

**Angus Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2020-2021**

Kathryn Lindsay,

Chief Social Work Officer

**Introduction**

My Annual Chief Social Work Officer Report for 2020-2021 covers a year where the impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) has been felt by all individuals and families throughout Angus. Across the council, partnerships and in communities everyone has been working hard together to provide safe and efficient services to support the citizens of Angus. Social work services in children's services, justice services and in the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) have continued to deliver support to the most vulnerable individuals and families within our communities, working to keep people safe as well as supporting their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This report is an opportunity to look back over the last year and reflect on the progress made with the priorities set out in last year's report; to celebrate what has gone well; and to acknowledge the significant, and sometimes devastating, impact of the pandemic on supported people, their families, staff, volunteers and communities.

In response to the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce, AHSCP and the Children, Families and Justice Directorate (CFJ) developed a redeployment process to enable staff to be moved to areas of greatest need during the pandemic and to ensure priority front line services continued to meet the needs of vulnerable citizens of Angus. The responsiveness of both staff and Trades Unions to the need for such flexibility enabled these arrangements, and the assurance they offered, to be implemented swiftly. I am grateful to all those who were able to support in these arrangements as well as to those who continued to work in their substantive roles. The commitment of staff, and as importantly carers, across all sectors in Angus has been humbling and has mitigated some of the potential worst effects of the pandemic on supported people.

The Independent Review of Adult Social Care was published on 3 February 2021 and includes a number of significant recommendations impacting the social work and social care professions and wider service delivery landscape. At the time of writing, the detail of the formal consultation on implementation of the Review is being confirmed, with a consultation scheduled for late summer/autumn 2021.

As I reported last year, the findings of the Independent Care Review (children) culminated in the publication of seven reports in February 2020, including 'The Promise'. This has since been followed up with the publication of the [Plan 21-24](#) and most recently [The Change Programme ONE](#) . Whilst the overall service delivery landscape may be impacted by the implementation of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, the activity required to deliver on The Promise will remain relevant and of critical importance across all organisations. We will continue to support the delivery of that vision, building on the good practice that already exists across services for our care experienced children and young people.

This Chief Social Work Officer report outlines how we are performing in social work services, highlights the challenges presented by Covid-19 and demonstrates the innovative practice and dedication shown by staff to ensure we continue to deliver services. I am proud to say that throughout our response to the pandemic, we have maintained focus on ensuring high quality care for individuals and families using services.

Kathryn

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## Summary of performance

### Achievement highlights during 2020/21

Some of our key achievements this year include: -

#### Partnership Working

A new third sector initiative, Angus Connect, was created between Voluntary Action Angus (VAA), Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP), Angus Council and other partner agencies. Angus Connect brings organisations together to help build capacity within the third sector as well as actively promote the sector and its support to communities. This initiative helped to successfully reach people most in need.

Building on this work, a collaborative partnership was established in early response to the pandemic; Humanitarian Aid Angus Response Team (HAART). Alongside other colleagues, social work staff across Children, Families and Justice (CFJ) and AHSCP were deployed to support the running of HAART, delivering a trauma informed response and proactive outreach to people shielding and in need.

In partnership with the third sector, advocacy has been expanded to support not only care experienced children, young people and those involved in child protection processes, but any child engaged with social work services. This sits alongside Children's Hearing advocacy giving children choice as well as providing flexibility so that advocacy in Angus is based on relationships: children can remain with the same advocate for as long as they need that support.

#### Internal Service Responses to Covid-19

By mid-March 2020, AHSCP had a Covid-19 mobilisation, implementation, and financial plan in place. This supported a volunteering support programme to aid with shopping and provision of a telephone befriending service for those shielding. Day care providers were supported to offer home-based visiting support and care at home providers worked together to ensure all planned home care was delivered.

Children, Families and Justice worked with colleagues in schools and other services to ensure that continued support was provided to children, their families, and other supported people throughout the pandemic. This involved supporting some children to access "hub" places whilst schools were closed

and working with Education and Lifelong Learning colleagues to ensure that families had access to the digital and other resources necessary to support children's learning at home. Prior to Covid-19, almost all CFJ work would have been conducted face to face. Restrictions on physical contact resulted in an immediate shift to other methods of engaging with supported people. Staff have worked with families to find more creative ways to maintain relationships with staff and, more importantly, between care experienced children and their wider family. Throughout the pandemic, staff have supported and facilitated families spending time together outdoors. Although advice and guidance to parents and people supported in the justice system has continued in different ways, we have ensured that core child protection work and certain work with those supported through the justice system, has continued to be delivered face to face.

### Strategic Developments

Arising from practice experience and findings from significant case reviews, a Transitions Group, chaired by the Head of Community Health and Care Services, has been progressing improvement work focused on the connection between child protection and adult protection; the Learning Disability transitions protocol; development and implementation of a Complex and Co-existing Conditions Case Panel; and support to vulnerable care leavers as they enter adulthood. At the start of 2021, a multi-agency service mapping and gap analysis exercise was undertaken and is informing improvement in these areas.

### Wellbeing Support

As part of the response to Covid-19, some additional short-term monies were received to enable additional support. We have worked collaboratively with partners to make best use of this funding to increase the availability of unpaid work placements for those in the justice system; to ensure discretionary financial support is available quickly to families in need ensuring they can access food, goods and support additional service provision from third sector partners. Referrals have been tracked weekly to pick up on particular vulnerabilities in communities and from weekly data reporting, we have been able to target enhanced support to victims of domestic abuse, young people experiencing coercion and control in relationships and deliver flexible family support at evenings and weekends.

Since July 2020, Health and Wellbeing Peer Support Workers and Social Prescribers have been based in 16 GP surgeries across Angus. Over 280 hours per week of mental health and wellbeing peer support are now being delivered across every GP practice in Angus. In January 2021, we agreed the extension of the Peer Support Service to young people aged 12-16 as part of our Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme.

A new Carer's Emergency Plan for unpaid carers has been introduced and the Carer Emergency Card has been relaunched. Guidance has also been developed to support people employing Personal Assistants via Self Directed Support (SDS) to manage the challenges presented by Covid-19. Separate guidance has been developed for practitioners in relation to SDS support packages for individuals impacted by Covid-19.

### **Key challenges over the last year**

Both AHSCP and CFJ have worked to support independent providers based in Angus to respond to and manage Covid-19 outbreaks, as well as managing our internal social work and social care services. The AHSCP leadership team and CSWO have put in place arrangements for Care Home Oversight in accordance with the increased expectation of local areas in this regard due to the Covid-19 outbreak. These have been valuable partnership contributions but have, at times, required the diversion of significant capacity.

Demand for personal care at home services has increased since the start of the pandemic. In the year to March 2021, there are an additional 1774 hours of care at home being delivered every week across Angus compared with the same time last year. This increased demand has been met by AHSCP in partnership with the independent sector. The increased demand reflects not only a reduction in care home demand but also the reduction in available day care provision during the pandemic, and the fragility of older people due to lack of activity and socialisation in lockdown. It also reflects the demographic increase in demand being actualised earlier than anticipated. AHSCP is working to monitor these emerging trends in service demand and ensure that needs is addressed appropriately in commissioning plans.

This year has seen a considerable rise in adult protection activity and significant fluctuations in the level of referral for child protection assessments as children became less and then more visible throughout the pandemic restrictions. The increase is partly due to a deterioration in people's overall wellbeing, including impacts on mental health, substance use and domestic abuse and the wider professional and community visibility of these impacts over the course of the pandemic. Other factors include a general increase in demand for services reflecting the needs of an ageing population; greater societal expectations about intervention; and increasing numbers of vulnerable adults with learning disabilities and autism.

We have continued to experience demand for foster and other placements for children and young people who need cared for out with their family. Increasing the number of approved foster carers remains key to achieving

better outcomes for those children. Despite an active social media campaign, only small numbers are coming forward to foster and adopt. To complement our social media campaign and to increase the ways in which people can find out more and express an interest in becoming a carer, we have developed a dedicated website, [www.fosteringandadoption.angus.gov.uk](http://www.fosteringandadoption.angus.gov.uk). A targeted campaign to reach out to council employees is planned later in 2021.

Despite significant recruitment efforts noted above, and the use of the Covid-19 legislation to safely fast track the approval of carers, we continue at times to have insufficient foster carers to meet the needs of children and have externally commissioned placements on those occasions. Some such placements are not in the Angus area and we recognise the negative impact that this can have on some children, regardless of the quality of the placement itself.

The wider impact of the pandemic has seen many children experience disruption in relationships with people who are important to them including their parents, brother and sisters, other family, peers, professional, social and school supports. The restrictions have led to delays in reaching key decisions for children including delays in carrying out assessments for children to return home; and delays in Children's Hearings being held. Many families have experienced challenges due to increased unemployment and furlough schemes and there is some evidence of increased anxiety for children and young people. As we move forward, we anticipate increased demand for social work services over the next year.

## **Governance and accountability**

The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) in Angus has continued in the role of Director for Children, Families and Justice Service and up to November 2020 held the post of Convenor for Social Work Scotland (SWS), the national organisation for the leadership of social work and social care professions in Scotland.

As a member of the Council's Leadership Team, the CSWO works in partnership with Elected Members, the Chief Executive, managers and practitioners with regard to the delivery of social work services and fulfilling the statutory duties of the role across the Health Social Care Partnership and Children, Families and Justice Service. Leaders are kept informed and engaged through regular reporting on key social work priorities, pressures and the wider social work agenda through Council Committees and the Integration Joint Board (IJB).

Within Angus, governance arrangements are well established to ensure the quality of our service provision. Alongside reporting to Council Committees, a number of high level senior leadership groups have been established to

monitor the impact of Covid-19 and oversee response plans including the Care at Home and Care Home Operational group, alongside Gold, Silver and Bronze meetings.

Integrated practice is overseen through the AHSCP Clinical and Care Professional Governance group and regular meetings are held between the CSWO and adult services counterparts.

The CSWO in Angus is a member of a wide range of groups and boards advising on reports, giving a broad oversight of all aspects of social work service delivery alongside operationally accountable managers. She also has professional responsibility for ensuring services fulfil their statutory duties, and that both staff and the Council work in accordance with the Code of Practice for employees and employers as set out by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

### **Service quality and performance**

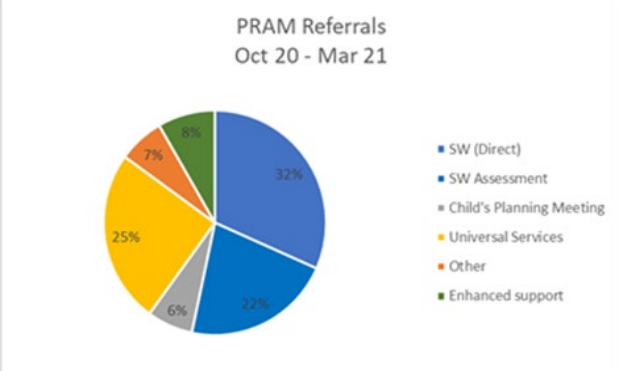
The CSWO has responsibility for overseeing quality assurance, improvements, inspection, and audit findings, including ensuring follow up actions are taken forward. Aspects of this role are discharged in several ways through senior managers across services undertaking a variety of actions including listening and acting on feedback and complaints, practice reviews and audit and self-evaluation work. The role of agency decision maker (ADM) is delegated to the Justice Service Leader who is also the Designated Depute CSWO.

During the year, one example of quality assurance work has been a review of Pre-birth Resource Allocation Meetings (PRAM) which targets early and effective support at the pre-birth stage. The review was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the local multi-agency pre-birth pathway and ensure that pregnant women are being referred to support and protection services at an early stage.

There were 60 women referred to PRAM in the six-month period from 01 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, most referrals are received from midwifery. On average, women are 12 weeks into their pregnancy at point of referral though this can range from 8 to 20 weeks. From analysis of the data, sampling of the referrals and tracking outcomes, there is assurance that the pathway is effective and support for women and unborn babies is being identified quickly. Unborn babies who require a social work assessment are being referred to children and families locality social work teams when women are on average around 13 weeks pregnant, enabling early coordination of help and support. Figure 1 provides a summary of the outcome of initial referrals.



Areas for improvement include ensuring closer links between the Glen Clova Project and midwifery services to enhance support options as early as possible for all pregnant woman who require support.

PRAM Referrals	Review Outcome														
<p>Figure 1</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>PRAM Referrals Oct 20 - Mar 21</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Referral Type</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>SW (Direct)</td> <td>32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SW Assessment</td> <td>22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Child's Planning Meeting</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Universal Services</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Enhanced support</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Referral Type	Percentage	SW (Direct)	32%	SW Assessment	22%	Child's Planning Meeting	6%	Universal Services	25%	Other	7%	Enhanced support	8%	<p>The right supports for women and unborn babies is being identified quickly and unborn babies who require a social work assessment are being referred to children and families locality social work teams when women are on average around 13 weeks pregnant.</p>
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A further example of quality assurance work has been the AHSCP audit of adult protection across adult services. The audit which took place between August and November 2020, was a recommendation following practice issues highlighted during initial and significant case reviews and involved analysis of 96 cases across and the findings of three large scale investigations. Work was carried out by members of the improvement and development team in AHSCP and findings reported to the multi-agency Adult Protection Committee and the IJB. An overarching improvement plan has been developed by AHSCP to address the findings, and others emerging from wider evaluation activity, with progress being reported to the Adult Protection Committee and IJB.

## Complaints

### Angus Health Social Care Partnership

AHSCP received 33 complaints at Stage 1 regarding social work services between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. The most common reasons for complaints were:

- The attitude and practice of staff
- Disagreement about decision making
- Quality of service or delays in providing a service

Complaints about financial assessment, or charges, arose during the first half of the reporting period but not since that time. These complaints highlighted the need for additional training for staff in this area. Overall, the most common

theme from complaints is communication. Had clearer verbal communication been given by staff, or the information been provided in writing, then the complaint could have been avoided, this is the main learning point being taken forward by services.

There were two complaints received at Stage 2 and investigated in the period. In the first, the main concerns were around allegations of poor hospital discharge planning and confusion about the role of workers from different teams. Again, poor communication was the main theme. In the second, disagreement about assessment and care planning, and engagement with the family were the main issues. Improvement actions for both complaints were agreed and are being actioned.

No AHSCP complaints were escalated to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) during the 2020 – 2021 period.

### **Children, Families and Justice**

The Children, Families and Justice Directorate received a total of 11 complaints during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, a decrease from 18 last year.

Of the 8 stage 1 complaints; 3 were upheld in full; 1 was partially upheld and 4 were not upheld.

There were 3 complaints received at Stage 2. The first complaint was not upheld following investigation and the second investigation remains ongoing at the time of writing.

The stage 2 complaint which was not upheld has been referred to the SPSO, with the outcome awaited.

The main themes for complaints to the service are mainly consistent with previous findings: a perception of poor attitude of a staff member; failure to provide a service; and poor communication. Learning from complaints is identified and shared as necessary within the service. A system is in place to enable the findings from complaints to influence wider system changes where this is required.

### **Duty of Candour**

The organisational Duty of Candour provision of the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016, and The Duty of Candour Procedure (Scotland) Regulations 2018, set out the procedure that organisations providing health and care services and social work services in Scotland are required by law to follow when there has been an unintended or unexpected

incident that results in death or harm (or additional treatment is required to prevent injury that would result in death or harm).

As part of our duty, the 2020/21 annual [Duty of Candour](#) report noted one incident in a children's social work service between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. This was because someone's treatment had increased because of harm.

Duty of Candour guidance was followed and an unreserved apology was given and followed up in writing to the family. A full review of all risk assessments in use across the relevant service was undertaken and a revised risk assessment, covering all activities undertaken by residents, has been introduced. Learning from the review has been shared with staff and policies and guidance have been updated. A full report was provided to the Care Inspectorate and the incident was discussed with Health and Safety team colleagues.

Angus Adult Services Duty of Candour report is contained within the AHSCP annual report for 2020 to 2021. Adult services had no reportable Duty of Candour incidents during the reporting period.

## **External scrutiny**

The National Health and Social Care Standards introduced on 1 April 2018 sets out five standards of care which services are accountable for delivering. These are:

- 1) I experience high quality care and support that is right for me
- 2) I am fully involved in all decisions about my care and support
- 3) I have confidence in the people who support and care for me
- 4) I have confidence in the organisation providing my care and support
- 5) I experience a high quality environment if the organisation provides the premises

In external scrutiny, inspectors grade establishments using a six-point scale from 6 excellent the highest grade to 1 unsatisfactory across five domains including staffing arrangements, leadership, the environment, care planning and the quality of care and support for people's wellbeing. The category wording varies slightly depending on the service context.

## **Adult Services Inspections**

There are 78 registered providers of adult care services in Angus, this includes care homes, housing support services and support services providing care at home and day care. Services are subject to inspection and grading by the Care Inspectorate. As noted above, the grading system operates by applying a grade between 1 and 6. The lowest grade in any area of the service is then

given as the overall grade for that service. In Angus, 76% of services operate at grade 4 (Good) and above. In 2020-21, 17 care homes and four supported services were inspected with two care home services inspected twice. Following inspections in 2020-21, four care homes had a combination of requirements and areas for improvement requiring action, and two further care homes had areas of improvement to address

The requirements related to:

- Environmental improvement plan
- Management of laundry
- Infection prevention and control

The areas for improvement were:

- Choice of range of social, creative, and learning activities
- Support at mealtimes
- Contingency planning

Providers are supported with improvement by AHSCP care management and district nursing. AHSCP also provided funding to Scottish Care to appoint an improvement officer to work with the independent care sector on quality improvement and change locally.

As part of local Care Home Oversight arrangements, AHSCP conducted two separate rounds of joint assurance visits to care homes. These were undertaken by social work and district nursing and supported by a programme of infection control visits by Infection Prevention and Control colleagues. Monthly data on care at home complaints or issues raised by supported people and hold monthly meetings to address concerns.

### **Children's service inspections**

There were no external children's services inspections during the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The service has continued to undertake self-evaluation activities using feedback from people using services, learning from complaints and reviews.

### **Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland**

The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland initiated a national secure care investigation in late 2019. The findings from that investigation were due to be published in June 2021 and findings will be addressed in a future report. Meanwhile, we are undertaking a local review of relevant cases and updating our guidance to staff. Any further improvement actions identified will be taken forward as a priority.

Over several years, Angus has continued to place very few children in secure placements, this year no children were placed in secure accommodation.

Separately, the [Secure Care Pathway and Standards Scotland](#) were published by Scottish Government in October 2020. These standards set out a vision for transformational change which will have a positive impact on the experience and outcomes for the very vulnerable group of children in secure care, or those at risk of being secured. Children's rights and the principles of dignity, compassion, being included, responsive care and support, and wellbeing are at the heart of the standards which we are working with partners locally to implement.

### **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry continues to consider evidence relating to the abuse of children in care in Scotland. The Inquiry will consider the full circumstances of what happened, the effects of abuse on children and families and whether organisations failed in their duties.

The Inquiry issued a section 21 notice to Angus Council relating to the fostering of children and young people. A full response was provided to the Inquiry in August 2020. Our approach was led between Legal and Democratic Services and Children, Families and Justice. A virtual management team was established supported by a dedicated project lead who, with staff resources from across Children, Families and Justice Service and Business Support, undertook a thorough analysis of records and recorded the findings.

Learning actions were identified from the work undertaken including improving the quality of written records and the practice surrounding allegations against people in caring roles. To date, there has been no response from the Inquiry team regarding the return provided in August 2020. Throughout 2020-21, the Inquiry have continued to issue several Section 21 notices regarding individuals and small groups of people which we continue to respond to promptly. The number of requests from the Inquiry and related Subject Access Requests from individuals is expected to increase over the next few years.

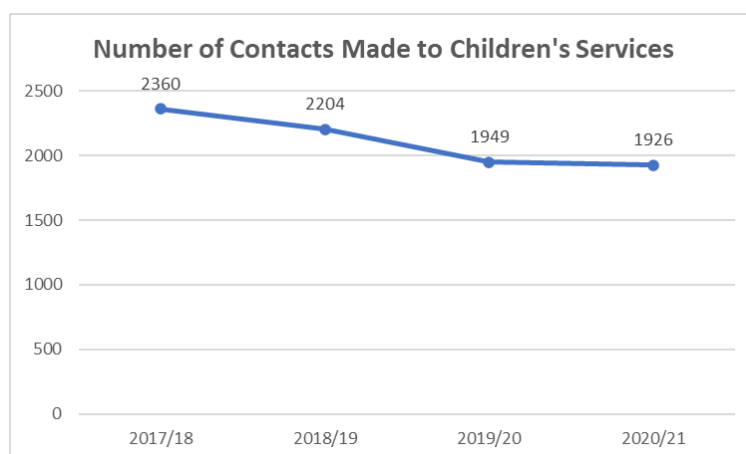
Resources have been increased in the Children, Families and Justice Service with the introduction of a dedicated information officer (IO) to support timely response to requests and develop the quality of our information management and the quality of records.

### **Performance Summary**

## Children and Families

Children's social work services continue to be dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our community at risk of harm from abuse or neglect. Critically the assessment of need and the provision of support and protection delivered by social workers and support staff in children's services is key to improving the life chances of those children and families receiving a service, ensuring we are 'getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC).

During the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, the number of referrals made to children's service has remained similar to last year at 1,926. While the number of referrals has remained consistent, the number of child protection referrals has increased as demonstrated below.



Of the 1,926 referrals this year 1,012 (53 per cent) required follow up action, a similar figure on last year's number of 1,059.

Robust arrangements are in place to screen and prioritise referral information quickly. Whilst social work is not an emergency service, swift responses to referrals are considered good practice and 81 per cent of referrals which required follow up were actioned either on the day they were received, or within 24 hours.

## Child Protection

Between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, there were 324 child protection investigations involving 231 children (some children were involved in more than one investigation). This is a significant increase on 265 last year and 295 for the previous two years. The average number of children on Angus Child Protection Register (CPR) this year was 50.

There were 29 registrations where domestic abuse was a listed factor. We know that domestic abuse continues to be a significant factor affecting woman and

children. During the year, we have worked as a member of Angus Violence Against Women Partnership (AVAWP) to understand more deeply the experience of women and children. There has been a decrease in domestic abuse reports to Police Scotland for the Angus area, but work with third sector partners shows an increase in behaviours such as coercive control with anecdotal evidence of this relating to young people's relationships. Work is continuing in this area to better understand the fuller context of domestic abuse and inform our child protection approaches.

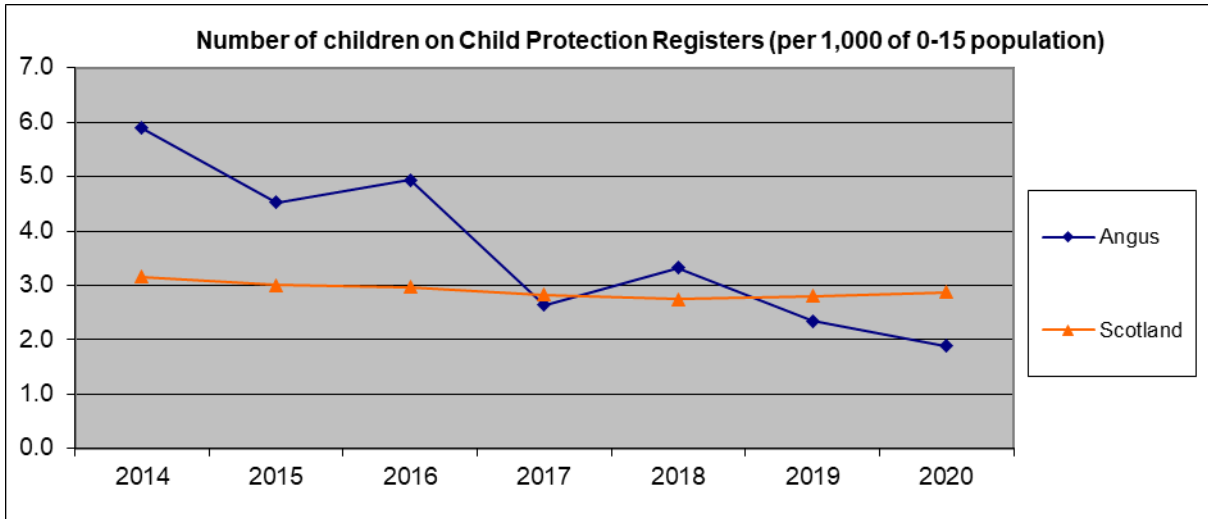
The number of Child Protection Orders granted in Angus this year has increased from 12 during 2019-20 to 22 during in 2020-21. While local figures have seen an increase, family groups sizes are a contributory factor in the increase with several larger families requiring this level of support. Orders are counted by individual children, rather than by family groups. Whilst I have referred elsewhere to the continued challenge of sourcing appropriate placements for children who cannot remain within the care of their own extended family, our capacity to assess and respond to child protection referrals has been sufficient to meet this increased need with additional investment having been made in core social work provision during the 2020-21 financial year and continued on a recurring basis from 2021-22 on.

### **Angus Child Protection Register (ACPR)**

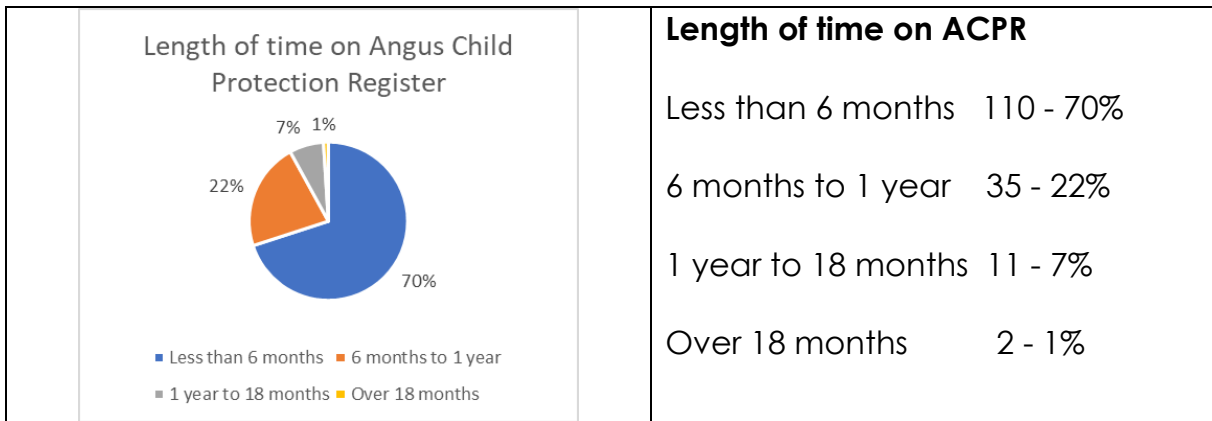
The total number of children on Angus Child Protection Register (ACPR) in 2020-21 was 158. These are children for whom significant concerns were identified at a multi-agency case conference, resulting in children's names being placed on the ACPR. The main area of concern over the year was neglect.

As the chart below shows, Angus has moved from being above the Scottish average for number of children on the ACPR (per 1,000 of the 0-15 population) in 2014, to being lower than the national average. Approaches to engage and support families at an earlier stage, referring children to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and earlier intervention pre-birth has contributed to this change.

We have explored the downward trend and note that there is no change in the number of families who receive support and in fact, there has been an increase in child protection work. We are confident from our analysis that families receive support in an ongoing way and that the right children have a child protection plan in place through registration. Routine weekly monitoring of the data, with reporting to the CSWO and other chief officers, ensures there is scrutiny around social work performance.



How long children are subject to registration is also of relevance. For children on the register and deregistered during the year, they had been on the ACPR for the following durations:



The majority of children (92 percent) have a child protection plan for under 1 year. A very small number of children remain with a child protection plan for over 1 year. Close monitoring of these plans is undertaken by the Quality and Review Team to ensure the plan remains effective.

The Quality and Review Team is a team of senior social work practitioners who carry out the role of oversight and scrutiny of child's plans, including chairing Child Protection Case Conferences and child's planning meetings for looked after children and young people. At the start of the pandemic, all child's planning meetings were moved to virtual meetings, initially using a conference call facility, and laterally using MS Teams. We have continued to carry out most child's planning meetings in this way and have ensured enhanced communication with families and young people prior to the meetings. This has included phone calls, emails, video calls and on occasions, outside meetings with participants to promote inclusion and participation in the formal meeting itself.



Between August and December 2020, we offered a blended meeting model which was very welcome by some families who wanted to be in the room together with the chair and social worker whilst other attendees attended virtually. Enhanced restrictions from December 2020 onwards meant that we had to pause this approach, but work is now taking place to re-introduce as restrictions ease. We are working on the principle that families and children will exercise more choice and control in how and where their meeting is held. We have used learning from PREpare (detailed in improvement events/activities section) to support our developments.

### **Significant case reviews and serious case reviews**

There have not been any child protection Initial Case Reviews ICR or Serious Case Reviews SCR initiated during the period of this report. Progress against the findings for the previously reported SCRs are ongoing. The most significant is the development of a learning pack for which has been trialled and received positive feedback. The learning from both reviews remain on the agenda for both the Adult Protection Committee and Child Protection Committee as to how best to monitor and progress the use of the learning pack to demonstrate positive change. Our approaches are being considered for good practice examples in the forthcoming triennial review of ICRs and SCRs published by the Care Inspectorate.

### **Children and Families Improvement Plan**

Children Families and Justice service hold an Improvement Plan 2019-2022 which has four overall improvement themes:

- 1) Working in partnership with people who use our services
- 2) Delivering effective assessment, planning and support to people who use our services
- 3) Promoting a resilient and sustainable social work and social care workforce
- 4) Working in collaboration across the Council and wider partnerships to deliver improved outcomes to some of our most vulnerable children in Angus

Although the impact of the pandemic on services has been considerable, improvement work has continued, including development of a framework for the integration of specialist assessment tools such as Safe and Together in cases of domestic abuse and Graded Care Profile in cases of neglect.

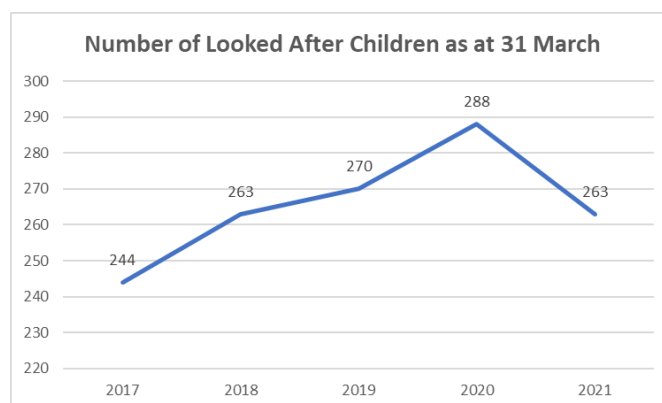
Changes which support evidenced based assessment, child-centred care planning and inclusion of families in decision making that affects them.

Children's care services have implemented the Secure Base Model of care which is based on research about child development, family relationships and focuses on the promotion of attachment and resilience. The model supports sensitive care-giving that develops secure relationships enabling children to feel more equipped to face future challenges successfully.

In recognition of the demand on services and the need to focus on continued whole system improvement as reported in The Promise and respond to other strategic and improvement activities, the service will increase capacity in quality improvement and support for children with disabilities during next year supported by additional recurring investment.

### **Looked after children / Care experienced children and young people**

The number of children 'looked after' has decreased from 288 last year to 263 as at 31 March 2021, reversing the gradual upward trend of the last four years.



During the year, just under half of the children (49 percent or 129 of 263 children) have continued to be supported either at home, or with family and friends. This is a slight change on last year's figure of 51 percent.

Arranging for brothers and sisters to live together, where it is safe to do so, is important to support and maintain relationships. This is an area we have taken a closer look at this year with data showing that in March 2021, approximately half of our looked after children and young people were living with children who were part of the same 'at home' household. Analysis of this is challenging because, in some situations, not all children in a family group require to live outside the family home while in other situations, it is appropriate for a child to be placed with extended family meaning separation from others. To better understand the data, we are now measuring the placement of children from the same household and using spot analysis to identify areas where we need to improve.

Across Scotland, trend data shows that around 5 percent of looked after children have three or more placements during the year. In Angus, 12 percent of looked after children had three or more placements during 2018, by 2020 this had reduced to 7.7 percent. We continue to focus on good matching where possible to minimise disruption for children and ensure early exploration of family members.

While we work to minimise placement changes where possible, it should be recognised that in some cases there may be limited choice available of placements, especially for older children or those with specific needs. The challenges of recruiting foster carers locally has been highlighted at the start of this report. Placements can, and do, breakdown. There are occasions where a placement change may also be in the best interests of the child or young person, if an initial 'match' proves to be less suitable in practice. As noted above, further work is needed to understand the profile of this data, who the children are and the reasons for placement moves.

Externally commissioned placements are only used when we are unable to identify a suitable placement within our internal resources. At 31 March 2021, we had 9 external fostering placements for 12 children, one of whom was placed on a continuing care basis and two children have been matched on a permanent basis. There has been an increase in the purchase of external foster placements, due to the increased demand for new placements at key points during the pandemic.

### **Fostering, adoption and performance**

Full details on fostering, adoption and kinship arrangements are available in the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report 2020/21 which will be presented at Children and Learning Committee on 12 August 2021 (report XXXX once available).

This has been a very challenging year for the service due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of this on staff, children, foster and kinship carers and adoptive parents is acknowledged. We moved to a model of virtual, and then hybrid panels and have continued to support all involved in the work of fostering and adoption services ensuring we continue to for fill our statutory duties.

In 2020-21, 84 panels were arranged to consider adoption and permanence, fostering and kinship care. This is an increase in the number of individual panels from previous years.

There is a process in place whereby carers can appeal the decision made by the Agency Decision Maker. In this year, two such appeals were lodged.

Following review by a different panel and Agency Decision Maker, both original decisions were upheld.

Nine fostering families were approved this year; one family approved as interim carers, five for short breaks, two for permanent and one specific approval short breaks carer. The number approved is consistent with the previous year.

On 31 March 2021, we had 28 fostering families offering interim placements to 46 children and 17 short-breaks carers. Two short break fostering families are offering interim placements to three children on an 'out with approval' basis. Two short break families are caring for two children on a shared care basis with the children's parents. A total of 72 children were looked after and accommodated with approved Angus foster carers.

So that we can ensure continuity of care, with adults who are known to children, we also assess and approve support carers. These are relatives of approved foster carers who can provide respite support for the children in placement. This means that children can stay with their extended fostering family, rather than stay with carers they may not know. On 31 March 2021, we had nine approved support carer families.

We also said goodbye to 14 fostering families following deregistration. Our valued carers left for a variety of reasons including retirement and other personal reasons and we thank them for their service and wish them well.

Section 29/30 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 covers adoption by a person who wishes to petition the court for an adoption order. The Adoption Agency does not arrange these placements, but Section 19 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 requires the agency to become involved by producing a report for Court.

In 2020-21, the Adoption Agency received 6 notifications of intent to apply to become adoptive parents of relatives/step-children. These reports are now completed within carers support service to ensure consistency of practice.

Angus Council currently operates an adoption allowance scheme. During 2020-21, Angus Council paid adoption allowances for 16 children. The number of kinship looked after allowances and pre-assessment allowances have increased slightly this year from 48 to 49.

## **Permanence**

Permanence for children who cannot live within their birth family is a complex area of social work practice which continues to be an improvement focus for the service. This year, we have noted some delay in considering children's permanence plans because the progress of parenting capacity and rehabilitation assessments were impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. However, we have also seen an increase in the number of children being presented with

permanence plans from last year and despite Covid-19, we have continued to match and have placed children with prospective adoptive parents.

In 2020-21, four permanence orders with authority to adopt and six adoption orders were granted.

### **Kinship**

There are 69 children subject to kinship orders, promoting their long-term security within their family. The Kinship team have continued to work in partnership with locality teams to ensure that children are secured in a long term arrangement within a timely period.

There continues to be a focus on keeping children within their family and the increase in the number of approved interim kinship carers reflects this. In addition, nine kinship carers have been approved as long-term kinship carers for the children in their care. This figure is a decrease compared to the previous two years, a positive reflection on the reduced delay in supporting kinship carers to secure legal permanence for the children in their care.

### **Continuing Care and Supported Lodging providers**

Since November 2019, the fostering service has been responsible for continuing care and supported lodging providers. At 31 March 2021, we had four carers, two of whom are offering continuing care placements to two young people, and two carers are offering supported lodgings to two young people.

### **Enhance Team**

The Enhance Team has been operational since April 2019 providing a flexible, responsive resource to meet the needs of children and young people at risk of becoming accommodated, or those already looked after and at risk of placement breakdown. The team provides a range of interventions using a strengths-based and secure base approach. This can involve daily 1-1 issue-based sessions for children, direct support for parents to include parenting programmes, and family sessions aimed at keeping families together. Over the first year, a total of 51 children and young people and their families received support. Following the team's second year in operation they received 60 referrals with 49 children and families going on the take up the service. Reasons for referral included:

- 22 to prevent a child/young person being accommodated away from home or when their placement was at risk of breaking down.
- 14 supporting the child/young person to return home or be supported with transitions including rehabilitations home
- 13 supporting families in crisis or whose parenting capacity was compromised.

Positive outcomes were noted in 31 of the 36 cases closed between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. The key impact for the children and young people was increased stability in their living situation.

### **Looked After Children Attainment Challenge Fund**

Inclusion Support is an intensive support service established in October 2019 with the aim of supporting care experienced children and young people in Angus who have been identified as not being fully included in their school or communities often as a result of periods of exclusion, part time timetables and low attendance rates impacting on young people's ability to secure positive future destinations.

In Angus, we reviewed our attainment data, attendance and exclusion rates and built on a small scale pilot that ran during 2018, combining expert educational psychology support and direct in-school support to children in one of the children's residential houses to design the Inclusion Support Service.

The Inclusion Support Service comprises three inclusion support workers supported and managed from the Enhance team. An Educational Psychologist is a critical part of the team offering regular, planned support to the service. The Angus-wide service operates flexibly to meet the needs of the individual children and young people being supported.

During October 2019 to December 2020, a total 34 young people received a service. The children and young people referred were living in a variety of care settings including at home, in a residential house, foster or adoptive care and two young people were being supported on a voluntary basis.

The children, young people requiring support experienced multiple layers of disadvantage including behavioural issues, attachment difficulties, offending behaviour, poor mental health, and poverty. Referrals received over the evaluation period varied with referrals generally lower from April 2020 through to September 2020 which may be linked to Covid-19 restrictions and the school summer holiday period. Ongoing review of our local data on educational outcomes and exclusion rates has identified a need to target support to those children looked after at home. The focus of the Inclusion Support Service for 2021-22 will focus primarily on those children looked after at home who experience any exclusion or where attendance falls below 70 per cent. Looked After Children Attainment money has also been used to extend the Aberlour Sustain Service, one of our externally commissioned family support services, to ensure early help and support for families.

## Justice Service

The Justice Service includes all Criminal Justice Social Work Services, care leaver support services and early help services for women. Performance information for Criminal Justice Social Work Services is reported publicly via Scottish Government and restrictions prohibit publication of 2020-21 information before that information is laid before parliament. Available information on data for 2019-20 can be accessed [here](#). Details are also available in [Committee Report](#) no 58/21 and [appendix](#) IJB/20

The information for 2020-21 is due to be published early 2022.

During 2019/20 84 percent of Community Payback Orders (CPO) were completed successfully. The completion rate has been above the average of 70 percent seen nationally since CPOs were introduced.

The number of Diversion assessments requests for 2020/21 have increased by 53 percent and the number of Diversions that commenced work (i.e. the individual has agreed to undertake the Diversion work) had increased by 62 percent. The figures highlight that more assessments have been deemed appropriate and more individuals have agreed to undertake diversion work compared to 2019/20. Diversion is an area of work where we have seen significant increases in 2020/21 compared to the previous year.

The Criminal Justice Social Work Service has continued to work in partnership with other professionals to assess and manage the risk posed by supported people who present a risk of significant harm to others. This includes working within the well-established Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The operation of MAPPA is subject to a separate annual report by the Independent chair of the MAPPA Strategic Oversight Group for Tayside.

Throughout the last year, multiagency public protection meetings have taken place on virtual platforms such as MS Teams, this has delivered improvements in attendance and improved use of professionals' time.

At the start of the pandemic, and in line with national and local guidance, there was a reduction in face to face contact with people supported by the Justice Service. Although other forms of communication were used to maintain contact, there was an increase in the number of orders and licences breached and recalls to custody. Like the general population, many people involved with the Justice Service found the pandemic stressful and isolating. As restrictions and risk assessment allowed, direct face to face contact was increased, following which there was an improvement in compliance and reduced recall to prison. This reinforces the importance of person to person interaction in the work we undertake.

The Service has continued to deliver support as part of a statutory requirement or on a voluntary basis via diversion from prosecution, prison throughcare or via children's services specific referrals. Whilst group based interventions have been suspended since March 2020 due to restrictions, programme work has continued on a 2:1 basis in the areas of general offending, wellbeing, relationships, domestic abuse and sexual offending.

The service continues to work closely with children's services and currently use their subject expertise to provide interventions to several males on a voluntary basis, addressing concerns around domestic abuse and coercive control. The Justice Service has adopted and promotes the Safe and Together principles and has two Safe and Together champions and a further two champions in training.

As part of the wider Children, Families and Justice Service work to tackle violence against women and girls, the Justice service led on multi-agency training and education around coercive control hosting an event in March 2021 with guest speaker Luke Hart, author of Operation Lighthouse. This successful virtual event was attended by over 70 people from across services including third sector organisations.

Some feedback from people engaged with the Justice service:

*"I now try to address my responsibilities. Little things like opening letter's and dealing with priorities. Even attending appointments more."*

*"I am glad for the support I received, they helped me a lot. If I never got the conviction, I wouldn't have received the support I did, and I think mentally I would have been in a worse state."*

Unpaid work (UPW) undertaken by supported people as a requirement of a Court Order is a significant part of the Justice Service remit. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, UPW ceased in March 2020 and unpaid work supervisors were redeployed to assist with the Humanitarian Aid Angus Response Team (HAART) and the setting up and provision of Food Distribution Hubs in Angus.

People supported by Justice Services were kept informed and were provided with information including helpline numbers and organisations offering specialist assistance. Staff kept in regular contact with people who were subject to Community Payback Orders with UPW requirements to offer advice and support where required and to explore other activity they might be able to complete.

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of UPW nationally and locally as a bottleneck of hours was generated by the restriction of activity and the continued making of new Orders with an UPW requirement by the Courts. Whilst the Scottish Government extended all unpaid work requirements



by a further twelve months to avoid default Order breaches, this resulted in a further accumulation of outstanding hours.

UPW in Angus restarted in August 2020, at a reduced capacity due to social distancing rules and other protection measures. The team being able to deliver around 126 hours of UPW per week, 20 percent of the capacity delivered in the same period the previous year. Where national guidance has supported this, we have credited other voluntary work undertaken during the pandemic, or training or education work to UPW Orders as “Other Activity”. Other Activity is being promoted as a viable mechanism for reducing hours as well as an opportunity for providing personal growth for individuals which in turn supports a reduced risk of reconviction.

Legislation was passed in March 2021 reducing UPW hours by 35 percent for eligible UPW orders. At the start of 2021, there were 17,527 hours of UPW outstanding. By April 2021, this had decreased to 14,391 hours once the reduction was applied. We continue to receive new Orders from the Court for completion. In Angus, the average figure for UPW hours completed pre-Covid was around 22,000 hours per annum.

### **Through Care and Aftercare (Horizon)**

Like all services, the Through Care and Aftercare team experienced a number of pressures over the past year. Their office base has remained open throughout the pandemic allowing staff to provide a responsive support service to care experienced young people living across Angus.



This year, the team undertook a review of its name and function and are now known as Horizon. Young people voted on the final name and one young person designed the accompanying logo. [The Promise](#) notes that 'the words used to describe young people's lives and experiences can exacerbate low self-esteem and is stigmatising'. The new name is less stigmatising and reflects the wider nature of the service which, since 1 March 2021, also provides a Criminal Justice Social Work Service for young males aged between 16 and 19.

Other developments have included adopting a more inclusive and choice based approach to supporting young people setting up their first homes; agreeing a Joint Protocol with the Learning Disability Team to ensure that care leavers who have a learning disability receive the financial, practical and emotional support they are entitled to from both services; reviewing and updating the Care Leavers' Protocol with housing. Throughout 2020, 38 young people have been considered under the Care Leavers Protocol, 30 of whom

have been housed in stable, suitable housing and three are currently living in temporary accommodation.

Via the Connecting Scotland scheme, Horizon distributed a total of 36 Chrome Books and 33 MiFi devices. This has supported the engagement of young people in all aspects of life including education, health and support services and has mitigated against the loneliness and isolation disproportionately experienced by care leavers during lockdown. The team has maintained a high level of contact with supported people throughout the pandemic.

### **Improvement events/activities**

Angus Child Protection Committee Practice and Policy Sub Committee led on a pilot to improve participation in the child protection process by supporting families from the conclusion of an investigation through to the child protection case conference. The PREpare (Participate, Relationships, Equity) pilot involved ten families with fifteen children and concluded in April 2020 with success demonstrated across the 4 outcomes.

- Families contribute to planning and decision making
- Views and opinions are voiced, heard, and acted upon
- Workers show a greater understanding of strength-based practice
- Child protection plans identify risks and build on strengths together with the family

PREpare is a strength-based approach to improving children and parental engagement in the child protection planning and decision-making process, ensuring the young person has a voice and the family are encouraged and enabled to be part of the safety planning for their children where there are child protection concerns. Due to the restrictions brought about by the pandemic, full roll out has been delayed but is planned for late summer 2021.

We were able to use the findings from the pilot to influence the introduction of blended meetings during lockdown to offer improved choice and participation in child's planning meetings.

The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 places a new duty on local authorities to take steps to promote, on a regular basis, personal relations, and direct contact between a child in their care and their brothers and sisters. In line with these changes to legislation, "siblings together" training was delivered to all relevant staff, foster carers, prospective adopters, and kinship carers to highlight the importance of promoting and maintaining these relationships.

New provisions contained in the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 section 25 and the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Amendment Rules 2021 comes into force in July 2021 giving certain siblings and others, rights of participation in children's hearings. The assessment

process and guidance for provision of reports to Children's Hearings and Court Proceedings are being reviewed to ensure compliance with legal requirements in the new legislation.

## **Adult Services**

The number of older people placed in a care home has continued to reduce because of the positive impact of the Help to Live at Home Programme. However, there has been a further reduction in placements in 2020-21 due to the pandemic, from 730 in 2016-17, 690 in 2018-19 down to 681 in 2019/20 and a further reduction to 647 in 2020-21. This year, 40 percent of placements were for nursing care rather than residential care, an increase from 27 percent in 2019-20. This is in line with expectations around demographic change the trend towards more people are being supported at home for longer.

Delivery of our home care services is central to supporting independent living, they enable people who use services to lead a fulfilling life at home. AHSCP delivered or commissioned 11,776 personal care hours per week, up 2,017 hours per week on last year. This continues to be an area of significant growth as we support people to remain independent in the community for longer. Throughout 2020-21, 1,856 people received personal care, an 8 percent increase from the previous year.

The pandemic has had an impact on the increase in the number of personal care hours being delivered at home for a variety of reasons. For some who may have moved to a care home, they have chosen to remain at home; people's health has declined which may be due to the constraints imposed e.g. unable to attend day care; care at home being accessed as respite which was not an option and where families have been unable to support due to shielding restrictions.

Access to long term social care support requires an assessment of need by care management teams. Individuals then make choices about what services would meet their needs and personal outcomes, how and when those supports will be delivered, accessed and who will provide them. Self-directed support is the mechanism by which these choices are provided. The options available are:

- Option 1 - direct payment
- Option 2 - person directs the available support
- Option 3 - local authority arranges the support
- Option 4 - mix of the above

Across Angus, 3,665 people had a care plan in place which includes a self-directed support option. In previous years, there continued to be a decline in the proportion of people choosing option 3 (where staff organise support on behalf of the person), and an increase in the proportion of people choosing option 2 (where a person selects and directs their support). However, in 2020-21 there was an increase in the number of people choosing option 3 from 56 to 60 percent and a decline in the number of people choosing option 2 from 27 to 24 percent. The proportion of people using option 4 (a combination options) and option 1 (direct payment) is broadly stable at 7 and 9 percent respectively.

### **Carers support**

AHSCP has continued to support the implementation of its strategy for unpaid carers developed in partnership with adult and young carers which was published last year. Work on the priorities set out in the three-year improvement plan is coordinated and overseen by Angus Carers Strategic Partnership Group. Within this, partners have prioritised tasks to assist with the Covid-19 response. The carer's emergency card was relaunched alongside a new carer's emergency planning template. A Carer Pathway was also introduced to signpost carers more clearly to the appropriate agency to support them.

Implementation of the key requirements of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 has continued but has been impacted by Covid-19. The 2016 Act led to the introduction of new local eligibility criteria for carers. Care management teams have been progressing reviews of carers who were assessed prior to the implementation of the new Adult Carer Support Plan and the changes in local eligibility criteria. The intention was that this work would be completed by March 2021. The support arrangements for those carers have not changed but due to the increase in new carer referrals and the impact of the pandemic, some reviews are still outstanding. The adjusted target is that they will be completed by the end of 2021. Much of care management contact with carers has been via telephone and email to minimise risk and to support those who are shielding. Adult services practitioners completed 174 adult carer support plans over the year.

Grant funding for third sector organisations supporting carers in Angus pre-dates the 2016 Act and totalled £757,000 in 2020-21. Our key partner Angus Carers Centre (ACC) provides a range of information and advice to meet our statutory duties in this area, alongside a range of other supports and activities for adults. This is generally where the impact of the caring role is low or moderate but there is partnership working with care management teams where appropriate. ACC services have continued to evolve with Covid-19 to minimise carer isolation, with predominantly telephone, online 1:1 and group contact and activity throughout the last year.

ACC have also supported the provision of person protective equipment (PPE) to unpaid carers, contact with carers on the shielding list, and enquiries related to carer vaccination which has led to contact with carers not previously known to the service and has supported a key strategic priority of carer identification to support earlier intervention.

The total number of adult carers who received support or contact from ACC during the year was 1514, though not all required on-going support. This compares to an estimated 1,000 adult carers identified and supported across adult services, children's services (parent carers), and the Carers Centre last year. There were 341 new referrals of adult unpaid carers to the centre during the year. For 277 carers contact was a direct result of the impact of Covid-19.

In addition, ACC has continued to provide support to young carers in the last year and adapted services to ensure this was maintained during the pandemic. Over the last year there were 49 new referrals to the young carer service of which 32 required ongoing support. The total number of young people receiving support from ACC during the year was 151. Young carers workers continue to maintain contact with schools who lead in the identification of young carers and completion of Young Carer Statements. An additional grant allocation was made by Children, Families and Justice to support activities for young carers using the Winter Monies funding from Scottish Government.

Across primary and secondary schools in Angus at the end of March 2021, there were 88 young carers recorded on SEEMis. All young carers are offered support and a Young Carer's Statement and of those offered support, 31 took up the offer of a Young Carer Statement which sets out the personal needs and outcomes for each young person and the support required to meet their needs. Numbers remain low for young people taking up the offer of a Young Carer's Statement with efforts continuing to be made to engage with young carers and address the barriers to identification and provision of support to this important group. The offer of support remains open for all carers under 18 years, or over 18 if still at school.

### **Adult support and protection**

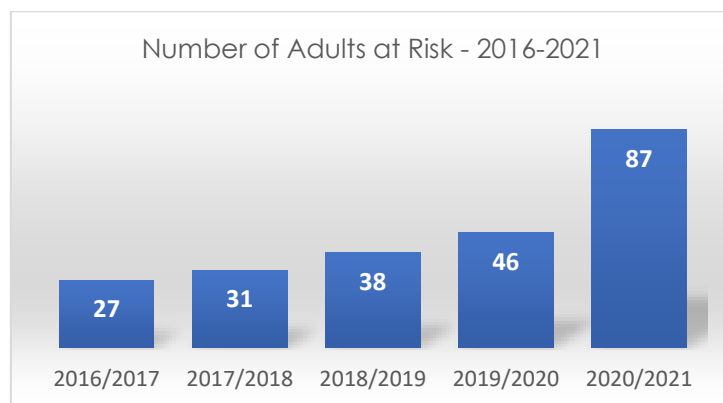
The year 2020-21 has seen a significant increase in all areas of adult protection activity compared to last year.

Adult Protection referrals increased from 406 in 2019-20 to 728 this year. There were large increases in referrals being made by members of the public, NHS, the Care Inspectorate and AHSCP staff. Police Scotland, however, continue to be the largest source of adult protection referrals.

Unsurprisingly given the upturn in referrals, Adult Protection investigations increased from 54 in 2019-20 to 145 this year.

The number of adult protection case conferences increased from 94 last year to 179 this period. The total of 179 case conferences were made up of 89 initial case conferences and 90 review case conferences.

Consequently, the numbers of adults at risk also rose to 87 as the chart below indicates.



All service areas have seen an increase in adult protection activity; although the increase in adult protection investigations and case conferences from the Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs under 65s) increased from 5 to 24, and from 7 to 44 respectively. An analysis of the adults at risk during 2020-21 shows for the first time that people with mental health problems are the highest in terms of the main client group with alcohol and drugs issues still significant in the numbers. Of the types of harm experienced by adults at risk, financial harm is again the most common principal type of harm with physical harm close behind.

The explanation for the increase in adult protection activity is difficult to specifically identify. However, the Covid-19 crisis has coincided with the increase. It is also the case that the CMHTs under 65s have changed their adult protection practice over the last year because of improvement activity referred to earlier in this report.

The AHSCP is an active partner on the Angus Adult Protection Committee and is represented at the Angus Chief Officer Group. These have continued to meet virtually during the pandemic and have combined progressing ordinary business with specific Covid-19 related risks. A weekly Covid-19 ASP meeting has taken place throughout the pandemic and weekly performance information is submitted to the Scottish Government.

Implementation of the Health Improvement Scotland Rape & Sexual Assault Standards (2017) has continued, AHSCP continue to take a lead role in adult

support and protection work, reflecting its legal duties and powers in this regard, and working in partnership with other agencies in public protection operational delivery. Increased demand in adult protect work is expected to continue as restrictions are lifted and the impact on individuals becomes clearer.

During the period 2020-21 there have been two Initial Case Reviews (ICR) both of which were taken forward to a Significant Case Review (SCR). One report is currently being finalised and the second SCR is ongoing. The findings are expected during 2021 and will form an important driver for agencies, including AHSCP, to consider how best to implement the learning as part of local improvement plans.

### **Mental health officer (MHO) function**

Statutory social work services provided under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 are delivered by AHSCP.

Information covering period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021:

- Emergency Detention figures are down by 3 on previous year to 42
- Number of short-term detentions increased from 69 to 91

Mental Health Officers (MHOs) completed:

- 80 Social Circumstance Reports (SCR's) an increase of 23 on last year
- 36 Compulsory Treatment Order applications down 1 on previous year
- 75 other reports relating to both civil and forensic cases plus reports to Scottish Ministers an increase of 12 on 2019/20
- The number of adults subject to Compulsion Orders remains low at 2 a decrease of 3 on last year with 6 adults subject to Compulsion Order and a Restriction Order

The ongoing shortage of Section 22 approved doctors and number of locums being used in Angus continues to have a significant impact on the number of assessments and detentions with the same distinct pattern emerging as last year. This is a matter which has been identified as part of the mental health service improvement work being led by NHS Tayside in response to the Trust and Respect Report. MHOs report that the number of detentions and revocations appear to correlate with the number of Doctors available - in other words where there is capacity for assessment, numbers accessing support increase.

During periods of lockdown, these difficulties became more pronounced with long periods passing where no assessments or detentions were requested or

undertaken. Each time restrictions began to ease; the MHO service observed a surge in assessments for detention although in some cases admission and/or use of the Mental Health Act was delayed by the Doctor due to a shortage of beds. While overall, the MHO Service saw an increase in Mental Health Act work during this period the majority was condensed into approximately 9 months for the reasons detailed above.

A total of 81 Guardianship reports were requested during the year, down by 17 from last year with 32 still pending allocation, an increase of 12 on last year.

- 57 new Guardianship requests (down by 18 on last year)
- 24 renewal requests (increase of 1 on last year)

Active Guardianship Orders as of March 2021:

- Local Authority - 138 LA (increase of 23 on last year)
- Private - 237 (increase of 25 on last year)
- Total - 375 (total increase of 48 on last year)

The shortage of Section 22 approved doctors, national lockdown, Court closures and the Office of the Public Guardian processing fewer Orders, in addition to uncertainty regarding emergency legislation, caused significant problems processing Welfare Guardianship reports which at its peak reached 92 pending allocation. As a result, most Guardianship reports were prepared over an 8-month period rather than 12 months. In addition to the increased number of reports prepared, a number had to be placed on hold or temporarily withdrawn due to the shortage of Section 22 approved Doctors able to provide the medical reports required to accompany applications. This resulted in MHO reports often having to be prepared twice.

Over the last 12 months, the MHO Service saw a threefold increase in attendance at adults with incapacity case conferences and a fourfold increase in attendance at adult support and protection case conferences.

### **Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (AIDARS)**

Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (AIDARS) continues to support people and their families affected by substance misuse within their own communities. The collaborative approach with partners is embedded within a recovery orientated system of care (ROSC), which ensures a person's recovery sits at the centre of service delivery. AIDARS provides an open referral system and encourages those in need to refer directly to the service. The teams also provide drop in contact within the Wellbeing Cafes in North localities in Angus, and through drop in contact with third sector services in Arbroath.



Over the past year, partners within the ROSC developed a number of initiatives to further support those in need and ensure supported people or their families see the right service at the right time, and in the right place. This has been supported through the development of a new business approach for substance service partners, as well as other stakeholders including carers and people with lived experience, and those who advocate for others. A new twice weekly joint referral hub for substance services has been developed within north and south localities to support early engagement and access to treatment. This has continued to support Angus services achieve the HEAT standard of “90 percent of people engaged in treatment three weeks after receipt of referral”. The service achieved 98.6 per cent of this standard during the period 2020-21.

In partnership with Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and Primary Care, AIDARS has also jointly developed a ‘test of change’ referral hub within Links Medical Centre, Montrose, focusing on developing improved referral processes between key services to promote joint working and improve transitions in partnership working. This is part of several initiatives locally focused on aligned and integrated working between mental health and substance services.

All suspected drug deaths in Angus are reviewed as part of the pan-Tayside Drugs Death Review Group led by Public Health. Learning is reviewed locally with AIDARS Business Governance Group and in partnership with Angus Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) and ROSC Partnership Group to identify themes and improvements. All suspected drugs deaths within Angus Services are also internally reviewed by AHSCP with multi-agency input. During the reporting period there were 17 suspected drug deaths in Angus. Confirmation of this number is awaited as there continue to be national issues around delayed toxicology reporting.

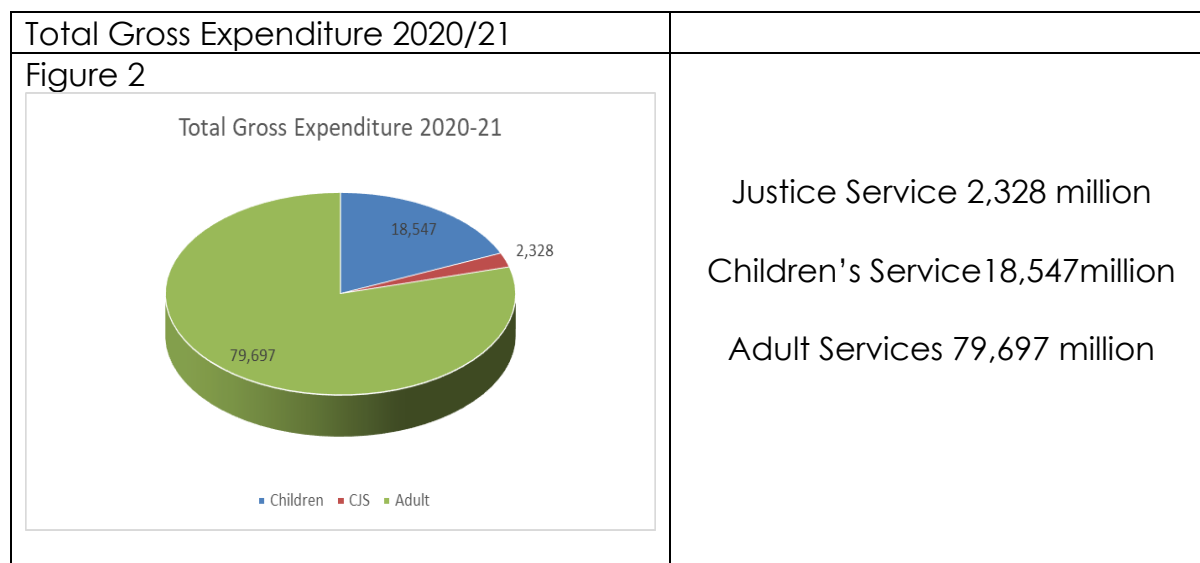
AIDARS works in partnership with NHS Tayside Harm Reduction Service and Scottish Ambulance Service to contact individuals who have recently experienced a near fatal overdose. An assertive outreach approach is taken to each individual and contact is made directly by AIDARS staff to support engagement with the service. This is monitored through Angus ADP Strategy Group.

## **Resources**

The total gross spend on social work services in Angus during the financial year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 was £100,572million (excluding all income).

It is recognised that all services have faced significant financial challenges with the pressure of year on year savings which have been required over the last few years, alongside the increase in demand on social work services, inflationary pressures, legislative changes and expectations from the people

who require social work services. During 2020-21 along with all Councils, Angus social work services have been severely affected by the financial and operational impact of the pandemic.



### Deployment of resources

The funding of Adult Social Care remains challenging. The most significant ongoing pressures facing AHSCP continue to be the growth in demand for personal care at home because of demographic change in Older People Services. Throughout 2020-21 resources have been redeployed to assist with Covid-19 responses and additional costs have been incurred in many areas. This includes increased PPE costs but also significant financial support to local independent and voluntary sector social care providers. This has been an important commitment during the pandemic response with support provided in line with national guidance. The long-term resource impact of Covid-19 is still difficult to determine, but we know that strategic planning interventions have been delayed and this will place an additional financial burden on services in the future. Early clarity on Scottish Government financial support to deal with Covid-19 issues was helpful and confirmed Scottish Government financial support remains in place at the start of 2021-22.

Within the Children, Families and Justice Directorate, the main fluctuating budgetary pressure continues to be the provision of good quality care for children and young people who are not able to remain at home. This includes internal and external fostering placements, residential and continuing care placements, and the provision of support for kinship carers including for filling our legislative requirement to provide kinship carers with financial allowances. Our secondary and more consistent challenge has been the budget available

for core staff provision. Additional, recurring investment has been secured for this purpose from 2021-22.

## **Workforce**

Supporting staff development has been challenging over the last year with all training and informal support and learning opportunities requiring to be converted to a digital format. With the pressures on staff in their day to day roles, the delivery of online single agency and multiagency 'bitesize' learning sessions have proved accessible and popular. The sessions have been well attended and have covered a wide range of topics including Corporate Parenting, keeping The Promise, Children's Hearing Advocacy, Suicide Prevention, and Coercive Control.

Registration of the workforce continues to be supported by the Organisational Development team and specifically our assessment centre staff in line with registration requirements of the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC). Due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 restrictions, the SSSC extended to 12 months (from 6 months) the timescale by which staff in a social care role requiring registration require to be registered. The SSSC have recognised the additional pressure the pandemic has put on the care sector and have continued the extended timeframes for staff to register and complete a qualification. Registration figures for staff in Angus have continued to increase across both adult and children's services.

Figures for 2020-21 staff currently qualified (remaining staff are working towards qualification):

Residential Child Care Service (including sessional staff)	60%
Care Home Service for Adults - 143 staff registered	66%
Housing Support Services – 52 staff registered	81%
Care at Home Services – 167 staff registered	66%

All those in a "social worker" post are suitably qualified and registered and arrangements are in place to monitor this on a regular basis.

A vast proportion of the social work and social care workforce, along with other key services, have experienced trauma as a result of their work during the pandemic. Support for the mental health and wellbeing of the workforce has been a priority for Angus Council, including ensuring easy access to 1:1 direct support and mental health drop in sessions as well as the availability of managers across services who have maintained regular communication with staff.

The experience of prolonged lone working has had an impact on the confidence and development of practitioners across all services, despite arrangements put in place to support practice discussions, these cannot replace the intuitive support and ad hoc learning opportunities afforded when practitioners are physically in one place. We are working with partners in the relevant teams to explore how we can bring social work and social care practitioners back together more routinely and in accordance with the principles of good, safe practice and Covid-19 risk assessments.

The impact of the pandemic is likely to stretch over the years to come and teams are reviewing their current workforce needs in light of this experience. We are beginning a period of workforce recovery and dealing with the aftermath and impact of Covid-19 and are revisiting workforce plans to ensure they are informed by the impact of the pandemic and reflect emerging workforce priorities.

### **Recruitment and retention of staff**

The health and wellbeing of our staff remains a priority. Feedback from staff highlights that their health and wellbeing is impacted by what is happening at work and by issues at home, such as challenges with home schooling as many working parents have experienced. As we continue to recover services we will maintain our close focus on the recovery of our staff. Staff are being encouraged to seek support if required and look after the wellbeing of themselves and others. There are several options available for staff, both locally and nationally.

A series of staff wellbeing surveys have been conducted and evaluated, spiritual care has been promoted, robust risk assessments have been implemented in the workplace and staff testing has been in place in accordance with government guidance

Ensuring we have a sufficiency of suitably qualified staff is essential to the delivery of social work and social care services. During 2020-21, eleven newly qualified social workers (NQSW) were recruited through the graduate recruitment scheme, ten joined teams within the Children, Families and Justice service, and one joined AHSCP. As recruitment was undertaken during Covid-19, restrictions have prevented newly qualified staff from attending sessions where they can physically meet. MS Teams has been used to facilitate protected time and drop-in sessions where staff could access support, training opportunities and build peer support networks. Recruits for 2020 are due to reach the end point of training by end of September 2021. Three of the 2019 cohort have been given an extension by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and are due to complete the qualified social worker support

programme by December 2021. Three will be unable to complete on time due to personal reasons.

Recognising the potential of existing staff and supporting them to gain a social work qualification continues through the internal Traineeship scheme. Two workers, both now in their third year, have continued to be supported through the Traineeship scheme during 2020-21. Following their current placements, both students will return to host teams for a period before entering their final year and thereafter qualifying as social workers.

Accommodation and Home Care Services were involved in a pilot to include Modern Apprentices into the workforce. This is a two-year pilot and has increased the number of staff under the age of 25, some of our modern apprentices have been successfully recruited into permanent posts.

Workforce capacity has at times been challenging over the last year. To reduce the risk of critical gaps emerging, both children, families and justice and AHSCP made arrangements to recruit additional staff on a managed basis, permitting managers, in certain cases, to temporarily recruit above their staffing establishments during recruitment exercises. Managers must have a plan to return to original establishment numbers within 2 years, but this is seen as a welcome route to temporarily increasing staffing numbers. AHSCP are now considering ways that this can become a permanent arrangement to address workforce recruitment issues.

A Care Management Improvement Programme commenced in January 2021. One of the key workstreams within this programme is reviewing the tasks undertaken within the care management function to ensure that we have the right numbers of staff with the right skills within all teams in AHSCP. The Care Management Improvement programme is also developing systems and practice in the context of increasing demand. The involvement of the wider staff group is key to the success of this work and will contribute to job satisfaction and retention levels.

Longer-term, we recognise the impact that demographic shifts will likely have on the availability and health of the workforce. By 2037, it is anticipated the 75+ age group within the Angus population will have increased by around 89 percent. The increase will exert pressure on health and social care services, but the effect will be twofold, not only in relation to projected demand on services, but also on the availability of the workforce.

Recognising that a significant proportion of our workforce is part of our local population, the effect of an ageing workforce will likely be felt more acutely within Angus. In AHSCP, 28 percent of the workforce is already aged over 55, and the retirement of a number of AHSCP senior staff, specifically those with a social work qualification, within the next two years will significantly reduce the level of social work operational and strategic experience at senior and middle

manager level. AHSCP have a workforce plan which seeks to address this challenge.

Approximately 6 percent of the care home workforce originates from the European Union and a further 6 percent from other countries. It is anticipated that changes brought about by our exit from the European Union will have a significant impact on the care home sector labour market overall. It will be important to monitor any changes in these numbers and providers' experiences of recruiting from the European Union and any barriers to enabling workers to enter this sector in Scotland over time.

### **Key priorities for recovery in response to Covid-19 pandemic**

The following areas remain a priority for Covid-19 recovery:

- Continuation of Care Home Strategic Oversight arrangements
- Oversight of care at home provision and adaptation of commissioning arrangement to account for emerging trends
- Continued focus on partnership delivery of early, community-based support for people
- Continued flexibility in the delivery of residential respite services for Children with Disabilities to enable provision of services for those who need it. Full details are available in [Committee Report](#) No 40/21
- Reinstatement of day care services in accordance with national guidance
- Ensuring sufficient capacity in our MHO team to respond timeously to referrals
- Continue to evaluation the impact of Covid-19 on demand and workforce availability
- Continue to progress investment to improve the availability of UPW, reduce the number of outstanding hours and improve the immediacy of implementation of Court Orders.

### **Challenges for the year ahead**

As noted in the foreword, there are several significant legislative and policy developments impacting on social work and social care over the coming year. The following provides a summary:

- The Promise - the national improvement programme for the children's care system, including early intervention will bring both opportunities and challenges to the conclusion of the programme in 2030. Services will need to respond to a series of three Plans, each lasting three years and outlining priorities and action required across that period. The Plan 21-24 focuses on the period from 1 April 2021 until 31 March 2024 and outlines a set of outcomes that should be concluded by 2024. Shorter-term targets associated with those outcomes are articulated within The Change Programme. The changes are rightly ambitious and reliant on national, local, and individual change
- Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive carers - despite an extensive campaign and use of Covid-19 legislative flexibilities to increase the recruitment of carers, we continue to have insufficient numbers of people coming forward to foster or adopt. The challenge will be to keep children and young people who are not able to live at home, within their local communities
- Implementation of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care – the consultation (expected in late summer/autumn 2021) is likely to have wide ranging implications for the whole of social work and social care provision. Whilst clear regarding recommendations for a National Care Service and National Social Work Agency, the review report itself was ambiguous about the imagined future status of children's and justice social work. There is a likelihood that most, if not all statutory social work provision will be considered as part of a new structure for the delivery of social work and social care in Scotland. Engagement in the process of consultation and the development of any future state will require the prioritisation of significant capacity
- Commissioning – re-evaluation of the commissioning assumptions in relation to care home and care at home procurement and delivery to support the continued shift in the balance of care from institutional settings to community settings

### **Priorities for 2021-22**

- Continue to deliver our local Covid-19 response
- Continue to seek new foster and adoptive carers, including those who can care for brothers and sisters together
- Build on relationships with independent sector children's residential providers
- Service users and staff safety, health and wellbeing remain a priority

- Social and physical distancing will remain integral in planning and delivering future services, including the availability of space to undertake direct work with supported people
- We will promote a digital first approach where it is safe and effective to do so and seek to improve practitioners' access to technology
- Establishment of a social care sessional staffing bank across AHSCP and a mentor scheme for succession planning

In conjunction with partners, begin preparation for an Inspection of Multi-Agency Adult Support and Protection Services for which there is no timescale but is anticipated

## **Conclusion**

Over the last year staff from across adult services and children, families and justice have done an incredible job showing compassion and demonstrating their adaptability to the changing needs the pandemic has brought. They have continued to be responsive and supportive to supported people across Angus.

The virus has exposed the health, social and economic inequalities still present in Angus, and across Scotland. It remains a priority to offer our full support and protection to those who require it and to continue to address the inequalities and advocate for the citizens we serve as part of the wider Community Planning Partnership.

Social work and social care services are committed to delivering on those aspects of our Corporate Parenting duties by keeping the Promise to our care experienced children and young people. We will be available to hear what young people have to say and importantly using our knowledge and understanding of the issues to advocate and support positive change across the wider corporate parenting group. Some of the things we have heard from young people reflect a desire to feel 'normal', to feel 'cared for', 'valued' and 'included'. Part of keeping the Promise will require us to act on what we have heard from young people when implementing the Plan 2021-24.

Social work and social care services continues to make an important contribution to the work of AHSCP. As integrated working moves forward, ongoing work is required to sustain the visibility and uniqueness of social work's value base and a distinct professional identity, in a way which contributes to and enhances partnership working with other professions. Some of the



workforce improvement points noted in this report reflect the commitment of AHSCP to address some of these areas.

A special thank you must be expressed to all our staff this year who have adapted and found creative ways to maintain services and support our most vulnerable children, young people, and adults. The support of numerous partners, including other Council services has been critical in enabling this. It has been more important than ever to prioritise our own mental and physical health, to look after ourselves and one another as a collective workforce through what has been an extremely challenging year. Going forward our practice must reflect, adapt, and continue to respond to the challenges that present every day.