

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Education, Children and Families Committee

Does this report require to be approved?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Ref AG/QA

Date

19/11/24

Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer 2023/24

From Alison Gordon, Chief Officer (Chief Social Work Officer - Children, Families, Justice and Integrated Services - Education & Families)

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Executive Summary

In line with Scottish Government guidance the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is required to provide an annual report. This report provides an overview of social work service delivery in North Lanarkshire for the period April 2023 to March 2024 and cover the following areas:

- Governance and accountability arrangements, including partnership working.
- Service Quality and Performance, including service developments.
- Resources
- Workforce
- Future Priorities

The North Lanarkshire CSWO Report 2023/24 is attached as an appendix to this report. The report also reflects social work's contribution to the Programme of Work underpinning the Plan for North Lanarkshire.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Education, Children and Families Committee:

- (1) Approve the report.
- (2) Note that approval of the report will also be sought through the Adult Care and Social Work Committee.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement All ambition statements

Programme of Work All Programmes of Work

1. Background

- 1.1 The requirement that each local authority appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer is contained in Section 45 of the Local government (Scotland) Act 1994. Statutory Guidance on the role of the Chief Social Work Officer was updated in 2016, to reflect the impact of Health and Social Care integration, extending the responsibilities of the role to provide advice to the Integration Joint Board (IJB). In addition to providing advice both to the Local Authority and IJB in relation to the discharge of statutory social work functions the role continues to carry key responsibilities for professional leadership, values, and standards both for directly provided and commissioned services.
- 1.2 Social Work Services in North Lanarkshire continue to play a lead role in supporting and safeguarding our communities. Adult Social Work and Social Care Services are delivered through Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire (HSCNL) whilst Children, Family and Justice Services are delivered through the Council's Education and Families Service.
- 1.3 The CSWO role requires to be undertaken by one designated individual, delegation of responsibilities is permitted where required by the scale of business. In North Lanarkshire this means that the Chief Officer Adult Social Work Services, routinely exercises delegated responsibilities for decision-making and professional standards within adult services as well as providing support and cover with respect to the wider functions of the CSWO role.
- 1.4 The Annual Chief Social Work Report is intended to provide a key overview of social work service delivery and performance. The Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor (OCSWA) also produces a national report each year which draws on key themes and messages from CSWO reports across Scotland.

2. Report

- 2.1 Social Work in North Lanarkshire employs around 2,800 staff and in collaboration with commissioned services and third sector partners provides to around 30,000 individuals and families at any one time. Social work also makes a key contribution to wider partnership and community activity.
- 2.2 As illustrated within the report partnership working is fundamental to social work at every level and a key aspect of the CSWO role involves developing and sustaining partnership working and relationships across a range of organisations and structures. In addition to the specific responsibilities of the CSWO to the Council and HSCNL, the CSWO holds a key leadership role within several local partnerships as well as contributing to the wider national social work community. Social Work also plays a key role within the Council's Programme of Work in particular, but not limited to, work being progressed under the *Resilient People* programme. Equally many of the aspirations of the wider programme including the core commitment to inclusive growth are critical to those in our communities most likely to require social work support.
- 2.3 Whilst the delivery of core statutory responsibilities including for public protection remain a significant part of social work service delivery, social work also plays a key role in early support and both primary and secondary prevention as highlighted within the report. Income maximisation and tackling poverty also continue to be key strands in the delivery of social work and social care in North Lanarkshire. These have become increasingly integrated into day-to-day practice and service delivery and have a strong

fit with the core values of social work. Equally important and threaded through the activity reflected within this year's report is a commitment to relationship based and trauma-informed practice.

- 2.4 Demand for social work services has continued to increase across all social work care groups continuing a trend which has seen this increase beyond pre-pandemic levels however as reflected within the report the service has continued to maintain a strong 'balance of care' meaning that a high proportion of those receiving support receive this within the context of their own homes and communities. There has also over recent years been an increased focus on the area of 'transitions' to ensure those receiving support do not face a 'cliff edge' as they move between child and adult life or between services or statutory and voluntary supports. Whilst further work is still required in these areas progress in this is evidenced in the steadily growing number of young people supported in continuing care and in those in receipt of voluntary throughcare from justice services.
- 2.5 External scrutiny of social work services is undertaken primarily through the Care Inspectorate and its partner agencies. In addition to ongoing inspections of regulated services a Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of harm in North Lanarkshire took place between April and October 2023 evaluating the impact of services on children and young people as *Very Good* and identifying a number of key strengths including in respect of collaborative leadership and the strong relational and trauma informed approaches which supported staff form trusting relationships with children, young people and their families.
- 2.6 Staff commitment and resilience has continued to be strong although as reflected in Section 5 of the report there remain staffing pressures in key areas including with respect to home support services, the mental health officer workforce, administrative support and other social care roles. A range of initiatives to support staff recruitment and retention against a challenging backdrop is outlined within the report and a number of these including the updating and re-evaluation of main grade social worker and occupational therapy roles have contributed to a reduction in vacancies in this critical area of the workforce.
- 2.7 Both despite and in response to pressures the service has continued to innovate including in the use of digital technology and has also continued to strengthen the involvement of those with lived experience in planning.
- 2.8 Looking forward the report reflects on future challenges including the likely increase in financial pressures, in part arising from the ending of temporary funding streams. but also identifies opportunities to build on successful areas of practice, and strong partnerships to continue to work holistically and in particular to improve early support to strengthen and empower individuals, families and communities.

3. Measures of success

- 3.1 N/A – Annual Report to meet reporting requirement. A range of outcome measures, KPIs and specific service standards are applied across social work services.
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4. Supporting documentation

4.1 Appendix 1: Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer 2023/24

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Gordon', written in a cursive style.

Alison Gordon
Chief Social Work Officer

5. Impacts

5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? No direct impact though the report provides key evidence that the effective delivery of social work services supports the Council in their delivery of Fairer Scotland Duty. As this is a retrospective report no EQIA is required If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5.2 Financial impact Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?
5.3 HR policy impact Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? All recruitment is in line with our workforce plans and governed through the appropriate routes.
5.4 Legal impact Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? All statutory requirements are met through the role and function of the CSWO.
5.5 Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.6</p>	<p>Technology / Digital impact</p> <p>Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>Whilst digital developments are a feature of service improvement and delivery within social work all relevant changes reflected within the report have already been considered through relevant governance processes.</p> <p>Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.7</p>	<p>Environmental / Carbon impact</p> <p>Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.8</p>	<p>Communications impact</p> <p>Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.9</p>	<p>Risk impact</p> <p>Is there a risk impact?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?</p> <p>Key risks highlighted within the report are incorporated in relevant risk registers. The report itself is part of a wider framework of reporting which supports the scrutiny of social work services and therefore aids the Council in its duties with respect to the delivery of key statutory functions.</p>
<p>5.10</p>	<p>Armed Forces Covenant Duty</p> <p>Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.</p> <p>Where relevant issues are considered in planning for individual's support,</p>

the service will also continue to consider the benefits of enhanced arrangement for groups of service users. An example of this is within our Restorative Justice Service which has both a veteran's group and has also previously contributed through unpaid work to linked community projects.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes ☐ No ☒

No direct impact though the report provides key evidence that the effective delivery of social work services supports the Council duty. As this is a retrospective report no CRWIA is required

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Chief Social Work Officer
Annual Report
2023 - 2024

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THE CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER FUNCTION

Every local authority must appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) as reflected in Section 46 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994.

The CSWO provides professional leadership, accountability, and governance, for the delivery of social work and social care services, including commissioned services.

The CSWO also provides advice on social work service delivery and on related issues to the local authority Chief Executive, Elected Members, and the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) promoting understanding of the range of social work and social care services, and the complexities involved in delivering statutory responsibilities which require both consideration of need and the management of risk and liberties. The then Scottish Office specifically recognized that the need for the CSWO role was driven by *“the particular responsibilities which fall on social services in that they affect personal lives, individual rights and liberties to an extent that other local authority services do not.”* (Circular: SWSG2/1995 May 1995).

Operationally the CSWO also has a direct remit for decisions on specific statutory matters including in relation to secure accommodation, adoption and welfare guardianship as illustrated below.

A further aspect of the CSWO role is to inform the delivery of wider services which support or impact on social welfare.

The CSWO role within North Lanarkshire is held by the Chief Officer, Children, Families, Justice, and Integrated Services however the CSWO is supported by the Chief Officer, Adult Social Work Services who holds delegated responsibilities with respect to adult social work and social care, deputises in other areas as required and works alongside the CSWO in relation to the other functions of the role.

ANNUAL REPORT

In line with Scottish Government guidance, the CSWO is required to provide an annual report. This report provides an overview of social work service delivery in North Lanarkshire for the period April 2023 to March 2024 and covers the following areas:

- Governance and accountability arrangements, including partnership working and statutory functions
- Service Quality and Performance, including key service improvement activity and challenges impacting on service delivery
- Resources
- Workforce Issues, including workforce planning, training, and development
- Future Priorities – Social work landscape and priorities looking forward to 2024/25

Social Work Services continue to play a critical role in supporting communities in North Lanarkshire and in meeting both national and local priorities to improve outcomes and empower those individuals and families who may face exclusion or a range of adversities. Demand challenges driven by societal factors including the legacy of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, demographic change and health inequalities have continued to impact on social work services over the past year alongside the challenging financial context for the public sector and whilst recruitment challenges have eased in some areas of the service they continue to present substantial challenges in others. This is reflected within the report along with our achievements as staff across the service continue to work with resilience and commitment to achieve the best possible outcomes for those we support.

I would like to record my thanks and pay tribute to all staff involved in the delivery of social work services in North Lanarkshire for their work over the past year I would also like to thank all internal and external partners, carers, families, and communities who have supported us in our work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Gordon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alison Gordon
Chief Social Work Officer

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1. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ARRANGEMENTS

Adult Social Work and Social Care Services are delivered through University Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire (UHSCNL) whilst Children, Family and Justice Services are delivered through the Council's Education and Families Service. Primary reporting and governance arrangements for Adult Social Work are through the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) and its Performance, Finance and Audit Sub-Committee but with local authority oversight and scrutiny also maintained through the Council's Adult Care and Social Work Committee. Reporting and governance of Children and Justice Social Work Services is in turn primarily exercised through the Council's Education, Children and Families Committee with reporting also to other council committee's including Audit and Scrutiny Panel where relevant on specific issues.

Social Work Chief Officers are part of the Council's Corporate Management Team whilst a number of joint arrangements support governance, service delivery and practice alignment across all social work care groups, including regular Social Work Solutions (Business) Meetings, the Social Work Leadership Team, and a Social Work Workforce Group.

Social Work in North Lanarkshire directly employs around 2,800 staff and in collaboration with commissioned services and third Sector partners, we are involved in providing support to around 30,000 individuals and families at any one time, in addition playing a key role in wider partnership and community planning activity.

Partnership working at local level remains fundamental to social work and a key aspect of the CSWO role involves developing and sustaining partnership working and relationships across a range of organisations and structures. In addition to the responsibilities of the CSWO to the Council and UHSCNL, the CSWO holds a key leadership role within several local partnerships, as well as contributing to the wider national social work community, as illustrated below:

1.1 NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL AND NORTH LANARKSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

[The Plan for North Lanarkshire | North Lanarkshire Council](#) sets out the shared priorities of NLC and partners and has a focus on inclusive growth and tackling inequalities.

The plan focuses on:

- improving economic opportunities and outcomes
- supporting all children and young people to realise their full potential
- improving the health and wellbeing of communities
- enhancing participation, capacity and empowerment across our communities and improving North Lanarkshire's resource base

Social Work continues to play a fundamental role in working towards these aims, notably around supporting children and young people to achieve their potential, improving community health and well-being and in supporting and facilitating engagement and participation.

The plan is supported by a five-year [Programme of Work](#), approved in March 2023.

The Programme of Work has seven priorities for delivery:

- Transforming Places – to deliver transformational change across town centres and local communities.
- Invest in North Lanarkshire – Faster delivery of outcomes and investment.
- Sustainable Futures - Focus commitments towards Net Zero Carbon and climate resilience and the associated energy solutions and investments required to make it a reality.
- Resilient People - Deliver whole family support locally, when families need it, in a way that addresses the impacts of poverty and reduces inequality.
- Brighter Futures - Support and improve educational attainment, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and volunteering.

- Digital North Lanarkshire - Develop a skilled digital workforce, promote an innovative, sustainable culture and be the Digital Leader for a transformed North Lanarkshire.
- One Service - Ensure services are delivered, in a streamlined, efficient, and supportive model, with the overall vision of inclusive growth and prosperity for all.

Whilst all services contribute and are supported by change activity across these seven priorities, social work's role is particularly significant within the Resilient People and Brighter Future strands of the programme which have key interdependencies in terms of delivery models with elements of the Digital and One Service programmes. This is reflected in the participation of senior social work managers in the programme boards and the CSWO's role as SRO for Resilient People.

Connections made across the wider range of corporate work programmes, continue to make a meaningful difference to people who use social work services. Examples include employability services, homelessness prevention and community wealth and capacity building with key examples of progress detailed within the relevant sections of this report.

Across the service a key focus remains to promote resilience, encourage and support preventative planning and anticipatory approaches and minimise the risk of crisis and the involvement of the Community and Voluntary Sector continues to be an essential strand of our wider approach, in promoting self-help, independence and resilience.

The **North Lanarkshire Council Equality Strategy 2019 – 2024**, sets out key objectives for success with all council services committed to knowing, understanding, and involving our communities and demonstrating leadership in equalities and human rights. There is recognition that the poverty, disadvantage, and inequalities that exist for some people in North Lanarkshire can be further exacerbated due to specific characteristics. Clearly this is a key area for social work and during this period this has also aligned closely with our work to embed trauma informed practice and systems and the strengthening focus around the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Adult Services have developed a Service Equality Action Plan which details how the service will meet the objectives identified in the Equality Strategy within Adult Health and Social Care. The plan includes equality actions in relation to the implementation of a new social work information system and the refresh of the Engagement and Participation Strategy. A programme of training in relation to good practice in Equality Impact Assessments has been initiated with around 40 senior staff having participated to date whilst the CSWO has taken on the role of Executive Race Champion for the Council.

North Lanarkshire Children's Services Partnership (CSP) is the structure through which partners provide governance, strategic planning, direction, and delivery of shared priorities for children's services in North Lanarkshire. The Children's Service Partnership Board membership includes Elected Members, UHSCNL/NHS Board representation and representation from young people through links with North Lanarkshire Youth Council, and Champion's Board links. There are developed links and cross over with other strategic partnerships such as NL Child Protection Committee and the Tackling Poverty Strategy.

The [North Lanarkshire Children's Services Plan](#) is refreshed every three years and supported through annual reporting: [Annual Report 2023-24](#). Social Work has a key role in all the CSP priorities. The CSWO is lead officer for the CSP and chairs the Improving Children's Services Group which has oversight of the work of task groups delivering on the priorities in the Children's Services Plan that are organised under the foundation of The Promise, Voice, Family, Care Scaffolding and People.

The **Community Justice Partnership**, currently also chaired by the CSWO has responsibility for the multi-agency oversight of Community Justice in North Lanarkshire.

The partnership has continued to benefit from strong collaboration with a wide range of partners including employability services and the NL Alcohol and Drug Partnership. This has supported continued developments in a range of areas including diversion, throughcare, bail supervision and our local Arrest Referral Pilot initiated in April 2023. Commitment from partners has also ensured a holistic response to the needs, examples being 'keep well' clinics for justice service users and a dedicated employability worker Routes to Work. A partnership steering group has also been stood up to support Early Release.

[NL Community Justice Annual Report 2022-23](#) and our new CJOIP: [Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2023 to 2028](#) was informed by significant engagement including with those with lived experience and a Strategic Needs Assessment and sets the framework for our ongoing activity in this area.

North Lanarkshire Partnership (NLP) brings together the major public sector agencies in the area along with Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL) the third sector interface in the area. NLP operates as the overarching framework for partnership working and the priorities for delivery across the partnership are included in The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

The nine Community Boards continue to support community leadership, involvement, and capacity building, with local outcome and improvement plans (LOIP) guiding this work.

Social work services support these local partnership structures. The CSWO continues to have the role of Community Co-ordinator for one of the local boards and the Chief Officer Adult Social Work and Senior Managers for Quality Assurance and Strategy & Performance provide links to the UHSCPNL and its strategic commissioning activity across all Community Boards. Senior Social Work Managers also participate in area-based teams and the sub-groups which support the delivery of the LOIPs (Local Outcome Improvement Plans).

1.2 HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE NORTH LANARKSHIRE

UHSCNL adopted its new [Strategic Commissioning Plan 2023-26](#) from April 2023, setting out key priorities for the next three years with the aim of ensuring that people are robustly supported to live in their own homes and lead independent lives in their communities.

The plan was developed through a collaborative process with people who use Health and Social Care services, partners, the public, and partnership staff. Key priorities include:

- Do the right thing first time
- Increased focus on prevention, early intervention and tackling inequalities by working with communities and people
- Develop and support a workforce for the future
- Improve mental health and wellbeing
- Support people through a whole family approach

Under each priority area, an agreed set of short- and medium-term goals has been developed underpinned by the Programme of Work which sets out in detail the programmes to be progressed. These are updated on an annual basis to ensure we are able to respond to any new or emerging issues. The plan will be implemented over the next three years, with ongoing monitoring to ensure that services continue to meet the needs and goals of local people.

The Annual Performance Report for 2023-24 which will be published later in the year, and this will give further details and achievements of the partnership.

1.3 SUPPORT, CARE, PRACTICE AND STAFF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Coherence in practice and staff governance within social work are maintained through a variety of processes and key forums. In addition, the HSCP's Support Care and Clinical Governance Committee (SCCGC) has met quarterly over the reporting period, currently chaired by the HSCP Medical Director but with the rotational chairing arrangement also involving the CSWO/Chief Officer Adult Social Work. Adult Social Work Governance meetings included a robust programme of assurance and improvement for Adult Social Work Services and feed into the SCCGC framework.

Over the 24/25 a review of the current framework will be undertaken by the professional and operational managers supported by our Quality Assurance team. A programme of work to support assurance, performance and improvement in the service delivery is planned. There is a commitment to ensure that practitioners and managers are supported with linked assurance activity which will include.

- Introduction of self-evaluation for each of the teams
- Audit of key processes including supervision
- Feedback from individuals and carers experience
- Feedback from staff
- Monitoring of regulated services and regulated workforce
- Staff/ individuals and carers safety
- Review of complaints and compliments
- 6 monthly reports on learning and development
- Planned programme of review current policies and procedures

Our In-House Monitoring Framework was approved, and a test of change has been in progress over the reporting period. A full evaluation is pending and, following refinements, will be rolled out across our adults and children's services. The Quality Assurance team have also prioritised the review of our contract monitoring processes to take account of multiple reporting requirements for commissioned services whilst information governance, complaints and Duty of Candour activity also continues to be overseen by our Quality Assurance team with key learning and reflections taken forward.

This work is reflected in the Quality Assurance Annual Report [ADD LINK](#) whilst work over the coming months will further expand on the streamlining and connection of activity to date.

1.4 CARE HOME ASSURANCE

A review of the enhanced clinical and care oversight arrangements for care homes took place during this reporting period. The purpose of this was to ensure continued support for care homes supporting adults and older people and improvements in care and outcomes by building upon the learning from the arrangements implemented during the COVID pandemic.

It has been widely recognised that although we are post pandemic, significant achievements have been made in maximising opportunities for partnership working and the outcome of the review captures the ethos of collaboration, sector expertise, access to healthcare and support for workforce development.

The functions of the refreshed Care Home Assurance and Support Board are to: -

- Ensure assurance and support to care home sector continues in the context of Excellence in Care, including Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), direct support and the embedding of the national IPC manual.
- Oversee whole system support to care homes to improve the health and wellbeing of adults living in these environments, through implementation of My Health, My Care, My Home – the healthcare framework for adults living in care homes, and Health and Social Care Standards in Scotland

- Ensure that a collaborative improvement model is utilised in all developments with care homes
- Ensure systems and processes are in place to share intelligence between agencies to identify and allow support to be provided to care homes at risk.
- Ensure systems and processes are in place to provide immediate response to serious concerns to mitigate risks
- Monitor overall capacity of the sector – identify risks and mitigate where possible
- Ensure contingency plans are in place for the sector and regularly updated.

Two subgroups, the Care Home Governance Group and Care Home Healthcare Framework Implementation Group have also been established. It is envisaged that following an initial gap analysis of the Healthcare Framework these two subgroups will merge with implementation of the Healthcare Framework continuing to be monitored and evaluated.

1.5 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PEOPLE WHO USE SUPPORT SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Engagement and Participation

There has been considerable progress in enhancing participation, capacity, and empowerment across our communities, in line with Ambition Statement 19, in the Plan for North Lanarkshire - Improve engagement with communities and develop their capacity to help themselves. This also a priority the UHSCNL Strategic Commissioning Plan and is critical to ensuring:

- We involve people in the decisions that affect their wellbeing.
- Improvement comes from feedback on the experiences of services and supports.
- Our services and supports continue to be based on what matters to people.
- We have a continued focus on person centred approaches to embed the wider approach to Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE).

During 2023-24 there was an increased focus on these areas has sought to ensure that the voices of supported people, carers and communities were strengthened.



The diagram above depicts the three principal areas of investment that sought to:

- Improve communication and increase connections.
- Increase awareness of what matters to people
- Increase capacity for early intervention and prevention.

UHSCNL Engagement and Participation Strategy Refresh 2024-2027

The Engagement and Participation Strategy has been refreshed to cover 2024-27. The approach to the refresh has engaged stakeholders, representatives of community-based organisations, supported people, carers and communities and representatives from UHSCNL staff.

Strengthening the voice of supported people and unpaid carers.

There have been significant developments to strengthen the voice of supported people through the awarding of a contract, following a tender process, to a consortium bid, headed by North Lanarkshire Disability Forum, alongside Voice of Experience and Lanarkshire Links increasing capacity to include those we need to work harder to reach, for example, people from minority ethnic communities, people from the LGBTQI+ communities and those in more rural communities, including through the recruitment of an Equalities Information Worker in North Lanarkshire Carers Together. This Equalities post augments a similar post that was already in place with Lanarkshire Carers.

Extensive engagement and participation activity was also undertaken to inform the North Lanarkshire Carers' Strategy 2024-2027 with carer feedback has influenced and shaped developments described elsewhere in this work.

Within Children's Services the Voice Task Group supporting the work of the partnership has been strengthened with young people also increasingly involved in planning and commissioning, including having a direct role in the tender for a specific counselling service for care experienced young people and more broadly in decision-making around allocation of funds for community mental health and wellbeing supports. Over two thousand families also participated in a survey which has informed the shaping of whole family supports.

In Justice Services two development workers with lived experience have been employed and have supported consultation activity with those involved with the service including the development of a digital questionnaire which has supported more routine gathering of feedback.

2. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT, QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE

2.1 PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Our formal reporting is presented for a variety of audiences, reflecting the scheme of integration and delegation of services to the North Lanarkshire Integrated Joint Board (IJB) and the governance of services within several partnership arrangements. As reflected above there are mature governance frameworks for the Local Authority, the Health & Social Care Partnership, and the other established partnerships, including the North Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership and the North Lanarkshire Community Justice Partnership (NLCJP). Performance reporting is presented to the various boards, committees, and groups of these organisations on a cyclical basis, covering the key performance indicators for the relevant services and areas of work.

Indicators are in place for core aspects of service, such as access, operational performance, workforce, quality, and outcomes, ensuring that we both monitor and demonstrate how we have met the needs of the community, produced positive outcomes for the supported people and that the work represents best value for the Local Authority. Critically in addition to quantitative data a variety of methods are used to measure impact, outcomes and how people experience our service as reflected throughout this report.

In addition to these internal arrangements, performance and quality is both monitored and regulated by several external bodies, including the Scottish Government, the Scottish Social Services Council, and the Care Inspectorate. All Social Work services provide validated performance and demographic data to the Scottish Government and the various agencies who support Social Work development in Scotland. This data supports the creation of national

indicator sets, such as the Local Government Benchmarking Framework and the Integration Indicators. North Lanarkshire provides annual returns for several national datasets, which can then be used for benchmarking purposes.

2.2 SUPPORT TO UNPAID CARERS

Unpaid carers continue to provide the vast majority of support to people who need it, across North Lanarkshire. Estimates vary as to the number of unpaid carers in our area, but we believe there could be as many as 50,000 or so unpaid carers, with about 13,000 of these being known to services and the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS).

We have a robust carer support infrastructure in place, with three commissioned carer focused organisations:

- North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT)
- Lanarkshire Carers
- Action for Children Young Carers Project

All of whom provide a wide range of carer focused support or information. There is also a broader range of other CVS organisations with a direct, or indirect, role in supporting carers. These, and many other carer focused organisations are part of a wider Carer Support Network (CSN), where caring related topics and issues of common interest can be raised, discussed and actions taken to improve carer experiences.

Alongside ongoing carer support, our focus during 2023-24 was engagement with carers (to augment ongoing day to day carer engagement) to help inform and develop the North Lanarkshire Carer Strategy for 2024-27. Engagement activity, facilitated by the commissioned carer organisations and the wider CSN, meant that a wide range of carers helped to inform and shape the new strategy; offering feedback relating to a range of topics of interest to carers around what was working well, not so well, and suggestions for improvement.

There was recognition through this work, that many carers experienced disappointment or frustration – citing not being listened to, or having to tell their story multiple times, experiencing an inconsistent approach, or poor outcomes. Our intention is to use such instances to inform and drive improvement, through what is, a carer led and carer informed Carer Strategy, to be launched in May 2024.

Conversely, there was also a wide range of examples that demonstrated that when carer support is done well, outcomes can be very positive. Such was the wealth of information provided, that alongside the strategy itself, consideration has been given to publication of some of the positive stories that we heard- to help promote awareness of preventative and anticipatory approaches leading to good outcomes, imaginative and creative use of carer budgets, or the enabling role that assistive technology can play.

2.3 JUSTICE SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Justice Social Work Services have seen demand relating to core statutory responsibilities increase as the justice system continues to address the backlog of COVID impacts with, for example, a 69% increase in hours of unpaid work requirements imposed over the past two years. Alongside this service delivery has been shaped by key priorities set out in both our new Community Justice Outcome and Improvement Plan (2023-2028) and the Scottish Government's Vision for Justice published in February 2022, and its supporting strategy published in June 2022, with an increased focus on areas such as diversion from prosecution and bail supervision. The service continues to promote a holistic approach to working with people with convictions to ensure that in addition to robust risk management, support is offered to address the range of issues, such as health and employment barriers, which can inhibit rehabilitation and inclusion and in turn better lives and safer communities.

2.3.1 COMMUNITY PAYBACK ORDER- INCLUDING UNPAID WORK

The communities of North Lanarkshire have benefited from 92,624 hours of unpaid work delivered by the Restorative Justice Team. This constitutes an increase in activity of just over 20% since the last reporting year. Of note, service activity in this area has risen by 54% over the last 2 years. Demand continues to grow and during the period of this report 133,941 hours were imposed by Courts in relation to Unpaid Work and Other Activity, a 69% increase in the hours imposed in this regard over the last 2 years.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of some unpaid work activities. More detail on specific activity is referenced in the Community Payback Annual Report.

The bike recycling workshop refurbished bikes which are donated by individuals or have been discarded in local recycling centres. The bikes are repaired to a gold standard and are distributed to local community groups, schools and individuals. This helps to maximise opportunities for better health and wellbeing and provides greater transportation access. Service users within the workshop also undertake bike repair for individuals who are unable to afford the cost of this. Due to the success of this workshop, a mobile bike recycling trailer has been purchased and this enables the provision of bike maintenance and repair within the local communities. In total 8,746 hours of unpaid work were completed through this initiative in 2023/24. This represents a significant increase in activity over the last 2 years when 1,075 hours were completed in 2021/2022, and 6,213 hours were completed in 2022/2023.

The woodwork workshop teaches joinery skills which enables bespoke items to be made from reclaimed wood pallets which were destined for landfill. Partnership working with family learning centres, nurseries, schools and communities have allowed for unpaid work service users to be involved in the construction of outdoor classrooms, and play equipment in the form of trucks, trains, cars. This approach has helped to promote outdoor play for children throughout our community.

Squad placements have benefitted the local communities through activities such as landscaping. In total 54 squad have been completed within North Lanarkshire. These range from one to two-day pieces of work to larger projects with a duration of four to six months.

The home improvement workshop provides opportunities for services users to gain experience in decorating, painting, and plastering. Once the individuals are proficient in these disciplines, they utilise the skills on projects within the local community.

In partnership with local housing colleagues and school staff the Restorative Justice unpaid work team has also facilitated learning events at our community allotments in Townhead, Clydeside, and in Wishaw. These events enable children and people in the local community to sow seeds and learn about different growing techniques. Participants can take away some of the produce and can be invited back later in the year to experience the harvest taking place. This project has allowed for a creative teaching space which helps individuals to develop new skills which they can contribute to the benefit of the local community.

2.3.2 OTHER ACTIVITY

The availability of Scottish Government Covid-19 recovery funding has enabled the continued commissioning of Third Sector colleagues to assist in the delivery of 'other activity' programmes. Co-production of this aspect of Community Payback Orders includes collaboration between Justice Services and a variety of organisations including the Wise Group, Creative Change Collective, SACRO, Reeltime Music and Ten for Zen.

In addition to the above commissioned third sector organisations, Justice Services provides a range of opportunities for service users to engage in Other Activity. The e-learning workbook resource pack provides blended digital learning which can be completed in partnership with staff. The Centre for Clinical Interventions as well as NHS Mental Health Foundation Trust resources are also utilised to complete workbooks in the following:

- Anxiety, Self-Care, Social Anxiety, Bereavement, PTSD, Self-harm, Sleeping Problems, Depression and Low Mood, Obsessions/ Compulsions and Panic.
- Alcohol and You, Cannabis and You, Cocaine, Gambling, Anger Management and Procrastination.
- Goal Setting, Self-Development, Writing applications and Interview techniques.

2.3.3 DIVERSION FROM PROSECUTION

In partnership with Police Scotland, a bespoke Diversion from Prosecution awareness training session was delivered by Justice Services in December 2023. This session was delivered at Jackton Police College to Inspectors in Lanarkshire. Following this event, it was identified that Police Sergeants would also benefit from this training. Consequently, a further five training sessions were delivered in March 2024. It is envisaged that this awareness raising will result in a further increase in people being diverted from the justice system through Diversion from Prosecution.

Within the reporting period of 2023–2024, 242 individuals were diverted from formal justice systems by being involved in the Diversion from Prosecution Scheme. This is a 38.29% increase from the previous year's figures of 175.

2.3.4 OFFENCE FOCUSED WORK

Offence focused intervention continues to be central to the delivery of Justice Social Work services, regardless of whether that engagement is mandated through Community Payback Order, Statutory Licence, Structured Deferment or Diversion from Prosecution. This is delivered through a trauma informed approach, considering wellbeing and individual responsivity and supporting others to recognise the links between wellbeing and risk whilst person-centred case management plans are informed by LSCMI, other relevant accredited risk assessment tools, the service user's views, and professional judgement.

Offence focussed interventions remain a priority area of work and a crucial element of supervision, particularly for those convicted of sexual offending, physical violence, and intimate partner violence. Such interventions are delivered by social work case managers as well as pathways into a dedicated programmes which offer trauma informed therapeutic interventions to individuals convicted of domestic abuse and sexual harm.

Increasing accessibility to offence focussed interventions is also a priority area in our Prison Based Social Work (PBSW) team based in HMP Shotts. During this period PBSW staff successfully cleared the Programme Case Management Board waiting list of 102 individuals in the establishment who did not have a risk assessment and were awaiting access to an intervention programme. This also enabled the Risk Management Team to make informed decisions about individuals who could be considered for progression. Through collaboration with Scottish Prison Service (SPS) staff, a streamlined system has been implemented to ensure that all individuals are risk assessed within the first five months of entry into HMP Shotts and ahead of their first Integrated Case Management Meeting (ICM).

In addition to offence related work Justice Social Work support individuals in areas such as education, employment, health, leisure, housing and financial needs. The Justice Outcome Star is employed to identify the service user's priority areas of need, and to support measure progress and outcomes.

2.3.5 MOVING FORWARD TO CHANGE (MF2C)

NLC Justice Services have been one of the pilot areas for the new Scottish Government MF2C programme which has been designed to supersede the MFMC (Moving Forward Making Changes) programme.

This programme is an intensive cognitive behavioural therapy intervention for men over the age of 18 who have committed sexual offences. The programme seeks to assist participants in addressing their offending and reduce their risk of reoffending as part of a Court Order or release Licence. The new programme has been adapted to incorporate up to date literature, can be delivered in Prison based establishments as well as the community. The Justice Programme Service is currently maintaining delivery of the MF:MC programme to relevant service users, whilst also delivering the pilot MF2C programme. In time the service will transition to increasing MF2C delivery while reducing and phasing out MF:MC delivery.

The pilot has been delivered on a 2:1 basis with a small group of service users and with relative success in relation to low reoffending rates. The pilot has been considered as part of the wider evaluation by Scottish Government and a decision reached that full implementation of the new programme will begin throughout 2024-25.

2.3.6 WOMEN'S COMMUNITY JUSTICE SERVICE (WCJS) AND BAIL SUPERVISION

The Women's Community Justice Service (WCJS) was established in 2014 in response to the Commission on Women Offenders by Dame Elish Angiolini. The service works with women who are involved in the justice system. The majority of the service users are subject to Community Payback Orders with requirements of supervision and/or unpaid work. Additionally, the service work with women subject to parole board licences, those subject to bail supervision and also alternatives to prosecution.

A key development in the WCJS, has been the recruitment of a Justice Support Worker to support women who are made subject to Bail Supervision. Proactive engagement has taken place with the Pan-Lanarkshire Court Social Work Team to agree a pathway for early identification of these cases and to ensure timeous communication with the WCJS. This supports the national vision for Justice to reduce the number of women who experience custody.

A partnership approach is adopted to plan, intervene/support and review service users' needs and risks. This assists to build on strengths and work towards achieving their goals and aspirations. With regards to unpaid work the female specific service allows for female only unpaid work activities.

Most of the women using the service have experienced trauma and much of the work involves supporting them with their emotional and mental health needs. Multi agency partnership working with Children and Families, Shine Women's Mentoring Service, Domestic Abuse and Addiction Services is crucial to support this service user group. Additionally, the Women's Community Justice Service have commissioned a new intervention resource entitled 'Managing Emotions and Relationships'. This approach enables staff to utilise Cognitive Behaviour Therapy to facilitate structured conversations that help Women to develop better coping strategies.

2.3.7 NEW DEVELOPMENTS: ENHANCEMENT OF VOLUNTARY THROUGH-CARE AND DRUG AND ALCOHOL SOLUTIONS COURT

Voluntary Throughcare

Through the local Community Justice Partnership employability subgroup, additional funding was secured to extend the offer of our current voluntary throughcare service beyond HMP Addiewell. As a result, a Justice Support Worker was recruited and the Bridges and Beyond initiative now offers person centred outreach support to individuals serving a short-term sentence in various prisons across central Scotland.

The Bridges and Beyond service has supported 53 service users in 2023-24. The service aims to remove barriers to employment and resettlement for those serving short term prison sentences is crucial in helping to reintegrate individuals into the community and reduce the prison population.

Drug and Alcohol Solutions Court

In September 2023, NLC Justice Services recruited two Justice Support Workers funded by the North Lanarkshire Drug & Alcohol Partnership (NLADP) to support the introduction of a Lanarkshire wide Drug & Alcohol Solutions Court. This has been instigated as a 12-month test for change. The initiative is based at Hamilton Sherrif Court and adopts a public health approach to working with people who are impacted by drug and, or alcohol, and who are in conflict with the law. The age range for eligibility is 35-55, and consideration is being given to extending this to people aged between 21-55.

Despite the early stages of the test for change, outcome star data indicates that all service users currently engaged in Structured Deferred Sentence through the new test for change have reported progress across multiple life domains. Service user feedback indicates that those individuals who have previously breached more stringent orders such as Drug Treatment and Testing Order, find the flexibility and assertive outreach dimension to the support as well as the trauma informed approach within court more effective.

2.3.8 THROUGH CARE: ARREST REFERRAL

An Arrest Referral test for change has continued to operate in North Lanarkshire's Police Custody Suites. Importantly this service is delivered by people with lived experience of the justice system offering an opportunity for partnership working with individual being held in custody with a focus on early intervention, direct and practical support, and a pathway for referral to appropriate agencies. This test for change is being funded by the NLADP and will be independently reviewed.

2.4 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

Children and families social work, working closely with our partners, has continued over this period to focus on embedding a culture that enables practice that is rights-based, trauma informed and built on relationships. To promote this, we developed further training in Safe and Together where domestic abuse is a concern and continued to implement the Contextual Safeguarding approach where young people are at risk in the community. Agreement was also secured to begin the implementation of Signs of Safety. Taken together, these complimentary approaches support staff practise in ways that build relationships with children, young people, and their families in need of support and protection by building on strengths. Crucially these approaches also form a key part of our commitment to keep The Promise by finding creative ways of supporting children remain cared for and loved in their families, reducing the need for crisis support or alternative care. We were therefore pleased that the Joint Inspection of Services for Children at risk of harm found our impact on children was *Very Good* as a result of children's experience of nurturing relationships to keep them safe (see section 2.4.3 for more detail).



2.4.1 THE BALANCE OF CARE

Our balance of care data outlined in the table shows that overall, the number of children in care has remained stable from 2020-2024. However, this needs to be seen in the context of a 20% increase in children referred to the service over the same period and within this a significant 44% increase in child protection referrals and the higher number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children now supported (55 and increasing) having arrived through the now mandatory National Transfer Scheme (NTS) or presenting directly from the community. In this context the maintenance of a stable position reflects the use of strengths-based approaches outlined above, finding solutions for children through family group decision making and a strategic approach to investment in family support through funds such as the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Whole Family Wellbeing Fund. Positively, we have also continued to reduce our use of out of authority foster placements which means more children have remained in North Lanarkshire close to their families and communities.

Placement type	Number as of 31 March 2020	Number as of 31 March 2021	Number as of 31 March 2022	Number as of 31 March 2023	Number as of 31 March 2024
Foster NLC	100	112	94	112	109
Foster Care (Independent)	67	61	53	51	47
Home Supervision	298	227	188	205	196
Formal Kinship Care	355	321	307	325	358
Informal Kinship Care	153	170	183	191	180
Residential (NLC)	28	27	27	31	32
Residential (Independent)	13	11	11	9	7
Secure*	0	2	6	7	5
Continuing Care	45	53	73	74	77

*number of young people spending time in any secure accommodation during full year.

Notwithstanding this, there are some significant pressures. The numbers of young people in need of our residential care or secure care has increased. In large part this is due to an increase in young people being at risk of violence in the community and/or criminal and sexual exploitation. These risks to young people compounded pressures and difficulties facing families. Similar trends are seen elsewhere in the UK (Jay, 2024). Our children's houses therefore continued to look after young people with a high level of complex needs. Following a 59% reduction in missing episodes

over the previous 3 years, the number increased in 2023-24 with young people often facing strong 'pull factors' linked to criminal exploitation and peer relationships. We continued to promote and invest in approaches such as Contextual Safeguarding (see section 3.6.3), and intensive family support (see section 2.4.4) to address these concerns.

2.4.2 MOVING ON: SUPPORTING CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE

As part of our relationship-based approach, we have focused on supporting young people make a positive transition from care into independence. The table above illustrates a 71% increase in the number of young people in continuing care (remaining in the care placement after reaching the age of 18) so they can leave care when ready and further to our investment in after care services we have seen a 107% increase in the number of young people receiving support – 252 18–26-year-olds as of 31 March 2024.

Much of this support is coordinated by the Care Experienced Young Persons Operations Group comprising several partners and care experienced young people as illustrated below:



A Housing Operations subgroup looks at the housing needs, resources to support preparation and sustainability and matching of young people to available properties. Through coordinated support there was a noted improvement in care experienced young people sustaining tenancies, with over 100 young people sustaining their tenancy long term. This was supported by partnership working with housing colleagues and the Tackling Poverty Team to quickly identify any debt and budget management issues that may have impacted on young people sustaining a tenancy and ensure their rights to financial support were in place.

A dedicated and coproduced counselling service, the Exchange Counselling Project, was established and now operates from our Aftercare Hub 5 days a week as well as reaching out to young people as required. In 2023-24, the service worked intensively with 42 young people, with 78% of young people reporting improved wellbeing on finishing counselling. Referrals indicated anxiety, family relationships/ home issues, violence and abuse, and bereavement were the main reasons for presentation.

Following a review of the unmet health needs of care leavers, NHS Lanarkshire agreed funding for two Throughcare and Aftercare Nursing posts to deliver front line health support to care leavers and undertake an analysis of the challenges and barriers faced by care experienced young people accessing adult services. One of the nurses started in November 2023 and was working with 28 care leavers by March 2024. From the outset, it was apparent that this support has made a significant difference in enabling care experienced young people to exercise their rights to appropriate health care.

Care leavers told us that they would like information about their rights and entitlement to support and this should be accessible in the one place. Given the preference of young people to communicate and access information digitally, an

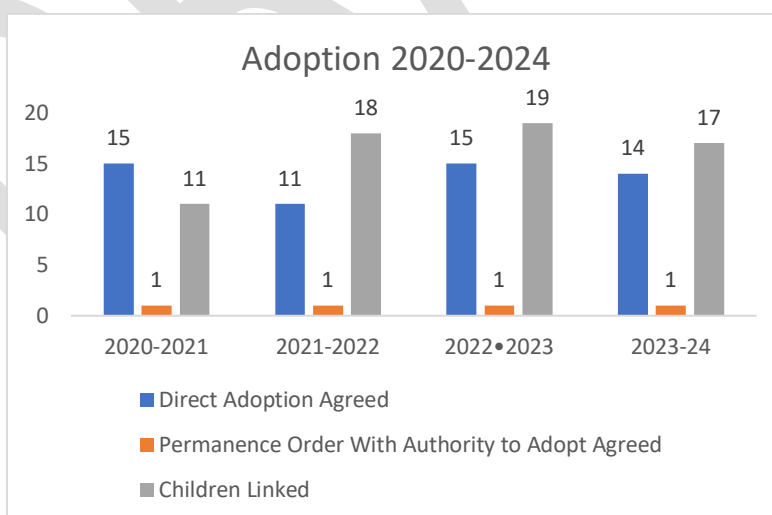
aftercare website was developed in partnership with a group of care experienced young people and care leavers. Aftercare North Lanarkshire went live in March 2024 and can be accessed via the QR code below.



2.4.3 A LOVING HOME: ADOPTION, FOSTERING & KINSHIP CARE

The Children's Carers Service provides support to kinship carers, supported carers of young adults, as well as to adopters and foster carers to achieve loving homes for children and young people into adulthood. Despite a reduction of the overall number of carers, we have been able to place more children in North Lanarkshire thanks to the commitment and flexibility of our carers supported by our carers team.

Recruitment therefore continues to be a high priority. As can be seen from the table below, interest in fostering or adoption has remained static post-Covid and the numbers of potential carers deciding to progress to an assessment has not increased. Positively, however, 2023-24 saw an increase in fostering approvals on the previous year. This was an indicator of the increased focus on recruitment through community-based initiatives. Adoption approvals have also increased, representing the continued interest and enquiries for adoption which has now been consistent for several years. As illustrated in the table below, this means that we are able to match children in need of adoption to adoptive parents, mostly within North Lanarkshire.

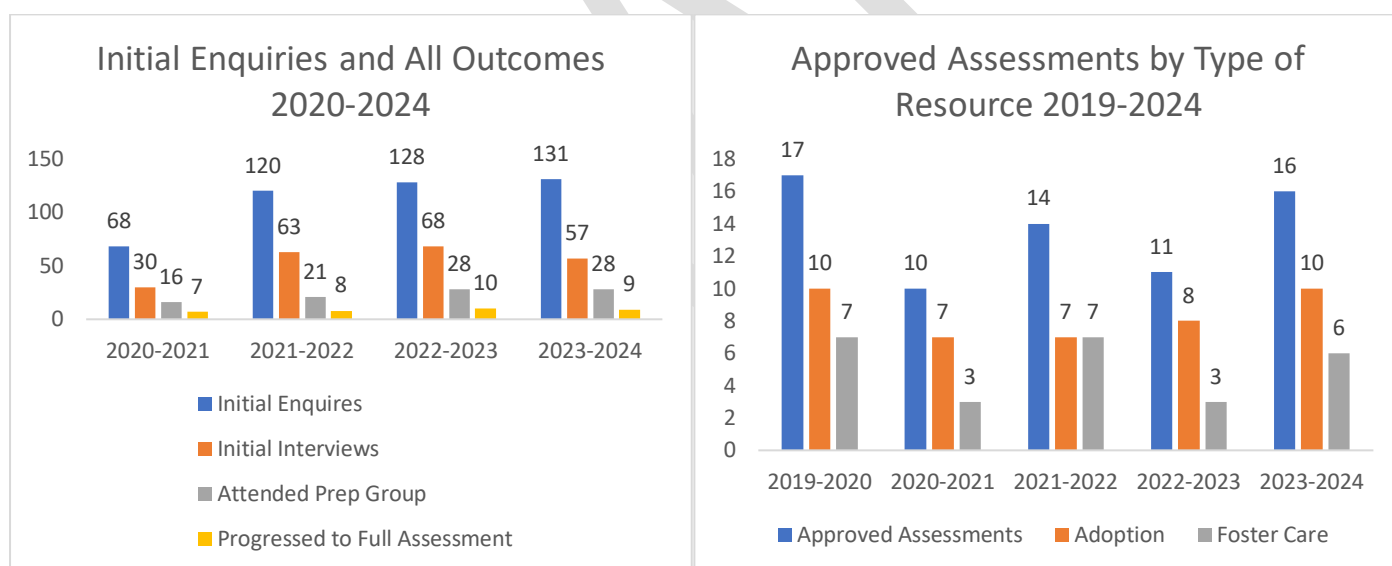


The recruitment strategy group developed an action plan to widen recruitment opportunities focussing on digital promotion and increased presence within local communities. This included recruitment stands within hospitals and local community events, on-line drop-in sessions for targeted staff groups within North Lanarkshire, and mail drops in local communities. These were in addition to the bi-annual radio and media campaigns.

As well as recruitment, retention of existing carers has been a priority for the service. The training and support programme for carers has therefore been enhanced to include adopters and kinship carers. Early indications are this has been successful in increasing numbers of participants and feedback has been positive about the added value to carers understanding of each other's roles and the needs of the children within their care. To support carer wellbeing, sessions in mindfulness and mindful yoga were provided along with a second therapeutic support group for adopters and permanent carers.

An increase and backdating of fostering allowances (in line with the Scottish recommended allowance) and fees (10% uplift) recognised the value North Lanarkshire places on its foster care resources. Similarly, an increase and backdating of kinship allowances in line with the Scottish recommended allowance recognised the valuable and important role kinship carers have.

There continues to be an increase in children being placed with kinship carers. Therefore, there is a higher demand for support for kinship carers from the kinship team. Over the last year support for kinship carers has developed and over and above the allowances paid, the service provided direct support to 190 kinship carers. Kinship support groups also took place on a fortnightly basis across North Lanarkshire and individual therapeutic and groupwork sessions were also introduced involving mindfulness and yoga which were well attended by kinship carers at the children's carers centre. The number of children formally looked after in kinship care has increased over the past three years and in response, we have recruited additional support workers to help carers manage the complexity and emotional demands of their caring role. This will increase our capacity for practical and emotional support going forward. Our Virtual School has also prioritised support to kinship families including in school holiday periods.





When children need care, the priority continues to be to secure a foster family where brothers and sisters remain together. In the last year, five of the eight groups of brother and sisters that required a fostering home, were placed together. The reasons for not keeping brothers and sisters together were due to individual children's needs and, for one family, difficulty finding carers to keep four brothers/sisters together. However, in this situation, North Lanarkshire carers have actively promoted their relationships. Updated permanence planning training for staff and guidance for independent chairs emphasised the priority in considering brother and sister relationships.

In response to feedback from our inspection from January 2023 specific life story training by was also commissioned and delivered. Another area identified for improvement including through inspections of registered services was linked to risk assessments. As a result, the risk assessments for placement requests and specific incidents were reviewed and updated and is now established in practice.

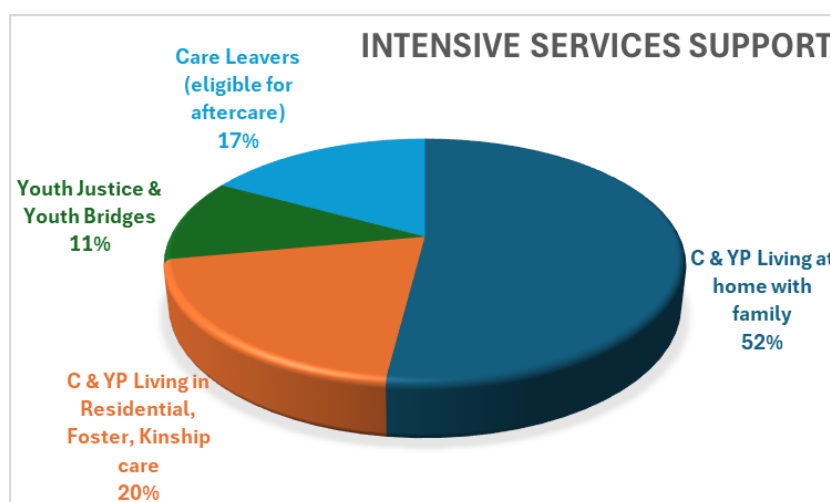
2.4.4 INTENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT

Community Alternatives & Families First

Our Intensive Social Work Services Team continue to successfully deliver whole family support 7 days a week where families need a high level of support to prevent a child or young person entering care or to sustain a care placement.

The service uses a range of materials to support interventions, such as structured parenting programmes and thematic interventions. Over 2023-24, a review was undertaken of the core programmes and interventions used to support children, young people, and their parents to ensure continuity and alignment with the supports available across the partnership. To support the workforce, staff training and development sessions were undertaken in partnership with health, early years and children's house staff focusing on the Solihull approach to parenting, Assessment of Care Toolkit, Infant Mental Health Indicator set in addition to training in Contextual Safeguarding and Safe and Together. This enhanced the individual and groupwork support provided through the service and with partner agencies. The service also delivered eleven thematic workshops to social work staff.

Intensive Services work with around 450 children, young people, and their families at any given time. Over 2023-24 52% of the children and young people supported were living at home with their family; 20% were supported in a residential, foster or a kinship care placement; 17% of the young people supported were care leavers needing a high level of emotional and practical support and 11% were young people in the community subject to Structured Deferred Sentence or Diversion from Prosecution or were supported through Youth Bridges whilst detained in Polmont YOI for a period and through their transition back to the community.

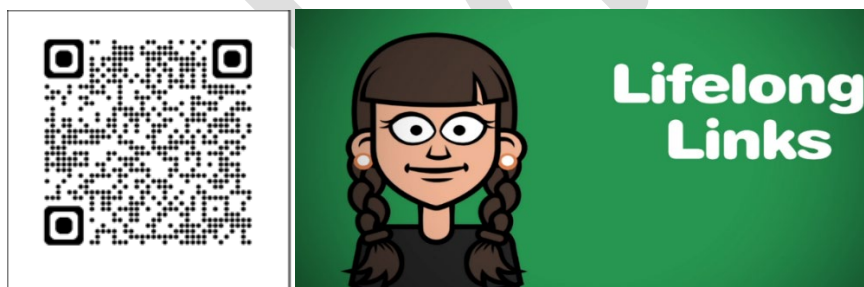


Weekend support is a crucial feature of our approach to prevent crises or a child coming into care. On average the service supported 28 individuals and families each weekend on a planned basis. The service also worked closely with the Social Work Emergency Service (SWES) to respond to emerging care, protection, and support needs out of office hours.

In recognition of the additional challenges experienced by families over the school holiday periods and to offer positive opportunities during the Easter and summer holidays, the service delivered individual support to families and daily structured activities in the local community for younger children, attracting up to 40 participants and family-based day trips with around 45 participants. There were a range of activities arranged for teenagers with between 6-10 participants in attendance at each and one weekend activity camp. All activities and trips received positive feedback from the participants.

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and Lifelong Links

The FGDM and Lifelong Links Service are an integral part of Intensive Services as part of our commitment to build on family assets, promote and maintain important relationships. The team practice from a rights respecting and strengths-based approach to support children remain in their family through listening and supporting families to develop a family plan to sustain family care. The Lifelong links service has now been operational for nearly two years, supporting young people make sense of their care journey and support reconnection for those who have lost connection to important people in their life. The QR code below links to an animation that explains more about Lifelong Links and a young person's experience of the service.



Referrals to FGDM and Lifelong Links have remained consistent over the past two years.

Year	Number of FGDM Referrals	Number of Lifelong Links Referrals
2021-22	115	N/A
2022-23	171	14 (partial year)
2023-24	172	16

Of the referrals received for FGDM during 2023-24, 70 were successfully progressed to family meetings where a family plan was devised, and 28 referrals progressed to a significant piece of work being concluded with the family without a family meeting.

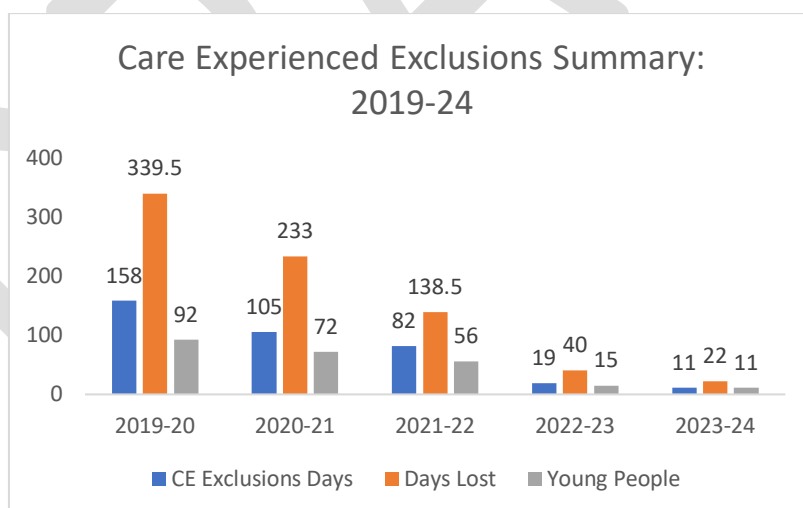
Lifelong Links is long term work that takes a trauma informed approach going at the pace of the young person as they come to understand their life story and consider who they want to reconnect with and how. Up until end of March 2024, 4 connections and 14 lifelong connections have been established with young people.

A Right to an Education

Our Virtual School, which is an integrated service comprising social work and education staff, has a focus on inclusion, providing bespoke packages of support based on a child's needs, strengths, interests, and future career aspirations.

For young people who are at significant risk of leaving school without formal qualifications, individual teaching input is provided. Supported by curricular leads, this session Virtual School teachers were able to extend the range of subject areas they could support young people to achieve in beyond English and Mathematics. National qualifications have been achieved in History, Modern Studies, Media, People in Society, Hospitality and PE. In session 2023-24 a total of 87 National 3 and 4 level qualifications were achieved by 27 young people working individually with Virtual School teachers: 93% achieved a qualification in English and 93% achieved a qualification in Maths. 63% achieved three or more national qualifications, 37% achieved four or more and 19% achieved five or more.

In addition, ongoing partnership work across our schools and wider services to support care experienced learners and reduce school exclusions continues to move forward positively with significant improvements recorded. For example, over the past five school sessions, exclusions of care experienced learners have reduced overall by 93% (158 to 11), learning days lost reduced by 93.5% (339.5 to 22) and the number of care experienced learners receiving an exclusion reduced by 88% (92 to 11). This is an area of work we continue to prioritize in line with our commitment to fulfilling the ambitions of The Promise.



2.4.5 YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

At 13.0 per 1000, the proportion of children referred to the Children's Reporter (SCRA) locally on offence grounds has increased and remained higher than the national average. In parallel the number of referrals for Early and Effective Intervention have decreased by 17%. In response to this and feedback from young people during a service review, plans are already in place to promote EEI as an effective alternative to referrals to SCRA. During the year we launched our new EEI youth work service, The Compass Project, with the aim of promoting rights and relationships over behavioural responses. The service delivers group work and bespoke individual support and a route into preventative

universal offers (such as DoFE) as part of a prevention model. This project launched in January 2024 and already 5 young people have gained outdoor learning awards and were linked into universal support and youth work programmes.

Between January 2023 and January 2024, North Lanarkshire also participated in a pilot with SCRA and South Lanarkshire Council to improve the experiences and outcomes for children referred to hearings on offence grounds by increasing their understanding of their rights, improving relationships, and ensuring supervision orders are tailored to the plan of support. A dedicated speech and language service was offered to provide advice to social workers and families and, where appropriate, direct support to young people to address unmet need and help them express their views in hearings:

'I like working with you. After I work with you my brain feels less fuzzy'

The pilot was evaluated by the University of West of Scotland, and initial findings have highlighted the impact of the focus on relationships. The researchers found that support workers roles went beyond offence-focused interventions to encompass a comprehensive family support approach. This included accompanying young people to the hearings, providing practical advice, facilitating access to education or employment opportunities, and most importantly building trusting relationships that help understand the young person's perspective better. This perspective was supported by young people on the project who discussed the importance of the relationship-based practice that they engaged in which helped build relationships with their own families, communities, and education.

Youth Bridges has continued to provide support to young people subject to diversion from prosecutions and structured deferred sentences and to young people under 21 subject to remand/ custody in Polmont YOI and through their transition back to the community. The number of under 18s from North Lanarkshire continued to decline with only 2 young people under 18 being remanded to Polmont YOI over the year. One young person was remanded to secure care. This is in line with the Scottish Government's to end remand to Polmont for those under 18 in 2024.

	01/04/23-30/06/23	01/07/23-30/09/23	01/10/23-31/12/23	01/01/24-31/03/24
Young People Supported	37	43	43	42
New admissions Polmont YOI	8	7	11	7
Diversion/ Structured Deferred Sentence	9	7	9	13
Ongoing Support	20	27	23	2

2.4.6 CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

There was an increase in requests for assistance to the service for children and young people with complex needs, particularly around young people experiencing neurodiversity. Across the year, 211 had access to an individual budget. As a part of a wider service evaluation, we found that budgets alleviated stress for families and improved outcomes, but that staff wanted to feel more confident in this area of work. The service has therefore strengthened its central support to staff working with this group of children and young people to improve assessment and planning. Alongside this we also used grant funding to invest in family support for children with additional support needs, working in an integrated way across Social Work, Health, and Education. Improving the experiences and outcomes for this group of children remains a key priority and further work in this area is planned over the coming year.

2.5 ADULT SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

In January 2024, a whole system project of work (Back-to-Basics), which aims to support individuals differently, commenced. Back to Basics is an overarching approach, which comprises a range of discrete and inter-related

programmes, projects and activities that support our wider approach across the whole system to ensure that when people contact services, the response is quick and effective, with a focus on helping people to help themselves first.

The overall ambition of the project is to have a system that is streamlined, minimises the risk of repeat actions for people and makes best use of resources. This will ensure that we are offering people the right support, at the right time and so increasing their quality of life, as well as increasing the quality of experience for staff in terms of work satisfaction.

Access Social Work continues to be the initial point where many people first come into contact with our service. Pressures around Access, like other teams, continues to be grow. There is a high volume of requests for support which could better be met by resources out with statutory services. As part of the Back to Basics approach this work will be a focus of our development and improvements in the coming months.

2.6 EARLY AND PREVENTATIVE INTERVENTIONS – RIGHT SUPPORT, RIGHT TIME

Self-directed support, Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and Getting It Right for Everyone (GIRFE) as well as the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 all emphasise the importance of choice and control early interventions and preventative approaches. Our approach across 2023-24 sought to embrace these principles to ensure that people who required our support experienced responses in line with these aspirations.

2.6.1 GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERYONE (GIRFE)

Getting it right for everyone (GIRFE) is a Scottish Government led multi-agency approach to Health and Social Care support and services. Building on existing best practice and aligning with the GIRFEC approach within children's services it aims to provide a national framework to deliver Health and Social Care services that support person centred outcomes for everyone throughout their adult lives. GIRFE is focused on providing a more personalised way to access help and support at the time when people need it. It is aimed at placing the person at the centre of all decision making that affects them, with a joined-up consistent and multi-disciplinary approach.

UHSCNL is one of 10 place-based pathfinders with the progression of this work supported by the Scottish Government's GIRFE Design School. Our focus is on Frailty and Older People with the pathfinder linking to a range of local as well as national aspirations, policies and strategies including The Plan for North Lanarkshire, the Health & Social Care North Lanarkshire Strategic Commissioning Plan and the Strategy for Preventing and Managing Frailty. Learning from GIRFE work locally and nationally will inform future policy and practice across the authority.

Nationally, GIRFE work has reached the point where 16 prototypes are currently being tested, with North Lanarkshire focusing on the following areas: ageing well, personal networks, accessible and usable information, peer support and Community Hubs. A process of co-production with both people who live and use services in North Lanarkshire and Health and Social Care staff is underway, with the consultation and co-design process having involved over 600 people to date. Active testing of the GIRFE prototypes is now underway to enable the approach to be more widely interpreted and implemented both locally and nationally.

2.6.2 MAKING LIFE EASIER

Disability Information Officers have been active in the community over the past year, promoting our Making Life Easier, web-based service and supporting individuals to use the site and undertake self-assessments.

The service also developed telephone assessments to help assessing staff during clinics/assessments. In addition, the service invested time in work with ADL Smart care working on a new and improved website and life curve and reviewing the content of the service system.

2.6.3 ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TEAM

The assistive technology team have continued to work across social work and the partnership to improve quality, delivery, and safety in assessment and care planning aiming to identify and achieve outcomes with people supported by the service in the least invasive of ways. The team's main ambition is that all individuals working for UHSCNL consider assistive technology as a necessary tool to enhance and safeguard wellbeing and making sure the most vulnerable people have the skills, connectivity, and devices to participate in a digital nation. There is also focus on reducing carer stress and empowering individuals, supporting independence and on reducing isolation whilst the team can also offer solutions which complement other services whilst mitigating some of the demand on them.

Across 2023-24 1,081 people were referred to the team. 36% of people accessing the service were over 80 years of age, 38% between 61-80. There were 1,005 assessments of need and 267 assistive technology flat visits. There continues to be upward trend for all referrals, assessments undertaken, and equipment provided.



The assistive technology flat has been further developed and showcases an extensive range of council provided assistive technology as well as technology which can be purchased privately. Funding for the flat derived from housing budgets 2023-24. This will not continue for 2024-25 and an alternative source of funding will be sought.

2.6.4 COMMUNITY ALARMS

As of 31 March 2024, Community Alarm Service supported approximately 7,700 people with 6,150 individuals supported in individual homes and a further 1,550 people in housing with support accommodation. The community alarm service also supports around 1,000 pieces of assistive technology programmed through the alarm receiving centre, with equipment ranging from door contacts to hard-wired smoke detectors for individuals with a cognitive impairment. Response Advisors also provide support to out-of-hours Home Support and takes social work emergency service calls from 01.30am. The average call volume each month received within Community Alarm is around 48,000 with around 2,180 of these leading to a visit from a Community Alarm Home Support worker (HSW) for face-to-face support to be provided.

The service's current alarm receiving centre 'Tunstall' servers had been identified as becoming obsolete/end of life by colleagues from Infrastructure resulting in the procurement of a 'Software as a Service' (SAAS) solution as we transitioned to the new 'Alarm Receiving Centre' (ARC). As all UK telephone lines are being migrated to digital it is also essential that we move to a fully digital community alarm system for both the devices and the ARC and to support this Analogue to Digital Board meets every 8 weeks to have oversight of the ongoing works being undertaken to transition the Community Alarm Service to a fully Digital solution. Replacement of these analogue alarms commenced in January 2023 and to date 3,000 units have been purchased and replaced. A further 1,000 units are currently being procured for a planned installation by the end of September 2024.

Staffing levels within the Community Alarm service have remained largely unchanged since the service was established and a priority over the next period is to review this in the light of both digital system developments, high call levels and the diversity of needs supported by the service.

2.6.5 EQUIPMENT & ADAPTATION SERVICE (EAS)

The service has been internally reviewed and evaluated over the last year with changes informed both by scrutiny of key processes and feedback from both Health and Social Care staff and service users. Importantly the service has cleared all outstanding waiting lists and is progressing a proactive service delivery approach to facilitate delivery by priority, helping avoid hospital admission and facilitating timely discharges.

The service has also procured a new equipment ordering system which has assisted staff to deal with the demand on service in a more streamlined way aiding improved communication and response times. The service can now record and report more accurate performance information whilst qualitative data on how equipment delivered by the service has impacted on people has been collated through a survey. Core staffing has been enhanced through recruitment to additional posts and training.

Looking ahead, the service is seeking to procure recycling equipment to ensure appropriate standard are met, increase recycling time and rates within the service, and to reduce waste whilst there is ongoing work with Enterprise and Communities colleagues to improve adaptation processes.

2.6.6 INTEGRATED DAY SERVICES (IDS)

Integrated Day Services (IDS) for older adults have continued to support people with complex support needs to safely live in their own homes, often preventing admissions to hospital. Support that the service provides covers the six North Lanarkshire localities. During Covid there were changes with IDS Nursing staff being redeployed to older adult community mental health teams and these changes have remained apart from one locality. This will be addressed through the current service review to agree a service model fit for purpose post covid, ensuring improved supports for older adults in North Lanarkshire aligned to the Dementia Strategy.

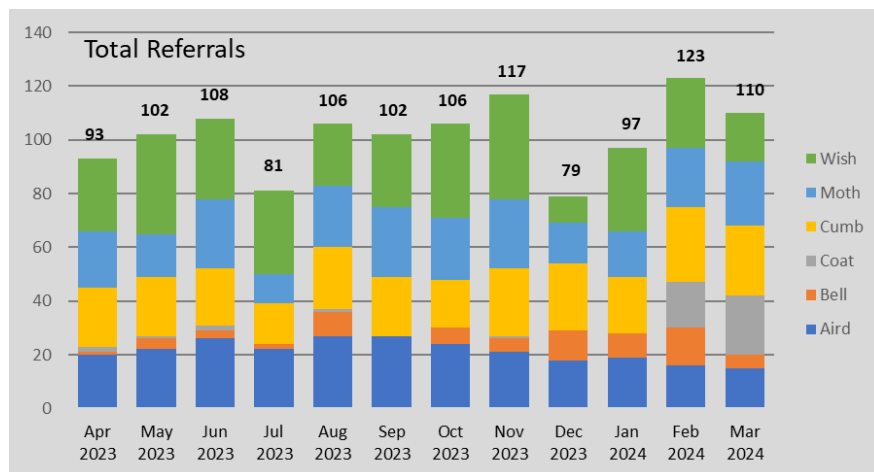
The IDS outreach via community groups continues in each locality, and these are well attended however transport and community venues can be a constraint and locality link workers continue to work with local agencies to address this and overcome any barriers to accessing this support. This is an alternative low-level support for older adults whereby the fuller service is for people more advanced in their dementia journey. It is noted across North Lanarkshire that dependency levels and complexity of need of people living in the community and needing support from IDS has increased.

IDS staff continue to provide high levels of support to people known to the service as well as to unpaid carers and continue to stay committed, focused, and passionate about the positive contribution IDS has to older adults living in North Lanarkshire.

2.6.7 HOME ASSESSMENT TEAM (HAT)

North Lanarkshire's Home Assessment Team (HAT) is a multi-disciplinary Social Work, Health and Social Care resource which applies a whole system approach to planning and preparation for hospital discharge and admission avoidance by facilitating both assessment and intervention within each person's own home. During the reporting period 1,224 patients have been referred to HAT and supported to return home from hospital.

As illustrated by the chart below, there has been a gradual build-up in the volume of referrals as staff have been recruited and trained. Whilst all localities are not yet fully operational, an average of 102 people are currently supported by the service every month. Those people who are referred to HAT are also being discharged quicker from hospital to be fully assessed in their home environment, with 94% of individuals referred to HAT and discharged from hospital on the same day.



As the HAT developed, the team were able to accept more complex cases and fully implement the multi-disciplinary teamwork that is required to support a 'Home First' approach. As more complex cases have been accepted, the proportion of people recorded as completing the service with no further service required has decreased; however, we know from our monitoring of delayed discharges that the HAT approach is improving flow. The contribution of the Home Assessment Team also appears to be having an indirect impact on the Partnership's overall performance in relation to patients' discharge being delayed in hospital.

2.6.8 HOME SUPPORT SERVICE

As of the end of February 2024, there were 2,305 people being supported by 955 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) care at home staff across North Lanarkshire. The in-house service has a workforce of Home Support Workers (HSW) in Reablement, HAT, Intensive, Longer-term Home Support provision and the Community Alarm Service. Across these services, a total of 1,403 staff are employed, with a worker profile of 6% male staff (figure inclusive of 101 sessional staff). In addition, there are 235 back-office staff in various support roles. Over the past year, increasing demand, service complexity and the recruitment and retention of a skilled and flexible workforce has remained a challenge. To mitigate this, we have implemented a range of actions to support improvement in the quality and consistency of care and support across our Home Support Service.

The service model is being reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose, in the current environment, and into future, including consideration of new roles introduced since 2019. Planned changes will ensure that the service is sustainable and can support both demand pressures and our strategic ambitions, in line with 'enabling hubs and the Back-to-Basics approach.

To support this, stakeholder consultation events were held in local communities to capture feedback on the current and future service model with surveys to seek views on the service being issued prior to events, with paper copies and QR codes also made available at these events. Initial analysis of feedback from people using the service and carers who responded reported positive experiences of care and support delivered by HSWs (Home Support Worker). A common theme from consultation however was the service not always getting the right balance of care and support for individuals receiving a service. Data from consultation events was captured and any operational issues were addressed

by Service Delivery Managers with a more general improvement action being the provision of a link to all HSWs to assist the service to prioritise reviews where the support required to be adjusted to meet individual outcomes

Consultation events were also held for office-based staff during July 2023, and again held in each locality area. The events supported the workforce to understand and commit to the vision behind service transformation.

The service continues to work closely with the Care Inspectorate to meet requirements and improvements that have been identified through the inspection process. All teams have now received a full inspection, with some teams receiving follow up visits to address outstanding requirements. The new inspection year will commence in April 2024, and the service has been informed each team will receive a full inspection during follow up visits.

Over the last few months, the service has taken delivery of a brand-new fleet of hybrid 4x4 vehicles to replace its ageing fleet. This investment supports North Lanarkshire Council's drive towards ensuring that a more environmentally friendly fleet of vehicles are in place supporting the citizens of North Lanarkshire.

2.6.9 TRANSFORMATIONAL SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT (SDS) AGENDA & INDIVIDUAL BUDGETS

The overarching aim of the SDS (SELF DIRECTED SUPPORT) transformation agenda in North Lanarkshire is aligned with the intention and values underpinning the SDS Act 2013 - to support and empower people to achieve the outcomes that are important to them, to lead full and meaningful lives, and to participate in, and contribute to, their communities. Our approach has a focus on ensuring that we deliver fully on the SDS principles of participation and dignity, involvement, informed choice, and collaboration.

In 2023/2024 we supported 2,480 people with an individual budget, delivered across the four options as shown involving 99.7 million in resourcing and reflecting the centrality of self-directed support to social work practice:

- Option 1 – Direct payment - 360
- Option 2 – Budget managed by support provider – 1,957
- Option 3 – Budget managed by local authority - 152
- Option 4 – Budget managed by a mixture of first three options - 11

Over this period North Lanarkshire have been represented on national groups reviewing the SDS Standards and facilitated by Social Work Scotland. We continue to be part of the national group who are developing an approach to the realisation of the standards reflecting our desire to support decision making as close to people as possible, decisions being made quicker, empowering frontline workers and leaders, and increase local creativity.

2.6.10 COMMUNITY LIVING CHANGE FUND/COMING HOME

The Coming Home team has been in place since 2023, funded from the community change funding from Scottish Government to identify and support planning for people in hospital or out of area for prolonged and unnecessary reasons.

The team have, through collaboration, identified the people who fall into this category and in line with Scottish Government guidance, have populated a Dynamic Support Register (DSR) for North Lanarkshire. Coming Home Review and implementation groups have been created to implement all the required measures to minimise people having to leave our area for support or treatment and the team continue to link with each allocated social worker for those on the DSR to track progress towards ensuring a suitable and preferred living arrangement is identified and actively pursued.

Understanding who is at risk of support breakdown is a priority and prevention of hospital admission is key. Work has therefore also commenced to understand the at-risk population in more detail, with the aim being to explore what is required to keep people as well supported and safe as possible.

North Lanarkshire's allocation of the change fund was committed for a two-year period and is set to cease in March 2025. We understand no further change fund resourcing will be available after this date. We recognise the areas of focus and are using existing resources to develop our understanding further, with the aim being to minimise any impact.

2.7 DIGITAL SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

During 2023-24, there has been significant progress and investment in digital solutions to support the management of social work and social care services. In addition to developments in Assistive Technology and those linked to the Community Alarm Service reference above these have included:

Mosaic Case Management System

As part of the North Lanarkshire Council's Digital NL programme of work and Digital and IT Strategy 2019-24, the council carried out a cloud readiness assessment to determine which line of business system would be suitable for transitioning to a range of cloud-based solutions. This reinforced existing service concerns around the functionality of our SWIS case management system and led to a tender for a new system. Mosaic, the new Social Care Case management system, will be used across all social work services and the tackling poverty team presenting significant opportunities to improve worker access to relevant information, provide a single source for data on the people we support, improve data analytics and reporting to inform service improvement, and better opportunities for data sharing across the partnership. Reflecting the scale of work required to safely and effectively support this transition the development and implementation of Mosaic is supported by a project team, which has spent several months working with teams from across all care groups and the wider system to configure the system to reflect our streamlined processes and workflows with testing to take place in late summer, supported by a training programme for staff commencing in Autumn 2024. Importantly the functionality of the new system is designed to better support practice.

Dynamic Scheduling System for Care at Home Services (CM 2000)

As reflected above the Home Support Service is currently engaged in a service redesign exercise and within the context of the wider redesign activity, has procured a digital solution to ensure staff capacity is optimally utilised supporting the provision of over 6,000 visits per day by the approximately 750 home support workers on shift daily and importantly also supporting improvement in continuity of service and the matching of the right staff with the right skills to people at the right time, essential to the provision of quality care and services.

Procurement in February 2024 of the CM2000 product is anticipated to support service delivery by aiding back-office staff to schedule support and adapt quickly to changing needs efficiently and effectively with the opportunity to explore additional benefits which would allow both supported people and family members to access care notes via an application allowing real time updates.

ELMS 2 – Equipment Management System (Integrated Equipment & Adaptation Service)

The Integrated Equipment & Adaptation Service has for many years used a software platform which is no longer supported. The system manages the day-to-day demands of delivering independent living equipment services across both North and South Lanarkshire. This includes stock control and asset management. The legacy system has suffered from a lack of integration across other systems and applications resulting in a reliance on paper-based systems and processes requiring significant double keying. A newly procured software solution, ELMS 2, will now be implemented to better support service requirements including:

- Direct ordering and tracking of orders technology providing delivery routes and times
- Linking directly to the stock control process, reducing administrative functions

- Use on handheld devices reducing the reliance on printed paperwork and providing real-time delivery information to the prescribers and route management
- Improved monitoring of equipment due for review and maintenance
- Giving staff direct access to equipment catalogues stock levels and service users equipment history

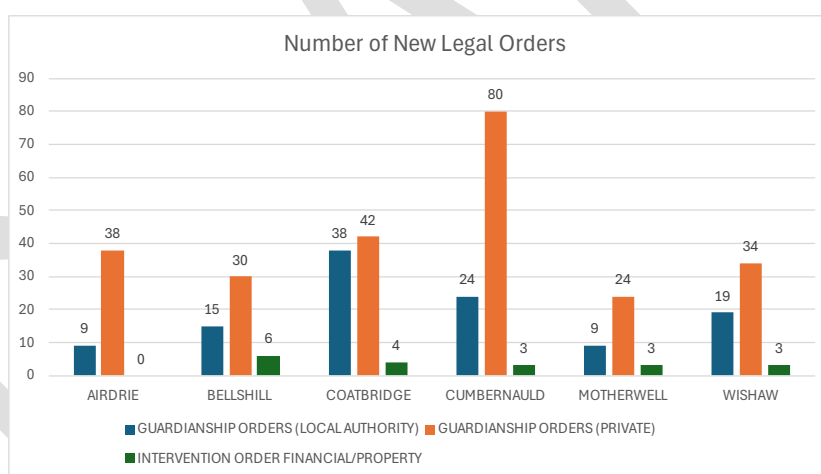
ELMS 2 also offers interoperability and integration with Mosaic,

Implementing these systems presents not just a shift from legacy systems, some of which are end of life, but also a cultural shift in using digital platforms which allow the service to function differently. The ability to access and generate accurate and real time information to support practitioners, the ability for supported people to access their own data and the enhanced data quality and integration offered by these products will continue to support the service across a range of settings.

3. STATUTORY INTERVENTIONS

3.1 MENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS SERVICE AND ADULTS WITH INCAPACITY ACT (SCOTLAND) 2000

There has continued to be considerable demand placed upon the Mental Health Officer (MHO) Service in recent years in terms of orders being sought under incapacity law in part because of large scale investigations which meant that a considerable resource had to be channelled towards meeting the demands of making new applications for orders. There has also been a significant increase in private guardianship applications.

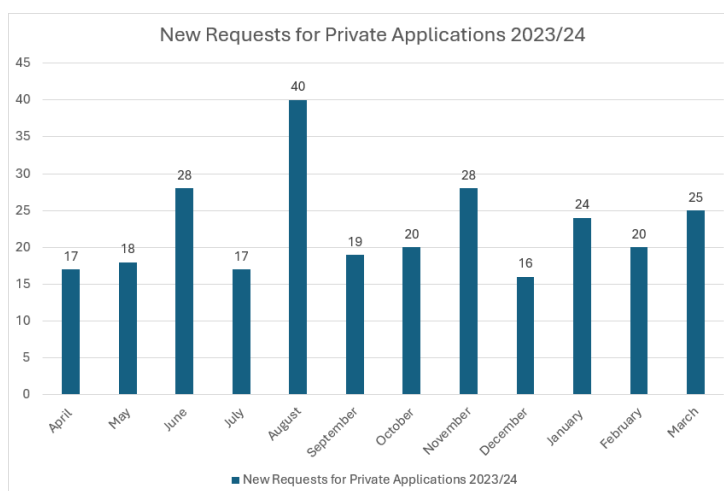


As illustrated in the above graphic there is a marked increase in new orders. During the period 2022-23, there were 150 new 'private' Guardianship Orders, with a rise to 248 in 2023-24, an increase of 49.2% on the previous year. Guardianship Orders granted to the local authority also rose from 73 in 2022-23 to 114 in 2023-24, representing an increase of 43.9%. A similar trend is seen with Intervention Orders which rose from 5 in 2022-23 to 19 in 2023-24. This representing an increase of 116.7%.

The overall number Guardianship Orders in place for individual's resident in North Lanarkshire has fallen very slightly by 23 to 1,031, involving 237 (23%) orders where the CSWO is appointed as Welfare Guardian, with the remaining 794 (77%) being 'private' Guardianship Orders. Reviews of all orders take place on a regular basis, with the intention of ensuring that powers are being used in accordance with the principles of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000.

Despite the slight fall referenced above the significant increase in new orders is matched by an ongoing increase in

applications as illustrated below:



Between April 2023 to March 2024, 272 new Guardianship Orders were requested an increase of 2% on the previous year– this total is inclusive of renewal requests for ‘private’ Guardianship Order. Local Authority applications and renewals totalled at 153 for the period. This continues a trend which has seen an increase of 67.3% in applications since April 2021. It is possible that the impact of Covid and extensions to the expiry date of orders during the pandemic may have had a bearing on these figures. However, what is evidenced is an upward trend in demand placed upon the service to allocate MHOs, to complete reports to support AWI applications, to the Courts, under incapacity law. This alongside recruitment challenges described below has led to delays in the ability to allocate MHOs to support applications which are less urgent, a situation which the service recognises runs counter to our desire to support anticipatory planning for individuals.

3.2 MENTAL HEALTH (CARE AND TREATMENT) ACT 2003 AND MENTAL HEALTH (SCOTLAND ACT 2015)

National trends for civil detentions under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 have continued to rise both nationally and locally. Locally there has been a significant increase in the number of recorded Emergency Detention Certificates, up by 102% on the previous year and Short-Term Detention Certificates have increased by 4.4% on the previous year, 2022-23 however, the number of Compulsory Treatment Orders has decreased slightly at 2.7% less than the previous year.

There has been a modest increase of 6.7% seen in the number of new requests for Mental Health Officer (MHO) input to ‘forensic’ mental health orders under the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995. The requirement for MHOs to be appointed to Compulsion Order with Restriction Orders (COROs) and Compulsion Orders rose significantly with an increase of 52.2% on the previous year, 2022-23. All these figures are illustrated in the table below:

Total Emergency Detention consents	(101) 203 [102% increase]
Total Emergency Detentions where no consent was sought	(76) 47 [47.2% decrease]
Consent refused by MHO – Emergency Detentions	(0) 0 [No change]
Total Short Term Detention consents	(247) 258 [4.4% increase]
Consent refused by MHO – Short Term Detentions	(11) 6 [58.8% decrease]

Total Compulsory Treatment Orders	(191) 186 [2.7% decrease]
Total Forensic Report Requests	(28) 30 [6.7% increase]
Total Forensic orders supervised (CORO/CO)	(17) 29 [52.2% increase]

2022-23 data for comparison is highlighted in red.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF MHO SERVICE TO MEET NEEDS

Previous reports outlined a rapid development within the service during the Covid pandemic. This saw the implementation of remote working and a centralisation of the MHO Service. Over the past two years, there has been a return to face-to-face working with clients alongside a hybrid approach to meetings. The centralisation of the MHO service at that time was seen to provide a degree of flexibility in the allocation of MHOs across the council area, to help relieve resourcing pressures in specific localities, as far as was possible. On review in 2023 it was however agreed that a return to locally based teams provided better connections and working arrangements for staff and better supported effective planning for individuals. This has now been actioned following appropriate consultation processes.

Internal development opportunities continue with Mental Health Officer forums held quarterly. These events allow discussion on upcoming legislation and legislative changes and provide an opportunity for guest speakers to attend. Remote external training and development opportunities also continue through organizations' such as the Scottish Forensic Network and Scottish Association of Social Workers.

3.4 APPROPRIATE ADULT SERVICES

It is a statutory duty for local authorities to deliver an Appropriate Adult (AA) Service under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 (s99), in line with functions conferred by the 2019 regulations. This legislation also places a statutory duty on Police Scotland (and other policing authorities as listed within the National Guidance) to facilitate an Appropriate Adult (AA) whereby they believe that an adult (above the age of 16) requires support with communication and understanding, owing to a mental disorder (s42).

Over the last financial year, 12 new appropriate adults have been recruited, making the total number of Appropriate Adults within North Lanarkshire Council 39. 29 of these carry out the AA role on a duty rota basis during office hours whilst the remaining 10 undertake their role as an AA out-of-hours through the Social Work Emergency Service (SWES).

In comparison to the last financial year, requests to the AA Service have increased by 30.5% from 59 to 77. This continues to be monitored through quarterly reports alongside regular meetings with the AA's and with Police Scotland. The primary reason for people who requiring an AA was Learning Disability which accounted for 37 of the 77 referrals. 32 of the referrals were for Victims whilst 22 were for those 'Officially Accused', 16 'Not Officially Accused' and 5 Witnesses. Of these 31 requests were to support adults involved with a Police Statement with the remaining referrals varied for support in procedures such as Caution and Charge, DNA, Medical Examinations, Police Interview Rights of Suspects (PIRoS) and Interviews.

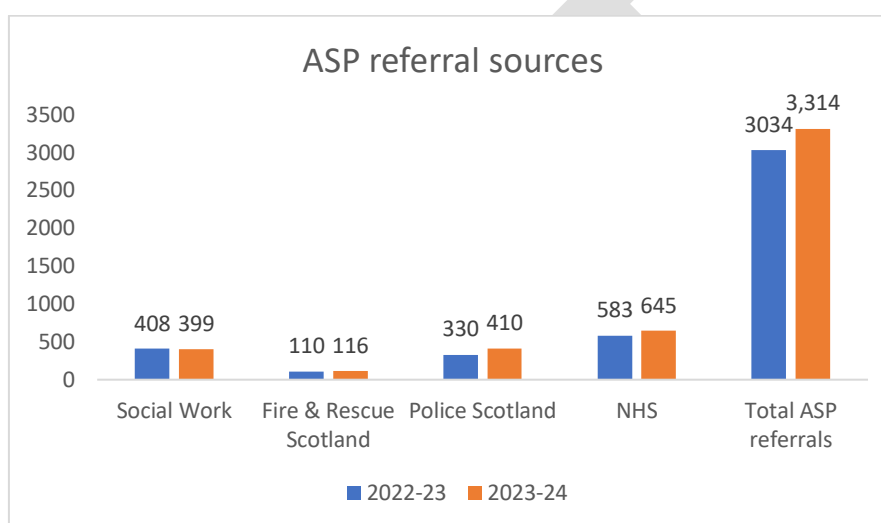
Currently, a process to gather feedback from the people using the service is being developed, to support feedback, assurance, and improvement. Links have also been made with other AA services and with the Care Inspectorate to share knowledge, skills, and experience to further develop the AA service within NLC. In the next financial year, the aim is to have developed a wider self-evaluation framework. As part of this development, a staff survey has been undertaken which has provided a further insight into the AA service as well as offering invaluable feedback on how to support and further develop the AA team.

3.5 PUBLIC PROTECTION

3.5.1 ADULT SUPPORT AND PROTECTION VESTIGATIONS/CASE CONFERENCES AND STATUTORY ORDERS/ FUNCTIONS

Over the period, North Lanarkshire received 3,314 ASP referrals, an increase of 9%, compared to 2022-23 (3034 to 3314). This is the fifth consecutive year that an annual increase has been measured.

Referrals from NHS Lanarkshire colleagues continue to rise, showing a 11% increase compared to last year from 583 to 645 whilst ASP referrals from Police Scotland have increased 24% from 330 to 410. Social Work referrals fell slightly by 2% from 408 to 399, whilst Scottish Fire and Rescue increased 5% from 110 to 116.



Care homes were the highest ASP referrer group in 2023-24 accounting for 34% (1,124) of all ASP referrals received a 21% increase on the previous year from 933 to 1,124, in part reflecting the challenges in managing increasing complexity of care needs within group living settings. Monitoring and support in this area is provided by colleagues in Quality Assurance. In addition, a pan Lanarkshire task group has been set up through North and South Lanarkshire's Adult Support and Protection Committees with all care home stakeholders involved. This aims to provide support to care homes to achieve a balanced and consistent approach in relation to ASP referrals and decision making.

Whilst Police ASP referrals have increased, Police 'Adult Concern reports' continue to increase also with a total of 4,280 Police 'Adult Concern' Reports received during the period an increase of 7% and reflecting the significant activity undertaken to keep adults in our communities safe.

Physical harm remains the most common harm type for referral with 1,594 referrals received, up 11% from last year. This high number of referrals with physical harm as the primary harm type is closely linked to the high number of ASP referrals received from the care home sector which often relate to witnessed/unwitnessed falls and low-level altercations between residents. As noted, work with care homes and stakeholders remains a priority in ASP.

Cases featuring self-neglect can be some of the most difficult and complex for practitioners to manage as they often span ethical, legal, and practical considerations. For the period there were 309 ASP referrals relating to self-neglect, an 11% increase in comparison to the previous year. Supporting good practice in these circumstances is a priority and this area has been targeted through ASP multi agency training with a specific focus on defensible decision making and professional curiosity.

ASP Inquiry with investigatory activity

It is important to note that NLC Social Work Adult Support and Protection procedures have now been updated. Key changes within the procedures centre on language and how we now view ASP 'Inquiries and investigations.' We now refer to initial inquiries as 'inquiries without investigatory activity' and ASP investigations and ASP 'Inquiry with investigatory activity.' Importantly investigatory activity involves any direct contact with the adult or their legal proxy, as such, it is anticipated there will be a rise in investigatory activity, and this should be reflected in future reports.

There was a total of 477 inquiries with investigatory activity in the reporting period reflecting the number of ASP referrals which converted to inquiry with investigatory activity is 14%. This is a slight increase from last year's conversion rate of 13%.

ASP Case Conferences

A total of 66 initial case conferences held and 56 review cases conferences were held meaning 14% of all investigatory activity led to an initial case conference. This conversion rate has declined from the last reporting period (17% to 14%) and reflects a continued decline in this rate over the last three years.

Statutory Orders issued over the period:

Type of Protection Orders	Number of Protection Orders granted
Assessment Order	0
Removal Order	1
Temporary Banning Order	0
Banning Order	0
Temporary Banning Order with Power of Arrest	4
Banning Order with Power of Arrest	2
Total	7

The use of protection orders fell 50% compared to last year (15 to seven). It is recognised that where 'adults at risk' are subject to protection planning measures, and as such, a range of actions have been implemented to mitigate risk of harm, this can reduce the requirement for an ASP Protection Order.

3.5.2 MAPPA (MULTI-AGENCY PUBLIC PROTECTION ARRANGEMENTS)

Justice Social Work continues to work effectively within MAPPA arrangements to manage and support people convicted of sexual offences or otherwise identified as presenting a risk of serious harm (ROSH) to maximise public protection, whilst maintaining a proportionate and individualised approach to risk and need. The number of individuals managed under MAPPA has continued to grow year on year in part due to the rise in online offences contributing to increased demand pressures on the service. The increase in the number of individuals being managed under the MAPPA process with no corresponding increase in resource in funding and staff continues to put pressure on the service. This is a situation which shows no signs of diminishing in the coming years.

This reporting year has witnessed an 8.4% increase in MAPPA activity from the previous year. Overall, the number of individuals managed under MAPPA have grown significantly since arrangements were established 17 years ago.

More specific detail of MAPPA related activity is published annually within the pan-Lanarkshire MAPPA report.

MAPPA arrangements interface often with other public protection processes including child and adult protection and with adult social work more broadly due to the increasing number of individuals managed through MAPPA who have care needs relating to frailty or disability. MAPPA awareness sessions for wider staff groups are therefore held regularly. In March 2024, a local multi-agency event was held, focused-on people being managed and supported under the Justice system with a diagnosed learning disability, or with neurodiversity challenges. This event was provided delivered by NHS colleagues. In addition, in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and MAPPA partners two multi-agency events were hosted in September 2023. Staff from Social Work, Police Scotland, Housing, and NHS Lanarkshire attended a full day input in relation to Risk Practice which was delivered by Professor Hazel Kempshall. This offered a valuable opportunity for colleagues to reflect on shared responsibilities, joint practice and strengthened collaborative approaches to managing risk and enhancing public protection.

3.5.3 CHILD PROTECTION INCLUDING CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

Following a trend identified in previous annual reports, child protection notifications have continued to increase as illustrated below representing a 125% increase from 2017/18.

Year	Number of Referrals	Investigations	Percentage Of Referrals Proceeding to Investigation	Number of Investigations That Proceeded to Case Conference	Number Of Registrations from Case Conferences
2023-24	2,326	768	33%	254	179
2022-23	1,895	775	41%	264	198
2021-22	1,714	754	44%	229	177
2020-21	1,482	831	56%	261	199
2019-20	1,617	800	49%	339	254
2018-19	1,150	642	56%	329	251
2017-18	1,030	692	67%	340	252

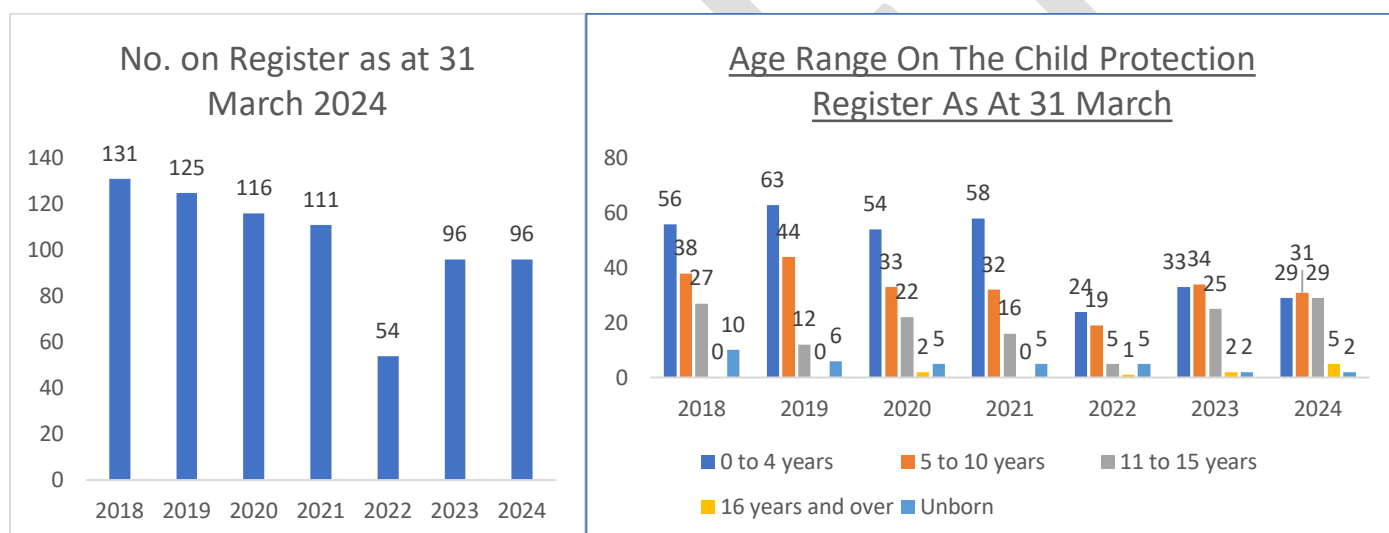
The overall increase in the number of referrals received is related to the extension of our child protection framework in line with child protection national guidance which now includes areas including care and risk management arrangements for those young people whose behaviour may present a risk of harm to others and extra familial harm within the contextual safeguarding approach. These extensions to our framework alongside Equal Protection legislation and additional pressures on families have increased demand but also consistency in practice and recognition, and response to harm, strengthened by early response to risk and harm by embedding our revised IRD (Initial Referral Discussion) guidance.

Contextually it is notable that one in four children still live in poverty and progress in addressing the developmental concerns for children at 27-30 months slowed in 2023-24. Given the established links between poverty, harm, and statutory interventions we believe this is also a factor in the continued demand for support to children in potential need of protection. As noted elsewhere tackling poverty is fundamental to protecting children and supporting families in North Lanarkshire and both child protection and family support responses are integrated with our approach to tackling poverty, under the leadership of the Chief Social Work Officer.

Our increased referral numbers have not resulted in an increase in children whose names are placed on the child protection register and this is due to the routes into our IRD process and the routes out of IRD. This means that alongside or as alternative to Child Protection Registration children can, where appropriate be supported by care and risk management processes, a referral to the Young People's Safeguarding Panel and through family support provided to the family through the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) pathway.

There has been an increase in older children's (12+) names being registered on the child protection register. This change indicates that practitioners and managers are increasingly focussing on and recognising the protection of older children and their rights in line with our commitments to *Keeping the Promise*, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)) and our investment in contextual safeguarding,

The service has continued to work with the partners in the Child Protection Committee, the Chief Officers, and Lead Officers groups to monitor and understand the relationship between child protection referrals and rates of registration to ensure the right children get the right support when they need it. Our data suggests that children and families are receiving early help and support through our cluster wellbeing approach. This is telling us that our strategic focus and commitment to early help and support, through staged intervention and planning for wellbeing, through the clusters is the right direction of travel to improve outcomes for children and families.



Joint Inspection

Between April 2023 and October 2023, the partnership was also subject to external scrutiny through Joint Inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm.

The main findings from the inspection were:

- The partnership has a strong multi-agency approach to early intervention, collaborative working, and information sharing.
- Staff are confident in their knowledge, skills, and ability to recognise, report and respond to signs of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We work together to ensure timely identification and responses to safety concerns for children and young people at risk of harm
- Staff demonstrate trauma informed and relational practices, which help children and young people experience supportive and trusting relationships with them.
- Children and young people have early access to services to support their mental health and emotional wellbeing, before concerns escalated. Partnership approaches were helping to identify need and secure support earlier.

- The majority of children and young people are meaningfully and appropriately involved in decisions about their lives. Staff listen to children and young people and understand them.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision, which was understood by staff. It was threaded through strategic documents, plans, and outcomes. The partnership was highly aspirational and has a strategic focus to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- Collaborative leadership is strong across the partnership. Leaders are aware of strategic risk and jointly deployed resources to the areas of greatest need.

Areas identified for Improvement:

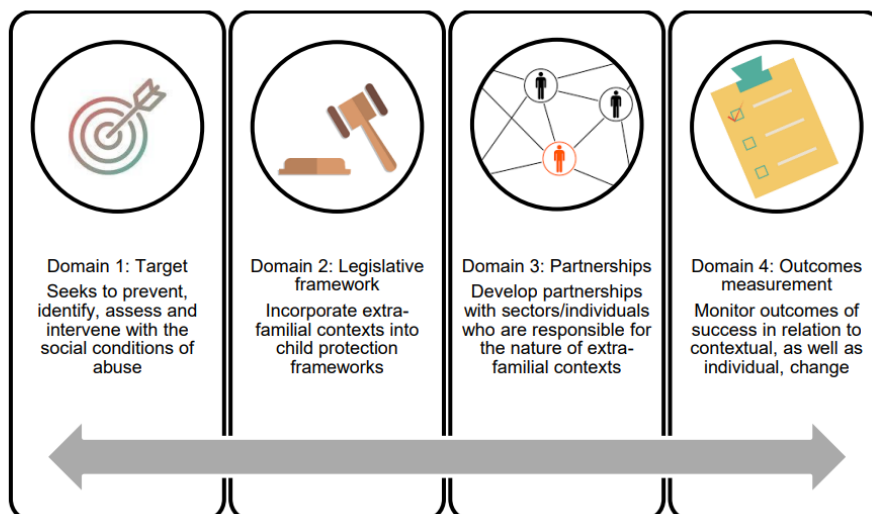
- Chronologies, assessments, and plans are in place and staff are confident in assessing risks and preparing plans, the quality of these chronologies, assessment and plans is inconsistent. This will be the focus of our improvement work moving forward.

Improvement activity cannot be achieved by the Social Work service alone and we are progressing the areas of improvement highlighted by our own self-evaluation activity and the findings from inspection as part of the wider partnership. Partnership actions are driven through our child protection business plan with the three main areas of focus being:

- Voice: Strengthen Voice of children, young people, and families within the delivery of CPC functions
- Operational practice: Strengthen joint operational practice with a focus on the quality of assessment and planning for individual children and young people.
- Data: Strengthen the use of data to drive improvements in practice and process and strategic planning

These areas for improvement are being addressed by the Continuous Improvement Group which reports to both the CPC and Children's Services Planning Partnership.

Contextual Safeguarding



As reflected above we have continued our commitment to embedding contextual safeguarding as a key vehicle to address the increase in extra-familial harms impacting on our young people. Over the course of 2023 and into 2024, we targeted Domains 2-3 above - improving staff awareness and understanding across the workforce while embedding the recognition of, and response to, extra familial harm within child protection processes. This was reflected in the finding of the Joint Inspection of a culture of rights-based, relational practice and collaboration between young people and staff. Going forward we will have a focus on the conditions of abuse, improving safety, and providing support in a

trauma informed way (Domain 1) in addition to taking a more strategic approach to the collation of impact data and monitoring of outcomes (Domain 4).

Key areas of development to promote social work practice in this area included the creation of an online training module, the development of a [Directory of resources](#) and the availability of consultations for practitioners dealing with complexities in this area.

A key area of our systems supporting young people who may be experiencing extra-familial harm is our **Young Peoples Safeguarding Panel**. Over this period panel actions were strengthened to focus on welfare and safety not surveillance with a fourteen individual young people and two groups of young people referred. Key themes identified included that many young people discussed experienced some neurodevelopmental difficulty, requiring specific support and follow up. The panel continues to play a key role locally in ensuring that the exploitation that underpins the offences that some young people commit is addressed through disruption and the reframing of information provided to SCRA (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration) and COPFS (Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service) to highlight the exploitation and support to young people and peer groups in addition to the increased use of the National Referral Mechanism where appropriate.

Our senior officer for contextual safeguarding, played a leading role in a UK-wide research study of the experiences of social workers using the contextual safeguarding approach. The findings of this continue to inform our approach to staff support and training. - [Sustaining Social Work: Practitioner experiences of Contextual Safeguarding | Contextual Safeguarding](#)

3.5.4 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Social Work staff across care groups continue to have a key role with respect to both the prevention and response to Gender Based Violence (GBV). The last year has seen work progress through the VAWG to carry out Customer Journey Mapping, a process of gathering information from women on their experience of services. Women interviewed were survivors of domestic abuse. Key improvement actions have been developed from the information given including domestic abuse inputs to trainee GPs (scheduled for the new year) an audit of out of hours homeless services to determine domestic abuse practice and a domestic abuse development session for frontline police officers in Lanarkshire Division.

A multi-year funding solution is now in place for North Lanarkshire MARAC. MARAC in North Lanarkshire in 2023/24 discussed 424 cases, 96% of victims discussed were female and referrals included 852 children. A quality assurance sub-group is now in place and is chaired by Education and Families Manager (Social Work Justice). A process of auditing MARAC meetings and MARAC cases has been approved.

The implementation of the Safe and Together Model continues with over 150 children, families and justice social workers trained in the model. Over 500 staff from multi-agency partner services have completed the Overview course. Work is progressing to support workers to take learning into practice. Monthly Safe and Together workshops where staff are supported to apply Safe and Together tools to a specific case are established. Workshops are open to workers who have and haven't completed Safe and Together training.

Strategic linkages are in place with North Lanarkshire Council Equally Safe at Work planning group. The group have representation from the VAWSG and has been working towards Bronze Award renewal. With a key milestone being the launch of North Lanarkshire Council Sexual Harassment Policy.

UP2U Family Practice Model

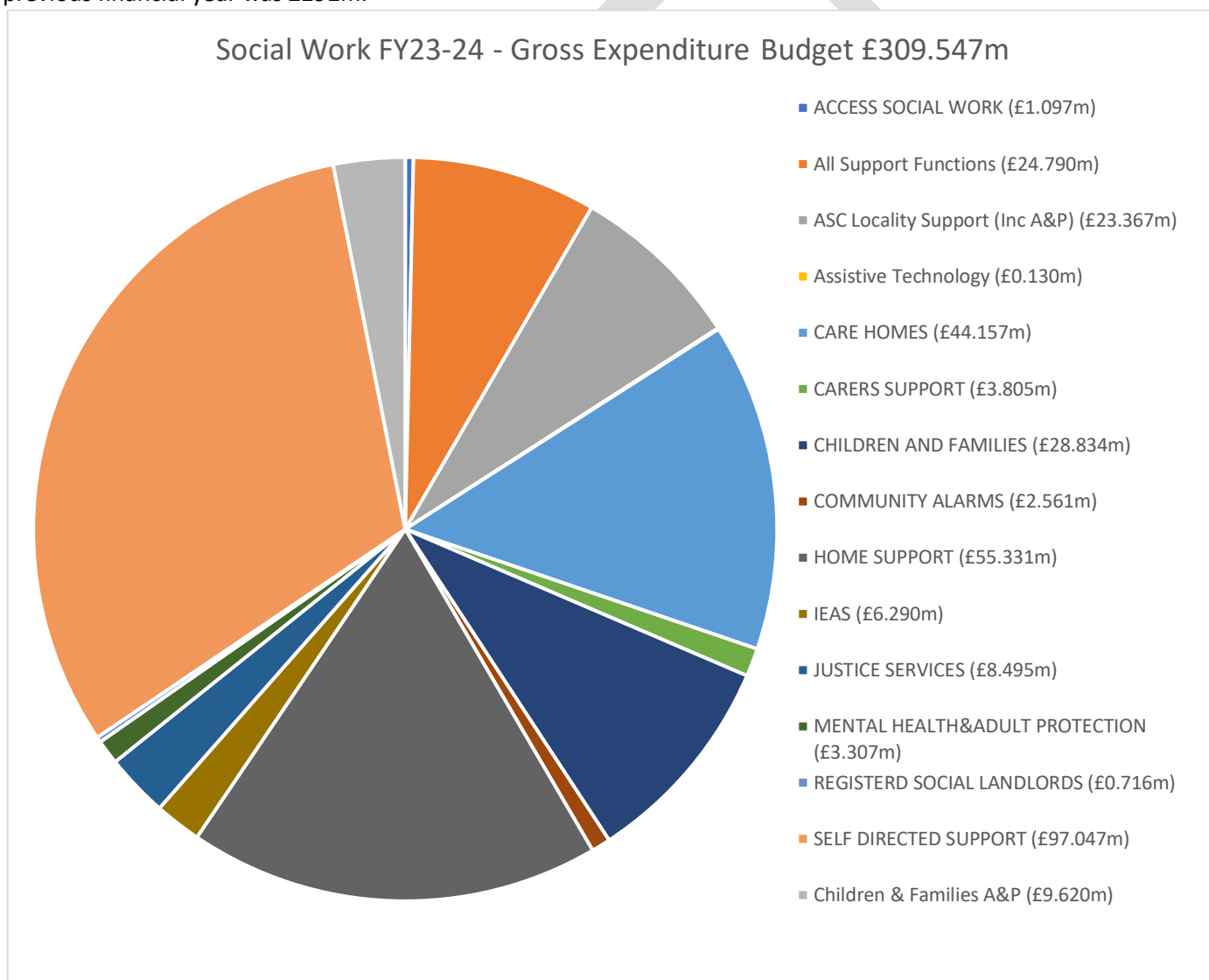
The UP2U intimate partner violence approach continues to be invested in by Justice Social Work (JSW) with new staff continuing to be trained in this programme and existing staff being given access to refresher training inputs.

UP2U – Creating healthy relationships 2 is the updated version of the domestic abuse intervention programme. Staff have begun to use the updated programme with individuals convicted of intimate partner violence and who are subject to a requirement to undertake UP2U. Integral to this intervention is the offer and provision of partner support for those who have been or are still the victims of intimate partner violence.

UP2U family practice is a version of the UP2U programme that can be delivered in a Children and Families context, and this adopts a more flexible approach to early intervention where domestic abuse has been identified within a family. This aims to work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to consider the impact on their children and the wider family. All children and families social work teams have identified Family Practice trainers, and this is an intervention that can be utilized as part of child's plans.

4. RESOURCES

For financial year 2023/24 North Lanarkshire Council had gross annual social work budget of almost £310m. This was allocated as £255m for Adult Social Care and £55m for Children, Families & Justice. The equivalent funding for the previous financial year was £292m.



In totality Social Work activity during 2023-24 was undertaken within the overall budget resource and resulted in an underspend position.

Within Adult Social Care the underspend was almost entirely because of ongoing recruitment issues being seen across the sector, both internally and within the care at home sector reducing the payments to these bodies.

The overall underspends across the service were a continuation of the 2022-23 position. These underspends however are non-recurring and the longer-term outlook for the service projects financial pressures across the following areas:

- Home Support
- Independent Care Homes
- Self-Directed Services
- Integrated Equipment and Adaptation Service
- Children's Houses
- External Placements

4.1 FINANCIAL MODELLING FOR SERVICE DELIVERY

Financial Planning and monitoring continue to be a key responsibility for the management team. The Council's financial strategy includes Service input to four key processes. These are:

- Preparation of detailed single year budget
- In-year budget monitoring and projections
- Preparation of rolling 3-year budgets
- Preparation of a Medium-Term Financial Plan

Alongside these the Council Finance Team work closely with the IJB Chief Finance Officer to prepare a medium-term financial plan for the Health and Social Care Partnership.

In terms of financial modelling the Management Team increasingly take a whole systems approach to delivering new and more efficient operating models which often requires joint working with other Council services and key external partners.

With respect to Children's Services the council and local partnership is one of three areas who have committed to working with the Promise team nationally on 'Human and Economic Cost Modelling', work which is intended to support longer term change both nationally and locally by identifying how money is currently spent and the system changes required to move the balance of spend toward early intervention and family support in line with the aspirations of Christie.

5. WORKFORCE

Workforce planning within social work is overseen by the Social Work Workforce Group, which both informs and is informed by the Council's corporate '[Workforce for the Future Strategy](#)' and the wider UHSCPNL workplan.

5.1 WORKFORCE PLANNING

Challenges in the labour market have impacted on recruitment to certain posts and the pressures on local authorities and HSCPs to provide services in the face of savings agendas has also impacted on workforce plans. Demand pressures have also continued to impact on the ask of the social work workforce over this period.

To support overcome these challenges, a close partnership approach between the service and HR colleagues has been built. Working together on recruitment, training and development and the management of employee absence, as well

as developing and implementing initiatives has supported the service to manage demands whilst supporting workforce resilience.

5.2 SOCIAL WORK RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Enhanced whole career support and development, allied to the wider ambitions of Workforce for the Future and the Scottish Government ambition to create a strategic framework from qualification through to enhanced practice, remains at the forefront of NLCs commitment to Social Workers. This work commences prior to recruitment, building strong relationships with further education establishments and supporting student placements in the development of future qualified Social Workers.

Our commitment to the provision of Practice Learning has remained strong and a model which continues to include student hubs has supported ensure quality learning experiences are available to all students as referenced in section 5.10 below.

To support both enhanced career pathways and recruitment our Social Work Trainee Scheme was recently re-established and funding for eight Social Work employees agreed via an earmarked reserve. In order to support access to a broader range of staff courses varying in length from 18 months to three years, dependent on the individual's current qualification level, have been sourced and funded, with the employees fully supported in becoming qualified Social Workers. Due to popular demand 14 candidates who were not successful this time have had learning pathways identified to support them to continue their journey to become a Social Worker. A further 25 employees are also working through development plans with a view to progressing to the social work degree pathway. NLC has also sponsored five self-funded employees, as they studied for their Social Work qualification. Recruitment opportunities were made available to these students as they neared completion of their course. All five were successful and subsequently offered Social Work positions within NLC.

In addition to internal pathways, we continue to recruit externally, and advertising frequency and dates have been reviewed to streamline processes and quicken the employee onboarding experience with improvements seen in recent campaigns. We continue to offer immediate access to our Senior Practitioner scheme for eligible Social Workers. These processes will continue to be reviewed, and improvements made wherever possible to support our ability to attract and retain social workers in what remains a challenging context.

During 23/24 we also commissioned research into the recruitment of social workers from global ethnic minority communities, as we endeavour both to recruit a more diverse and representative workforce and improve the support and the experience of our BAME staff. It is hoped that any changes implemented for Social Work recruitment will also be of benefit to authority wide recruitment processes.

Whilst too early to assess the full impact of the regrading of main grade, senior practitioner and first line management social work roles reported last year and actioned on 1 May 2023 the council is now more competitive in terms of salary, when compared to the other authorities and there are early indications of reducing vacancies and there is hope that this plus the support and development that is offered will encourage applicants and assist in the retention of current Social Workers. In line with the re-evaluation of roles the job description and employee specification for social workers has now been reviewed, and issued to all Social Workers, bringing this in line with the expectations of the role within an increasingly complex context whilst remaining grounded in relationship-based practice.

Recruitment to temporary posts however remains challenging. These requirements exist for a number of reasons, including temporary promotions, maternity leave and long-term absence cover and the increasing number of roles related directly or as backfill for posts supported through temporary funding streams principally linked to Scottish Government recovery funding in justice services and change initiatives in other areas. Temporary vacancies are being

closely monitored in terms of numbers, locations and the impact on teams. Whilst for a period, and in line with predicted turnover, the service was able to offer permanent contracts against temporary vacancies for social workers the capacity to do this has reduced as vacancies have decreased and many temporary funding streams remain committed only to the end of the parliamentary term.

Whilst social Workers are being appointed through NLC recruitment processes and entering the workforce with new skills, creativity, and commitment there are now issues relating to the balance of experience within the service with a high number of relatively newly qualified staff. To mitigate this for both new and experienced Social Workers, managers are monitoring caseloads, assisting in the prioritisation of statutory responsibilities, and ensuring additional supports, such as Health and Wellbeing, are available when required. Support is also being provided through the hubs and the TOD Team are working closely with the service.

The commitment to the requirements of the Support Year in Practice in both time and resource is substantial. A review of the Supported Year in Practice has recently been undertaken to ensure compliance with new requirements issued by SSSC, 'Definitions of employer support 2023'. Prior commitment to NQSW support and development assisted NLC, however lack of funding from the SSSC or Scottish Government to support these requirements beyond the pilot period is disappointing and reconfiguration within the TOD team and additional input from managers will be required to retain commitment to this key area of support for staff.

Targeted advertising has proven invaluable in securing the skill and experience required for specific posts in hospital and home assessment teams however recruitment, in particular external recruitment in the key area of Mental Health Officer roles has remained challenging and has not kept pace with need impacting on service provision in key areas.

We continue to be committed to promoting the MHO programme to existing Social Workers within the service. The route is through the MHO Traineeship Scheme, which supports Social Workers in gaining an MHO award – a postgraduate award through the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. It is expected that three MHO trainees will successfully complete the MHO Award in June 2024, to then take up full-time MHO vacancies within the service. To further support the MHO Service and to help expedite the discharge of hospital patients awaiting powers under AWI legislation (typically in the form of Guardianship Orders), the MHO Service now has eight sessional MHOs who can be allocated work thus easing a significant pressure on Locality-based MHOs.

Funding for temporary positions within the Community Mental Health Teams continues, allowing Social Workers from across Education and Families, Adults and Justice Services who are considering applying for the MHO award, to be a part of a Mental Health Team. The establishment of the Practice Assessor role and the ongoing work of the postholder, not only for MHO students but also for those who have expressed an interest in the course, is invaluable.

Opportunities for experienced Social Workers including MHOs include the Senior Practitioner Scheme. This scheme maintains our commitment to Social Workers, and Community Occupational Therapists, beyond qualification and appointment. With over 50 practitioners holding the status the scheme enables those who meet the criteria to progress to an enhanced salary scale. The service also benefits with Senior Practitioners committing to undertake additional responsibilities within the authority.

5.3 SOCIAL CARE

Linked with both the national and local focus on supporting hospital discharge and providing quality support and reablement within the community a significant focus remains on the recruitment of home support workers and other social care roles. Recruitment to these positions is in line with the strategic direction of the service and whilst there has been success, staff turnover has resulted in little net increase in staffing numbers overall. Monitoring of recruitment and the placement of newly appointed HSW across the six localities therefore continues with the wider Home Support Service review referenced earlier having a key focus on a sustainable staffing model.

In recognition of the key role that Home Support Schedulers play within the Home Support Service, six new Home Support Scheduler Supervisors have been introduced. To date, five positions have been filled, and the remaining one will be advertised. These roles will direct, guide, and instruct scheduling through a person-centered approach, ensuring excellent customer service.

5.4 OTHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

Other areas in which recruitment challenges are evident include roles within Locality Support Services and Clerical and Administration posts. The recruitment and retention difficulties within Social Work administration have resulted in a planned review and redesign which will progress over the coming year. In the interim action is being taken to promote recruitment to these difficult to fill roles, for example, linking directly with local colleges as adverts are released and work continues to develop apprenticeship schemes as a route into these areas.

The service has also benefited from the corporate Summer Placement Programme developed to provide paid work to NLC pupils for seven weeks of the school summer holidays. Over the summer, fifty placements were made within Social Work services in roles such as HSW, Locality Support Worker and Clerical Assistant. Placements within other services have also been facilitated, for example in Early Years, Customer Service, Health and Safety and Sports Development.

5.5 CARE ACADEMY

During this year and drawing on funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and earmarked HSCP reserves projects taken forward under this umbrella have included:

Project one – Trainee Social Worker Scheme

As noted in section 5.2 above there are eight internal Social Work trainees who have been successful in becoming part of this programme with a further 46 now on the pathway to gaining the necessary qualification which will allow them to be considered for future programmes.

Project two – Upskilling for Home Care Workers

In line with the qualification agenda, we continue to utilise the monies available from the UK Prosperity Fund to develop a training pathway for our Home Support staff. Our partnership with New College Lanarkshire has enabled us to procure access to ongoing spaces for the programme over the next year with another 60 workers currently undertaking qualification from our August 2023, November 2023, and March 2024 cohorts. The success of this programme has also allowed us the opportunity to extend this relationship with New College Lanarkshire with us recognising the ongoing staffing difficulties within the service and the level of new recruits also requiring access to qualifications within a shorter time frame.

Project three – Home Care Support Officers

We are continuing to liaise with services across the Home Support workforce to identify opportunities to support this group of staff to access suitable qualifications and opportunities for future employment pathways. However, this work will now be aligned with the redesign of the home support service and the new structure of the staffing complement. We envisage using available monies from the UK Prosperity Fund to ensure that we invest in this group of staff to both attract and retain the quality and skills of our support staff who are a vital resource for home support services. The group which will be targeted initially are the Schedulers and Senior Schedulers. A relevant career pathway has been built for this group of staff with access to a recognised qualification.

5.6 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF SUPPORT

Our online platform for learning, LearnNL is a key component in providing improved access to learning and provides each employee with an individual learning record linked to the Performance Review and Development (PRD process).

The reporting function within LearnNL allows us to filter and sort information in a variety of ways and ensures that training-related information can be shared quickly and easily with colleagues and with the Care Inspectorate when required. A specific social work space developed within the platform allows staff to see what training opportunities they should be accessing as part of their mandatory training requirement and optional opportunities for development and future progression.

5.7 ASSESSMENT CENTRE AND REGISTRATION

Continued provision of qualifications through the Assessment Centre

The Assessment Centre continues to support Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ), and Professional Development Award (PDA) qualifications required to meet registration, role and CPD requirements. This is achieved through both in house assessment and access to SVQs through external providers.

Active Candidates – External Programmes (2023 – present)

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 6 (SVQ2) – 48 including Home Support and Locality Support Staff

SCQF Level 7 (SVQ3) – 23 including Residential Workers, Locality Workers, and Justice Staff

SCQF Level 9 (SVQ4) – six including Senior Residential Worker, & Locality Support Manager

Higher National Certificate (HNC) – two Residential Worker and Children & Families Support Worker

Active Candidates – Internal Programmes (2023 – present)

SCQF Level 7 (SVQ3) – two: one HSW and one Technology Support Assistant

5.8 POST GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES

The team also continue to provide access to Post Graduate Certificate opportunities through the Learning and Development budget. The numbers undertaking some form of qualification are detailed below:

- Advanced Practice skills – one commenced September 2023
- Postgraduate in Child Welfare and Protection at Stirling University – four candidates commenced September 2023 due finish June 2024
- Postgraduate Certificate in Children and Young People in Conflict with the Law – two candidates started in September 2023 completed June 2023
- Postgraduate in Adult Support and Protection – three
- Postgraduate Certificate Securing Children's Futures – one
- Postgraduate in Mental Health – three
- MSc In Leading People Centred Care – one
- Part funding of final year of PHD qualification – one

5.9 SOCIAL WORK DEGREE PATHWAY WITH THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

As reflected in section 5.2 there continues to be a strong appetite across all our Social Work and Social Care workforce in becoming a Social Worker. We have had interest expressed from admin staff, HSWs, education and family support workers, locality day services staff and other staff. We are currently working with 46 members of staff on individual learning plans; all of whom are undertaking Open University modules and working towards a degree in Social Work.

The monies received from the UK prosperity fund enabled us to fund modules for staff from October 2023 to May 2024. We anticipate further use of the UK prosperity fund later this year to again support staff on the pathway and further modules commencing in October 2024 and February 2025.

5.10 STUDENT SOCIAL WORK HUB

From August 2023 to date, 60 Social Work students were placed within North Lanarkshire; 52 being external students from four different Universities, with 14 of these students securing Social Work posts within North Lanarkshire and now progressing onto our NQSW supported year.

From August 2023 onwards we have been developing two student Hubs: one Community Care Hub and one Justice Hub. Both Hubs have evaluated well, with very positive feedback received.

We have seconded two full-time Practice Learning Officers and a permanent Practice Learning Officer who also oversees the NQSW supported year. Our Hub activity continues to grow and expand, and we foresee this continuing to develop in line with Service needs and demands. The Hubs are a reflective and educational forum for the students to experience peer to peer support, 1:1 teaching and support from their Practice Learning Officer. They also take part in extensive training sessions and presentations by external speakers whilst direct teaching from their Practice Learning Officer has included risk assessment theory, outcome focused practice, anti-oppressive practice, reflective practice, unconscious bias training, exploration of use of self, development of professional accountability, authority, and assertiveness. All of which are crucial in solidifying the fundamentals required of a qualified Social Worker. The students have also benefited from the relationship and links created within the Hub to gain shadowing opportunities and learning experiences with various other service areas/

5.11 NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) Supported Year referenced in section 5.2 above will become mandatory across Scotland from October 2024. This is to ensure that support is given to NQSW in their transition to front line practice enabling us to develop an increasingly confident and competent workforce for the people who use our services and their families.

5.12 OTHER KEY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provision of a practice learning pathway for link workers

We have 120 link workers, and twenty-five practice educators based onsite with students on traditional placements. We currently have five link workers applying to undertake the PDAPL, which starts in September 2024. We also have a waiting list of link workers all interested and working towards making applications for the next PDAPL intake in January 2025.

To fully support the Service and ensure the learning and development needs of all staff are met, a Social Work Learning and Development sub team was established in March 2023 consisting of two Senior Learning and Development Advisors, two Learning and Development Advisors and two Clerical Assistants. This team have been responsible for the implementation of a range of initiatives including:

An updated programme of Adult Support and Protection Training including the delivery of ASP Level 1 refresher training to 1,000 staff and bespoke ASP level 2 training for home support team leaders.

Provision of Getting it Right in Child Protection training including a broad range of e learning modules in child protection awareness, contextual safeguarding, understanding child neglect, assessment and planning for children and young people, child sexual exploitation and Age of Criminal Responsibility with over 2, 800 course completions.

Safe and Together - We are working alongside our Child Protection Committee and our partners at the Safe and Together Institute to look at the further possibilities of commissioning specialist eLearning modules and materials in relation to the Safe and Together Model.

Continued provision of Moving and Handling and Medication training - 352 Home Support staff and nine Home Support team leaders have attended role specific moving and handling training during reporting period.

Implementation of a robust induction programme for HSW's 152 HSWs have attended induction training since April 2023. The online HSW induction course is currently being reviewed.

Carrying out a full Training Needs Analysis (TNA) across the Service to identify key learning and development needs as part of the development of the Learn NL Social Work dashboard.

Refresh and reintroduction of Assessment, Planning and Recording Practice learning, this will also align with the most recent Back to Basics approach in Adult Services and Signs of Safety and Healing in Children's Services ensuring person centred practice is at the forefront. This work was supported by a Steering Group of managers, practitioners and TOD staff who refined the training materials to ensure alignment with North Lanarkshire's value base and best practice in addition to making the training more accessible, sustainable, engaging, and interactive to enable staff to re-access the training materials and learning whenever they require in the future.

Introduction of Autism Awareness and Neurodiversity training delivered by facilitators with lived experience has also been a huge success. As of March 2024, we have commissioned Part 1 "Making Connection" and Part 2 "Building Bridges" as well as bespoke models which has resulted in 61 members of Social Work staff completing this targeted training.

Refresh of the Senior Practitioner programme - It is envisaged that the new model will enable Senior Practitioners to be involved in development opportunities across the services and to utilise their enhanced skills and qualifications for the benefit of the wider community. We also envisage the involvement of our senior practitioners in the roll out of future assessment and planning developments and offering support to their Senior Social Workers by fulfilling supervising and mentoring roles to our NQSW in their supported year as per the revised standards and framework.

Justice training and staff development has included Naloxone Training delivered In partnership with NHS Lanarkshire's Harm Reduction Team, to help staff to respond confidently and appropriately to situations of overdose and assist combating the number of drug deaths among people engaging with Justice Services in North Lanarkshire. A continued training schedule is in place to ensure that all relevant staff receive training on this intervention.

5.13 TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

Implementation of Trauma Informed training

Towards the end of March 2024, we successfully adopted and integrated Trauma Informed Practice eLearning modules from the NHS digital platform TURAS to our own LearnNL. Since the launch of the modules in March 2024 staff have been able to access all the materials digitally. We envisage that work in this area will continue to grow with the roll out of the face-to-face 'skilled' and 'enhanced' level training, as well developing our training for trainers programme which will enable us to develop our own team of in-house facilitators ready and able to respond to any training requirements in relation to trauma informed practice.

5.14 REVISION OF SUPERVISION POLICY

Over the past year and following consultation our supervision policy has been updated and linked to a new toolkit of resources to support reflective and outcome focused practice aligned to developments in practice and also recognising that whilst one-to-one supervision remains fundamental to social work practice that other supports such as group supervision and case consultations can play a key role in supporting practice.

5.15 SUPPORT FOR STAFF WELLBEING

Within each locality a variety of teams have held development days focussing on Health and Wellbeing (HWB), staff resilience and supports, team building, and this continues. Recruitment for an North Lanarkshire HWB officer took place, an appointment made in early 2024 to support this activity and to work with the NHSL HWB officer for a joined-up partnership approach. HWB is at the forefront of staff development. Various Social Work management teams were subsequently engaged by Organisational Development (and the health-based Staff Health and Wellbeing Officer), with particular focus on the 'Stay Conversation' project. These initial briefings and workshops have led to engagement across a range of teams for ongoing collaboration looking at enhancing Social Work Wellbeing.

6. LOOKING FORWARD – PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2025 AND BEYOND

Continuing the pattern of the last two years demand for social work and social care services, often accompanied by increased complexity of presenting need, has continued to grow and surpass pre-pandemic levels across all areas of social work driven by a range of demographic and societal trends including continuing cost-of-living pressures impacting on the resilience of our communities. This is a pattern that is likely to continue into the immediate future. Whilst the service has been successful in maintaining a strong balance of care existing pressure points such as those on care at home services and MHO services have also been supplemented by new ones, for example growing demand for children's house places.

Neither the council or IJB have to date responded to financial pressures by reducing core social work staffing, however nor has there been capacity simply to expand resources to meet demand and pressures on wider budgets are also likely to continue to impact on social work service delivery. Moreover, innovation and investment in service improvement and redesign for longer term sustainability is increasingly reliant on temporary funding streams many of which are uncertain beyond the current Scottish parliamentary term creating additional challenges in planning,

Alongside additional uncertainty associated with future proposals for a National Care Service, the proposed National Social Work Agency, review of elements of social work education and discussions on a national improvement programme, albeit focussed primarily on social care, have brought welcome attention at national level to the key role of social work. It is however disappointing in this context that commitments for investment have not matched those made to some other areas of the public sector with even relatively modest developments like the embedding of the 'Supported Year In Practice' from 2024 implemented with no funding support.

Locally there is some indication that investment in the social work workforce may be reducing vacancy levels and the number of our own staff seeking a pathway into social work is positive and encouraging however although the potential introduction of a graduate apprenticeship in social work nationally is a welcome development it is unlikely on its own to meet need.

Key areas of workforce focus for us going forward will include continuing efforts to grow our MHO workforce and to address the workforce vetting requirements associated with the introduction of MAPPS (a highly secure home office system) within justice services. Further work is also planned to consider the implications of local research relating to diversity in recruitment alongside national findings on racism experienced by BAME staff. In addition, continued attention to staff well-being and trauma informed systems will remain key both to supporting retention and best practice.

In this context both to support improved outcomes and experiences for those who need our support and for demand and cost avoidance, the continuation of our focus on prevention will be critical over the coming year. Vital to delivering this will be our programmes to improve core practice such as the 'Back to Basics' work in Adult Services and 'Signs of Safety and Healing' in Children's Services alongside continuing investment in early family support and carer support. We will also continue to maximise the opportunities created by the integrated working embedded in the Programmes of Work for the Council and that supporting the HSCP's Strategic Commissioning Plan with a key focus also on improving outcomes and continuity of support at key transition points.

The redesign of social work administration to a business support model alongside work to introduce the new social work management system Mosaic and the ELMs2 and Dynamic Scheduling Systems for the Integrated Equipment Service and Home Support respectively, will all involve significant preparation and time and people resource over the coming year but are again vitally important to future operational efficiency.

Finally, the requirement to respond to and embrace a plethora of national policy and legislative drivers, external scrutiny findings and continued reporting requirements to the SCAI (Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry) will also continue to place significant demands on the service over the coming year. A continued focus on strong partnership working across and beyond social work including with those who use our services will be central to ensuring that our workforce is not overwhelmed and can instead continue its central role in delivering positive outcomes for our communities.

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