health, Care and Justice Services	285.2	108.7	393.9
Directorate	4.0		4.0
IJB Finance	31.0		31.0
Locality Health and Care Services	660.4	360.1	1020.5
Wellbeing and Recovery	269.1	87.2	356.3
Primary and Urgent Care Services		164.0	164.0
Total:	1346.6	970.3	2316.9

Work is ongoing to ensure the partnership is an employer of choice with competitive terms and conditions, career progression opportunities and a strong emphasis on the wellbeing of the workforce.

Training, Learning and Development

Organisational Development

East Ayrshire Council continues to provide Organisational Development (OD) support to the Health and Social Care Partnership employees. A number of bespoke OD events and programmes were delivered to both Social Work and NHS teams within the partnership throughout the reporting period, including Team Manager Development Programmes, DISC Development Sessions, Wellbeing and Resilience Development Sessions, Team Coaching and various other Team Development Sessions.

Council employees within the partnership are supported to identify and access all relevant learning and development opportunities during supervision and within their FACE Time annual review and development process. All employees have access to a wide range of skills development learning and development courses including face to face and online learning, all of which are aligned to our FACE Qualities and Behaviours. The Coaching Programme, which promotes a relational way of working by empowering the people we serve and communities, continues to be well attended by partnership employees. Attendance at both the New & Aspiring Leadership Programme and Leader as Coach Programme has also been positive and supports the aims of the Workforce Plan in recruitment and succession planning in terms of leadership roles.

Practice Learning

Throughout 2023-24 a range of social work professional and technical development activity took place. These activities offered social work practitioners the opportunity to cover diverse content and come together, providing opportunities for professional practice discussions with a view to increasing knowledge, enhancing skills and have critical reflection of practice and interventions.

Practitioner feedback:

- **Care and Risk Management:** 1 day course, initially delivered as a pilot, 100% of attendees found this relevant to their role
- **Principles of Social Work Practice (Family Support Practitioners/Support Assistants):** 2-day course, 100% of attendees found this relevant to their role
- **ASP Role of Second Worker:** Half-day course delivered on four occasions over 2023-24, 100% of attendees found this relevant to their role

face

84
employees
completed (or
in the process
of) **Coaching
Programme**

35
employees
completed (or in
the process of) **New & Aspiring
Leadership
Programme**

15
employees
completed (or in
the process of) **Leader as Coach**



*"Great course and lots
to reflect upon and
influence practice"*

*"I have an understanding
now of how an
investigation is carried
out and my purpose and
role of 2nd worker"*

*"Decision making
tree will help when
completing assessments
and making decisions"*

The Practice Learning team have continued to support the trainee social worker scheme as it continues for a third year. Six employees enrolled on the Postgraduate Social Work Diploma programme last year and have been supported to achieve their qualification. They will move into their new posts later this year. 11 practitioners were also supported gain additional qualifications, with a further two commencing their programme in January:



- **2** practitioners completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Child Welfare & Protection
- **3** practitioners completed the Mental Health Officer Award
- **6** practitioners completed the Practice Development Award: Practice Learning
- **2** practitioners commenced the Postgraduate Certificate in Adult Support & Protection in January 2024

There continues to be competing demands in supporting social work practitioner development activity, as we move into 2024-25 the SSSC will be introducing a new 4-part register: Qualified Social Workers, Student Social Workers, Children’s Service and Social Care Workforce. These each bring new continuous professional learning requirements as well as mandatory supported practice for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) in their first year. This will result in the existing East Ayrshire programme to undergo a full review and refresh to address the upcoming changes.

Self-Directed Support (SDS)

Following on from development work carried out with Matter of Focus in 2022-23, The Thinking Differently team have been working alongside Emma Miller to progress ‘Good Conversation’ work on outcome focused and strengths-based conversations with practitioners delivering SDS.

What we do	Who with	How they feel	What they learn and gain	What they do differently	What difference does this make?
Have good conversations with people we support about what matters to them, their strengths, and how supports and services can help	People we support, their unpaid carers and families	Safe, listened to, valued, respected, included and hopeful	People know what matters to them and have a plan that shows how supports and services will work together with them to realise this	People put their knowledge and skills into practice, and take action to improve their lives in ways that matter to them	People make progress towards their personal outcomes and sustain or improve their health and wellbeing
We explore, signpost and connect to natural supports that are available in people's communities			People gain access to a range of community based supports and services		
We work collaboratively to plan supports, services and TEC solutions that address the needs and aspirations of the people we support	Staff, partners, volunteers and people in the community	Staff feel motivated, confident, informed, engaged and supported in their role	People gain knowledge, confidence and skills that will empower them to make progress towards their personal outcomes	People get the right support that is timely and appropriate and builds on their own strengths and natural supports	

National SDS standards and practice guidance emphasises the importance of relationship-based practice, staff autonomy and outcome focused and strengths based recording, which are promoted in the sessions being delivered across the workforce.

In March 2024 a total of 6 workshops were carried out with practitioners from diverse teams across Kilmarnock and Cumnock. These sessions were underpinned by the principles of the exchange model of assessment and gave practitioners the opportunity to reflect on their practice and share information with one another.



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. The Safe and Together Implementation Plan is now in its fourth year and has continued to be supported by the Scottish Government through the Equally Safe Strategy.

Training has continued across the Partnership, and it is projected that 75% of key professionals involved in Child Protection processes will have accessed the appropriate level of training for their role by 2024-25.

Multi-agency evaluation activities have informed large-scale learning events which have communicated the Pan-Ayrshire vision for domestic abuse-informed practice and culture change. This has created a strong commitment to practice change which has been driven by the children's health and care service over the past year.

The Safe and Together Lead Officer has facilitated individual case consultations in both single and multi-agency cases which has been fundamental in supporting practitioners to make sense of complex situations and comprehensively understand risk through relationship-based approaches.

Social Care Learning Hub

The Social Care Learning (SCL) Hub has continued to develop governance and establish positive working relationships with services across the Partnership.

The SCL Hub have continued to deliver the 10 day induction to all new Community Care Officers (CCOs) joining the Partnership, delivering 12 courses to 150 officers in 2023-24. Overall, the SCL Hub has increased the skills and knowledge of the workforce, empowering them to deliver best practice, which in turn is starting to have a positive impact on the level of care and support offered to our communities.

At the end of 2023 the SCL Hub introduced the Playlist for Life Best Practice Day, following one of the Learning and Development Officers becoming certified to deliver the programme. Playlist for Best Life focuses on practitioners using music therapy techniques to support people with dementia, using playlists to aid with routine and memory. Full day training sessions for the workforce began in February 2024 with 24 people being fully trained so far.

Moving forward the SCL Hub looks offer their learning and training programmes from a dedicated multi-use learning and wellbeing space mid-2024. This will remove the challenges and limitations of booking venues that the service currently faces, as well as the financial limitations associate with venue hire.

CCO Feedback:

"Even although I have worked in this field for many years I learnt new things in this induction"

Training feedback:

"Absolutely crucial for the benefit of the people who attend day care"

The Social Care Learning Hub were awarded green for all SQA Standards following a recent inspection. Feedback was complimentary to the SQA/SVQ team within the hub, praising the quality of assessment and support offered by the in-house assessors.

Wellbeing

The wellbeing of our workforce is a key priority. We have dedicated wellbeing supports that staff are able to access, from counselling to mindfulness sessions.

Over the past year we have established

wellbeing spaces in each of our main Partnership buildings, where staff can go to take a break in a calming and comfortable environment.

Staff are also able to access Wellbeing Sessions hosted at Dumfries House where they can spend a half day experiencing holistic therapy taster sessions and learning about different methods to relax and de-stress. In 2023-24 there were 28 sessions delivered at Dumfries House, with 262 Partnership employees attending to support their health and wellbeing at work.

The '[Wellbeing in East Ayrshire](#)' webpage provides help and advice relating to various themes including: mental health and wellbeing, young people, parents and carers, physical and entertainment activities, financial assistance and contact information for numerous organisations which can provide additional support.

A wide range of wellbeing support are available to employees of the Partnership, and our dedicated Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator has developed and delivered a range of supports. They will work to deliver an information and advice service to all staff, focused on being holistic and person-centred, that will offer a friendly and confidential space to discuss all matters that are impacting on health and wellbeing. Staff will be able to self-refer to this service by contacting the Health and Wellbeing coordinator directly.

Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity training is mandatory for all employees and is delivered through an online training course designed in partnership with the East Ayrshire Council Organisational Development Team and Corporate Officer (Equality and Diversity). Face-to-face courses are also delivered for those employees who are unable to undertake the e-learning course. We continue to provide all our staff with access to appropriate training to ensure that we build staff confidence, and professional assurance, to deliver high quality accessible services to the people of East Ayrshire and a range of e-learning courses are currently available to raise awareness of equality issues in the workplace and in relation to Service delivery. These include:

- LGBT Training
- Respectful Relationships
- PREVENT
- Nil By Mouth



A wide range of other equalities-based training and development opportunities are offered to Partnership staff through different partner agencies, including Women's Aid, Vibrant Communities, Social Work Learning and Development Team, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Corporate Equalities Section and the Organisational Development Team. These cover guidance and awareness training for working with vulnerable people who may be covered by protected characteristics. Some of the training courses provided over the last number of years include:

- Awareness of the Adult Support and Protection Act 2007
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Autism Awareness/ Learning Disability/ Dementia / Parkinson's Awareness
- Understanding the Dynamics of Domestic Abuse
- Children & Young People's Experiences of Domestic Abuse
- Working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Various Welfare rights and benefits courses (including awareness of benefits for older people)

The Partnership is represented on the East Ayrshire Council Equalities Forum, which is comprised of individuals and members of groups representing all of the protected characteristics. The Equalities Forum meets twice per year, and an annual equalities event is also held, which reviews achievements in the previous year and identifies issues for consideration in the future. Equalities Forum members have discussed and debated a wide range of issues, including communication, promoting citizenship, transport issues, Integrated Health and Social Care and the potential impact of Welfare Reform. The Forum continues to grow in membership with the group widened to represent religious establishments, Tenant's Associations, and LGBTQ+ groups. We continue to undertake Equality Impact Assessments on any new policies or budget proposals that are likely to have an impact on local people, the workforce or other stakeholders.

During the reporting period the Practice Learning and Development team have supported practitioners to access 'Passion 4 Fusion' sessions to develop cultural competence in their work with African families. Moving forward in 2024-25, they will launch a new 'Anti-Racist Practice and Equality' 2 day training programme which is currently under development, this will be rolled out to all social work practitioners in East Ayrshire.

8. Looking Forward

Looking forward to 2024-25 there is no doubt that this will be another challenging year for the delivery of social work and social care services. It is likely that across all service areas that we will see and experience significant change. This change will be required in order to support the workforce meet increasing demand and complexity in the face of diminishing resources.

The work around the National Care Service (NCS) continues and despite significant work from Scottish Government and key partners the way forward seems uncertain. What the NCS will look like remains uncertain in terms of the scope of services to be included and this challenges the identity and cohesion of social work services. This uncertainty will undoubtedly have an impact on a workforce that has experienced so much over the last few years.

There are a significant number of national consultations expected throughout the year, with a focus on Children's Hearing reform, Moving On from Care, Adults with Incapacity, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence but to name a few. The extent of consultation that is taking place where social work and social care services have an interest is an indicator of ongoing system and process reform driven by Scottish Government that impacts on local service delivery.

As set out in the report, the financial position for the Health and Social Care Partnership is incredibly challenging with the final outturn profiling a significant overspend situation with the financial settlement having no real terms increase. Over the course of the coming year there is no doubt that social work and social care services will require to be prioritised for those most in need, with a review of the eligibility criteria setting out what this will look like.

In managing the challenging financial context, the increase in demand and complexity there is an imperative for social work and social care services to go through a further period of review and change in order to work smarter, not harder, to deliver for those who need to access services in order to live their best possible lives. It is important to recognise that services to people in East Ayrshire will need to be delivered in a different way in order to be financially viable and sustainable into the future.

As Chief Social Work Officer it is my responsibility to promote and hold to the core high quality social work practice that meets the needs of people in fulfilment of statutory responsibilities and functions. I have responsibility to both the people who require to access social work services and to those who deliver them. Given the ongoing challenges anticipated, the role of CSWO will be crucial in providing both the Partnership and Council best professional social work advice.

We will continue to strive to deliver high quality social work services to the people in East Ayrshire. Some of the key areas that will be taken forward include but are not exclusive to:

- **Workforce** – our workforce is our most valuable and crucial asset and through smart workforce planning and making East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership an employer of choice we will continue to develop our recruitment of the best people to support our communities;
- **Workforce** – we will continue to develop our learning and development offer to the workforce based on what they tell us the need and in fulfilment of the new requirements for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) and the managers that are required to support them;
- **Wellbeing** – through our wellbeing coordinator we will seek to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the needs of the workforce through ongoing engagement and seek to develop supports that meet these;
- **Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE)** – across the services involved with the GIRFE our services with people to the core;
- **Older Adults** – we will continue to develop and implement our approach to reablement which will support more people to regain independence and mitigate the need for care at home support;

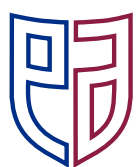
- **Mental Health** – a review of the way in which mental health services has been offered in East Ayrshire will be concluded in 2024-25, with implementation of the new approach taken forward in order to meet the increasing demand for this service;
- **Learning Disabilities** – a review of the delivery of supports to adults with learning disabilities will take place in 2024-25 in order to ensure that those who require support, are supported in a proportionate manner;
- **Addictions** – support to people affected by alcohol and drug use continues to be an ongoing area of focus given the disproportionate number of drug related deaths that East Ayrshire sees;
- **Trauma responsive practice** – Justice social work service have taken a lead on developing a trauma responsive workforce and this approach will be developed and upscaled across services throughout 2024-25;
- **Children's Houses** – Our children's houses have experienced some challenges over the last year as such over the coming year we will seek to implement the key recommendations of the best value service review in order to support staffing and our approaches to ensuring the excellent delivery of care to our children;
- **Fostering and adoption** – we will develop a recruitment programme in order to increase the number and range of foster carers available locally;
- **Children and Families** – we will seek to implement an approach founded on restorative practice in collaboration with our key partner, Children 1st in order to maintain children within their families and communities;
- **Quality assurance and improvement** – we will seek to develop and implement a sophisticated approach that supports an understanding of how well we know ourselves and how we may improve services; and
- **UNCRC incorporation** – across all services we will seek to implement UNCRC, place the rights and voice of children to the core of all that we do.

This is not an exhaustive list of the key actions that we need to take forward but a flavour of some of the activity that features across all service improvement plans. As always I will conclude by showing my appreciation to the workforce that supports our communities to live their best lives and support people who are at risk of exploitation and harm.



Marion MacAulay
Chief Social Work Officer

July 2024



East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

