

Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2024/25



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1. Foreword



It gives me great pleasure to present my seventh Annual Report as Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) for East Ayrshire, reflecting on the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report provides an overview of social work and social care services and practice within the context of the delivery of statutory functions.

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. A range of performance data, highlighting areas of good performance, but also areas where performance requires to improve is also provided.

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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Marion MacAulay'.

Marion MacAulay

Chief Social Work Officer /

Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice Services



2. Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions

Role of the Chief Social Work Officer

The requirement for every local authority to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer is contained within Section 3 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. This is one of a number of statutory requirements in relation to posts, roles or duties with which local authorities must comply.

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 CSWO has 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. 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.

Delivery of Statutory Functions

The Scottish Government has put in place statutory guidance relating to the role of the Chief Social Work Officer that clarifies:

- role and function
- competencies, scope and responsibilities
- accountability and reporting arrangements

The Scottish Government has also preserved the statutory role of the Chief Social Work Officer within the terms of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014.

The format for this report is in line with guidance that was issued in June 2025 by the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government.

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.

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/Partnership). The 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 and 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 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 Forum is a standalone group in relation to its function for professional governance for social work and social care in that it doesn't seek authorisation for its business through any other governance structure.

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.



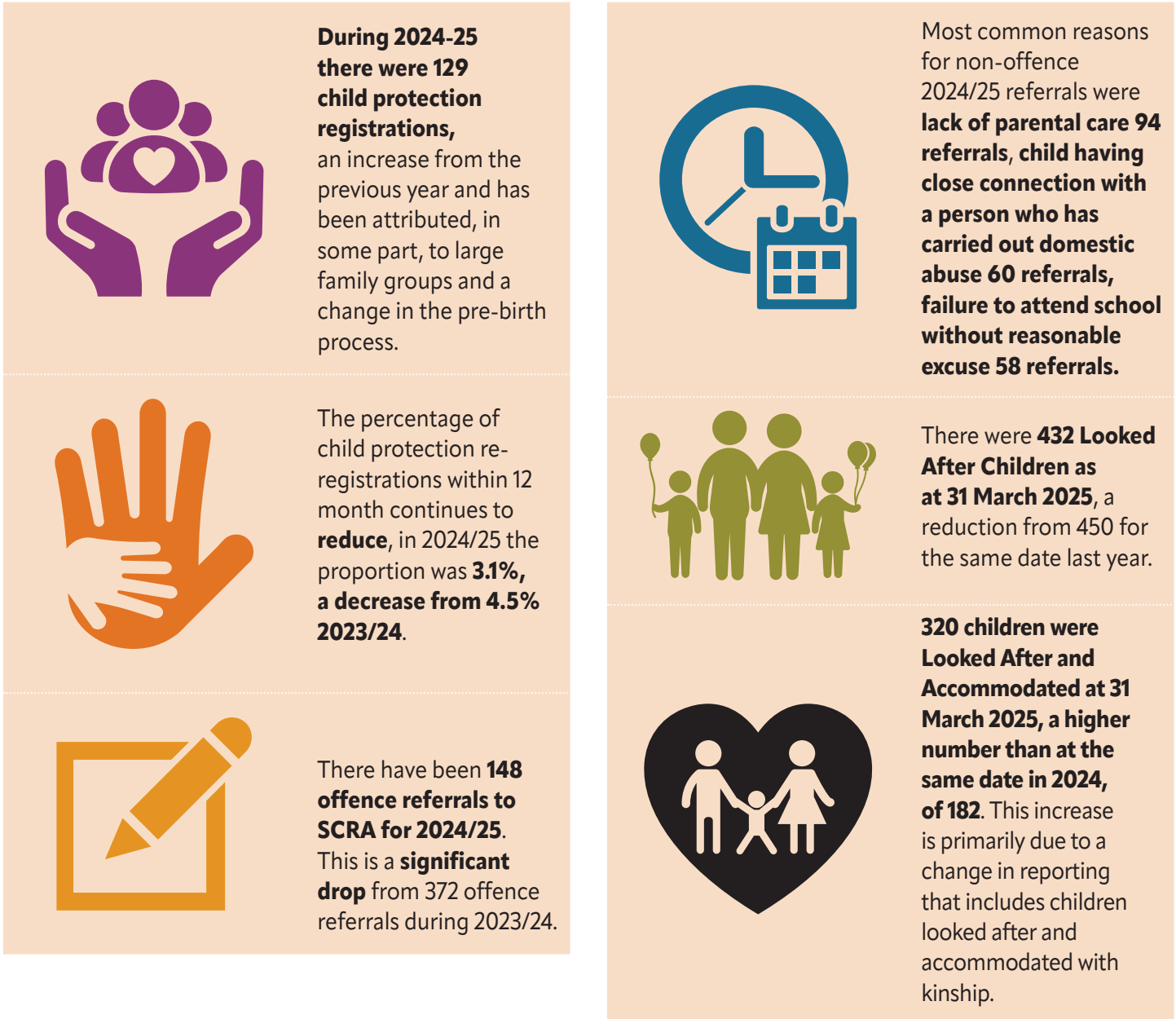
3. Service Quality and Performance

Performance in 2024-2025

A well-established framework is in place to monitor the performance of social work services delivered across social work and social care on an ongoing basis. A comprehensive suite of performance measures aligned to local and national strategic priorities, in addition to key service improvement actions, comprise core elements of this framework. This content is updated on a regular basis 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 performance reporting system (Ideagen Risk).

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 and financial challenges. This commitment is reflected in our continual cycle of self-evaluation, reflective discussions, audits and reviews, which continued to be implemented throughout 2024-25 across all social care settings to identify key areas for focus and improvement.

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





840 of Social Work reports were submitted to the Courts by the due date during 2024-25. This was **higher** than the 97.6% for 2023-24.



63.1% of personal carers are qualified to Scottish Social Services Council standard, **up** 1.6% from 2023-24.



95.1% of the unpaid work requirement was completed on time during 2024-25, **down** 2.7% from the previous year.



97.3% of older people aged 65+ lived in housing rather than a care home or hospital setting during 2024-25, which is unchanged from the previous year.



96.1% of Community Payback Orders were successfully completed within the year, 3.6% **higher** than the previous year.



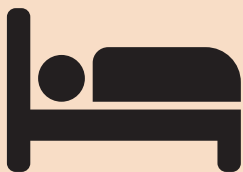
As at March 2025, there were **1,321 Care at Home service users aged 65+**, slightly lower than 1,373 from the same date the previous year.



Foster carer recruitment as at 31 March 2025 was 65, **down** from 69 in the previous year.



As at March 2025, there were **688 care home residents aged 65+**, a **slight increase** from 686 in the previous year.



11,586 bed days were lost as a result of delayed discharge during 2024-25, an **increase** of 7.6% from 2023-24.

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.

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 care 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.

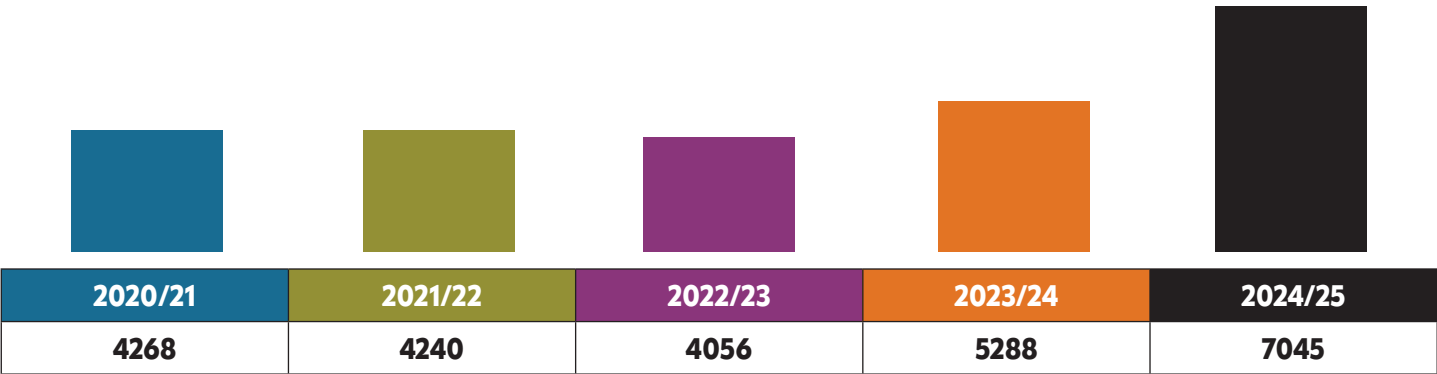
Our performance has shown improvements in a number of areas over the reporting period, including a reduction in the number of offence referrals to SCRA; a consistently high proportion of Social Work reports to Court by the due date and unpaid work requirements being successfully completed within timescales. We also recognise, that there are a number of areas we need to focus on in 2025-26, such as the number of bed days being lost as a result of delayed discharge and continuing to focus on increasing the number of foster carers.

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.

Children and Families

Demand for support has increased significantly, with the Children and Families Service receiving 7,045 referrals in 2024-25, up from 5,288. Analysis of the data has shown that there is significant need for crisis intervention at the point of Request for Assistance. This has led to a shift in service delivery, from our original aim of early intervention to crisis intervention and prevention of escalation.

Number of referrals received 2020 - 2025



More families require detailed multi-agency plans at an earlier stage than is currently the case and through better understanding of our data, service resources can be used to better support our children and families. Supporting families to identify their strengths and developing a plan to support meaningful change by treating families as experts in their own lives will support strength-based and risk-balanced practice, underpinned by children's rights.

Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm

Within this reporting period, a Joint Inspection of Services for Children at Risk of Harm took place between September 2024 and April 2025. Inspectors gathered and reviewed evidence to provide a formal evaluation of quality indicator 2.1: impact on children and young people. The evaluation of the quality indicator was Good and the inspection highlighted areas of strength including:

- Children and young people were safer because of effective recognition and initial response to risk and concerns.
- Quality multi-agency training and guidance helped staff to understand what they had to do to work together to keep children and young people safe.
- Almost all children and young people told us that they felt safe where they lived all or most of the time.
- Children and young people experienced nurturing relationships with staff. Staff understood the importance of these relationships in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people.
- Most children and young people were supported to share their views. Staff were creative in the ways in which they helped children and young people of different ages and abilities to express their views.

Areas of improvement were also identified to ensure improved consistency in experiences and outcomes for children and young people at risk of harm:

- Whilst most children and young people had the opportunity to participate fully in decisions affecting them, a few did not.
- Although children and young people were benefiting from the support they received, some did not receive the help they needed at the right time or in a way that fully met their needs.
- It was evident staff and individual services were providing help and support to children and young people, which made a positive difference to their lives. However, there was limited information to demonstrate the difference services were making to the lives of children and young people.

Improvements identified by the Inspection were already known to the Community Planning Partnership and work had begun to progress this work. An Improvement Plan has also been developed and will inform learning and development across social work services.

Fostering

The Fostering Service has experienced significant demands this reporting period. This comes at a time of significant challenge in respect of foster carer recruitment and retention across the country. East Ayrshire have been able to conclude two fostering assessments in this reporting period, and project further new approvals early in the next period. Currently, there are 65 households offering a range of care to our young people and a further 4 were approved during the reporting period. There has been a reduction from 69 approved households in the previous year.

The service has updated its website and produced a new local campaign to capitalise on new interest from the public. Whilst also linking into national efforts, led by the Scottish Government, to improve fostering recruitment rates. This is in tandem with a national recruitment campaign, due to launch on 12 May 2025.

To ensure the voices of carers and children and heard, the service has consolidated efforts by ensuring that most foster carer reviews are being held within 12 months. The service has made significant strides in identifying and approving 'Familial Short Break' carers, to provide short breaks to children in our care. A number of our children and young people have been permanently matched with their foster carers over the past year, recognising the drive to create stable childhoods in the service.

The fostering and adoption services also welcomed a new Independent Panel Chairperson.



Kinship

The service continued to grow and develop, responding to a significant demand for assessment of prospective kinship carers and providing intensive support for kinship families facing change and challenges. The service remains connected to national developments in this area of practice, including adopting the Scottish Government Kinship Assessment Framework.

In 2023, there were 239 Kinship carers, this has now reduced to 227 kinship carers in East Ayrshire in 2024.

East Ayrshire celebrated Kinship Care Week, through promoting the What Now? Booklet. A local Kinship Carer event took place in Kilmarnock with many carers in attendance.

Adoption

Working alongside carers, the service took part in the first 'Online Adoption Exchange Day' in August 2024. This helped to provide adopters with a good understanding of our children and was a successful means of progressing discussions between local authorities and prospective adopters. One adopter was approved within this reporting period and three children matched with adoptive families. The adoption service has continued to receive enquiries from those interested in becoming adopters, as well as progressing adoption assessments.

The service works alongside East Ayrshire Advocacy Services to better understand the needs of birth parents whose children have entered the care system seeking ways of offering direct support to birth parents.

Children's Houses

Over the past year, there has been a focus on ensuring our workforce is trauma informed and able to understand needs as they arise. We continue to work closely with partners to create a web of support around our houses, carers and young people.

Our children's houses continue to ensure that our young people have all the opportunities and experiences of their peers. We are keen to see our young people participating in their communities and having their voices heard in relation to what it means to be care experienced.

Promise Participation and Engagement Team

Despite changes to the Promise Participation team, our care experienced young people have continued to be supported to maintain the Care Experienced Cabinet and see it function and grow. Recently co-creating a new 'Terms of Reference' or Charter, they agreed parameters for the functions and how the Cabinet reports back to our young people. Further embedding the aspirations and values of 'The Promise' across our services remains a key priority for the Partnership.

Children and young people are also currently working on a refresh of the original East Ayrshire Connecting Voices 'Promise', including some of the original authors, alongside other younger children and young people. 'ArtClub?', the co-curated group led by care-experienced young people won the UK Parliament Speaker's Art Fund.

Bairn's Hoose

The Ayrshire Bairns Hoose Affiliate Partnership has received funding over 2024/25 to support our ambition for a Bairns Hoose in Ayrshire. The Ayrshire Affiliate has developed several key workstreams to take forward the Bairns Hoose standards and our commitment to justice and recovery for children. Those key workstreams are Participation; Places and Spaces; Trauma Interview and Recovery; Bairns Hoose Implementation; and Quality Assurance.

Each of the workstreams has a role to play in achieving our ambitions for the infants, children and young people across Ayrshire who have been harmed. The Participation Group has supported and strongly influenced what a physical Bairns Hoose across Ayrshire should look like. Coupled with this we have the invaluable learning from our delivery



partner Children First who have a wealth of learning through the implementation of Scotland’s first Bairns Hoose in North Strathclyde. Extensive scoping of potential Bairns Hoose sites across Ayrshire has taken place over 2024.

Whole System Approach

Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) has remained a key element of the Whole System Approach. There were a total number of 334 referrals made to EEI between January 2024 and December 2024. This figure is a significant increase over recent years. This should be seen as a positive in East Ayrshire’s approach to diverting children away from formal justice systems and aiming to provide earlier intervention.

In 2024, most young people supported at Court were known to social work and most had care experience. This highlights the concern around the overrepresentation of care experienced young people within the Justice system. It also demonstrates that more work is required in addressing these concerns and helping support our children and young people in care and ensuring that a trauma informed approach is being undertaken.

The service is committed to attending all our Initial Custody Reviews/Whole System Reviews within 72-hours in line with best practice. This year we have continued to provide ‘welcome home packages’ to children and young people leaving secure care or custody. In 2024, the service supported two children within Secure Care.

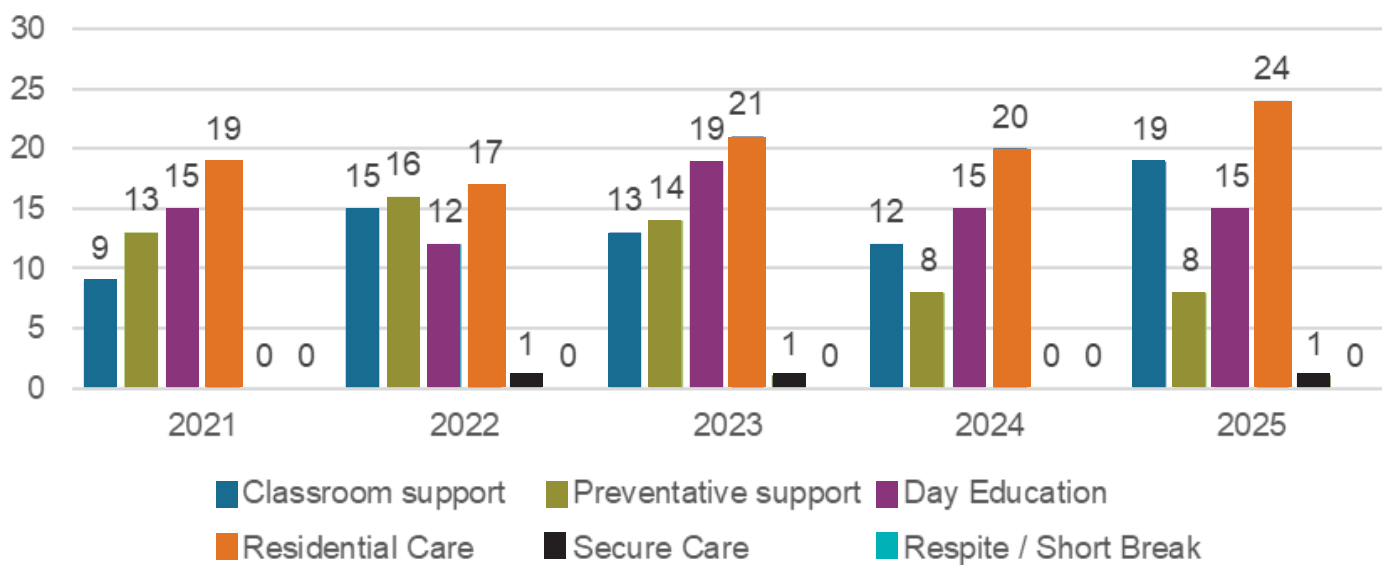
Outwith Authority Placements

The pressure on financial resources in relation to outwith placements is evident, and increasing, moving into 2025-26. This is due to increasing costs of residential placements, the reduced availability of foster carers, the resources required to support young people with complex needs, the increasing need and complexity of children and young people and the pressure on services that support them.

During 2024, following approval at the Integration Joint Board, a decision was made that we would be unable to support the request for any further placement requests due to financial pressures. It was agreed Outwith Placements Screening Group would continue to receive requests, provide a position on whether these were required and track unmet need.

Signs of Safety and Healing

Outwith Authority Placements Placements as at 31st March:
5-year Comparison



In 2025, East Ayrshire started the journey to implement Signs of Safety and Healing, to support strength-based and risk-balanced practice, underpinned by children’s rights and focused on family-decision making. In taking forward this

approach, Signs of Safety and Healing will provide a framework for the consistent delivery of Safe and Together and Restorative practice with Family based Group Decision Making (FGDM) as a wider Practice Vision.

Safe and Together

The Scottish Government Delivering Equally Safe fund resourced a pan-Ayrshire Lead Officer, in post from September 2022 until December 2024, tasked with implementing the model across the three Ayrshire HSCPs, and further, through developing practice, process and cultural change.

Training delivery continued throughout 2024, and this has now reached most Children and Families Social Workers and Team Managers. A key development for practice and culture change has been the Safe and Together Facilitators from both Social Work and Health Visiting services.

Implementation progress was measured through a Case File Audit in October 2024. The audit allowed for an understanding of where the strengths lie in practice, what the learning needs are and what families' experiences are. The consistent theme was the need to develop understanding of coercive control, and what this means for both women and children's daily lives. This will lead to enhanced risk assessment which will influence a collaborative and more effective response to risk management.

Introduction of Request for Assistance Team

The introduction of the Social Work Request for Assistance (RFA) Team in March 2024 was under a 'test for change', initially in the North locality. In October 2024, this was rolled out to the South locality becoming an authority-wide service. Throughout the rollout, analysis has been carried out on RFA's to understand need and deploy our resources to best support this. This work has produced a rich source of data including locations, reasons and sources of referral, age, gender and outcomes, as well as supporting the introduction of Signs of Safety and Healing.

Family Group Decision Making and Family Wellbeing

Children First are commissioned to provide restorative family approaches at an early intervention and prevention stage. At an early stage of development, it was agreed the service would initially link to the newly established RFA team. On analysis of the data, it is clear there is significant need for crisis intervention at point of RFA, therefore service delivery has shifted from our original aim of early intervention to crisis intervention and prevention of escalation through the system. More families require detailed multi-agency plans at an earlier stage than is currently the case. This has enabled the service to provide the appropriate support to families when they need it.

Third Sector Commissioning

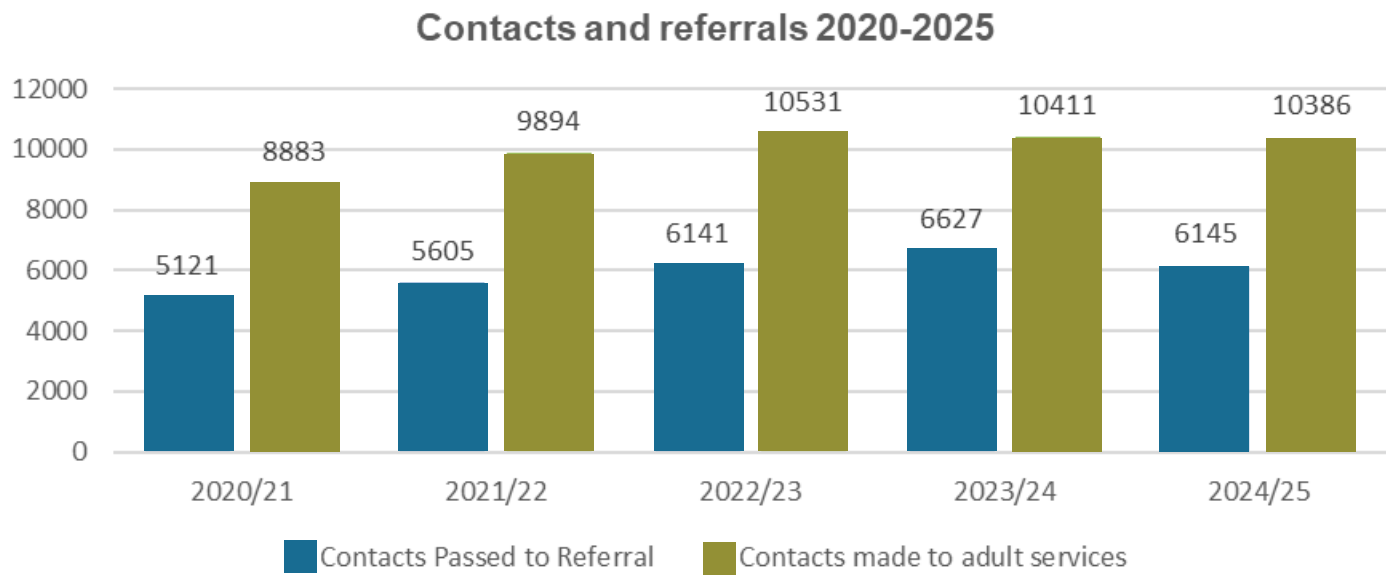
Our commissioned services underwent a full review in 2022-23 to ensure that they aligned with the changing needs of families and communities, as well as the ambitions of The Promise and our EAHSCP Strategic Plan 2021-30.

The Framework re-opens in December each year to allow partners the opportunity to apply to Lots 3 and 4. From the December 2024/25 tendering process, an additional five successful applicants joined the Framework. Two bespoke pieces of work have been commissioned from the Framework.



Adults

As with all services, demand for adults and older people’s services remains high. In 2024-25, 59% of all contacts made to adult services resulted in a referral being made, compared to 64% in the previous year. Referrals have reduced after a period of year on year increases between 2020-21 and 2023-24.



Care Homes

Our partner care homes continued to receive a range of valuable supports from East Ayrshire Council, the HSCP and partners in 2024/25. Circumstances have been challenging given the recruitment difficulties in the sector, whilst auditing, reporting and scrutiny requirements have increased, which has impacted on resources and capacity. Despite this, our care home providers continue to develop their staff by utilising the resources made available to them by the HSCP, including the Care Home Professional Support Team. Some of our care homes have experienced changes in management over the last year, with the HSCP and Independent Sector Lead having supported these transitions. The relationship between care home providers and the HSCP continues to be strong, supportive and collaborative.

A number of activities took place during 2024/25, including the second annual ‘Great East Ayrshire Care Home Bake Off’. The second Care Home Olympics event was also held, again at the Kilmarnock Athletics arena, and contestants from all care homes took part.

Mental Health Officer Service

The Mental Health Officer (MHO) service continued to experience considerable challenges throughout 2024/25. The dedicated MHO team was established in February 2025 increasing the number of MHO posts.

A further 3 practitioners are currently enrolled on the PgCert MH Award and will qualify in June 2025. Following internal selection, an additional 3 practitioners have been selected to progress onto the 2025-26 cohort to begin the PgCert MH award in September 2025.

Despite these challenges, the service has maintained a high level of activity, including:

- 164 MHO reports completed to support AWI guardianship interventions, reflecting a rise from 150 reports completed (2023-24)
- 122 Private applications, 42 Local Authority applications.
- MHOs responded to 108 S44 Consent Requests

- 96 Social Circumstances Reports were completed; and
- 28 Compulsory Treatment Order applications were lodged.

Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

Having launched in 2020, but disrupted by the covid pandemic, the Analogue to Digital transition programme (for telecare devices) is now nearing completion. This will ensure that East Ayrshire has digital infrastructure in place to accelerate the provision of telecare and telehealth service.

The Smart Hub is a proof-of-concept project primarily for the health and social care workforce, recognising that the work done is also of interest to other stakeholders, including supported people, their families and carers. It provides a dedicated space for creative thinking, good conversations and for demonstrating consumer technology within a simulated home environment to raise awareness of how smart technology can better support people's health and care. The Hub has been officially open for one year and 95% of attendees rated the Hub as 'Excellent.'

It is anticipated that digital solutions will reduce unscheduled presentations to hospital and front door services and support better demand management. Embedded technology enabled care solutions can make the delivery of services much quicker and more cost effective, ensuring financial sustainability and resilience well into the future.

Supporting Independence

Our Intermediate Care Team (ICT) continued to deliver vital care and support for older residents during 2024/25 to enable timely hospital discharge, reduce avoidable hospital admissions and promote independence at home through identifying and contributing towards personal goals.

In this period ICT received a total of 1,814 referrals, up by 6% on the previous year. Of these 923 were preventing avoidable hospital admission, up by 48% on the previous year and 891 were facilitating hospital discharge, up by 56% on the previous year.

Moving and Handling Service

This reporting year has been one of significant change within the Service. Major changes have been implemented to improve service resilience and capacity and return the staff training function to an in-house provision. The Moving and Handling training at the new facility will enable a higher volume of quality and consistent training to all front-line staff involved in the care of individuals in our communities.

Older People's Day Service

Older people's day service continues to deliver high quality, person-centred social opportunities for older adults in East Ayrshire. The service is well attended – in March 2025 the Day Care North locality was operating at 93% planned occupancy rate. Over the same period, Day Care South locality was operating at 92% planned occupancy rate. To address waiting lists for the service in the North locality, afternoon care now operates in Rosebank Resource Centre, delivering an additional 1,248 day care places in the 2025/26 financial year.

Older People's Day Care Service has streamlined systems through digitising the consultation process. The service obtains feedback from service users, as they attend the centres, by using iPads, connected to the Care Opinion website.

Reablement Service

The service has continued their strong performance in 2024/25. Of those reviewed, 55% did not need a package of care and 24% had a reduction of the weekly hours needed. The total cost of the Reablement packages of care for the 110 people was the annual equivalent of £848,053. After accounting for costs of delivery, at the end of quarter three, the net cost avoidance on a projected annual basis was £442,907.



The outcomes Reablement has helped people to achieve are overwhelmingly positive, with a focus on exploring ways of people maintaining and improving their function and independence central to the team ethos, alongside demand management. Satisfaction with Reablement remains high, with over 90% of people reporting "very" or "fairly" satisfied after Reablement team.

Care at Home

The service has continued to navigate challenging situations over the last year, with several measures implemented to improve the consistency and capacity of workforce including review of shift patterns and enhanced and targeted recruitment. Through work undertaken alongside other teams in line with new eligibility for social care, the balance of workforce capacity and work demands has improved by over 2.5% in our Locality Care at Home teams.

Significant preparatory work has been undertaken to procure, plan and commence implementation of a new scheduling, monitoring and care management system, Totalmobile, which alongside structure and process changes will transform the way quality care is delivered within East Ayrshire. Implementation commenced in February 2025 with full implementation scheduled in May 2025.

Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

The Suspected Drug Death Review Group underwent a test of change in 2024, and a robust data set is now in operation. It is anticipated that the agreed data set will help us look at ways to improve how services/ supports respond to emerging trends.

Support from the Scottish Recovery Consortium, has provided the required resources to develop the Lived Experience Panel to effectively engage the wider community.

The ADP has developed a standardised off-label buprenorphine titration microdosing package which is designed to be psychologically supportive, safe, effective, and simple to complete. This has been implemented as part of a 'toolbox' approach for our clinical teams to offer as an option for individuals, alongside other 'standard' treatment approaches. Feedback and outcomes have been very positive thus far, with 75.9% retention on buprenorphine-based treatment following transfer and minimal reporting of any issues during the process.

Social Work Out of Hours Service

Throughout 2024-25 the service responded to 9,455 referrals, with 3,353 of these about East Ayrshire residents. The peak time for referrals is between 5pm and 11pm, where over 1,410 of East Ayrshire referrals were received. The peak days for referrals are Friday, Saturday and Sunday, where they responded to 1,801 East Ayrshire resident's referrals.

Of the 3,353 East Ayrshire referrals, 1,244 referrals were in relation to Child Concern/ Child Welfare and 358 referrals in relation to Adult Concern/Welfare. There were 382 referrals relating to young people missing from home, 50 for Care at Home, 67 in relation to mental health and 73 for financial destitution.

Best Value Service Review of Front Door Approach

A crosscutting review of the Multi-Disciplinary Team for Front Door Approach has been progressing within this reporting period. The wide scoping review is a rigorous process focusing on the core elements of challenge, consult, compare and compete. This process will demonstrate improvement in service delivery for our communities. The review will move to approval within the next reporting period.

East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership

East Ayrshire's Position Statement on Prostitution was refreshed in 2024. The East Ayrshire Violence Against Women Partnership Position Statement on CSE has been updated to reflect national and international policies and to reflect the Equally Safe 2023 position on CSE.



The Women's Support project trained eleven people across Ayrshire in 2024 to be trainers in Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The Building Bridges module is available on LearnPro to support practitioners' when a women makes a disclosure of selling or exchanging sex. Finally, information is being disseminated amongst the Recovery network by the ADP to support organisations and practitioners who may support women.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

The Ayrshire MARAC continues to make a significant contribution to improving the safety of victims of domestic abuse at risk of significant harm or death across Ayrshire. MARAC meetings take place monthly in East Ayrshire. In 2024-25, 12 meetings took place with 155 cases referred – 152 females and 3 males.

Focused work has taken place in 2024-25 to improve the interface between MARAC, Adult Support and Protection and Safe and Together.

Tackling Poverty

In the reporting year 2024/25, the Financial Inclusion Team supported with 1,671 referrals, resulting in £5,589,628 financial gains for residents of East Ayrshire as well as assisting with £336,978 of debt through the In Court Advice service. The EA Money helpline assisted 1,318 residents of East Ayrshire with onward referrals to the Community Team, project areas or an appropriate partner agency.

In the summer of 2024, the Child Poverty Action Group featured the pupil participation work, done by the FIT Education project, focusing of article 26 of the UNCRC, with a Welfare Rights and Cost of the School Day focus. CPAG Case Study for East Ayrshire Involving young people in financial inclusion.

Following a Cross Cutting Review of Financial Inclusion, there will be a new model of delivery for Welfare Rights in East Ayrshire. Merging the Financial Inclusion Team and Universal Credit Support Team, under Housing and Communities, later in 2025.

Unpaid Carers

East Ayrshire Carers Adult Service operates from Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Dalmellington as well as from Acute and community hospitals in Ayrshire. Within this reporting period there were 7,510 one-to-one supports given. There were 673 new registrations, and 602 Adult Carers Support Plans completed. 296 Carers accessed the 'Time to Live' grant for a break from their caring role a totalling £94,016.54.48

Through the Hospital Discharge Carer Link Workers there have been 908 informative conversations with East Ayrshire residents within the hospitals, resulting in 148 new registrations for unpaid carers to get support. There are respite groups in Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Dalmellington.

Adult Support and Protection (ASP)

The annual multi-agency self-evaluation of ASP for 2024 was completed with a focus on self-neglect and ASP Planning Meetings. The group continue to raise awareness on financial harm in older people and general awareness raising of adult support and protection, which were the two focuses of Adult Support and Protection Day in 2025 both nationally and locally. The Learning Review for Adult O was completed with the Improvement Plan developed and being delivered. The ASP Multi-Agency Planning Meeting Guidance was reviewed and refreshed. The Annual Multi-Agency Audit for ASP in 2025 will have a focus on Learning Disability.

Justice

As a lead agency, East Ayrshire Social Work Justice Service is responsible for managing individuals while they are subject to statutory supervision. Those managed under these arrangements may be in custody or community and the numbers of those subject to these arrangements are detailed below:

	Number of MAPPA cases in East Ayrshire at 31 March 2024	Number of MAPPA cases in East Ayrshire at 31 March 2025
Level 1	190 (148 community; 42 prison)	212 (159 community; 53 prison)
Level 2	5 (2 community; 3 prison)	5 (3 community; 2 prison)
Level 3	0 (0 community; 0 prison)	0 (0 community; 0 prison)
Total	195	217

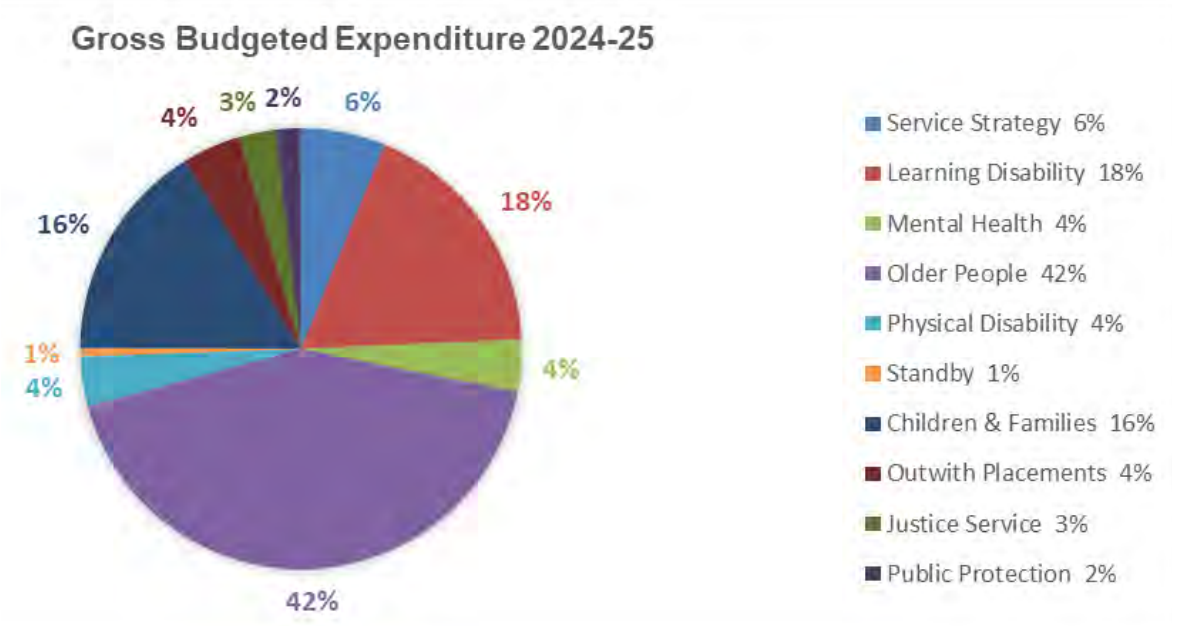
There were 10 MAPPA referrals received in 2024-25, of which one was not progressed and no repeat referrals. Over the reporting period there were 89 Registered Sex Offender (RSO) notifications received, an average of 23 per quarter (a reduction on 6 per quarter in the previous year), of these, 88% were new cases to MAPPA.

Several service developments took place over the reporting period including:

- A new MAPPA brand was created. A video, and accompanying leaflets, posters, pull up banners and other public facing materials have all been developed.
- In February 2025, Professor Kemshall provided training to a group of MAPPA level 2 and 3 chairs from across the region as well as an input to 60 staff from across the region on Best Practice in Risk Management.
- Development continues on the MAPPA statistical dashboard. The results of MAPPA case file audits and the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) key performance indicators have now been included giving the SOG additional interactive information in respect of the performance and how effective they are at reducing risk.
- One of the key performance indicators developed was to create a mechanism to ensure that it did not inadvertently place too many MAPPA managed offenders into the one locality. The MAPPA office has created a heat map, shows the concentration of offenders across the region. SOLOs have found this helpful during the ERA process.

3. Resources

The overall net social work budget within the HSCP is £113.593 million. The gross spend (after income from NHS and service charges) is £143.851 million, which breaks down into the following services:



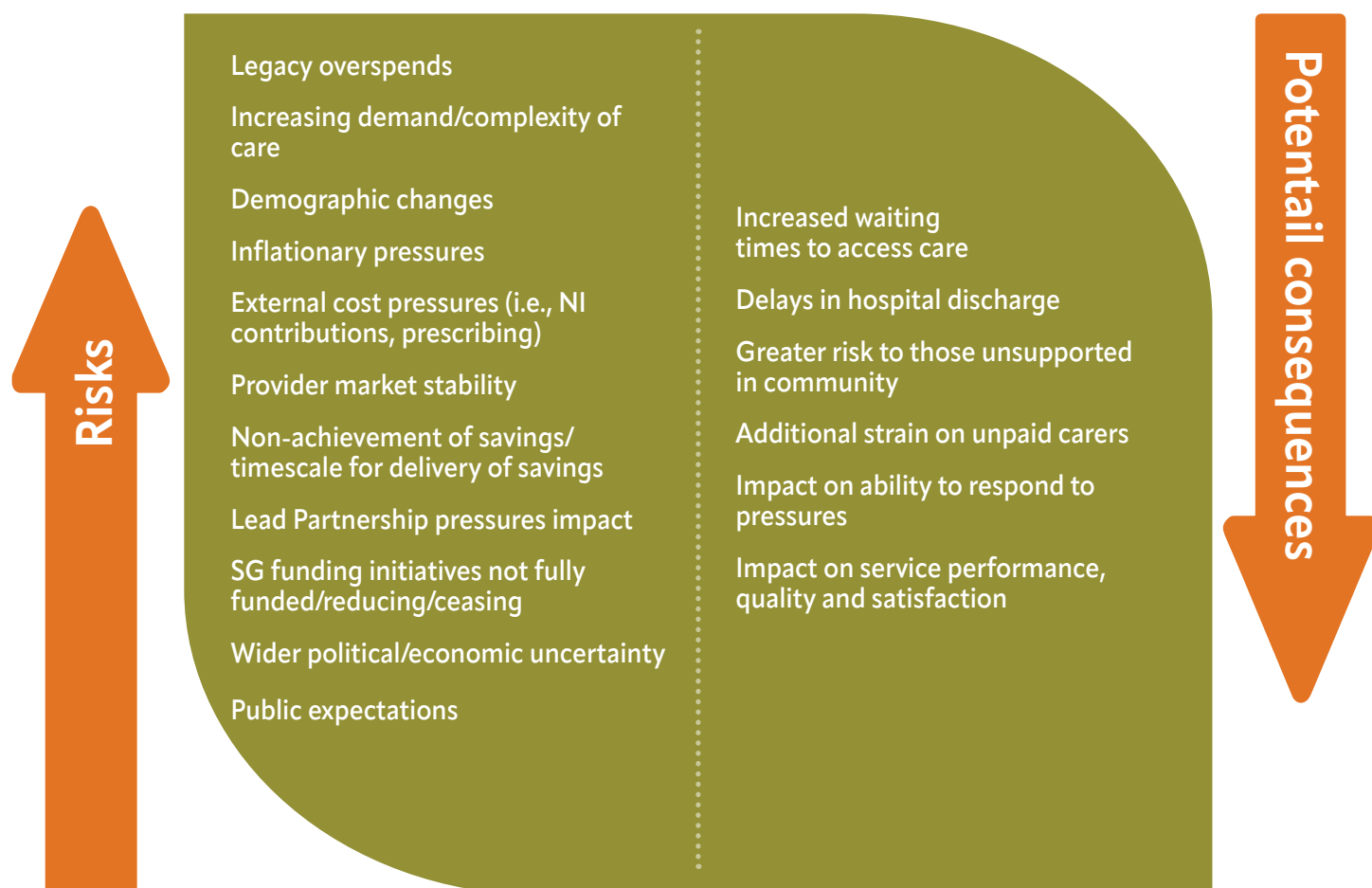
The current and forthcoming period is an enormously challenging one due to the extent of public sector budget reductions. This necessitates essential services to be secured with less money, while maintaining service quality and coping with rising and diverse demands.

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	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Community Care	1.345	1.528	1.672	2.521	2.329
Children & Families	0.455	0.037	0.000	0.465	0.296
Justice	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Service Strategy	0.116	0.011	0.000	0.070	0.068
Totals	1.916	1.576	1.672	3.056	2.693

In 2024/25, the Social Care Service was £1.804m over the approved annual budget which includes a non-recurring additional funding allocation of £4.650m from East Ayrshire Council and in addition non-recurring IJB balances drawdown and cross substitutions £1.616m. Without these non-recurring contributions, the true projected adverse variance is £8.070m.

Going forward into 2025/26, the challenges remain consistent, particularly:



These key risks and potential consequences represent a challenging position in 2025/26 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 is involved in aspects of budget setting and financial decision-making related to the Social Work element of the 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 £117.533 has been delegated to East Ayrshire IJB for 2025/26.

East Ayrshire Council's approved delegated budget therefore includes the pass through of £3.601m Scottish Government funding to offset additional costs incurred to uplift the Scottish Living Wage for commissioned care services, as well as the Free Personal and Nursing Care uplift.

The Council has additionally recognised that there are a number of specific pressures on Social Work budgets nationally and this is reflected in East Ayrshire. These pressures would be compounded in 2025/26 by a reduction in resource through GAE. The Council's approved delegated budget includes an allocation of £0.570m to mitigate this GAE reduction for 2025/26. Furthermore, the cross-cutting review of Children's Services recognised the need to collaborate across Council services to resource children and young people that need additional support above that which can be provided by universal services, as a preventative and early intervention action. An additional sum of £1m has been approved as part of the delegated budget for 2025/26 (on a non-recurring basis) with a cross-cutting review to be undertaken of the current arrangements. These additional funding allocations total £1.570m

4. Workforce

The HSCP employs 177 Social Workers across three directorates. This equates to a whole time equivalent of 162.2, distributed across various working arrangements. From March 2024 to April 2025, the Social Worker head count increased by 3.51%, while the Whole time equivalent increased by 2.01% highlighting growth within certain Social Worker roles.

A large proportion of our workforce lies within the 30-45-year age bracket. However, there is a progressive shift towards the older age bracket, with 30.5% of Social Workers now aged 50 years and older. This highlights the need to attract young people into the sector to ensure an adequate supply of labour to meet future service delivery needs.

The HSCP faces a range of workforce challenges that are shaped by geographical, demographic, and infrastructural factors that impact the ability to attract, recruit, and retain staff across social work services.

To support employee wellbeing, a Health and Wellbeing Coordinator post was established and recruited to in 2024 to deliver a range of wellbeing supports to employees. Support offered includes face-to-face, telephone or virtual appointments and home visits to support staff who are absent from work due to anxiety, stress, bereavement, neurodiversity and diet/exercise, among other causes. Additional wellbeing sessions are being delivered through current Leadership Development programmes which place an emphasis on Vicarious Trauma targeted work. In addition, a 'Supporting Attendance' team was established in 2024, to provide early intervention for staff to prevent long-term sickness absence.

Training, Learning and Development

Supporting the professional development of social work practitioners remains a focus in East Ayrshire despite working in a time of increasing financial and resource challenges. We continue to provide a range of high-quality learning and development opportunities for our social work practitioners with the key focus of supporting the delivery of high-quality services to people in East Ayrshire.

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 across our leadership programmes has also been positive and supports the aims of the Workforce Plan in recruitment and succession planning in terms of leadership roles.

In addition, Organisational Development (OD) worked collaboratively with colleagues in Social Work Learning and Development to deliver a First Line Management Programme across the Children's Health, Care & Justice Service. Those attending highlighted the benefit of bringing key leaders together. This is reflected in the following feedback.

Over the reporting period OD have continued to provide support and advice to working groups including the MDT Working Group and GIRFE Working Group. A co-ordination role is also undertaken by OD in respect of our 3 localities-based Communities of Practice (COPs) which have a growing and diverse membership. Our COPs aim to facilitate the further advancement of MDT Working in East Ayrshire by providing a space for workers to meet, learn and share together.

From October 2024, SSSC rolled out Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) requirements which Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) are required to evidence over their first year in qualified practice. The Social Work Learning and Development Team carried out a full review of our existing NQSW CPL Supported Programme aligning this with the new requirements of evidencing 8 Core Learning Elements.

NQSW CPL development sessions were delivered in supporting NQSW to understand the 8 Core Learning Elements and in facilitating reflective practice discussions to consider how these requirements will be met in submitting evidence for their re-registration at the end of their first year in qualified practice.

A wide range of formal practitioner learning and development activity has taken place with some examples noted below:

- Anti-racist Practice & Wider Equalities: A new 2-day development course providing an opportunity to consider the protected characteristics of the Equality Act (2010) which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society, and with a specific focus on anti-racist practice within social work services.

- Chronologies: 1-day course which incorporates experiential learning in supporting practitioners to work on live cases in considering effective chronologies which support reflective analysis and decision-making.
- Children & Young People Sexually Harmful Behaviours and AIM3: 3-day programme with a holistic and trauma-informed approach to understanding the problems of sexualised behaviours in young people and implementing appropriate risk management approaches.

Five employees are in the process of completing the Postgraduate Social Work Diploma programme with the Open University. They are now moving into their first Qualified Social Worker posts.

11 practitioners were supported to gain additional post-qualifying qualifications including Postgraduate Certificates in Child Welfare & Protection, Mental Health Officer Awards, Practice Learning Awards and Postgraduate Certificates in Adult Support & Protection.

The Thinking Differently team have progressed work on building consistency together, shared understanding and planning, in delivering SDS through, strength-based practice. The team ensured work is consistent with the SDS Phase 2 Scrutiny report, and with the new Scottish Learning and Improvement Framework. 75 staff attended workshops over a five-week period July and August. Senior management involvement was highly valued by staff, as evidenced in feedback. There was strong emphasis on the need to consistently record outcomes rather than just outputs or processes, and a stronger shared understanding of outcomes.

The Social Care Learning Hub

The Social Care Learning (SCL) Hub have worked to grow the programme of learning for the workforce across adult and older people's services. The SCL Hub have now, successfully, set up a bespoke training venue. The space has two larger training rooms, a Moving and Handling Training Suite, office space and meeting room space.

The SQA Assessment Centre had an inspection where all standards were met and exceeded. A challenging year lies ahead for this part of the service, with two planned cohorts for a total of 40 new learners joining the centre. 2024/25 saw 55 Learners in total with 17 completing their qualifications. The SVQ teams, within the SCL Hub, are working closely with Human Resources and Planning and Performance colleagues to improve data quality and how this information is collated, stored and reported.

There is now a new "Content Review Group" established towards the end of 2024/25 period. This will take all Care Inspectorate, SSSC and the Care Staffing Act into consideration to ensure that we are meeting needs as an employer, employee and registered workforce.

The SCL Hub have also started exploring the use of virtual reality in training. The Dementia specialist will be incorporating VR into his content to allow the workforce to have a more realistic understanding of what it is like living with dementia. Over the 2025/26 period new opportunities will be explored around experiential learning.

In 2024/25 SCL Hub delivered:

- 11 x ten-day Induction courses to 98 Community Care Officers.
- Delivered 24 Safe Administration of Medication full day sessions in partnership with NHS Pharmacy staff.
- Supported two cohorts (55 people) with their SSSC qualifications, with 17 Community Care Officers having completed their qualifications in full and the other 38 learners nearing the end of their awards.
- Developed and now implemented a new in-house Moving and Handling training programme, in collaboration with the Moving and Handling Service.
- Reached 1,178 individuals with training tailored to their needs and roles.
- Set up training session in collaboration with NHS colleagues to offer specialist training around epilepsy, motor neuron disease and diabetes.
- Delivered 25 Moving and Handling full day courses in partnership with Physicare.
- Ensured that 40 frontline social care workers, who are supporting people at home with Parkinson's, had specialist training with NHS A&A Parkinson's nurses.



- Delivered Play List for Life training to 86 frontline social care staff.
- Delivered Dementia Skilled training to 97 Community Care Officers.
- 240 Community Care Officers attended the annual engagement sessions.
- 609 Community Care Officers attended the suite of Best Practice Days – to ensure their knowledge and skill are up to date.
- Continued to develop and deliver a full programme of learning and development opportunities including: Food Hygiene and Nutrition, SSSC Codes of Practice, British Sign Language, Palliative and End of Life Care, Continuous Professional Learning, Best Practice Days, and eLearning suites on LearnPro.

Wellbeing Support

Launching in 2024, HSCP staff members have been supported with issues relating to anxiety, stress, bereavement, neurodiversity and menopause, with onward referrals to agencies/services in the community to further support staff with the self-management.

A referral pathway has been established with the Mental Health Practitioners, based within GP practices in East Ayrshire. When HSCP staff members presents at their GP practice for mental health support, they are automatically offered an appointment for the Staff Health and Wellbeing Service.

Targeted work has also been delivered on vicarious trauma with social work staff including those from East Ayrshire Children's Houses and within Communities of Practice meetings. The Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator also co-facilitated a workshop at the East Ayrshire Social Work conference. This session was well received with staff, resulting in referrals to the Health and Wellbeing service for further support with secondary trauma.

The Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator co-facilitated the wellbeing sessions within the Leadership Development Programme. This detailed programme was delivered to managers in Children's Health, Care and Justice Services. The feedback from these sessions was very positive. Targeted work with Care at Home staff continues to be positive, with increased referrals from this area.

Equalities

The HSCP provides a range of equalities focused training for staff on equality and diversity, which includes a mandatory course as part of our Employee Essentials Programme. Other equalities focussed training that is provided for staff through our e-Learning platform includes:

- Cultural AwarenessChallenging Anti-Muslim Prejudice
- Gender Based Violence
- LGBT Awareness
- Myths of Immigration
- Racial Inequality
- Raising Awareness of Gypsy Traveller Communities
- Delivering an Accessible Venue
- Gaelic Awareness Training

A new set of HSCP Equality Outcomes have been developed cover the 2025-2029 period. These new Equality Outcomes are the third set of outcomes to be developed and monitored by the Partnership and they reflect the diverse health and social care needs of those with a protected characteristic in East Ayrshire.

A 2-day 'Anti-Racist Practice and Wider Equalities' course was designed for delivery to social work practitioners. The course provides an opportunity to explore our understanding of prejudice and discrimination in relation to social work practice. The course seeks to support the development of practitioner confidence to actively promote equality and to challenge racism. The pilot course was delivered in October 2024 and following evaluation it now forms part of the annual social work core training calendar.



5. Looking ahead

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 to support the workforce meet increasing demand and complexity in the face of diminishing resources.

In managing the challenging financial context, there is an imperative for social work and social care services to go through a further period of review and change to work smarter, not harder, to deliver for those who need to access services in order to live their best possible lives.

As CSWO 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 HSCP 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:

- Through smart workforce planning and making the HSCP an employer of choice, we will continue to develop our recruitment of the best people to support our communities.
- 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 NQSWs.
- A review of the delivery of supports to adults with learning disabilities will take place in 2025-26 to ensure those who require support are supported in a flexible way.
- The review of the multi-disciplinary approach at the front door will conclude in 2025-26 to streamline the way our communities access the support they need.
- Justice social work service has taken a lead on developing a trauma responsive workforce and this approach will be developed and upscaled across services throughout 2025-26
- We will continue to implement Signs of Safety and Healing to ensure children and families are supported in a strengths and rights-based way.
- Quality assurance and improvement – we will seek to develop and implement a sophisticated approach to quality assurance and improvement that supports an understanding of how well we know ourselves and how we may improve services.

This is not an exhaustive list of the key actions that we need to take forward but a flavour of some of the activity. 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 2025





East Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear

