



**Chief Social Work Officer's
Annual Report
2021/22**

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Purpose and Background	3
3. Governance and Accountability Arrangements.....	4
4. Service Quality and Performance.....	5
5. Resources.....	27
6. Workforce.....	28
7. Conclusion	29

1. Introduction

Welcome to my Annual Report as Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) for Dumfries and Galloway, reflecting the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

I noted in my introduction last year that this was one of the most challenging times for Social Work Services due to the COVID19 pandemic, and on reflection I start in the same place. We have all been touched by the pandemic and the impact of this will be felt for many years to come as we recover and rebuild. Social work staff have, and continue to, show remarkable commitment, compassion, adaptability, and determination to maintain services, in these challenging times and for this I send my sincere thanks.

Throughout the reporting period there have been several key changes to how we practice because of the pandemic, changes to local services, guidelines from Scottish Government, public health, and partner organisations, and I have reflected these throughout the report.

This report provides an overview of professional activity within Dumfries and Galloway through the delivery of statutory functions and the duties I hold as the CSWO on behalf of the Council.

2. Purpose and Background

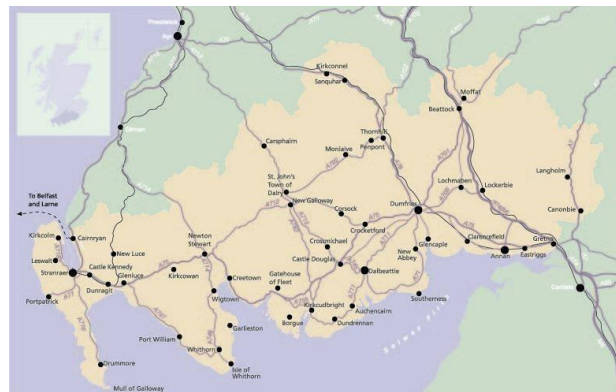
This report is produced to satisfy the requirement to prepare and publish a report in relation to the CSWO's role in professional leadership, oversight of practice, governance, values and standards as described in national guidance. The report also relates to the specific areas of decision-making and practice where legislation confers functions directly on the CSWO.

My report refers to the contribution of Social Work and social care in working in partnership with others in relation to the wider safety and wellbeing of Dumfries and Galloway residents.

Profile of Dumfries and Galloway

Demographics

We have a population of 148,290. Between 1998 and 2020, the population of Dumfries and Galloway decreased by 0.3%. Over the same period, Scotland's population rose by 7.7%. Our population is projected to decrease by 5.8% over the next 10 years.



58% of our population are aged between 16-64, which is around 6% less than the Scottish average. The average age is 46 years old. (UK average 40; Scotland 42).

Our demographic is changing. The population aged 65-84 is forecast to increase by 25% by 2037 while the number of children and working age adults is projected to fall. By 2039 it is projected that there will be a 10% decrease in the number of people aged 18 or under.

Economy

Earnings in Dumfries and Galloway are lower than the national average. In 2021, full time workers received an average of £549.80 per week compared with £622 nationally.

The statistics on poverty in Dumfries and Galloway are stark. Around one in five Dumfries and Galloway residents live in poverty. On the tighter definition of income deprivation, 11.5% of the population are considered income deprived. Some areas within Dumfries and Galloway are amongst the 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. These are mostly in and around the largest towns – our most deprived areas are Stranraer West and Northwest Dumfries.

The statistics on child poverty are of particular concern: 6,141 children (26.2%) across our region live in households below 60% median income before housing costs. This proportion has increased by 2.8% since 2015, the fifth highest increase amongst Scottish local authorities. 18% of children in the region are reliant on free school meals.

3. Governance and Accountability Arrangements

As CSWO, I have a key leadership role within the Council, the Health and Social Care Partnership and, as a member of the Senior Leadership Team of the Council reporting directly to the Chief Executive.

I represent Social Work within key strategic groups including the Children's Services Executive Group, the Children's Services Strategic and Planning Partnership, the Integration Joint Board, the Executive Team of the Health and Social Care Partnership and as a member of both the Care Home Oversight and the Care at Home Oversight Groups. This allows me to contribute and oversee progress on developments across the Children's Services Partnership and professional oversight to all delegated Adult Services within the Health and Social Care Partnership.

I am a member of the Southwest of Scotland Strategic Oversight group for the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) which along with chairing of MAPPA3 cases allows me to ensure that all aspects of Justice services delivery for our highest risk offenders are managed and monitored appropriately

Public Protection continues to be at the forefront of our response over the past year as we have, with multi-agency partners, sought to continue to ensure those at risk of harm continue to be supported and protected throughout the pandemic. We have also appointed a permanent Independent Chair of our Public Protection Committee during this period.

I maintain a key role in Public Protection as one of the Vice Chairs of the Public Protection Committee and as a member of the Case Review Group.

At the beginning of this reporting period, we had two Significant Case Review's in progress as Social Care Institute for Excellence Learning Reviews. The Care Inspectorate had agreed that we suspend these given the impact on the service from the pandemic. This was lifted with one being presented to Chief Officer's and the other to be presented during the first quarter 2022/23. During this reporting period a further six notifications for Initial Case Reviews were submitted. One of these proceeded to Significant Case Review with progress underway.

I continue to provide assurance on the quality of Social Work Services across three key committee structures. These were disrupted due to the pandemic, however, reporting has returned to the normal reporting cycles. Reports are distributed with Full Council, Social Work Services Committee and the Council's Area Committees. Adult Services continued to be reported through the Integration Joint Board and the Council's Area Committee structure.

We regularly report to Social Work Committee and the Clinical and Care Governance Committee of the Integration Joint Board on the outcome of external scrutiny of regulated services within Children and Families and Adult services. This was limited during the previous year as the number of Council regulated services being subject to inspection was impacted on from the pandemic, this is now returning to the normal inspection cycles.

The Social Work Services Strategic Planning Group includes my most senior managers from all areas of service. Our structure ensures that all members of this team are routinely in touch with day-to-day operational practice and able to provide assurance quickly on individual issues as they arise as well as playing their part in the strategic direction of the service. This team is responsible for the

recruitment, development, and professional oversight of staff across their functional areas, and for communicating, modelling, and maintaining practice quality and standards across the service. The Strategic Planning Group met on a more frequent basis during the period to provide enhanced leadership and presence within the service and to support the additional demands and work required because of the pandemic. This increase in meetings continues to date.

The Social Work Services Tactical Managers group includes senior operational managers across the service responsible for the leadership and management of frontline staff and therefore responsible for practice standards and the quality of services delivered. My leadership of this group maintains the key link between operational practice, local and national policy and the strategic direction of my service.

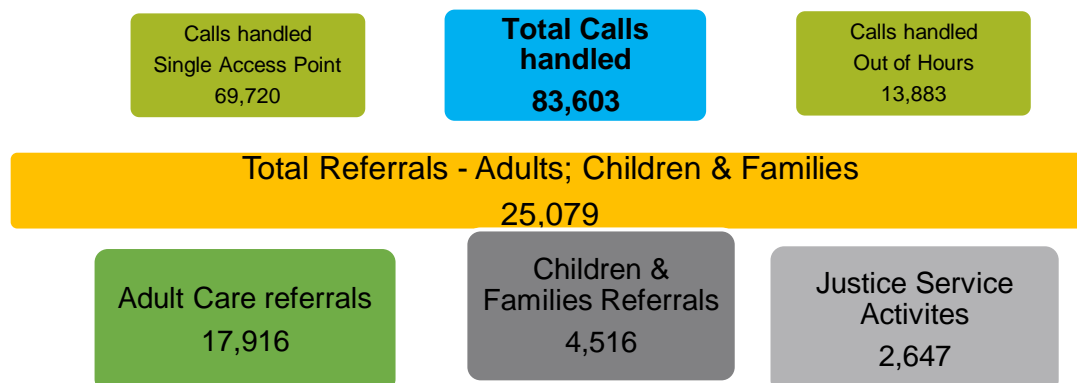
In this reporting period the Strategic Planning Group has led a range of improvement and assurance activity, evaluation and associated performance reporting and service initiatives including responding to the ongoing demands arisen / impacted due to the COVID19 pandemic.

This has included:

- Responding to emergency legislation, policy and guidance in all areas examples including the introduction of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 (ACRA) and prepare service readiness from publication of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland.
- Introduction of a new telephony infrastructure to enhance our Single Access Point.
- Key player in the launch of the Scottish Government’s Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway, becoming only the third area to pilot the model and the first rural area to do so.
- Working with the Scottish Government’s Leading Improvement Team to review and further improve Child Inter-Agency Referral Discussions.
- The launch of our new Family Hub75 in the West of our Region.
- Design of a Home Teams approach to provide locally based solutions across the spectrum of care and support with ready access to required expertise.
- 22% increase of the total number of people who had opted for self-directed support Options 1 and 2 under The Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 providing them with more choice and control.
- Oversight and assurance of our local care home sector including the development and implementation of Partnership and Provider Improvement Plan template and process (recognised as an exemplar by Care Inspectorate colleges).
- Service redesign and transformation activity across all service areas. An example of this includes the review and development of non-custodial and diversionary activities within our Justice Service creating capacity to increase our collaboration and partnership working with stakeholders, and to focus on the professional development of the Social Work assistants.

4. Service Quality and Performance

This has been a busy year given the different level of demands on the service with the level of contact increased as evidenced through the number of calls handled by both Out of Hours (OOH) and the Single Access Point (SAP).



The total of 25,079 referrals represents a 12% increase on the previous period. The initial stages of the pandemic resulted in a drop in the referral rate. This increased as restrictions eased and continues to surpass previous levels. The active workload across the service reflects a significant increase as we focused on those already known to the service and those coming into the service for the first time.

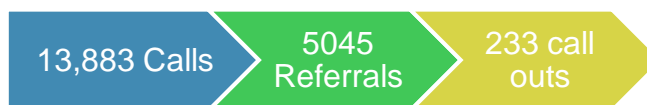
Single Access Point

The Single Access Point access to services model was introduced at the height of the pandemic and was designed to provide a streamlined single 'front door' contact for members of the public, social services users and professionals alike.

The team's resilience has been enhanced by the recent introduction of a more efficient telephony infrastructure reducing the amount of dropped and re-directed calls, leading to better service to both members of the public and agency partners. The team have processed 21,000 referrals on behalf of the partnership and Social Work services, however, the professional health advisors have also dealt with 5,667 referrals themselves that came through health care pathways.

Our regions Care Call community alarm service is now under the management of the Single Access Point. There are more than 3,500 people receiving the service which provides home safety and personal security systems. Care Call fits well within the Single Access Point as this brings together dedicated social care management and enables access to services across the Health and Social Care Partnership. The service did see an increase in incoming calls from services users by 4,420 over the year which had a knock-on effect of calls to responders increasing by 925. In addition, the team are also streamlining services, such as the Out of Hours Service where all possible referrals received are sent to the Single Access Point to triage, in the same way as they would be dealt with during the daytime, this provides for a consistent approach to services.

Social Work Out of Hours Service

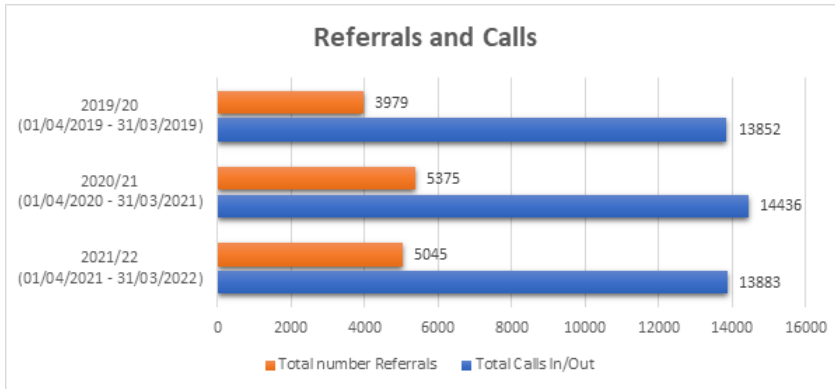


The Social Work Out of Hours Service is an integral part of the delivery of Social Work Services in Dumfries and Galloway. The team provide a professional response to statutory emergencies and other Social Work issues across children and families and adult services as well as other complex situations which cannot wait until the next working day. The premise of the service is to ensure vulnerable adults, children, young people and families are safe and have access to support whenever they need it.

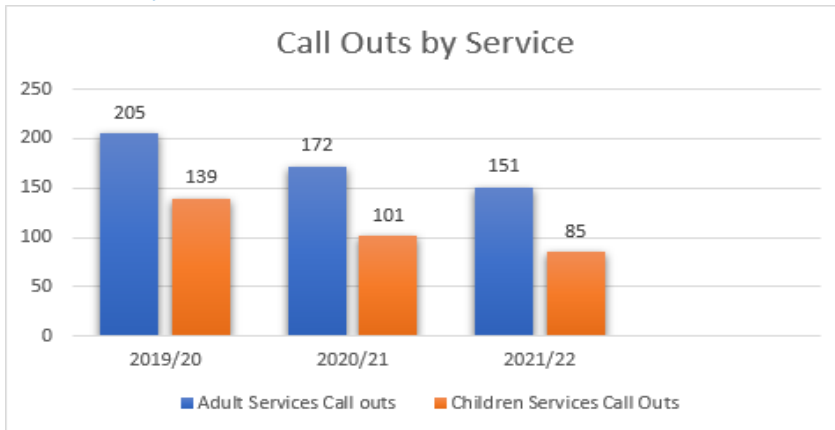
During this reporting period we continued to experience a high level of telephone contacts with the busiest period tending to be weekends and public holidays. 69% of calls received related to adult care and 31% to children and young people. We have continued to see a reduction in the number of calls or referrals to the service resulting in a call out or visit down by 14% from 2020/2021, from 273 to 233. The reduction this year reflects the changes to practice because of the pandemic with less face-to-face contact due to the restrictions other than those situations where there was no alternative. Of these 233 call outs or visits 148 have related to adults and 85 to children and young people.

In 2021 we joined colleagues in NHS and Police Scotland to respond to questions posed from young people on the Cool2talk service. This service provides a confidential and safe place for young people from 12 –26 years to ask questions without judgement. From the responses a small test of change project took place in February 2022 with the Family Hub75 service that allowed a Social Work response to straightforward call outs in the West of the region, requests for an Appropriate Adult and provision of food parcels. Feedback so far has been positive with timely solutions to social issues. In November 2021, an Interim Team Manager post was established to support an overview of options for future planning of the service and to focus on a quality assurance framework to meet locally agreed standards. This will improve and maintain excellent practice and outcomes.

Referral and Calls (Out of Hours)

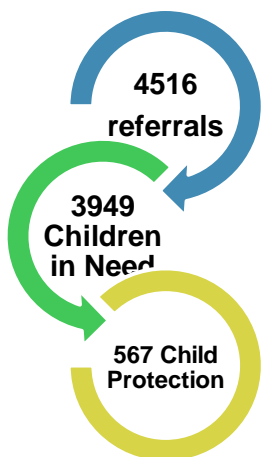


Call Outs by Service



The Out of Hours Service has had positive feedback from agencies and individuals which has allowed us to see how well we are achieving our aims and objectives. Further planned work with key stakeholders will ensure we continue to develop and improve the Out of Hours response in Dumfries and Galloway.

Children and Families Services



During 2021/22 there were 4,516 referrals to Children and Families, reflecting a busy year in which we dealt with some very complex and challenging areas of work, 87% of our referrals were for children considered to be in need with 13% related to children in need of protection. Whilst this figure shows a reduction in referrals from 2020/21 it does not reflect a reduction in workload as this is a result of an improved change to our reporting practices.

The above figure accurately reflects new referrals to Children and Families Social Work and excludes referrals made about children we are already working with, where we know what the concerns are and are working with the families to address these.

During 2021/22 we experienced significant changes in the workforce across Children and Families Social Work Services with staff moving on, retiring, long term absence. During the period, over 30% of our staff who were experienced moved on and were replaced by newly qualified workers.

In 2021/22 the number of children referred into the Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has increased by 11% compared to the previous year. A total of 1,097 children were referred into Child MASH, with 532 children discussed at Inter-agency Referral Discussion. We conducted 266 Child Protection Investigations resulting in 87 Children Protection Planning Meetings; an increase of 12% compared to that of 2020/21. As of 31 March 2022, there were 47 children on the Child Protection Register, with the most prevalent risk factors being domestic and emotional abuse, and in recent months larger family groups have impacted on registration figures.

Monthly multi-agency quality assurance continues to be undertaken by the Interagency Referral Discussion Review Group. Findings include decision-making being appropriate, good evidence of analysis of risk, including prediction of future risks and the impact on the child. There are good examples of single agency analysis and learning has been shared through direct sessions with staff in MASH. Developments are underway to improve multi-agency risk analysis.

Child MASH has continued to operate remotely throughout this period, we are reassured through monthly Initial Referral Discussion Reviews (IRD) that this has not impacted adversely on partnership working and decision making for our most vulnerable families. IRD Review (undertaken jointly by Police, Social Work, NHS, and our Lead Officer Public Protection (Child Protection)) has consistently concluded that the right families are being referred for discussion at IRD and when they proceed to full IRD, the right safeguarding decisions are being made.

Activity specific to the workings of MASH, including IRD data alongside qualitative findings from monthly IRD Review are reported to Public Protection Committee through the Child Protection Scrutiny Group and inform the Child Protection Minimum Data Set.

In May 2021 we launched the Scottish Government's Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway, becoming only the third area to pilot the model and the first rural area to do so. Ongoing arrangements, developments, and improvements of the Scottish Child Interview Model in Dumfries and Galloway are agreed through the Implementation Group and Performance and Quality Group chaired by our Locality Manager. The Scottish Child Interview Model Strategic Oversight Group is chaired by our Senior Manager. Through the Oversight Group we developed our vision for children in Dumfries and Galloway:

“We will ensure that any child in Dumfries and Galloway who needs to have a joint investigative interview will have one in a way that is trauma informed, tailored to their individual needs and is undertaken by specialist staff to support the child’s right to protection, justice and recovery from trauma.”

Initial feedback from children is that they have found the interview experience to be supportive and helpful - even within the context of something having happened to them which means they need to be interviewed. We have also held focus groups for school and Social Work staff, and this has helped us think about how we can better support children before and after the interview – with plans being put in place to develop this.

Key Facts and Figures

111 interviews were undertaken during the reporting period using the Scottish Child Interview Model.

61% of children interviewed had past or current involvement with Social Work, and 39% were not known to our service.

36% of children were known to SCRA either currently or in the past and 64% were not known at all.

81% of children interviewed were victims, or possible victims of abuse; 69% of these children were suspected of being abused by someone within their own family.

58% of interviews led to disclosure by children.

Crime reports were raised as a result of 52% of the interviews.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 came into effect on 17 December 2021 that saw the increase in the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland to 12 years.

Dumfries and Galloway’s Age of Criminal Responsibility Implementation Group is chaired by Social Work and was able to mobilise and ensure all necessary plans were in place to respond to any situations as defined by the Act from 17 December 2021. The Implementation Group agreed and developed a communication strategy to accompany the launch date of 17 December 2021 for all staff across the partnership and information to the public was released over social media, with the emphasis on the cultural changes and focus on Children’s Rights that the Act signifies.

On 31 March 2022, our now well-established Family Support team were supporting 129 families, with a total of 226 children supported across Dumfries and Galloway. Evaluations are completed with all families we work with when we end our work with them. They have told us:

It woke us up and we got things sorted out. Now the house is a lot cleaner.

I don’t like opening up much to people but I still felt comfortable to message or call, I never felt judged by him.

It was a case of spending time figuring out what was needed. I didn’t know what I needed; I was a bit of a mess.

Example of impact

XX's mum said that the worker paid close attention to XX's feelings and took things at his pace. XX was willing to try most of the things that the worker suggested and if not they both agreed compromises. XX's Mum said that the support has been life changing, XX is a different person, he has grown so much in confidence and XX was in fact keen for the school to build up his timetable again faster than the school were able to.

To allow us to identify the application of Signs of Safety procedures and assess the support this provided when gathering and updating information, in November 2021 to March 2022 we conducted a further collaborative audit of 50 cases which had been closed within the last 6 months. The audit included file reading and evaluations with children and parents and surveys with staff. We saw a big improvement in all areas but still have work to do for this to be consistent throughout our work.

Below is an example of a Signs of Safety, Safety Plan.

Safety Plan

- Marie is a Social Worker and its her job to keep children safe and to listen to children.

- Marie knows you love and miss Simon, and she is helping mum and Simon find a safe way for you to have contact with Simon.

- Simon did something that got him in trouble with the police, so it was unsafe for Simon to see you or come to the home when you were there

- We can do this by having a safe adult supervise your contact with Simon, this can be someone you know and love, such as Nanna or Grandma.

- Marie wants you to feel safe and know that you have people you can talk to if you have any worries. Mrs Davies and your teacher at school will keep an eye out for you to make sure you are okay at school and at home.
- You can talk to your teacher if anything is making you sad at school or at home.

- Social work don't stay involved in peoples lives forever. It is hoped that mum and Simon follow the safety plan and we can leave people in peace to get on. This is what Marie wants for you and your family. She also wants you to be happy and not to worry about anything. If you were to worry about anything in the future you need to know who you would speak with.



Feedback has been positive with one family expressing 'everyone was on the same page and working together and clear about what needs to be done and why'.

Our Youth Justice Team is now represented on all national Youth Justice Groups and is recognised nationally to the extent that we were asked to present to the National Youth Justice Conference in June 2021 to talk about how we have implemented the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019. We have been asked to return in June 2022 to follow this up.

In February of this year, we were successful in our bid to the Promise Partnership – A Good Childhood for investment of over £99,000 to support our improvement work on how we respond to children and young people who come into conflict with the law. This is an exciting opportunity for Dumfries and Galloway.

At the beginning of this reporting period, the Pre-Birth Strategic Group (chaired by Social Work) agreed and implemented a change to the way we work with vulnerable women who are pregnant and where those vulnerabilities could affect how safely they are able to look after their babies. Based on a review of how we approach this work and the impact this has on these women; we aligned our Pre-Birth processes to existing referral and child protection processes and timescales with the aim of

earlier assessment and decision making allowing for more time to build relationships with women and their families before their babies are born. This has led to earlier and more effective interventions. The Pre-Birth Strategic Group, alongside practitioners from NHS and Social Work began an evaluation in February 2022 – a year after the changes were made – and initial findings indicate that the changes made have been positive.

2021/22 has been an exceptionally busy year for our Care Leavers. Supporting them through the pandemic has been no mean feat but they have coped remarkably well and shown great resilience as they moved from one lockdown to another. Most of our young people reacted well to the pandemic and appreciated that life slowed down for them as they were able to focus on themselves and others around them. For some of our other young people, the isolation and loneliness were not positive, and this impacted on their overall health and wellbeing with them feeling lonely, isolated, and unable to move on. As we have come out of the pandemic, it has been great to see our young people move on with their lives positively, with some moving into their own home, going to university and college or finding employment.

Our team has directly supported over 130 care leavers throughout 2021/22. There are approximately 330 young people who are able to access an after service aged 21-26 years should they wish to do this and the Leaving Care Team has been there to support them when they have needed it. We have some great news stories and many achievements over this period from qualifying for nursing, mental health worker, internship with Scottish Government, travelling abroad, moving house, becoming a parent and much, much more.

We have supported over 20 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children and young people and they have adapted well and made some positive choices. We have seen some choose to stay at school, train in a new field and attend university. Dumfries and Galloway have supported the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking children, which was introduced to reduce the demand on the UK ports of Dover and Portsmouth.

Key Facts and Figures

On 31 March 2022, we had:

303 Looked After Children

301 Current kinship placements - 69 of these being Looked After Children

119 Foster carers in 63 fostering households

8 Children made subject to a Permanence Order

20 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people supported

Our Fostering and Adoption Service has continued to work to operate as best as they can in the times of demand, restrictions, and challenge. They have continued to undertake all our fostering, adoption, and kinship panels online. This has been a great success and we have seen workers, foster and adoptive carers, birth parents and key people in the lives of children attend panel to give their views.

I must thank all our foster carers, adoptive carers, kinship carers and supported lodgings providers because without them we would not be able to deliver our services. This national crisis has brought many challenges but has also changed the way we currently do our business while supporting carers, undertaking assessments, delivering training, holding all our panels and much, much more.

We continue to strive to deliver a high-quality service in times of demand, restrictions, and challenge.

We have 63 fostering households and 119 carers. This year 10 fostering households withdrew mainly due to foster carers wishing to retire, spend time with their grandchildren or have taken up employment. To try to encourage and support our existing foster carers we have been supported by Dumfries and Galloway Council to introduce a fee for foster carers. This was approved in December 2021 and was implemented on 1st April 2022. We also managed to seek an increase to our foster care mileage which many of our foster carers were delighted with and feel this is helping them in times of fuel crisis.

We were unable to hold our foster carers day in 2021 due to the restrictions but are eagerly looking forward to a day of Celebrations in 2022 to acknowledge and say a huge thank you to all our foster carers who do a fantastic job for us throughout the year.

In 2021/22 we introduced our Chairing and Reviewing Team who undertake the role of independent chairing of all Looked after Reviews, Child Protection meetings for our most vulnerable children. It is important that those chairing these meetings can operate in an independent way to ensure that the plans are in place are the right plans to support the children and their families. This has allowed the team to begin to consider the service improvements for those children who are looked after or are subject to children protection meetings

During the reporting period we undertook a service redesign which has seen the closure of Cairnryan House to the formation of the new Family Hub75 in the West. The staff team have adapted well to this service change and the opening of the Family Centre in Stranraer has seen the service visited by many families in the area who have required their support. This staff team have over 2021/22 delivered a very extensive summer programme of activities, delivered support to young people individually and in groups, they have supported many children and young people via outreach support and support to families in crisis. The Winter Wonderland was just what was needed in December to bring a smile to those families and children who visited the centre. A huge well done to the staff - who knew we had joiners and painters and artists in our staff team? This was a significant effort and loved by the many families who attended, and the feedback was brilliant

Massive well done, to all that put together Santa's Grotto and Winter Wonderland at family hub 75 west. It was perfect. You should all be so proud of yourself giving the kids all this for £1. You guys are amazing and Stranraer has a lot of happy kids ♥ xx

It was brilliant, even got a selection box as a present. The folk behind it have went above and beyond for our community xx



We continue to be remarkably busy at Hardthorn Road with the unit having the first phase completed of a programme of refurbishment. Our children have continued to go to school or be schooled online. They have continued to pursue hobbies and interests when they can and maintain contact with extended family members either face to face or via Microsoft Teams. The young people have shown great resilience and have continued to achieve and prosper during this year.

Additional Scottish Government funding has seen the purchase of new bikes, a trampoline, a Polly tunnel for growing vegetables and much more. Who would have known we had some keen gardeners in our midst? Lockdown has allowed us all to consider trying new things which has provided our young people with a range of new experiences.

For those young people for whom we cannot care for in our Children's House we offer external fostering and residential care placements for them. We have seen a reduction in the number of out of authority residential placements but, have seen an increase in the number of purchased fostering placements for children and young people.

Our Children and Families Commissioning Service has continued to be busy throughout 2021/22 supporting our existing range of contracts in place to support our most vulnerable young people. We continue to work in partnership with an extensive range of providers both within Dumfries and Galloway and those out with. The additional poverty and mental health monies were most welcome additions throughout this period and allowed us to reach a greater number of children and young people to offer them enhanced early intervention and prevention services to support their health and

wellbeing. This included advocacy support at school, early models of service delivery for young people who were feeling low and isolated, peer support, support with housing for care leavers, the ability to try different opportunities, befriending, equine therapy, activities and much more.

Key Facts and Figures

Barnardo's Hear 4 U Advocacy Service

118 referrals with 200 children and young people accessing the service for support with domestic abuse, homeless, mental health, emotional wellbeing, being a looked after child and many more.

Dumfries and Galloway Befriending Project

72 referrals with 72 young people accessing the service for support with isolation, self-confidence, self-esteem, social skills and many more.

Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre

97 new young carers referred with a total of 297 young carers accessing the service for supports with caring responsibilities, social interaction, support and guidance and many more.

Dumfries Toy library

1002 visits to the centre, 310 visits to stay and play session, 127 social work supported contacts and 173 people accessing the toy and equipment bank.

Holm Park View Supported Accommodation Project

12 young people provided with accommodation with 2 of our young people moving to permanent accommodation. Support provided to our young people include accessing further education, practical house management skills, budgeting and managing finances.

Homestart Wigtownshire

35 new referrals with 67 of our families being supported, 104 parents supported, and 130 children supported. Support provided includes family groups, housing, and emotional support.

Quarriers Family Support Service

4 referrals were made for short breaks, 14 referrals for family support services, 11 children and young people accessed short breaks, 84 accessed family support service and 134 accessing emotional health and wellbeing service.

Relationship Scotland

54 intake appointments, 95 supervised contact sessions, 24 supported contact sessions, 49 handover contact sessions and 18 mediation sessions facilitated.

Upper Nithsdale Family Service

174 referrals with 139 children supported, 17 young people receiving intensive support and 18 families receiving intensive support. Support provided includes therapeutic groups, parenting groups, play therapy and domestic abuse programme.

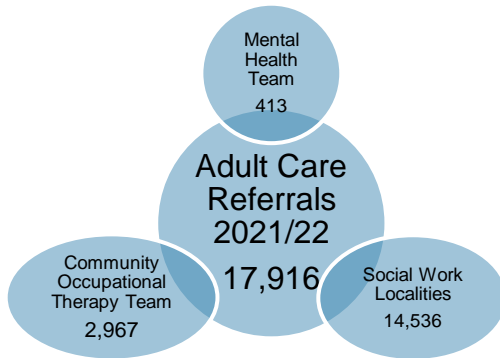
Services for Adults

Adult Care functions except for the Mental Health Statutory work, Out of Hours Social Work delivery and part of the Single Access Point are delegated to the Integrated Joint Board for delivery through the Health and Social Care Partnership.

In response to the increasing and changing levels of demand across the health and social care system, adult services managers and staff have actively contributed within the partnership to the ongoing work to redesign models of care and support. One of the key developments is the design of a Home Teams approach to provide locally based solutions across the spectrum of care and support with ready access to required expertise.

There was a total of 17,916 referrals received during 2021/22 which is an increase of 16% from the previous reporting year. The increase was in the level of referral to Social Work localities and the Mental Health Team which increased by 18% and 5% respectively compared to the previous year.

This year also saw 13% increase in the level of referrals for the Occupational Therapy team.



The level of demand being experienced across Adult Services has continued to increase in line with the trend over the past 3 years.

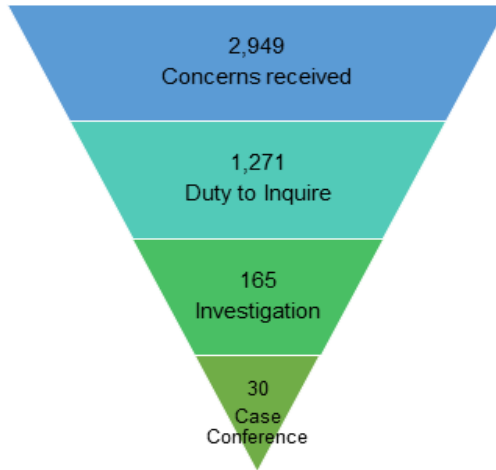
The impact of the pandemic slowed the rate of referral initially as people were reluctant to get in touch and were more wary of people visiting their homes.

The move to Options 1 and 2 under The Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 provides people with more choice and control and has remained steady and at a fairly low level over the last few years. At 31 March 2022, we had a 22% increase taking the total number of people who had chosen a Direct Payment under Option 1 to 463 people. This was a welcome improvement on the previous yearly increase of 9%. The number of people who chose Option 2 under the Act, went up by 88% this year.

Overall, adults experienced reduced access to resources during 2021/22 with building-based services needing to close in line with the COVID19 restrictions as and when with the need to meet changes in guidelines. This included day services and centres for all adults and respite services for those with a learning or physical disability. Whilst arrangements were made to support the most critical needs this was limited due to the restrictions in place and families have experienced considerable stress and pressure without these regular supports over an extended period.

To manage these impacts for vulnerable adults and their families we supported changes to support arrangements with Social Work staff focused on keeping people safe from harm. Whilst this include adults at risk of harm it also included the need to ensure that support was available to all those in need, if not through home visits, then by phone or with Microsoft teams. Many vulnerable adults were also continuing to shield throughout this period, and this impacted on not only their physical needs but their need for further emotional support to help manage the anxiety, social isolation and loneliness which emerged.

Adult Support and Protection concerns continue to be screened by the Single Access Point to determine the initial level of concern and the agreed onward route. In 2021/22, the number of adult protection referrals onward into Adult MASH has decreased by 10% compared to the previous year, with 2,949 referrals screened. The level of demand and complexity in Adult Support and Protection however has increased with 1,271 Adult Support and Protection Duty to Inquires undertaken, an increase of 21% compared to the previous year. A total of 165 Adult Support and Protection Investigations were undertaken within the last year, 50% more than in 2020/21. A total of 30 adults were discussed at Initial Case Conference in the last year compared to 47 in the previous year. This continues to demonstrate, as I detailed last year, a clear focus on resolution through robust inquiry and early intervention to find solutions which avoids the need to use the more formal parts of the process.



Each of the agencies within the MASH has addressed the demand on the team through the allocation of additional resources.

As a statutory duty for the Local Authority the Appropriate Adult Service provides support to vulnerable adults subject to police procedures. The Steering Group is now established with representatives from Social Work, Police and Speech and Language Therapy. The Appropriate Adult Service continues to develop, and recruitment is currently underway to allow the service to operate independently of the frontline Social Work team.

The Mental Health Statutory Team have experienced an increase in demand during this period. There was a small increase of Referrals received by 4% from 395 referrals in 2020/21 to 413 referrals in 2021/22. The number of active cases as at 31 March 2022 has also increased by 18% from 126 adults in 2020/21 to 154 in 2021/22 and these reflect the increasing levels of complexity being presented.

The statutory mental health team have worked to meet the year-on-year challenge of increasing Mental Health Officer duties. One key area of demand is Adults with Incapacity, with the team completing 145 reports for guardianship applications heard in court. In addition to meeting these increasing workloads, the team have supported three Mental Health Officer trainees in undertaking their Certificate in Mental Health Social Work. All trainees are due to complete this training in July 2022. The introduction of three newly qualified Mental Health Officers will be beneficial to the ever-growing demands on the service and will build resilience into the team, enabling continued high standards of practice.

A focus throughout this period has been enhancing links and communication with our service users, key partners in health services and locality Social Work teams, with the aim of providing a continuity of service to all stakeholders.

Mental Health Team Key Facts and Figures 2021/2022

- 413 New Referrals
- 145 Guardianship Orders Granted
- 63 Compulsory Treatment Orders
- 77 Adults with Incapacity Conferences held
- 6 moves from hospital supported by 13za legislation
- 195 Assessments for Detention

With the introduction of a duty cover worker, there is a single point of contact for all professionals and individuals contacting the team. This allows for a co-ordinated response to mental health assessments, AWI conference requests and general enquiries for all active work within the team’s remit. This function has been integral to the management of a 4% increase in initial referrals this year, totalling 413.

During the reporting period we strengthened the links with inpatient mental health services by linking a team member to Midpark Hospital. This has enhanced availability, provided more robust information sharing and acting as a point of contact for individuals and staff at the hospital.

Appendix 1

Following the findings of the Mental Welfare Commission's report 'authority to discharge', last year, the team reshaped Adults with Incapacity processes to ensure a full Adult with Incapacity case conference was held prior to intervention under 13ZA of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and before making any application for guardianship, on behalf of the CSWO. After a full year of implementation there has been a 60% increase in the number of 13ZA decisions being agreed, rising from 41 in 2020/21 to 66 in 2021/22. The team work closely with locality Social Work partners to ensure there is full scrutiny of the circumstances for each adult and work collaboratively to ensure the best interests of the Adult are achieved throughout this process.

Our In-house Learning Disability Services sit within the Mental Health Directorate as part of the Health and Social Care Partnership's delegated management arrangements. These services include:

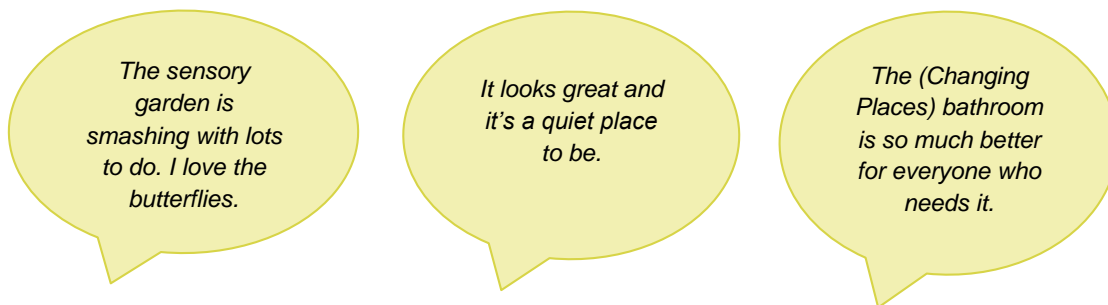
- Six Activity and Resources Centres - day service provision for adults: Annan, Dumfries, Kirkconnel, Castle Douglas, Newton Stewart and Stranraer.
- Two Housing Support/Care at Home services: Castle Douglas Community Support Service (CDCSS) and Dunmuir Park also in Castle Douglas.
- A Respite/Short Break facility "The Rowans" situated within the Dunmuir Park development.

While the pandemic presents ongoing staffing challenges, it has also required the service to continue to develop through our partnership approach.

The Activity and Resource Centre service has now almost returned to pre-pandemic levels of attendance, with most families choosing to return although some remain cautious at this stage. The requirement to operate within support bubbles has now been lifted, enabling people to spend more time again with friends and support staff in other 'bubbles' and to take part in an increasing range of community-based activities again, with these developments being very well received.

Online supports continue to be offered and valued although the uptake on these has reduced since services re-mobilised. Use of social media has enabled some services to live stream events, and it is hoped that we will be able to extend this facility to all services going forward.

Environmental improvements continue to be progressed, with this year seeing the installation of a Changing Places disabled bathroom and more user-friendly reception facilities in Dumfries Activity and Resource Centre, the opening of a Sensory Garden to mark Castle Douglas Activity and Resource Centre's thirtieth anniversary and increased disabled parking bays at Newton Stewart Activity and Resource Centre to improve accessibility. Online supports and environmental improvements have received very positive feedback:



Our Housing Support Services/Short Breaks Services and their staff showed tremendous resilience throughout the pandemic in the face of huge challenge, continuing to ensure that people were safely supported despite national or local surges in infection transmission rates which placed immense demands on staffing levels. This work is highlighted through the following example of a support worker within the Castle Douglas Community Support Service, from an extract published by the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland in May 2022:

Maisie's Story – The Brave Face of Support Work Through the Pandemic

My role as a support worker is something I take great pride in. Supporting people to fulfil their potential, keep in contact with their families, and live their lives to fullest is something I love being a part of.

I feel extremely proud of how we have adapted to all the changes and completely taken them in our stride.

The constant challenges during the pandemic have shown us how adaptable we, and the people we support, can be. The most important things to me about my role is ensuring that the people I support are never defined by their disability, and are always seen, heard, listened to, and respected.

I love my job and can say I have gained far more from the people I support than I have ever given to them.

Referrals to Occupational Therapy continues to be a significant proportion of adult referrals, with a total of 2,967 (17% of the total referrals). This has shown a 13% increase on previous year, which is comparative to other service areas and reflects the challenges faced by many during the pandemic in terms of reduced activities. Taking into account the impact of the pandemic and the ageing population within Dumfries and Galloway, the increases reflect the success of the proactive and collaborative approach across the Health and Social Care Partnership, that ensures duplication of work is minimised.

There were 192 referrals to Sensory Support 2021/22, in comparison to 313 for 2020/21. This was impacted by the pandemic given that a range of services were reduced including Audiology, Ophthalmology and Low Vision services. There are 797 people on the local statutory Blind and Partially Sighted register all of whom have been assessed, supported, and provided equipment by the Rehabilitation Officers. We consistently receive positive feedback from our service users. Due to our ageing population, these figures are expected to grow year on year.

A case example from our Social Work Assistant who has been a member of the Sensory Support Team for 16 months

Recently I assessed Mrs X at home, she lives alone and is 84 years old. Mrs X is hard of hearing and wears hearing aids. Mrs X was referred to the Sensory Support Team by her daughter who also acts as her carer.

Mrs X often missed visitors because she couldn't hear the doorbell, she no longer enjoyed watching TV and telephone conversations were a source of stress because she couldn't always hear what people were communicating. Mrs X is supported at home by family. Mrs X's poor hearing impacts upon her independence, safety and wellbeing.

Following a person-centred assessment, advice and guidance was offered and a TV aid and doorbell were supplied, as well as other equipment options to maintain Mrs X's wellbeing, independence, and safety.

The advice and equipment provided to Mrs X has been highly beneficial and has promoted her right to independence and autonomy. Mrs X's wellbeing has improved enormously, and carer's stress has been alleviated somewhat.

Within Dumfries and Galloway there currently are 30 care homes and 2 short break facilities registered as care homes, all privately run. An additional short break facility is run by the Health and Social Care Partnership. There is a rolling programme of assurance visits with additional support or visits undertaken as necessary, such as training and/or outbreak support visits. This proactive programme of assurance work considers Infection and Protection Control (IPC) measures, workforce issues, education / training, and wider care and support needs of residents, ensuring a timeous response to any escalating concerns.

During the reporting period the service had to respond to the decommissioning of Singleton Park Care Home following an inspection by the Care Inspectorate. The service and partners had to undertake the management and day-to-day running of the Care Home until residents of the home could be safely transferred to alternative care homes and the work to close Singleton could be concluded. This required significant investment of officer time and other resource.

The Care Home Tactical Team (CHTT) have already implemented several key actions to strengthen the oversight and assurance of the local care home sector:

- Building rapport and good working relationships with care home managers, owners and staff.
- Regular, direct contact with care homes to understand concerns and offer support.
- Facilitating regular Care Home Manager Webinars with Scottish Care.
- Thorough schedule of assurance visits, recommendations and follow up.
- Comprehensive programme of education and development delivered and supported by CHTT.
- Development and implementation of Partnership and Provider Improvement Plan template and process (recognised as an exemplar by Care Inspectorate colleges).
- Supported all symptomatic and non-symptomatic testing systems and processes.
- Implementation and compliance monitoring of Turas Safety Huddle.
- Delegated responsibility for authorisation of all care home risk assessments, processes and protocols relating to visiting.
- Supported successful vaccination programme of care home staff and residents.
- Care Home Tactical Group, chaired by Tactical Leads and including partnership stakeholders, Scottish Care and Care Inspectorate, with associated Work Plan.
- Development of Communication and Engagement Plan.
- Supporting local care homes to implement digital care planning (with funding secured via Scottish Government TEC programme).

The Tactical Group continues to provide enhanced professional clinical and care oversight for care and support at home providers as we continue to deal with and begin to emerge from COVID19, in areas related to peoples care and support needs, infection prevention and control measures; issues with staffing requirements; staff testing arrangements, and future developments for care at home services.

Care and Support Services (CASS) has continued to focus on providing Care at Home services to rural and hard to access areas of Dumfries and Galloway with the service reviewing all practice resources used to capture individual outcomes as well as undertaking reviews and surveys with all service users and staff to help improve practice. Managers have created and delivered training on Adult Support and Protection, Palliative Care and diabetes. Our comprehensive induction and training programme has been refreshed and is now back on track to pre-COVID19 levels. Staff have been provided with safe systems of work to support all associated tasks and laterally Infection Control in particular, where practice has been observed by Supervisors as part of our business assurance programmes.

The service has developed an electronic client alert feedback which is used to capture queries, changes, or concerns for individuals. As well as capturing this information it provides the service with a way of gathering valuable information in relation to service user outcomes and ambitions.

From a delivery perspective the service has continued to see an incremental rise in the number of planned and delivered visits, this has been made possible by revising working patterns and rotas for staff to deliver a better work life balance as well as increased productivity. CASS planned 338,264 visits in the last financial year, an increase of 8.79% from 2020/21.

Our Mountainhall Day Care Centre which has reopened following a reduction in COVID19 restrictions has had an inspection and awarded a Grade of Good overall with Very Good noted for Staffing category. This is an extremely encouraging result for a service that was set up very quickly to meet a gap left following the withdrawal of provision by another provider.

Justice Social Work

As with all Social Work areas Justice Social Work in Dumfries and Galloway has continued to face significant COVID19 related challenges. Our local service planning was shaped by the national review and transformation of the Scottish Justice System with the modernisation of the Scottish Justice system placing a focus on creating safer communities and shifting societal attitudes and circumstances which perpetuate crime and harm.

The Scottish Government provided additional funding this year for Justice Social Work; without these funds, the pace of response and service delivery would have been slower or stalled, impacting adversely on the wider justice system's effectiveness and credibility. Justice Social Work's ability to sustain service delivery remains challenging and the capacity to transform remains limited, partly due to the temporary short-term nature of funding. The focus during 2021/22 has been two-fold - sustaining service delivery whilst simultaneously engaging in transformation strategies and activities.

Staffing has been a particular challenge during 2021/22, staff demonstrated astonishing resilience, dealing with the constant change and uncertainty inherent to working through a lengthy pandemic. Justice Social Work has experienced unprecedented staff turnover, resulting in a significant drop in the experience of our Social Workers and consequently capacity in terms of time, knowledge, skill, and expertise has substantially diminished.

The availability of national training presented some significant challenges for the Justice Service, we negotiated with Community Justice Scotland to deliver an LSCMi training event locally.

In this period, we renewed our strategic plan for Justice Services 2021/24. The plan captures the challenges of delivering a transformation of justice services, whilst simultaneously continuing to deliver services within a context of limited resources, high demand, and continued uncertainty. COVID19 funds enabled us to create a temporary Senior Social Worker post to lead a service wide team of Social Work Assistants to review and develop non-custodial and diversionary activities. This has created capacity to increase our collaboration and partnership working with stakeholders, and to focus on the professional development of the Social Work Assistants. The team has reviewed and enhanced bail supervision including the preparation for electronic monitoring as part of bail supervision. The enhanced partnership working with other justice partners; Crown Office Procurators Fiscal Service (COPFS), Faculty members and local Sheriffs has engendered confidence in our bail supervision provision which is reflected in the increase in numbers. Participation has been positive, individuals are supervised and supported in the community as opposed to being remanded in custody.

During 2021/22, 11 bail supervision cases commenced, in comparison with a total of 6 cases in the previous years.

Case Study – Bail Supervision

Mr X was made subject to bail supervision, he is well known to the justice system. He stated "*I never knew there was such a thing but I was happy to get the chance.*" Mr X also added that bail supervision allowed him to keep his job, contribute to his family and maintain contact with his son.

The team also launched Structured Deferred Sentences (SDS) in Dumfries and Galloway for the first time in November 2021. The start-up pilot is aimed at women over the age of 21 years assessed as low-moderate risk, with evidence of underlying needs relating to their offending. Structured Deferred Sentences is a brief, 3-6 months, but intense intervention programme designed to steer individuals away from the justice system towards community services, self-efficacy, and future non offending. The initial response has been very positive again reflected in an increase in numbers in the 2 quarters following introduction. Positive feedback has been received from all involved:

Staff report that: *“Attendance is good. The females want to attend appointments.” “The less formal approach helps identify needs effectively.” “It will be good to strengthen links with other services.”*
Those subject to SDS comment: *“I like the self-assessment. It is helpful.” “I feel supported.” “I am making better choices with relationships and to open up more and seek help when I need it and to think about my actions more”.*

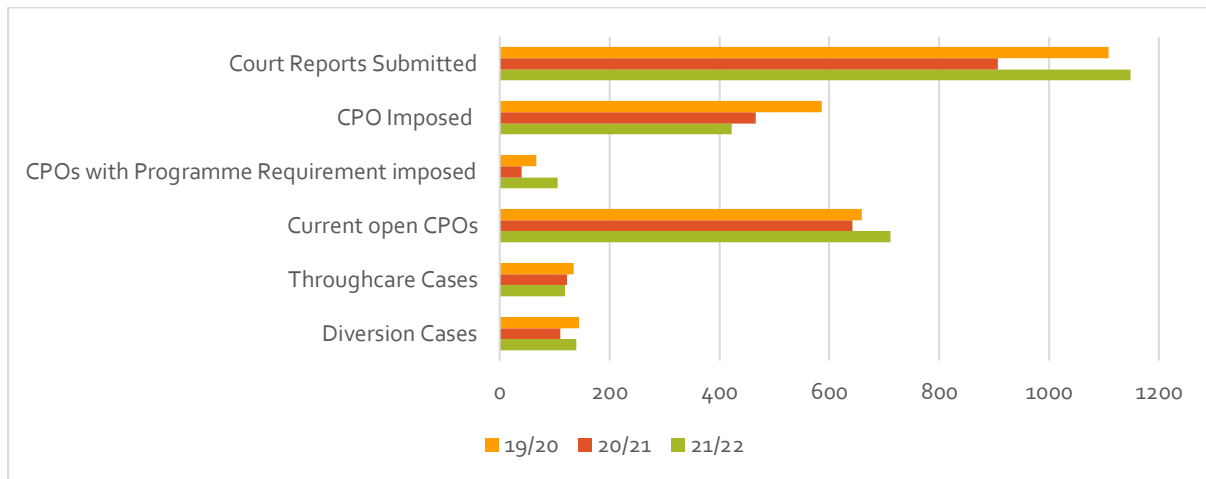
Court Stakeholders: *“SDS is a welcome disposal option in D and G.” “The pilot audience is well selected.”*

Community Third Sector: *“The addition of Justice Social Work to the support plan has been helpful.”*

The development of the dedicated Social Work Assistant team has also created capacity to develop and support the Social Workers within the throughcare and community teams.

The demand upon the service remains high, and as can be seen below, there was no drop in demand during 2021/22, despite the increase in how long cases were taking to progress through the justice system during the pandemic. The table below shows activity across various areas of the service.

Justice Social Work Activity



Dumfries and Galloway had the highest number of Community Payback Orders imposed per 10,000 population – at 46.2 compared with the national average of 21.2. It is noteworthy that the number of Community Payback Orders imposed 2020/21 was higher than 2018/19 (471 compared with 431). This trend continued with again, a high number of Community Payback Orders being imposed during 2021/22.

During the reporting period Justice Social Workers were managing a high volume of need and complexity associated with individuals’ offending behaviour, often characterised by trauma, mental health issues and addiction. The accessibility and sustainability of community services remains very challenging.

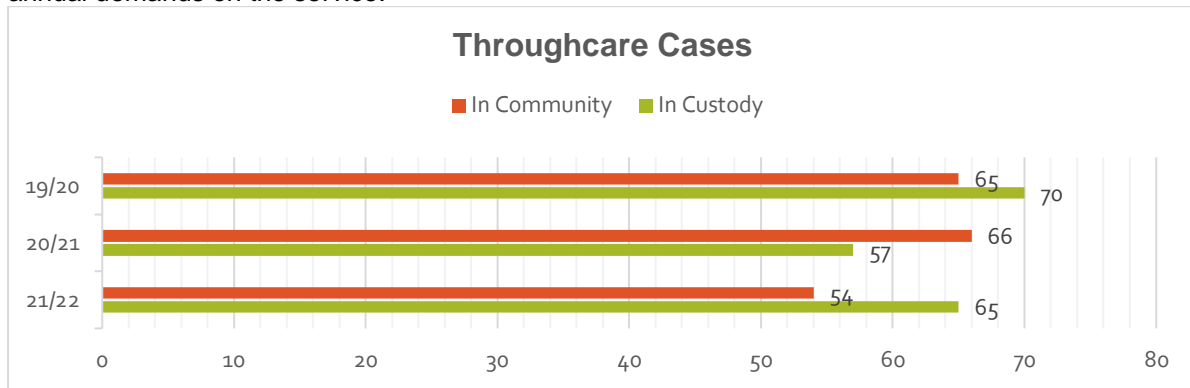
Service Activity and Prioritisation

Case Study – High Priority

X is in his late thirties with a history of serious violence and assessed as posing a high risk of harm. Extensive preparatory work was done prior to his release from custody. His case was managed as a MAPPA level 3 “the critical few”. He had complex needs; extensive childhood trauma, addictions, pro-criminal attitudes, and mental health issues; he was undiagnosed, but his behaviour suggested psychopathic personality disorder. The likelihood of a successful return to the community was very challenging. The Social Worker had to balance public protection by limiting and restricting X’s freedoms whilst simultaneously building a working relationship.

His social worker established a therapeutic relationship with him, he cooperated with health services, and was assessed with paranoid and schizotypal personality aspects. He was prescribed appropriate medication which enabled him to feel much calmer. He demonstrated a desire to live an offence free life and actively engaged with his rehabilitation plan, there was a notable positive change in his offending attitudes and behaviours, and no issues with addictions. X has remained in the community, offence free, for a year.

Many of the higher priority cases are for throughcare, service users who have served a custodial sentence and are subject to statutory supervision on release. The table below indicates current annual demands on the service:

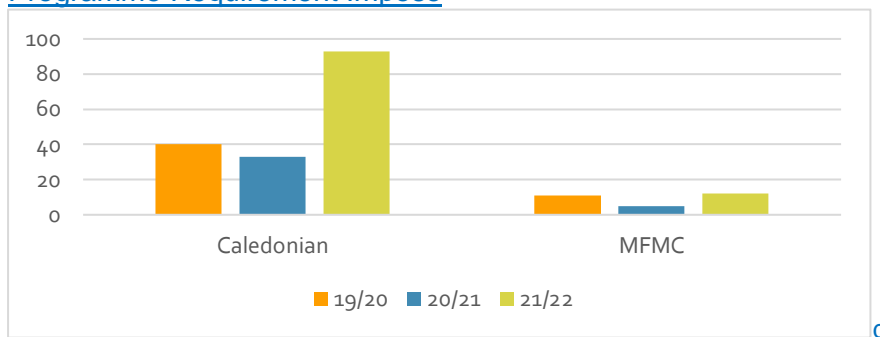


The service is actively investing in the resilience and capacity of Justice staff by strengthening team working, peer support and the introduction of targeted project work as part of quality improvement. Formal training courses, including the PG certificate in Mental Health and Justice Social Work, COSCA Diploma in Pluralistic Counselling and Psychotherapy, recognise the impact the pandemic has had on the mental health and well-being of individuals who use our service.

Justice Social Work has also invested in management and leadership training for Senior Social Workers, to reflect the increase in responsibility and complexity of leadership in the current environment.

Higher priority cases will often involve the delivery of behaviour change programmes; nationally accredited programmes are delivered by Justice Social Work in Dumfries and Galloway; the Caledonian, for perpetrators of domestic abuse; and Moving Forward: Making Changes (MFMC) for those convicted of sexual offences. Generally accepted because of COVID19 lockdowns there has been an increase in domestic abuse cases which, in turn, impacted on the Justice Social Work demand. The table below shows the significant increase in the number of Community Payback Orders with a Caledonian programme requirement imposed, as well as the increase in MFMC demand this year:

Programme Requirement Impose



During the pandemic Justice Social Work facilitated unpaid work in accordance with COVID19 guidelines and some service users have been reluctant to return to face-to-face activities; offering outdoor activities has eased their anxieties and encouraged their return.

The demand on and delivery of unpaid work in Dumfries and Galloway remained high. During 2021/22 Justice Social Work used some of the additional COVID19 funding towards the development of the outdoor areas of the unpaid work depots to increase group capacity whilst adhering to any on-going COVID19 working practices, as well as increasing the range of activities that can be undertaken, not only for those subject to an unpaid work requirement but also those subject to supervision.

Undertaking the development tasks has provided excellent unpaid work opportunities for service users, and at least 2 have secured employment as a result of the experience and skills learnt when assisting with the depot developments. The development of the unpaid work sites creates the opportunity for a more holistic person-centred approach with all service user groups, including:

- Case managers meeting with services users in a trauma informed, safe environment conducive with good practice skills. This was evidenced with a MAPPA case to promote the therapeutic relationship and engender trust.
- Drop in facilities including shower, laundry, and food to promote engagement and person-centred service ethos.
- Community inclusion – the use of drop-in clinics to promote accessibility of other agencies in a more service user friendly environment, for example, community health and wellbeing, addiction services, creative activities/clubs skills development sessions.

The provision of outdoor gym equipment increases capacity for well-being and outdoor activities. The benefits of exercise on mental health are well documented for those with substance misuse issues, behavioural problems, or low-level mental health issues.



The focus on exercise will be used to promote physical and mental wellbeing, as well as self-discipline and team working. The development of the Annan unpaid work site is now complete. Whilst sited at our unpaid work units, the facility will be available to all of Social Work Services.

During the reporting period Justice Social Work created a new role of Community Engagement Officer to develop higher quality work experience and unpaid work placements in collaboration with other services. The overall aim is to further increase the purposefulness of unpaid work through employability, education, health and wellbeing, confidence, and community inclusion.

Despite the recurring COVID19 restrictions, Social Work Services have remained fully operational at HMP Dumfries. The primary mode of service delivery is face to face contact, but the use of electronic devices/systems has enabled communication with the Scottish Prison Service, prisoners, and their families. Justice Social Work have worked closely with Scottish Prison Service to ensure ongoing service delivery and we have continued to meet all our key performance indicators satisfactorily and fulfil our obligations as per the Memorandum of Understanding.

Senior Management at HMP Dumfries have been appreciative of the ongoing support provided by Social Work Services. It is noted that critical support on the planning and management of prisoner release into our communities has been a key priority by successfully linking prisoners to partner agencies through statutory provision and third sector agencies. This is most visible in terms of providing support immediately to prisoners on release who are subject to statutory supervision in the community, assisting with relevant welfare needs, promoting social justice, and addressing public protection issues.

Further to this we continue to work closely with the Parole Board for Scotland on providing timely reports, it is noted that Justice Social Work have experienced a marked increase in the number of Oral Hearings over the last 4 years. Having gone from very few each year, during the reporting period there have been 34.

COVID19 funds also enabled us to recruit a temporary Business Improvement Officer to create additional capacity within the Justice Management Team, in particular the introduction of a new Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement framework.

Justice Social Work have funded the local Community Justice Partnership to commission two local 3rd sector Lived Experience Projects. The projects have been commissioned at both ends of the region. The aim is to reduce stigma and barriers to community inclusion for those with lived experience of the justice system. This will hopefully increase service user participation in the development and delivery of justice services, via peer support initiatives.

Public Protection

Social Work Service has and will continue to play a lead role in undertaking the statutory duty to protect those who are our most vulnerable and ensure the shared commitment to protect continues to be at the heart of all that we collectively do. I am aware that we would not be able to work to protect those in our communities without continued effective working with our local partners and I thank them and individual staff who work collectively across this agenda.

The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) continue to have multi agency responsibility to ensure effective joint arrangements are in place to manage risk across Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection, and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), meeting statutory requirements. This is undertaken through oversight of the partnership by the Chief Officers Group - Public Protection (COG-PP) and the Public Protection Committee (PPC). As CSWO I continue to attend COG-PP to provide professional guidance, as necessary.

Services were subject to Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection, a statutory function under section 115 of part 8 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. The Joint Inspection Team comprised of the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland.

The purpose was to seek assurance that adults at risk of harm in Dumfries and Galloway are supported and protected and to provide assurance to Scottish Ministers about how effectively the partnership has implemented the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. The inspection also represented an opportunity to identify good practice and support improvement. The Inspection report was published on 23 November 2021.

The Inspection report concluded:

Key Processes - effective with areas for improvement. There were clear strengths supporting positive experiences and outcomes for adults at risk of harm, which collectively outweighed the areas for improvement.

Leadership - effective with areas for improvement. There were clear strengths supporting positive experiences and outcomes for adults at risk of harm, which collectively outweighed the areas for improvement.

Key Strengths

- Partnership achieved good outcomes for almost all adults at risk of harm, including during the period of COVID19 restrictions.
- The partnership had made a sound decision to focus on adult support and protection early screening/triage and duty to inquire arrangements. The well-resourced multi-agency safeguarding hub provided a robust platform from which to take forward Adult Support and Protection work.
- Adult Support and Protection investigations and risk assessments were collaborative and undertaken to a high standard. The rolling risk assessment and use of a risk matrix contributed to high quality work.
- The partnership's Chief Officer Group and Public Protection Committee (PPC) worked well together to provide a clear vision and ensure adult support and protection remained a strategic priority prior to and during COVID19.
- There was a clear collaborative ethos across the partnership including frontline staff, and across the leadership team including the statutory, third and independent sector organisations.

The Inspection required 3 Priority Areas for Improvement

- Key process timescales were inconsistently met. This resulted in poor outcomes for a small, but significant number of adults at risk of harm.
- Medical examinations should be completed in line with the needs of the adult at risk of harm.
- The partnership should implement means to ensure frontline staff are more directly involved in self-evaluation and improvement activity.

Following the inspection, an Improvement Plan was submitted to the Joint Inspection Team and is structured around the three priority areas for improvement. It also takes account of other comments from the report which referred to potential areas for improvement as well as improvement work which was already underway prior to the completion of the Plan to provide a full and comprehensive document pulling together all improvement activity into one place.

I am glad that considerable progress has been made with several areas of improvement already completed with an additional number in progress.

The pandemic required the partnership to jointly refine and rethink PPC priorities and continue to influence its collective approach to protect vulnerable individuals in our region. Whilst working through the agreed joint Public Protection strategy which was developed for 2020/23, Social Work continued to work to progress the immediate priorities and associated activities were developed. This strengthens the service's ability to work in partnership and the collective commitment to protect vulnerable people across Dumfries and Galloway.

During the reporting period it has become evident that the short, medium, and long-term impact of COVID19 has had an adverse impact on the levels of vulnerability locally and the impact has been felt most acutely by the most vulnerable individuals and families in our region. In addition, the impact on Social Work Services remains and is subject to ongoing review as we continue to seek and develop new ways of working to address the needs of vulnerable individuals and groups. We have had to ensure effective oversight and continuous management of change to the level and type of abuse suffered by individuals and how these impact on demand within both our services and across the wider protection partnership.

A priority for the PPC is the development of a dedicated localised performance framework including a suite of dashboards across each area under Public Protection. Progress has been made to identify the reporting requirements, including scoping existing data available across the multi-agency partnership for Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls.

In May 2021, a successful application was submitted to the Missing People's Charity for the opportunity to have their in-depth support to further develop the work Dumfries and Galloway already do for missing people and their families. This was in line with the agreed PPC immediate priority of Sexual Exploitation, Human Trafficking and Missing Persons to prevent people from going missing in the first place and limit the harm associated with people going missing.

September 2021 saw the publication of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland. Local Authorities have 18-24 months to ensure local implementation. A mapping exercise was completed in January 2022 to highlight current local child protection practices. We are well placed locally to deliver within the timescales as our existing practice is largely in line with the new guidance.

National Guidance for undertaking Learning Reviews in Child Protection was introduced in September 2021. Local authorities had 24 months to implement but we chose to pilot the new framework with immediate effect. Not only did this allow for the process to be tested prior to full implementation, we also included Adult Support and Protection, which allows for a seamless approach in anticipation of the guidance for both children and adults being implemented in Dumfries and Galloway in parallel, thus offering consistent learning opportunities for practitioners in both children and adult services across the partnership.

Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection week, 14 to 18 February 2022, was an opportunity for partner organisations to connect with the community and share best practice and knowledge. We wanted to highlight how we all work together at all levels, to provide a co-ordinated response to our

most vulnerable citizens and reiterate the significance of Public Protection being everyone's responsibility. The week offered a comprehensive programme of events featuring on-line workshops and presentations, some delivered by national leads for Scotland and others by colleagues from local partner agencies. Each event's central theme and focus was on the importance of protecting children and adults and reducing violence against women and girls. Presentations included an overview of Domestic Abuse, Department of Work and Pensions, Missing People, Hourglass Scotland, Adult MASH, Signs of Safety, Alcohol and Drugs Partnership in conjunction with "We are With You," culminating on the Friday with Adult Support and Protection - the ability to safeguard and then the psychological understanding of hoarding, to coincide with National Adult Support and Protection Day on 20th February 2022.

Over three hundred delegates attended the events during Public Protection week with 44 formal responses via the survey. Comments from individual events included "informative," "extremely helpful," "so relevant," "powerful," "interactive and informative," "refreshing," and "useful resources shared."

The 2021 16 days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women this year, amongst a varied calendar of events, saw an online Leaders' Summit/Event held to raise awareness of work to challenge violence against women and to encourage Leaders across all agencies to embrace violence against women as part of the agenda for all services.

The ability to capture the "lived experience" from the people we work with can be immensely powerful and this was evidenced during the signs of safety online seminar event which was facilitated by children and family's Social Work practitioners and Police Scotland.

Throughout the event a video was shown of a couple talking to their journey and experience of multi-agency working following the birth of their daughter. It was both emotive and compelling.

They spoke of the changes they needed to make for their baby to be safe at home and were clear from initial involvement of services what was expected from them to make this a reality. The couple were resistant as they had not had a positive experience of service involvement when residing in another local authority area. They voiced how they felt "*listened to*," "*felt supported*," "*did not feel judged*," "*their views and opinions were considered*" and "*we felt Social Work were fair, hard but fair*."

The couple referred to some of the signs of safety tools which were used during the completion of the assessment and said how this helped them to recognise what the safety plan was and how this involved the wider family and explained to them in a language they could understand. They expressed the safety plan being shared with all the agencies helped to make the plan work as "*everyone was on the same page and working together*."

As a result of previous concerns in relation to neglect, domestic abuse, criminality, to name but a few, 12 months ago the couple were certain their baby would be taken from them. Despite it being a hard and challenging journey, the couple reported how proud they are of themselves and thanked services for being "*open and honest*," "*for putting it right out there*," and "*for being clear about what needs to be done and why*."

This is a true testimony of how empowering the signs of safety approach can be. It highlights how relationships can build the foundations to help parents do what they can to keep their children safe, healthy, and cared for.

During the reporting period the Policy and Procedure Framework has been amended to include the communication and circulation of revised documents to highlight the interface with the Communications and Service User Engagement Sub-Committee. I am pleased to report the following have been approved and circulated during the last reporting period:

- Multi-Agency Risk Management Framework (MARM)
- Protocol for Professionals Meeting

- National Risk Framework Guidance
- Sudden and Unexpected Death in Infancy Guidance
- Interim Multi-Agency Child Protection flowchart and 7-minute briefing
- Self-Neglect and Hoarding Protocol

There has been two Large Scale Investigations in the reporting period which has involved significant input from Adult Care Social Work, as well as the wider Health and Social Care Partnership. We continue to refine our performance reports through our Adult Support and Protection Scrutiny group. We are a learning partner in the co-design of the Adult Support and Protection National Minimum Dataset led by Institute for Research in Social Services (IRISS). This will support our continuing examination and improvement of our processes, information systems and continue to improve data collection and quality, both locally and nationally, building on our experience of being a pilot area for the previous development of Child Protection National Minimum Dataset.

We continue to support evaluation of quality of practice and outcomes for people using the Adult Support and Protection audit tool which uses a set of themes based on legislation, the National Health and Social Care Standards and the principles of Self-Directed Support. Peer audits are now routinely conducted by operational Social Work staff using this tool.

The Social Work Adult Support and Protection Practice Group continue to explore several identified areas from the Joint Inspection. This includes improving feedback to referrers and improving the personalised nation of Adult Support and Protection case conferences model. This group includes front line Council Officers who are responsible to direct support to adults at risk of harm.

The Violence Against Women and Girls agenda has continued to grow throughout the reporting period. The local specialist services have highlighted that they are having to tell survivors of domestic abuse and rape that they will have to wait for over two years until their cases go to Court. This in turn means that survivors are unable to move on from their abuse with the expectation of having to testify later with support being offered for extended periods of time. Furthermore, family and friends of survivors often require advice and support from specialist services.

A successful bid was made to the Delivering Equally Safe Fund to support Dumfries and Galloway to embed the internationally recognised Safe and Together Institute's approach to domestic abuse. A Multiagency Steering Group has been convened to implement the programme, and this is chaired by a senior manager in Social Work. A Safe and Together Development Officer has been appointed within Social Work to progress the roll out of training and evaluation. It is expected that this approach will improve the response to domestic abuse across services.

During the reporting period the Multiagency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) moved permanently to online MS Teams which has proven to be successful in our rural area. This has allowed partners to engage remotely; in the case of MARAC transfers, remote MARACs have also allowed for people from outside Dumfries and Galloway to attend to share their knowledge of the case live. The increase in referrals identified in previous years is now established (with a year-on-year increase). In 2021/22 there were 163 referrals discussed with 70 of these being repeats and 224 affected children relating to the MARAC cases.

Staff from the Violence Against Women team in Social Work continue to deliver training on domestic abuse across all partners and public, including Housing, Schools, and Social Work Students. They also partnered with the local Women's Aid organisation and provided awareness raising to local young women as part of International Women's Day.

During the 16 days of activism in 2021 a Leaders' event was held to increase knowledge of local and national activity to challenge violence against women and girls identify local priorities for the next year across many partnerships the service is involved in. The event was positively received and has led to a renewed understanding that the pervasive nature of violence against women means it is an issue for all partner agencies. An action plan will be developed to guide activity and keep a continued focus on violence against women and girls over the next year.

Community Justice Partnership

Social Work continues to chair the Community Justice Partnership (CJP). Amidst the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and delays to work nationally around the revision of the National Community Justice Strategy and Outcomes, Performance and Improvement Framework a decision was made to extend the 2018/2021 local strategic plan and undertake a robust Strategic Needs and Strength Assessment (SNSA) to ensure the next plan is built on local evidence, focussing on local priorities. Due to a small uplift in funding for the partnership, and ability to work alongside Community Justice Ayrshire, external experts were commissioned to undertake data gathering and analysis as well as produce a performance dashboard to monitor progress in key areas. Because of the strong relationship built up with the Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership we were able to do this working jointly, making this the first partnership across Scotland to take such an approach.

Through additional COVID19 monies, Justice Social Work recognised an opportunity for the Community Justice Partnership to lead a piece of work around learning and improving services through the voices of those with lived experience of justice services. The funding was used to commission two services, one East and one West, to employ Peer Support Coordinators (themselves with previous justice experience) to promote and develop support groups for others who had been through the justice journey. Voices for Us, delivered by Apex Scotland and Amazing Futures delivered by Summerhill have both now started. It is only by listening to those who have been through the system that we can learn, adapt and change; not only for the benefit of the service but also those going through their own justice journey in future.

Once again, the CJP and Alcohol and Drug Partnership jointly funded a Family Support Coordinator post for Families Outside. This support worker supports local families when a family member goes to prison, linking with education, all areas of Social Work, other partner agencies, and raising awareness of the impact of parental imprisonment on children and families.

Through close working with colleagues in health, CJP was able to work with the University of Glasgow to undertake a research project; *How did COVID19 affect the delivery of support to meet the needs of male offenders in Scotland?* which was then used as the student's dissertation. Research was undertaken with staff from all partners in community justice and highlighted some interesting findings.

5. Resources

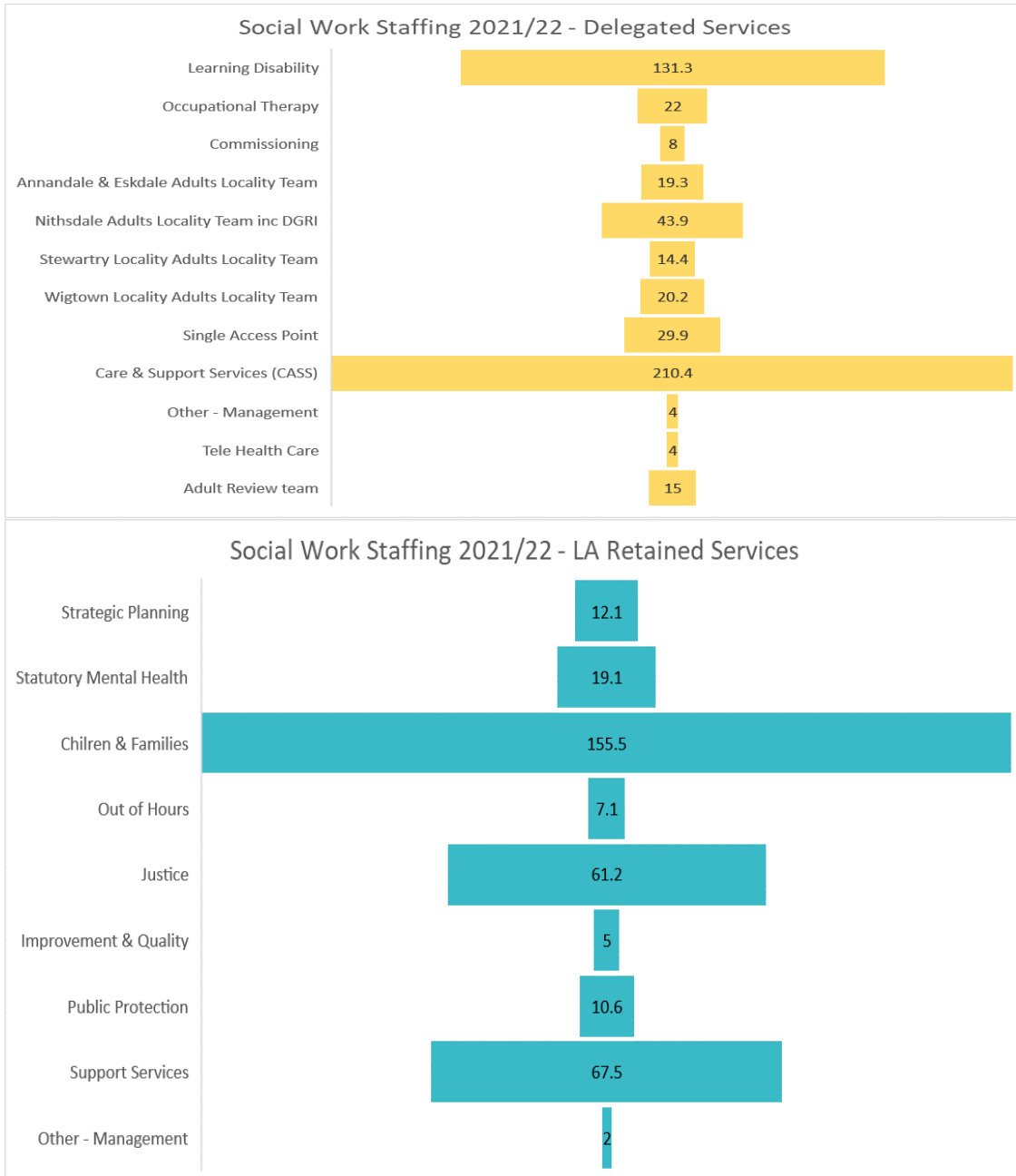
Children's and Families Services budget for Financial Year 2021/22 of £26.9m, with additional funding provided due to the impacts of COVID19. There were significant pressures with increases in looked after numbers causing rises in fostering, kinship care and agency placements. The service has continued to control external residential placements through outcome focussed children's plans, utilising alternatives to residential placements however children are being placed younger and staying longer in placements. This has had a knock-on effect into fostering placements with networks being stretched and the need to purchase more costly agency placements identified. The impacts of the COVID19 pandemic have exacerbated pressures on family placements. The service has had access to additional policy development funding delivering early intervention supports and utilising the signs of safety methodology to help children and families, who traditionally would require these placements, avoid residential placements, and ultimately improve life outcomes.

Adult Services budgets for financial year 2021/22 were £86.8m. The costs of care continue to increase within the younger adult's areas with costs significantly increasing year on year, whereas within older adults the challenge to source care continues to be a pressure for the Health and Social Care Partnership. The impact of COVID19 on the services delivered by adult social care was significant with suspensions of some services to our most vulnerable citizens, this required alternative support for these individuals resulting in increased costs. The impact on care at home and care home providers was significant with increased costs from PPE and staffing absences alongside loss of income due to some services being unable to be delivered. Additional funding was provided in December to increase measures that would increase flow throughout the Health and Social Care Partnership, measures included an increase in care staff provider hourly rates of pay from £9.50 to £10.02, interim care and temporary placement measures. It was not possible to fully utilise this funding which will be rolled into the 2022/23 settlement distribution.

Within Adults Services additional funding had been directed at the reablement services and the anticipated avoidance of assessed care will help to alleviate pressure on the care at home market. Increases in care at home services both in-house and within external providers has been partially successful however significant pressures exist within the sectors ability to improve terms and conditions which would result in increased recruitment.

6.Workforce

The total staffing full time equivalent (FTE) for Social Work Services in 2021/22, including support services was 801. 60% of these staff form part of integrated services, delivered by the Health and Social Care Partnership. However, the Council remains their employer.



We have had several staff leave either to posts elsewhere or retirement which continues to impact on the balance of staff within the service between newly qualified staff and more of experienced staff.

Workforce Development

Staff have continued to have access to a range of learning and development opportunities. This includes Post Graduate awards in Mental Health, Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Practice Teaching as well as SVQ accreditations to support staff in their roles as a Care Co-ordinator, Social Work Assistant or Social Care role. In addition to this, all areas of service continue to commission, develop, and deliver learning and development opportunities specific to their function, this has included, in Children and Families Social Work, a continuing programme of training in Signs of Safety, the Children's Hearing system, Corporate Parenting, and Permanency planning. In Justice Services, Post Graduate certificates in Mental Health, Contemporary Drug and Alcohol studies, and Leadership and Management. Finally, in Adult Services, opportunities for training for Appropriate Adults and Council Officers has been made available.

We continue to have two "Grow your Own" schemes, one for qualified Social Workers and the other for Mental Health Officers. During the reporting period we had 8 staff on the programme at any one time with funding for an additional 2 posts having been agreed in June 2021. Interest in this route to qualification remains high. Many of these staff are already engaged in independent study toward a Social Work degree and we are now offering potential candidates' early advice on career pathways to support their preparation, in partnership with the Open University.

Core to providing a steady flow of professionally qualified staff from both the Open University Studentship and other universities, is the availability of practice teaching staff to monitor and assess student performance during placement. Following final approval from the SQA and SSSC, in October 2021 the first cohort of students on the Dumfries and Galloway Practice Development and Practice Learning award (PDAPL) began their studies. This will improve local access for our Social Workers to this post qualifying award and add to our complement of in-house practice teachers for Social Work students.

In 2021/22 Dumfries and Galloway have hosted 32 Social Work degree student placements both within the local authority and with our third sector partner agencies. We have continued to take a creative and flexible approach to provide students with a broad range of experiences relevant to the changing landscape for professional Social Work. This has also presented opportunities for creative solutions to the benefit of the students and the service. The benefits of practice teaching to the service are clear with many of this year's students having been offered permanent posts in Dumfries and Galloway. Last year we offered work opportunities for local Social Work students during their summer break. Whilst providing both experience and employment to the students, they also proved to be a valuable resource at a time of significant staffing pressures.

We have also expanded our provision to support newly qualified Social Workers (NQSW) in their first year of practice, partly in response to the additional stressors brought about by COVID19 but also in anticipation of the launch of the Supported First Year in Practice developed by the SSSC. This has included a peer mentoring programme, a weekly learning and reflection opportunity for NQSWs, with guest speakers addressing NQSWs monthly, and ongoing support for learning.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion to this year's annual report, as CSWO, I am privileged to have the opportunity to highlight the wide and varied services delivered by Social Work staff and to recognise the tremendous effort that has been made to support our communities and would like to thank each and every member of staff for their hard work and dedication in exceptionally challenging times.

I know the coming years will be challenging, we will continue to innovate the way we operate, and confident that Dumfries and Galloway Social Work Services will continue to rise to the challenge.

Thank you.

Lillian Cringles
Chief Social Work Officer