

**REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE –
6 DECEMBER, 2018**

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Consider the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) Annual Report for the 2017/2018 financial year in relation to Children's Social Work Services and make recommendations to Full Council.**
- 1.2 Acknowledge the level of investment by the Council in Children's Social Work Services for the residents of Aberdeenshire.**
- 1.3 Acknowledge the commitment of Social Work staff in the consistent delivery of high performing services.**

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the CSWO Annual Report for the financial year 2017/2018.
- 2.2 The preparation of an annual report is not mandatory but is a recommendation of Scottish Government guidance on the role of the CSWO.
- 2.3 Council committees and the Integration Joint Board receive reports throughout the year on the performance of Social Work as measured against a range of national and local indicators, and also receive reports on particular initiatives and issues.
- 2.4 In order to add value, the CSWO report attempts to avoid duplicating this information.
- 2.5 Rather, it draws on these reports to highlight particular overarching themes and trends, and also reports on key areas concerning the proper discharge of the Social Work function that may not have been addressed elsewhere, including those areas of decision-making that require CSWO output.

Conclusion

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

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

3. Scheme of Governance

3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section E.2.3 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance.

4 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required. All of the projects and initiatives referenced in the CSWO report have their own Equality Impact Assessments where appropriate.

4.2 There are no staffing or financial implications.

Iain Ramsay
Chief Social Work Officer

Report prepared by Iain Ramsay, Chief Social Work Officer
Date 20 November, 2018

**ANNUAL REPORT BY ABERDEENSHIRE'S CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER
2017-2018**

Introduction

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

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

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

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

This Report on the Social Work Service in Aberdeenshire for 2017/18 uses the same format as previous years and is consistent with the national reporting cycle first adopted in 2013/2014 and is concerned with the financial year rather than any other time period. This follows the request of the Scottish Government's Chief Social Work Advisor in order to assist with ensuring that on a national basis key issues are highlighted, and information and learning is similarly shared. On receipt of Reports from 32 CSWO's the Chief Social Work Advisor prepares a national overview.

The overall approach and purpose of this report is to provide a summary of Social Work provision in Aberdeenshire. Albeit, it is not a complete account of all aspects, but sets out to highlight key areas of achievement, challenge and risk. By and large this Report adheres to the financial year time frame with only minor exceptions.

In July 2018 there was a change of CSWO, therefore this report pre-dates the current incumbent's period within post. As such this report is a retrospective review of information gathered from a range of colleagues to whom the CSWO owes much gratitude and thanks. The CSWO would also like to extend thanks to the previous CSWO for providing information pertaining to the period concerned.

1. Summary Reflections

Every day, social work services in Aberdeenshire deliver essential support to some of the most vulnerable citizens. In 2017/2018 staff in all social sectors have continued to demonstrate their commitment to improving the lives of service users and their families. Many legislative, policy and demographic drivers have been approached positively, with innovative thought and behaviour and with a focus on solutions, all to the immense credit of our staff.

Despite the continuing challenging financial climate, service users, carers and staff continued to benefit from substantial financial investment in service delivery. In addition, both the Council and Integration Joint Board (IJB) have continued to support innovation, service re-design and re-provisioning in accordance with best practice. The support of Officers, Elected Members and the IJB to staff involved in leading and implementing change, and on managing expectations will remain important in the years ahead.

As an example of innovation and the potential difference which can be made, the Virtual Community Ward (VCW) has proven to be a model which has led to tangible improvements both in terms of the positive impact for individuals and also the way in which teams work collaboratively towards a single aim. As you will note throughout this report there are many examples of collaborative working across Aberdeenshire.

The challenge however remains, that continuing to meet immediate demands across all Social Work functions balanced with developing sustainable and innovative solutions to prevention is a complex process. Extensive work has been undertaken throughout 2017/18 to develop strategies which articulate clear strategic priorities which are both deliverable and financially sustainable. Throughout this report there is reference to tangible examples of where Aberdeenshire has been working on innovative models of delivering services which point to progress in this area.

2. Partnership Structures/Governance Arrangements

The CSWO is a member of the Council's Senior Leadership Team and has direct access to Elected Members, the Chief Executive, managers, and frontline practitioners in relation to professional social work issues. The CSWO has the authority to report directly to relevant Aberdeenshire Council Committees and the Integration Joint Board.

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

As described in last year's Report Older People and Adult Social Work services are managed on an integrated (i.e. not profession specific) basis in 12 localities, while Criminal Justice and Substance Misuse Social Work Services continue to be delivered on a functional basis. The opportunity which Health and Social Care Integration has created in respect of the delivery of Substance Misuse Services, has initiated some changes to the delivery model as health and social work teams are becoming co-located. The single management structure within the Partnership also allows for the better development of integrated working whilst professional leads maintain the integrity and identity of the two professions. Criminal Justice Services have continued to deliver their statutory function. Community Justice Scotland has strengthened their existence in many aspects of the national picture. Locally, the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Partnership has become well established. Representation from all of the statutory partners and stakeholders has been achieved which provides a really good framework around the delivery of the first Aberdeenshire Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan for year 2017/18.

Previous Reports have highlighted the potential risks associated with the Social Work function being dispersed throughout a range of governance bodies, albeit with each passing year it is clear there is a growing maturity. However, this landscape does inevitably create risks, and the themes of transitions and identity remain areas of focus.

As contained within in last year's report there continue to be professional and practice challenges for the proper discharge of social work responsibilities, for example:

- 1 Within arrangements and structures rightfully founded on the principles of collaboration and multi-disciplinary working there is a challenge to retain the **distinctive contribution** of the Social Work profession to the lives of vulnerable people
- 2 Under separate governance arrangements it is critical those involved in the discharge of Social Work duties retain an influence on **supporting and protecting** vulnerable people under separate governance arrangements

- 3 The statutory responsibilities of Social Work are undertaken via **safe professional practice** and clear lines of professional support and accountability in the context of 1 and 2.

Following the enactment of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014, in April 2016, Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) recognised the need for enhanced support to the CSWO, from within Adult services. A new role of Lead Social Worker for Adult Services was created and commenced in May 2017. Over the period, this role has provided professional guidance and leadership for Social Work within the AHSCP and has been the link to wider social work services within the council. With a lead role for Adult Support and Protection, Self-Directed Support (SDS) and Learning and Development (across Children's and Adult Services) the Lead Social Worker gives assurance to the CSWO that there continues to be effective links and consistency of social work practice, throughout Aberdeenshire. The key achievements of this post have been –

- 1 The establishment of a social work forum to bring together practitioners working across all functions of social work
- 2 To provide objective professional support and guidance to practitioners working across a range of complex and conflicting circumstances
- 3 Promoting the principles of audit and continuous improvement within practice

Social Work also features significantly in what is known as “Public Protection” arrangements. The Executive Group for Public Protection (previously Chief Officer Group for Children) was established in 2018 and oversees the related spheres of Child and Family Protection Committee; Multi Agency Offender Management; Adult Support and Protection; Domestic Abuse; and the Alcohol and Drug Partnership. Social Work fully participates across all these areas and is represented by the CSWO at the Executive Group.

In 2017 the Aberdeenshire Clinical and Adult Social Work Governance Committee was established as a committee of the Integration Joint Board. It has a remit for providing assurance to the IJB throughout all aspects of the health and social care partnership. The Committee has considered and sought assurance across many important issues throughout 2017/18, including inspection reports from several health and social care regulators.

3. Social Services Delivery Landscape

Aberdeenshire is a predominantly rural area in North East Scotland covering a wide geographical area of 6,313 square kilometres (approximately 8% of Scotland’s territory). There is a relatively low population density of 41 people square kilometer compared to 70 for Scotland. In 2017 Aberdeenshire’s population was estimated to be 261,800, approximately 5% of Scotland’s total population of 5,424,800.

Aberdeenshire’s child population (aged 0-15 years old), is above the Scottish average and growing steadily, with a predicted further 13.8% rise over the next 25 years to 2037. Overall the population of Aberdeenshire is projected (Figure 1 & 2) to rise steadily over coming years, but with particular increases in the number of people aged 75 years old and over. By the year 2035, it is forecast that the population of people aged over 65 in Aberdeenshire will have increased by 65%. Whilst a great success story, it also means that people will be living longer with potentially more complex health or care needs. As a result of these demographic changes, there is increasing demands on education, health and social work services.

Figure 1

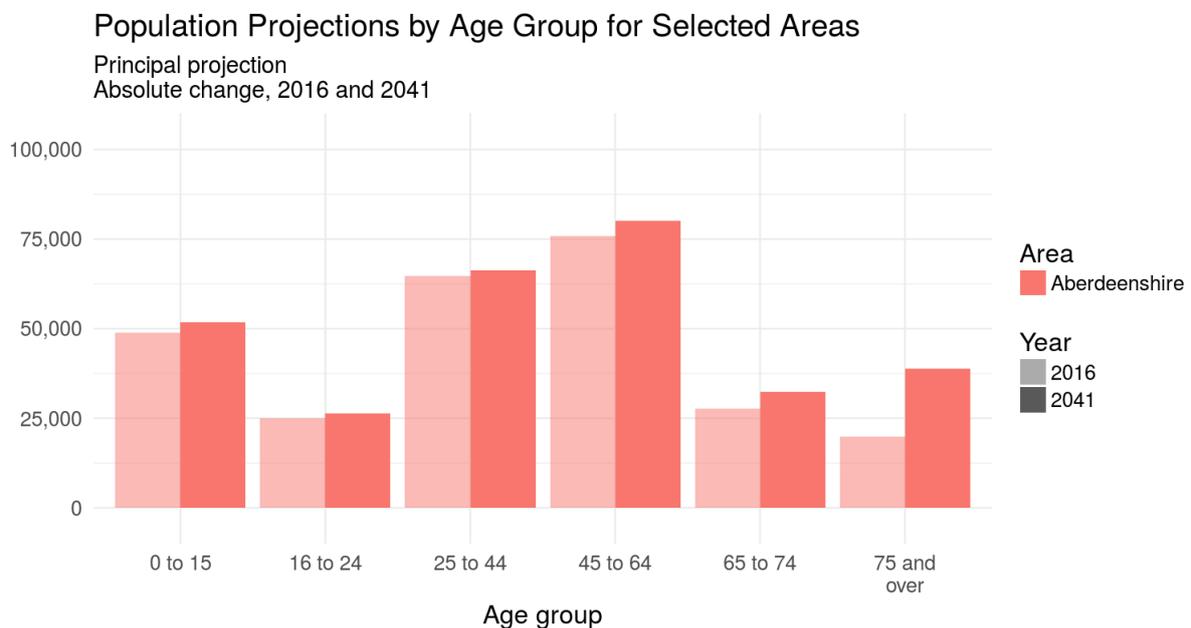
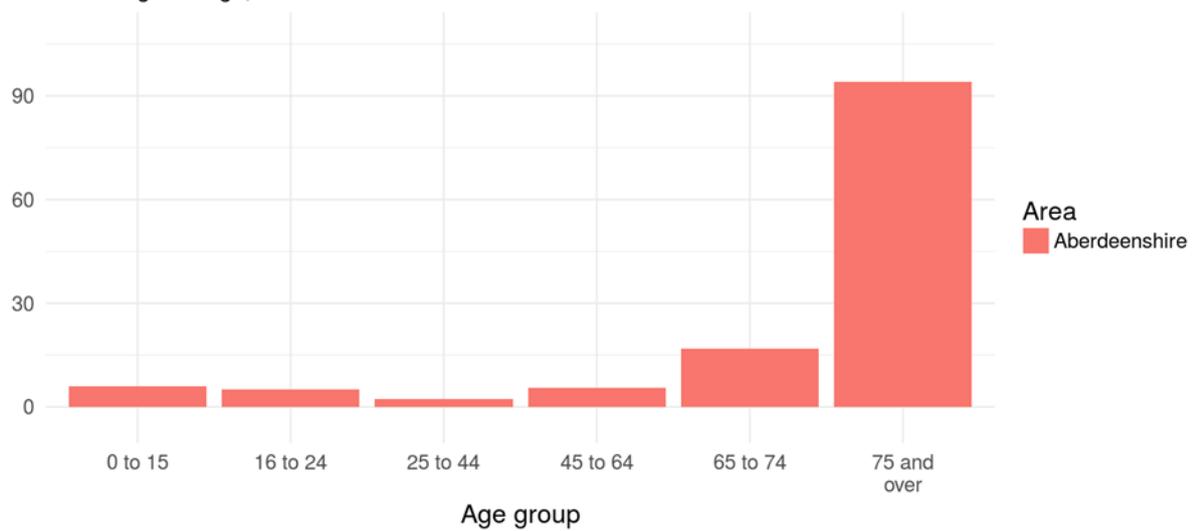


Figure 2

Population Projections by Age Group for Selected Areas

Principal projection
Percentage change, 2016 and 2041



Compared to some areas of Scotland, Aberdeenshire is generally not considered to be an area of high deprivation. However, there are significant numbers of individuals and families who experience the effects of multiple and persistent deprivation. It is important to recognise the impact of poverty on all those affected.

4. Finance

Social work services continue to be delivered within an increasingly challenging financial environment. Aberdeenshire Council and the Integration Joint Board continues to invest in social work services to meet current and anticipated increased levels of demand. The total expenditure on social work services during 2017/18 was almost £30 million on children's services and over £130 million on adult social work services.

In terms of Children's Social Work Services, the main area of pressure has been on externally provided residential and care provision. This is largely generated by the need for externally procured placements to meet the needs of children and young people. Expenditure can vary considerably year to year based on the demand for service.

Within Adult Services, there are significant pressures associated with increased demand, especially for care at home and residential services. Through the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) programmes of work are ongoing to deliver more sustainable models of service delivery. This change is challenging but necessary to support the continued availability of services for the most vulnerable.

5. Service Quality and Performance

The approach adopted in this report is to use the Care Inspectorate grading's of regulated services; add a narrative to highlight particular challenges and achievements; and to reference some self-evaluation outcomes.

In summary, the Care Inspectorate undertakes planned and unannounced inspections. Inspections do not assess all quality themes in every visit. Themes are selected from a range of sources of "intelligence", including self-evaluations/assessments. The Social Work Service considers Care Inspectorate reports individually and strategically in order to highlight any themes that may require to be addressed.

The Care Inspectorate undertakes inspections of regulated care services. Services are graded according to the following themes:

- Quality of Care and Support
- Quality of the Environment
- Quality of Staffing
- Quality of Management and Leadership

The grading scheme for these themes in all regulated services is:

- 6 Excellent
- 5 Very Good
- 4 Good
- 3 Average
- 2 Weak
- 1 Unsatisfactory

Detailed inspection reports for all services can be viewed online here: [Care Inspectorate](#). Overall, the services provided by Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership are of a high standard, achieving an average of 4.5 in 2017 -2018. This is slightly lower than the 2016 -2017 average of 4.7.

By way of additional narrative, information by major function is as follows:

5.1 Services for Older People and Adults

Aberdeenshire Council has contracts in place with externally commissioned service providers for the following numbers of local registered services:

- 36 care homes for older people
- 2 care homes for people with mental health problems
- 17 care homes for people with learning disabilities
- 25 care at home services
- 26 supported living services

These contracts are managed in accordance with a risk-based contract monitoring approach. At present only 2 of these 106 contracts are subject to the Council's non-compliance process.

An overview of the performance of specific services is given below:

Internal Care Homes

In 2017 – 2018 seven of our eight care homes achieved grades of 3 or above across all themes. Of those seven, five achieved grades of 5 or above across all themes. One of our care homes received grade 2 in regard to the quality of the care and support, staffing, management and leadership at an inspection carried out in February 2018. An action plan for improvement was subsequently developed and implemented. With this one exception, grades have remained consistent with 2016 – 2017.

Very Sheltered Housing

In 2017 -2018 our Very Sheltered Housing complexes achieved an average grade of 4.5 across all themes. One complex achieved grades of 3 which is lower than 2016 – 2017. Four of the six achieved grades of 5 across all themes, with one complex grade 6 for the quality of care and support provided.

Home Care and Housing Support Service

In November 2017 the service achieved a grading of 4 for the quality of care and support provided. This compares with a grading of 5 in November 2016. Similarly, the quality of management and leadership was graded 3 in November 2017 in comparison with a grading of 4 when this theme was last reported in 2015. The Service was required by the Care Inspectorate to ensure they had reviewed the personal plan of every person they have supported for six months or more within eight weeks of receipt of the draft report. This requirement was met within the agreed timescale.

Day Care Services

Day Care Services for Older People were last inspected in January 2015 at which time the Service achieved grades of 5 across all themes. The Care Inspectorate recommended that the Service provide core training for volunteers. This recommendation has not been implemented to date.

5.2 Adults with a Learning Disability

Aberdeenshire Respite, Residential and Supported Living Services

Aberdeenshire Respite Care Service provides:

- 3 residential respite care services for adults and children with learning and physical disabilities
- emergency replacement care for adults
- short breaks for parents/family carers in order for them to continue in their caring role.

60 individuals and their families currently access the Service.

It has been noted that higher packages of care and support are being requested in order to provide respite for people who have increasingly complex care needs. The team in North have responded by providing flexible and varied input including waking night cover, 1-1 support and introducing telecare. This has enabled them to keep pace with increasing demand for higher levels of support within their existing resources.

Further, there is a trend towards 2 distinct types of respite which are challenging to provide within one building:

- Provision of high level of complex care to support the service user and their family in the transition to residential care
- Provision of support into independence to enable the service user to move out of the family home

Despite these challenges, the Service achieved an average grade of 4.5 when inspected in 2017 with all themes reported graded 4 or 5.

Aberdeenshire Supported Living Service supports people with a wide range of learning disability support needs, to move into and live as independently as possible in their homes and communities. 18 individuals are currently supported. The team has identified an increase in requests for shorter term, focussed input to support people into independent living.

The Service was inspected in 2017 and achieved grade 5 for the reported themes - Quality of Care & Support and Management & Leadership.

Aberdeenshire Shared Lives Scheme

Aberdeenshire Shared Lives Scheme is an adult placement service which arranges accommodation for vulnerable adults in the homes of families or individuals, together with personal care, personal support, and other help. The Service recruits and approves people from the local community as self-employed adult placement carers.

The Service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in June 2017 at which time there were 34 adult placement carers and 20 service users. It achieved a grade of 6 in regard to the Quality of Care & Support and a grade of 5 for the Quality of Staffing. The Care Inspectorate report highlighted that the Service “continued to be an outstanding service of its type in relation to the quality of care and support”. Further, it noted that the service culture and values provided a strong foundation for success, with outcomes and experiences of service users consistently high.

5.3 Children’s Social Work Services

The regulated Children’s Services are residential care; foster care; adoption; a supported accommodation project and Supported Lodgings.

Residential Child Care

Three Children's Homes were inspected during 2017/18 with all receiving positive grades of 4 or 5 across a range of indicators.

Supported Accommodation

Taizali opened in the latter part of 2015 and is a supported accommodation project providing care for four young people transitioning between care and greater independence. Taizali received a full unannounced inspection on 28 June 2017 with the grades of 4 and 5.

Adoption Service

In March 2017 the Adoption Service received Grade 6 for the two quality themes that were inspected – quality of care and support and quality of staffing. No further inspections have taken place.

Fostering Service

In March 2017 Aberdeenshire's Fostering service received Grade 5 for the two quality themes that were inspected. No further inspections have taken place.

Supported Lodging Service

Supported lodgings is accommodation with support for young people aged between 16 and 21 years old, who have usually been in the care of the local authority. The accommodation is offered by individuals or families with a spare room, who work with our Throughcare and Aftercare team. All Supported lodgings offer a home environment with help and support which provides a stepping stone to living more independently. The Service was inspected in January 2018 and received Grade 5 for the quality themes that were inspected.

6. Delivery of Statutory Functions

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

6.1 Secure care

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

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

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

Scotland has 84 secure accommodation places spread across five dedicated units, the closest to Aberdeenshire being Rossie in Montrose, Angus. In 2017/18 Aberdeenshire continued its trend of using these facilities very rarely.

The child – centred resilience and professional approach to risk management demonstrated by the child care workforce when faced considerable pressure to “solve” a challenging situation by placing a child in Secure Accommodation has been pivotal in maintaining this relatively low use of the secure estate.

6.2 Adoption

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

Throughout 2017/18, 11 families (13 in 2016/17) were approved by Aberdeenshire's Permanence Panel as adoptive families four existing fostering families also offered adoption for children already in their care.

Fifteen children (11 in 2016) were successfully matched and moved to live with prospective adoptive families in 2017/18, this included 2 sibling groups of 2 children and 11 single children.

Aberdeenshire is a full participant in the national adoption register which seeks to progress the matching of children with approved adopters on a national rather than local authority basis.

Nationally, the ongoing recruitment of adopters and foster carers remains challenging and in the last few years, Aberdeenshire has also experienced dwindling numbers of families coming forward. Recruitment is a key priority for the council and the Services continue to be innovative in their approach to engaging with local communities. This has included drop in sessions for interested parties, a regular social media presence, newspaper and radio advertising as well as local poster campaigns.

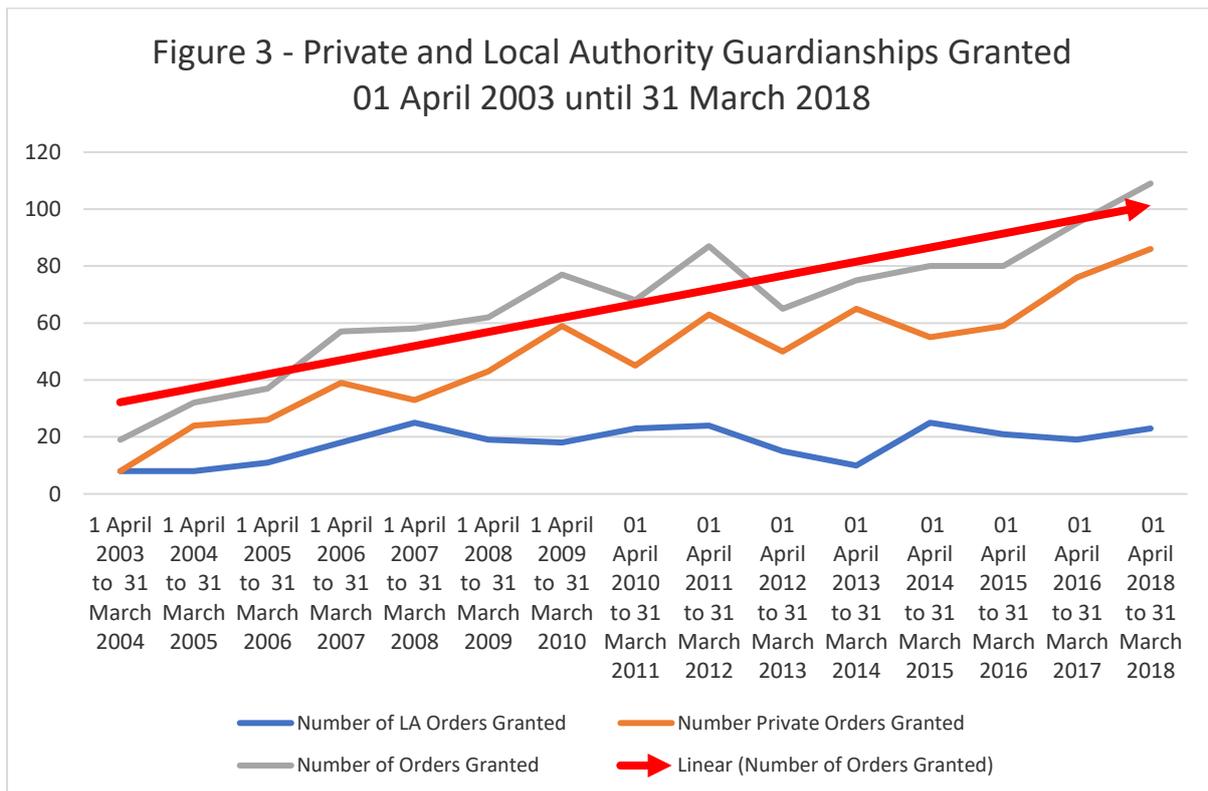
6.3 Mental Health Officers; Adults with Incapacity

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

With regard to the MHO workforce, the 2016/17 CSWO Report confirmed an improving trend on recruitment and retention of MHO's and this has endured in 2017/2018. Pivotal in this has been the retention of the ability to fund 5 training places per year with backfill arrangements during absence from substantive posts. Of the 25 applicants, 23 have successfully completed the course since 2013 and a 100% completion rate has been attained from 2016 onwards.

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

In both areas MHOs have a key role in assisting the court and supporting the individuals involved, and the ageing population has continued to contribute to the increase in workload (Figure 3). MHOs can also make a significant contribution to reducing the number of hospital bed days lost due to people being delayed in hospital longer than is needed. Over recent years MHOs along with multi-disciplinary colleagues have endeavoured to minimise delays associated with legislative processes and have made good progress.



6.4 Adult Support and Protection (ASP)

Adult Support and Protection in Aberdeenshire is operationally overseen by the Adult Protection Network (APN). During this reporting period the role of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) continued to evolve and develop in relation to adult support and protection. Though Aberdeenshire Council remains the statutory lead, the AHSCP has a pivotal role in supporting and protecting adults who are at risk of harm

In November 2017, the Network and its partners, were part of a joint inspection, which included scrutiny from the Care Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Health Improvement Scotland. This was a joint thematic inspection of adult support and protection across Aberdeenshire, which was one of 6 Scottish areas inspected.

The inspection focused on outcomes for adults at risk of harm, key processes for adult support and protection and leadership and governance for adult support and protection. The report was published out with the reporting period, in July 2018.

In 2017/18 there were 172 Aberdeenshire APN received ASP referrals. Compared to previous years this was a reduction. The reduction is evidence of positive changes that occurred following the APN's introduction of a formalised advice and guidance service which gives professionals an opportunity to discuss individual cases. This service is effective in providing preventative input and support. The result of this model reduces the need for statutory involvement without increasing risk to the individual.

7. User and Carer Involvement

This section concerns the involvement of service users in their own service experience and how they influence the nature of the actual service itself.

7.1 Self Directed Support

Self-directed Support enables people, their carers and their families to make informed choices on what their support looks like and how it is delivered, making it possible to meet agreed personal outcomes. Having more choice and control is empowering and leads to individuals being more confident about achieving aspirations. Self-Directed Support is now well embedded across most functions of social work, including child care, learning disability and older people services.

In Children's Services, Self-Directed Support has been made available to children and young people with additional support needs and a small number of children affected by disability. The number of children/young people accessing support through SDS is increasing. At the end of March 2018 there were 262 Self Directed Support packages recorded for children/young people, this is an increase of approximately 142 funded packages of support since the implementation of Self-Directed Support.

A wide range of supports and services are included in packages across Aberdeenshire, such as Personal Assistants, home care, specialist carers, Yoga for children/young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Wrap Around Care, traditional respite and self-catering breaks in place of traditional respite.

Families are encouraged to be creative as to how the budget is utilised to meet the identified outcomes for their child. However, in some parts of Aberdeenshire this can be difficult due to the lack of people who are willing to be employed as Personal Assistants.

7.2 Unpaid Carers

Engaging and working with unpaid carers continued to be a priority during 2017-18. The main area of focus was on preparing for introduction of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. This new legislation came into force on 1 April 2018 and brings new duties and responsibilities. The intention is to support carers in a flexible, person-centred way with an emphasis on prevention. Under the new legislation, carers are recognised and valued more than ever before. Caring responsibilities can affect some carers' physical and mental health with many having long-term health conditions. The imperative is to better support carers on a more consistent basis so that they can continue to care, if they so wish, in good health and to have a life alongside caring.

Achievements during 2017-18 have included the production of draft Local Carer Strategies. The Partnership and Aberdeenshire Council have developed separate Local Carer Strategies for both adult and young carers which were consulted on in draft form in early 2018. These strategies outline the plans of what will be done over the next few years to best support carers in Aberdeenshire. Consultation on both

strategies was in the form of a survey and face-to-face consultation with stakeholders. Consultation also took place on separate draft Eligibility Criteria for adult and young carers, based on a national framework provided by the Scottish Government. This framework detailed areas, or quality of life indicators, which are used to assess a carer's eligibility for social care services. After full consultation with stakeholders, these were ready to be approved by the IJB and Children's Services and Education Committee in April 2018. In December 2017, a carer representative was appointed to the IJB. The representative will communicate the views of carers to the IJB on all issues discussed at Board meetings.

7.3 Children's Services

The Young Peoples Organising and Campaigning Group (YPOC) for care experienced young people has grown from strength to strength over 2017/18 and now has around 12 young people who attend regularly. The group is facilitated by two Children's Rights Officer and the Who Cares? Scotland young person's worker.

The group spent 2016/17 working on their newest campaign 'Don't judge, we're no different from you' which was launched in Spring 2017. The DVD is being used across services and in schools with a specific resource pack. The DVD has also been taken to the Scottish Parliament by some of the group who had an audience with the First Minister, MSPs and invited guests from across Scotland.

The YPOC group's next campaign is focussing on what happens when young people first go into care. The YPOC meetings guide has been used as part of Children's hearing Scotland's campaign to 'Make Hearings better.'

The Aberdeenshire Looked After Children (LAC) Factor group has continued to meet throughout 2017/18 and have been involved in a smoking cessation survey, designing an input into the Children's Rights GIRFEC Module and more recently have been involved in meeting with the foster care recruitment workers to assist with recruitment.

7.4 Community Justice and Criminal Justice Services

As part of the development of the first Aberdeenshire Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan 17/18, a local strategic needs assessment was undertaken. Data collection from across partners contributed to this assessment alongside the outcomes of a range of consultations which included people who had experience of the justice system. This enriched what the Community Justice Partnership identified as the priorities for the first year of the Partnership. Within HMP & YOI Grampian, the prison based social work team led a series of consultations around throughcare provision with people from Aberdeenshire who were serving custodial sentences. The Criminal Justice Women's Service hosted a number of different focus groups to both inform the establishment of the Women's service but also to contribute to the needs assessment. Priorities around access to mental health services were informed directly by this consultation. Within the setting of Court, Criminal Justice Social Work gathered the views of people who were appearing from both custody and community. The presumption against short sentences is evidenced based and has an impact on sentencing. The views of people who are made the subject of short sentences or

indeed community based alternatives informed the community justice priority around the development of alternatives to remand and prosecution.

Within the Criminal Justice, service user “exit” questionnaires have long since been an established way to gather outcome information and direct feedback to inform service provision. Questionnaires are completed at the end of a period of community supervision. This captures the views of a whole range of people who have entered different parts of the justice system. Work commenced in 17/18 to redevelop these questionnaires to reflect the community justice landscape and contribute in a more meaningful way to both performance and effective outcome delivery.

8. Workforce

8.1 iMatter Survey

iMatter is a continuous improvement tool initially implemented within the NHS which has now been fully rolled out across the Health and Social Care Partnerships in Grampian. It aims to help improve understanding of staff's experience at work at an individual, team and organisational level, providing an opportunity for staff to provide feedback and influence change and improvement.

The process initially involves staff completing the iMatter Questionnaire, covering their experience as an individual, experience within their team and of their direct line manager, and experience of the organisation and the system. The results are formulated into a Team Report, which is then discussed by all members of the team and they produce and agree an action plan for the year ahead.

Aberdeenshire HSCP has now participated in the iMatter cycle for 2 consecutive years (2017 and 2018) allowing for comparison and reflection on results. The key results and conclusions to be drawn from the Aberdeenshire 2018 iMatter results are:

- Overall the iMatter survey recorded a very good response rate and generally positive scoring against the majority of indicators.
- Of particular note is that 84% of staff reported that they understand how their role contributes to the goals of the organisation.
- Additionally 81% of staff would be happy for a friend or relative to access services within the HSCP.
- The organisational indicators relating to visibility of senior management, staff confidence in the management of performance, and staff's sense of involvement in organisational decision-making, will provide the priority areas of focus for the HSCP senior management team moving forward.

8.2 Workforce Development

The Workforce Development Team, hosted by the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Work Partnership, supports the annual training Plan that incorporates training needs across all Social Work functions. In terms of planning to ensure that our staff achieve and retain the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) registration requirements, courses and bespoke support for individuals continues to be provided.

A range of training opportunities exist for staff involved in the delivery of social work services, including post-registration support. In 2017/18, twenty-three newly qualified professionals met the requirements to join and successfully completed our one year Social Work Professionals Support Programme. The programme provides an induction into the service, familiarisation with our expectations regarding good practice and opportunities for reflection and discussion on challenging themes. We are currently working with SSSC Newly Qualified Social Workers Pilot Project;

(2018-19) - Approaches to a Supported and Assessed Transitional Year as one of three national pilot sites.

Overall, Aberdeenshire is well placed to continue to provide services to the people of Aberdeenshire through a competent and confident workforce and sufficient investment in training remains a key aspect of ensuring the influence and contribution of Social Work.

8.3 Care Provision

The care market in Aberdeenshire continues to experience many challenges to both commissioners and providers. The biggest issue is recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of care staff, with an ageing workforce and fewer young people choosing care and support work as an occupation. The policy of paying Scottish Living Wage to care staff has been welcomed. In addition, the development work on the National Care Home Contract is helping to address the 'fair price for care' issue, however recruitment within care homes remains challenging. In non-residential care, there is increasing demand, partially because of demographics changes, but also because people requiring care and support are choosing to stay at home. Some very positive work has commenced between commissioners and providers, taking a collaborative approach to designing services that will be sustainable and cost effective for all.

9. Improvement Approaches

The Service has an extensive range of approaches to improving services. These range from large scale programmes arising from significant national or local initiatives through to smaller scale developments arising from self-evaluation exercises. The following examples are not exhaustive, but they give an indication of tangible projects that have resulted in real improvements in service delivery and the lives of people in Aberdeenshire.

Inter – Agency Referral Discussion.

This development extends the range of agencies involved in establishing the validity, nature and initial response to a child protection concern that has been received by the police or social work. Previously, the police and social work determined the initial response, and although supported in doing so by information that was sought from health and education, the process and quality of outcome for the child has been enriched by the participation of a colleague from each of these services in the dialogue.

Through & After Care

A suite of accommodation and support options have been developed including Langstane Supported Tenancies, Supported Lodgings and Taizali residential resource, to assist care experienced young people with the transition from care to independence. In 2017/18, 34 care leavers have been supported to successfully sustain their own tenancies.

The development of a Youth Housing Forum to prevent homelessness for care leavers has resulted in a change in culture whereby care leavers no longer have to register as homeless with the housing service to access accommodation.

Whilst Aberdeenshire have always supported looked after young people to remain in their placement post 16 years of age, the introduction of Continuing Care as part of the Children & Young Persons (Scotland) Act 2012, has placed this within a statutory framework. In 2017, 23 young people over the age of 17 years were eligible for continuing care and 14 have taken up this option. The main reason for leaving the placement is the young person's personal choice. Continuing Care has also enabled the authority to support young people to retain a 'home base' post 18 years if for example they have joined the armed forces or gone to university. Two young people are currently able to return to their carers for home leave from the Army.

Our Family Firm

Launched by the Scottish Government in January 2011 the intention of 'Our Family Firm' is to provide supported experience of the "work place" in order to help ensure that care leavers are better equipped for adulthood and the world of work.

An improvement drive has resulted in a referral increase from 5 in 2015 to 62 in 2017/18 with subsequent placements in ICT, Day services, Library Service, Catering Leisure, Landscaping, Facilities and Waste Services. Further placements in Media, Law, Childcare, Mechanics and Joinery are in process.

Criminal Justice Service

The Strategic Needs Assessment which informed the local priorities of the Aberdeenshire Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan identified that a higher than national average number of short sentences were imposed in Peterhead Sheriff Court. Analysis identified that there was a number of people who remained in the justice system in a cyclical pattern of community and custody. Non-compliance with community-based Orders being the method of entry into a short sentence were the pattern of unmet need is perpetuated through further disengagement and non-compliance. Improvement activity around this priority developed the Criminal Justice Intensive Intervention Service. The value of the working relationship is a foundation of good social work practice. A dedicated social work practitioner and Criminal Justice Employability Officer work in a paced and creative way to establish that effective working relationship from which better compliance management is developed which centrally manages risk, fulfils the statutory duty but also works towards addressing the unmet need which underlies the cyclical patterns of offending.

The Women's Service

The Women's Service translates the national recommendations of the Commission on Women's Offenders Report. Two social workers and a support worker provide individual and group work interventions for women who are in the justice system. The workers are based within the developing two Resource Centres which offer a multi-agency "one stop" safe space. Equality of access to services and gender responsive practice are key features of the Service which also looks to embed these principles through shared learning and joint working with other services and statutory partners, specifically Mental Health Services and Court Services.

Westbank Cappa Project

This year Westbank opted to be part of an improvement program with Care Inspectorate called CAPA (care about physical activity). The team at Westbank are very aware of the benefits of increasing physical activity to support the wellbeing of residents and implemented a variety of small projects with individuals and small groups within the home which have resulted in many positive outcomes for those involved.

One of those projects has received particular attention as an example of best practice. An intergenerational fishing project supporting 3 residents and 3 local children to fish together has been established at Lochter Activity Centre. The aims of the project is to increase activity and provide an opportunity for both groups to interact. For the residents it gave an opportunity to be a mentor. For the children it allowed them to appreciate that older people have lots to share. The project met all of the initial aims, importantly everyone had great fun and formed friendships that

have lasted past the initial period of the project. Whilst only a very small project, the Westbank project is a good example of how intergenerational work, under the right circumstances, can bring about positive outcomes for both young and old.

10. Conclusion and the Year Ahead

The staff in social work services, including those commissioned should be commended for the support and protection they have provided to our vulnerable children, young people and adults throughout 2017/18. This report has highlighted several challenges, including increasing demand across all service areas alongside financial constraints. The focus ahead will be to continue providing high standards of delivery and innovating the way we work with others to improve the sustainability of services for the future.

This report has laid out the challenges and achievements throughout 2017/18. It is the intention of the CSWO to focus on a range of key areas during 2018/19, the intention being to develop a programme of work, which includes:

- Promote linkages between children and adult services to continue developing strong professional relationships between those involved in all aspects of social work services.
- Develop a culture of professional identity and a clear individual and organisational understanding of the unique role of social work within an ever changing world.
- Raise visibility of social work including its purpose and contribution to society, especially in challenging poverty.
- Through the use of internal and external scrutiny, consider social work's current approach to risk and the balance between statutory and non-statutory provision.
- Encourage the move to a digitally enabled workforce which appropriately uses technology as an enabler, both in terms of recording/storing information and as a tool for engaging with individuals.
- Increasing demands and expectations, new legislation, national and local policy drivers all necessitate the need for innovation. During these times of rapid change, the CSWO will continue to emphasise the importance of open and transparent communication between individuals, teams and organisations.