

REPORT TO: CITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 1 DECEMBER 2025

REPORT ON: CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

REPORT BY: CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER

REPORT NO: 247-2025

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report brings forward for information the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report for 2024-25, attached as Appendix 1.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the City Governance Committee:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report and the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report for 2024-25 attached as appendix 1.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 The requirement that every local authority has a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) is set out in Section 5 (i) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended by Section 45 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994. Associated regulations state that the CSWO should be a qualified Social Worker and registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

- 4.1 The CSWO provides a strategic and professional leadership role in the delivery of Social Work and Social Care services, in addition to certain functions conferred by legislation directly on the officer. The overall objective of the role is to ensure the provision of effective, professional advice and guidance to Elected Members and officers in the provision of Social Work and Social Care services.

- 4.2 The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 provides for the delegation of certain Social Work functions to an integration authority but the CSWO's responsibilities in relation to local authority Social Work functions continue to apply to services which are being delivered by other bodies. Responsibility for appointing a CSWO cannot be delegated and the officer also has a role in providing professional advice and to the Integration Joint Board (IJB).

- 4.3 National guidance requires that the CSWO presents and publishes an annual summary report for local authorities and IJBs and that the approved report is forwarded to the Scottish Government to contribute towards a national overview of Social Work services. The information in this report complements other more detailed service specific reports on Social Work and Social Care services which have been reported in other ways.

- 4.4 As can be seen in this year's report, Social Work and Social Care services have continued to deliver quality support which improves lives and protects vulnerable people, whilst contributing towards and responding to a range of national, regional and local developments. There are several highlights in the report alongside a description of ongoing challenges and priorities ahead. Some specific developments over the last 12 months have included:

- Response to the Care Inspectorate National Thematic Review of Social Work Governance and Assurance published in November 2024

- Implementation of a new local CSWO Governance Framework including a cross-cutting dataset to enhance oversight of levels of volume, demand, capacity and performance
- The first annual Strength in Practice event to help promote leadership visibility across the workforce and ensure clarity of governance, performance and support arrangements
- Implementation of Magic Notes in Children's and Justice Social Work to reduce administrative tasks and enable enhanced direct support to service users
- Continued implementation of a Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) scheme and development of a new Supervision and Support Framework
- Co-location of the Adult Support and Protection First Contact Team with Child Protection services at Seymour House to promote an integrated Protecting People approach
- Progress with the implementation of a new ASP Pathway with key priorities of a shared vision, risk assessment tool and multi-agency meetings for the most vulnerable people
- Collaborative review of Children's Social Work working hours designed to maximise support to families at times of greatest need, including evenings and weekends
- Coordination of the Early Release Scheme for Short-Term prisoners in response to concerns about population levels in prisons

4.5 The 2024-25 annual report is also forward looking and identifies the key challenges and opportunities for the coming year. Further policy and/or legislative change specific to Social Work and Social Care are anticipated, alongside continued budgetary constraints and requirements to maintain support to vulnerable groups in all services. In this context, some key priorities include:

- Inform and respond to developments within the new National Social Work Agency which is currently operating in its shadow year.
- Implement a new Supervision and Support Framework across all 3 services areas and explore the expansion of Magic Notes or similar in Health and Social Care.
- Advise on quality assurance arrangements on assessments, plans and support and support arrangements for formal learning reviews and associated improvement activity.
- Coordinate enhanced support for care experienced children and young people subject to Compulsory Supervision Orders at home and in Kinship Care in Children's Services
- Implement an Improvement Plan on defensible community-based alternatives to custodial remands and custodial sentences in the Community Justice Service
- Respond to the findings and recommendations of the pending Care Inspectorate inspection on mental health services in Adult Services
- Work with all partners to explore opportunities to develop a cross-cutting prevention plan for vulnerable people including through the development of place-based approaches.

4.6 Over the next 12 months, there will continue to be a focus on the capacity, confidence and competence of the Social Work and Social Care workforce. This will include recruitment, oversight of the Newly Qualified Social Worker scheme, supervision and support, training and development, caseload management, absence management, team development, involvement in improvement activity and wider welfare supports.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This report has not been subject to a risk assessment as it does not require any policy or financial decisions at this time.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Chief Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Heads of Service - Health and Community Care, Dundee City Council Leadership Team and the Clerk were consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer – Scottish Government Publication July 2016. Guidance for local authorities and partnerships to which local authorities have delegated Social Work functions.

Glyn Lloyd
Chief Social Work Officer

DATE: 5 November 2025

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**Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report
Dundee City Council
2024-25**

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Introduction from the Chief Social Work Officer

I'm extremely proud to present the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2024-2025. In my first full year in the role, services have continued to implement multiple new national policies or legislation whilst working within current and anticipated budgetary constraints, responding to changing levels and complexity of demand, managing risks, supporting teams, improving practice and meeting the varying needs of vulnerable groups from pre-birth to older people across our city.

Over the period, I've been struck by the level of commitment, flexibility and innovation across Children's, Community Justice and Adult services. Progress has been made with priorities identified last year in strengthening both CSWO and wider Protecting People governance arrangements; all services are improving foundational practice in assessments, plans and support; inspection grades improving in most areas; and performance exceeding national averages in several respects.

In my view, services are continuing to apply Social Work and Social Care values and practice to make major contributions to Council and Health and Social Care Partnership priorities, particularly in respect of addressing inequalities, promoting social inclusion and protecting people from harm. There have been some outstanding achievements, including Excellent inspection grades, services described as sector leading and others winning or short-listed for both UK-wide and Scottish awards.

The report shows how services are also increasingly focused on enhancing prevention and building community capacity to accelerate a shift in focus away from institutional care such as children's homes, hospitals or prisons. In doing so, they are working with partners and service users to jointly develop multi-disciplinary place-based approaches in our areas of greatest need. It involves a focus on enhancing the flexibility and accessibility of services, including during evenings/weekends.

We know there are continued challenges on the horizon, including financial constraints and levels of demand projected to continue to increase. New legislation in the Care and Justice (Scotland) Act 2024, the Promise (Scotland) Bill, the Domestic Homicide (Scotland) Bill and the Assisted Dying (Scotland) Bill are also on the horizon. It is imperative that we continue to empower communities, prioritise, support teams and enable them to build meaningful support to the people we serve.

Over the next 12 months, priorities therefore include a joint place-based focus on prevention; continued support to the workforce; enhanced targeted support to more vulnerable families; finalising a new Adult Support and Protection Pathway; responding to a pending Care Inspectorate inspection of mental health services to adults; and contributing towards reducing the growing prison population through defensible community-based alternatives.

Some Key Achievements in 2024-25

The Children and Families Service was a finalist in the UK-wide Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2024 for Our Promise

The White Top Centre received grades of 6 (Excellent) for wellbeing and leadership in their most recent service inspection.

Over 98% of patients were discharged from hospital without any delay and lost bed days reduced from 9,861 to 7,917

The balance of family-based versus residential care for children increased from 87.2% to 90.5%, now above the national average

The proportion of Diversion from Prosecution schemes completed successfully increased from 75% to 95%

99% of participants attending Save a Life suicide prevention training reported greater confidence in how they would approach concerns

99% of unpaid carers supported by the Carers Centre reported feeling their health and wellbeing increased after receiving support.

Children's Services case file audits showed further improvements with 94% graded as Good or better

Forrester Children's House received Very Good grades from the Care Inspectorate, describing their approach as 'sector leading'.

The What Matters to You initiative winning a COSLA Award on Community Engagement

Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions

The Head of Service for Children's and Community Justice Social Work became the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) on 1st March 2024. They continue to have direct access to Elected Members, report to the Chief Executive and Executive Director of the Children and Families Service and hold regular meetings with the Chief Officer of the Integration Joint Board. They also meet other Social Work leaders, managers and front-line practitioners. They contribute towards strategic partnership meetings as follows:

- **Chair of the Our Promise Partnership**
- **Chair of the Community Justice Partnership**
- **Chair of the What Matters to You Advisory Board**
- **Member of the Integration Joint Board**
- **Member of the IJB Performance and Audit Committee**
- **Member of Child Poverty, Inequalities and Attainment Leadership Group**
- **Member of Chief Officer Group for Protecting People**
- **Member of the Children at Risk Committee**
- **Member of the Adults at Risk Committee**
- **Member of the Tayside MAPPA Strategic Oversight Group**
- **Member of the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative.**

The CSWO is a member of the national Social Work Scotland CSWO Forum and over the last 12 months, Chaired the Social Work Scotland Justice Standing Committee. As such, they are also a member of associated partnerships such as the national Criminal Justice Board and have opportunities to contribute towards national developments and cascade them locally. In doing so, they are supported by a Governance Group which brings together senior Social Work leaders across the city with a focus on:

- **Practice governance and continuous improvement**
- **Professional advice including where services are commissioned**
- **Workforce planning, learning, recruitment and support**
- **Making decisions relating to the curtailment of individual freedom**
- **Assessment and management of certain offenders who present a risk of harm**
- **Assessing, reporting and advising on mitigations for serious or immediate risks**
- **Assisting partners to understand the complexities of Social Work practice**

Governance Challenges, Opportunities and Next Steps

Going forward, the CSWO Group will maintain a focus on priorities in this report in the context of wider developments, including social care reform; the development of the new National Social Work Agency and Scottish Social Work Partnership; national and local Protecting People Committees and workstreams; and legislative and policy change. To avoid duplication, enable integration and maximise partnership effectiveness in the delivery of services, there will be a continued focus on streamlining governance, planning and reporting arrangements as far as possible.

In November 2024, the Care Inspectorate published the findings of a National Thematic Review of Social Work Governance and Assurance. It focused on how well governance and assurance arrangements support leaders to ensure statutory duties are carried out safely and effectively; enable staff to be supported and accountable; and assist staff to uphold Social Work professional values. The methodology included consideration of literature, structured interviews with key leaders such as Chief Executives and CSWOs and a workforce survey. Nationally, key findings included:

- Services sometimes finding it difficult to match supply with demand exacerbated by increased levels of complexity
- Concerns that traditional relationship-based practice was being replaced by transactional or episodic engagement with service users
- A new approach to tackle recruitment and retention, which has been especially problematic in rural areas.

Locally, some key findings included staff having confidence in supervision and raising practice concerns, good understanding of line management arrangements, confidence in helping people to access community-based services and up to date training in Adult Protection, Child Protection, Trauma Informed Practice and Risk Assessments. As there was less certainty about wider governance structures, mixed views about support for Social Work values and some uncertainty about the effectiveness of their work, the CSWO convened the first annual Staying Connected event.

This occurred in November 2025, was jointly delivered by the CSWO, Care Inspectorate and Social Work Scotland and involved teams from across all 3 service areas. It had a shared focus on national and local developments, practice, priorities, wellbeing and support. The outcomes from the event are being used by the CSWO Governance Group to clarify and communicate both national and local governance arrangements and promote transparent and accessible performance reporting within and between service areas. Further events will be held on a minimum of an annual basis.

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Service Quality and Performance

Children's Services

In Children's Social Work, over the last 12 months the Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH) responded to an increased number of Child Protection referrals. In 2022-23, a total of 7,769 referrals, or around 148 referrals a week, were made to the hub by partners and members of the public. In 2023-24, this increased very slightly to 7,750, or 149 a week. In 2024-25, it increased again to 8,505, or 163 a week. This increase is partially attributable to a policy change stipulating that all 16–17-year-olds should be treated as children with concerns responded to under Child Protection Arrangements.

There was a slight reduction in the number of reported concerns for vulnerable pregnant woman from 187 to 174 but support to this cohort continues to be a key priority. In addition to existing support, this continues to inform the development of new initiatives both within Children's Social Work and with key partners for both infants and adolescents. The aim is to provide effective support to families before difficulties escalate and continue to reduce the number requiring alternative care, which has declined by 14% over the last 2 years. Developments include:

- **Revision of a Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Delivery Plan to promote consistency in the organisation of Team Around the Child Meetings and Named Person roles**
- **Allocation of Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) to the Tayside Council on Alcohol Birch Programme and Alternative Counselling services to support identified vulnerable pregnant women and other women at risk**
- **Work with NHS Tayside and Dundee University on the development of an Infant Pledge resource entitled 'Hello in There Wee One', promoting active listening and positive attachments between mothers and babies**
- **Allocation of WFWF funding to develop a co-located multi-disciplinary hub focused on enhanced information sharing and support to vulnerable young people in Child Protection or Youth Justice processes**

Following referral to the MASH, there was a small reduction in the number of families requiring more in-depth assessment by a Social Work team. Of those, the number proceeding to multi-agency Child Protection Planning Meetings decreased from a peak of 159 in 2023-24 to 99 in 2024-25. The number of new Child Protection Registrations also reduced from 136 in 2023-24 to 92 in 2024-25. As there were also 102 de-registrations over the same period, with decisions to remove a child from the Child Protection Register because risks had been addressed, this support is interpreted as being effective.

Bairns Hoose

To further enhance immediate responses to risks and prevent difficulties escalating, the service also continued to collaborate with partners in Angus Council, Perth and Kinross Council, NHS Tayside and Police Scotland to sustain a regional approach towards delivery of Bairns Hoose through extended Scottish Government funding. It involves enhancing support across the 4 Bairns Hoose 'rooms' of Protection, Health, Justice and Recovery. A full update is being prepared for the Children at Risk Committee in early 2026 and key developments over the last 12 months have included:

1. **Protection** – further upgrading the layout and facilities at the MASH at Seymour House to make it a more child-friendly environment and developing work with Speech and Language Therapists and Talking Mats to assist communication.
2. **Health** – additional capacity to carry out general GIRFEC assessments and specific Forensic Medical Examinations, along with training to NHST staff not accustomed to attending Initial Referral Discussions.
3. **Justice** – introduction of a new Scottish Child Interviewing Model (SCIM) to Police and Social Work teams to replace Joint Investigative Interviewing (JII) and improved links with the Procurator Fiscal and Court via a video link.
4. **Recovery** – commissioning longer-term flexible family support to assist children, young people and their parents/carers, which includes a focus on families being the key decision-makers in support received.

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Bairns' Hoose

Children and Young People Requiring Temporary or Permanent Alternative Care

Over the period, there was a marked reduction in the overall number of children and young people requiring temporary or permanent alternative care alongside continued positive changes in the balance of family-based versus residential care. It mirrors the development of targeted support to vulnerable families and efforts to return some children and young people from external residential care to their local community, school and family ties. By June 2025, the balance of care had returned to a high of 91%, above the national average. Some details are provided in the table below:

<u>Types of Care</u>	<u>31.03.2024</u>	<u>31.03.2025</u>	<u>% Variation</u>
Secure Care	0	1	100%
External Residential	17	17	0%
Internal Residential	20	24	20%
External Foster Care	83	73	12%
Internal Foster Care	83	76	-16%
Kinship Care	111	91	-18%
Prospective Adopters	21	27	29%
At Home	50	78	56%
Flat/supported Accom	4	11	150%
Grand total	389	398	2%
Balance of Family-Based	90.5%	89.5%	-1%
% Externally Placed	31.4%	31.5%	0.5%

However, a reduction in the number of Foster Carers from 109 in 2022 to 74 in 2025 has continued to mirror national trends and both a national recruitment campaign and local 'Ideas to Action Programme' have had little impact. The service is therefore currently considering the findings of a recent Scottish Government consultation on Foster Care and finalising a review of fees/allowances in the context of budgetary constraints and affordability. A review of commissioned services is also including support to Foster Carers as a key priority.

Adolescents

In relation to vulnerable young people and young adults, Children's Social Work services now lead a partnership Young People's Strategic Group. The current key priority of the group mirrors the findings of the Joint Inspection of Child Protection Services published in January 2022 and Significant Case Reviews into support to adolescents. It involves implementation of a new co-located city centre multi-agency service due to be opened in early 2026 alongside the development of a new operating model and practice pathways. A wider framework of support also includes:

- **Two new Supported Accommodation facilities**
- **All 16–17-year-olds responded to as children within CP arrangements**
- **Delivery of Functional Family Therapy to families with teenagers at risk**

Continuing Care and Aftercare

In Continuing Care, a young person can remain in the same care arrangement if they choose to until they are aged 21 years as part of a supported transition to adulthood. Over the last 12 months, the total number of young people wanting to remain in their care placement increased having previously reduced from 40 to 31 in 2023-24 back to 41 in 2024-25. This may partially be due to the service revising a protocol in response to last year's decrease, which now involves the Aftercare Team explaining options to young people sooner.

However, the number of young people receiving compulsory Aftercare up to the age of 21 years and discretionary aftercare up to the age of 26 years reduced. The former decreased slightly from 52 to 44 and the latter from 119 to 107, with a total decrease in young people receiving Aftercare support from 171 to 151. Typically, young adults might not wish to avail themselves of support, but the service is reviewing the extent to which the team remains sufficiently pro-active in identifying, tracking and offering appropriate support to care leavers.

Positive destinations for care experienced young people showed a small improvement from 70% in 2023-24 to 73% in 2023/24 but data for the 2024-25 period is not yet available. Whilst each year this figure is based on around 20 care experienced school leavers, it is still significant that they lag their peers and can struggle to maintain progress longer-term. It reinforces the importance of the Aftercare Team ensuring that they are sufficiently pro-active in their approach towards care leavers and the review will be informative.



Children and Young People with a Disability

Following a review in the last 12 months, the service has retained a specialist Children with Disabilities Team to maintain and develop specialist knowledge and skills. This requires effective partnership with adult services, schools and NHS Tayside colleagues, including in relation to their transition to adulthood. The team continues to support families based on assessed and identified need which includes the assessment for and coordination of Self-Directed Support (SDS). Currently, 140 families are in receipt of various forms of SDS and a new assessment tool ensures equity.

This forms part of an action plan in response to a national Care Inspectorate Thematic Review of Approaches Towards Children with a Disability, which the team contributed towards. The review identified a range of good practice within Dundee whilst noting a need for greater clarity and consistency of available support both nationally and locally. This has resulted in a national social work group being formed with a specific focus on children with disabilities. The service is represented at the group, which affords opportunities for sharing of best practice.

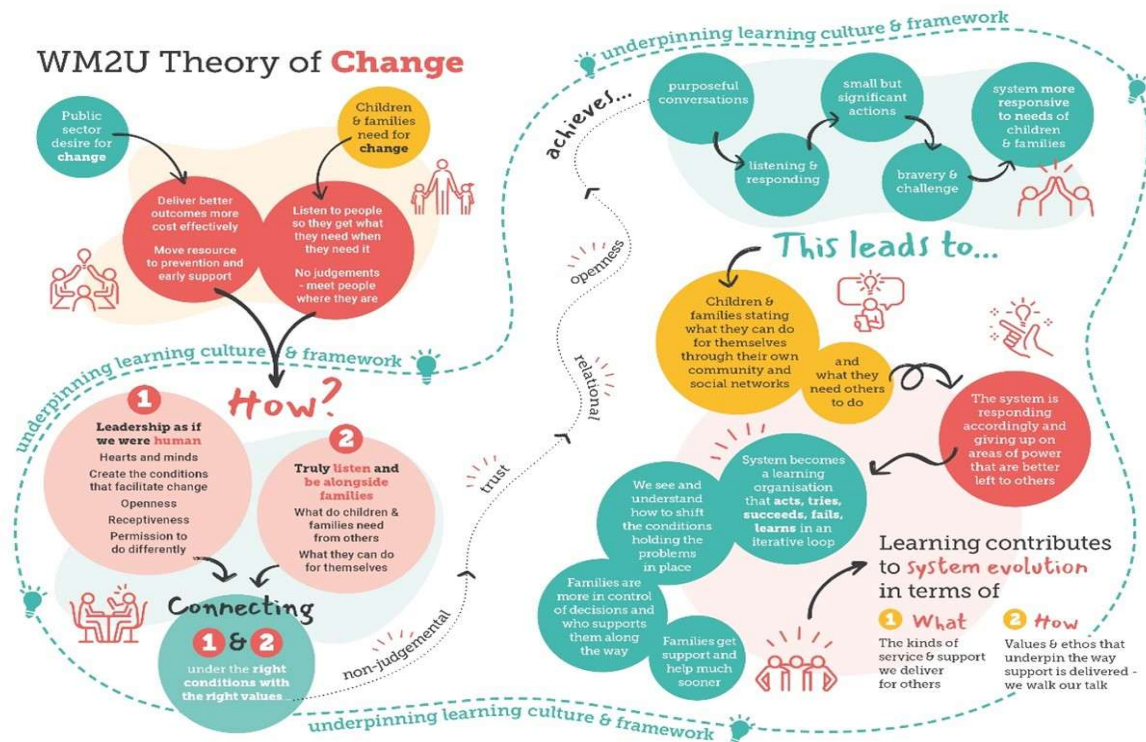
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

In 2024-25, 19 vulnerable young people newly arrived in the city without their parents or carers via the Home Office National Transfer Scheme (NTS) to be accommodated under S.25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. As such, these young people were legally defined as care experienced and the service supported them to settle, integrate, access wider services and stay safe. As children and young people, they can also be protected where necessary by local Child Protection arrangements and services will continue to ensure they receive appropriate support.

What Matters to You

The Children's Service also closely involved in the development of What Matters to You in partnership with the Hunter Foundation, BBC Children in Need, Columba 1400 wider Council and other partners. This initiative places the voice, needs, aspirations and capacity of communities and families at the centre of engagement and support. It has been piloted in Lochee, Strathmartine and Whitfield, where engagement and support has occurred via Columba 1400 Values Based Leadership Experiences, Community Cafes, family sessions and other activities.

Families have reported a positive difference to their lives involving a greater sense of belonging, growing self-efficacy, heightened trust, improved emotional health and hope. The initiative has made further progress this year and Local Community Planning Partnerships will be instrumental in scaling and sustaining the approach. As the Hunter Foundation and BBC Children in Need will withdraw in June 2026, the Advisory Board is developing a plan to scale and sustain the initiative. **The approach won a COSLA Award for Community Engagement and Empowerment in November 2025.**



For our overall approach to The Promise, which involves a range of actions under the 5 foundations of People, Family, Care, Voice and Scaffolding, the service was shortlisted as a finalist in the UK Local Government Chronicle Awards 2024 in the category of Children's Services. There have been demonstrable improvements in support and outcomes. An Expert Panel consisting of UK-wide senior leaders commented on a **'strategic approach to improving outcomes engaging a variety of partners evidencing good progress in a challenging context'**.



Community Justice Services

In Community Justice, the service continued to deliver and develop a range of interventions across the criminal justice system to ensure that timely, proportionate and effective responses are available to people who commit different types of crime. For the first time in 4 years, levels of demand across most areas exceeded pre-pandemic levels, especially in relation to Diversion from Prosecution referrals. When all areas of demand are combined, the total in 2019-20 was 3,918 and in 2024-25 4,066. Comparisons with last year were:

- **Diversion from Prosecution** – referrals from the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) increased from 77 to 92
- **Court Reports** – increased from 1,165 to 1,368 reports to inform sentencing decisions
- **Structured Deferred Sentences** – increased from 44 to 87 to provide people with an opportunity to engage with support prior to final sentencing
- **Community Payback Orders (CPO)** – increased from 447 to 553 Orders newly imposed by the High Court and Sheriff Court
- **Unpaid Work** – increased from 43,616 hours imposed to 49,765, with work carried out at various locations across the city
- **Supervised Release Orders** – increased from 16 to 29 people receiving a custodial sentence of less than 4 years with specific conditions on release
- **Long-term prisoners** – increased from 153 to 165 people serving prison sentences of 4 years or more.

This increase is consistent with national trends and was associated with Police Scotland, the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service and Scottish Court Service continuing to address the pandemic backlog, alongside increased arrest and conviction rates for new offences. It was manageable within the available capacity. The exception to the increase was Bail Supervision, which was reduced to only 6 people and informed a self-evaluation exercise and improvement plan carried and developed in collaboration with the Care Inspectorate.

In terms of engagement, the successful completion rate of Diversion from Prosecution schemes increased markedly from 67% to 95% whereas the proportion of people successfully completing a CPO reduced from 70% to 65%. It has fluctuated over the last 3 years as teams aim to balance attempts to engage with people whilst carrying out enforcement procedures where they do not comply. Unpaid Work projects received 100% positive feedback from recipients and included painting buildings at Clatto Park, refurbishing benches at cemeteries and repainting railings (see below).





In March 2025, there were 443 Registered Sex Offenders across Tayside and 185 in Dundee. The service continued to jointly assess, supervise and support these RSOs and 2 high risk of harm Violent Offenders under Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). This includes regular information sharing, reviews and joint interventions with Police Scotland, NHS Tayside and Neighbourhood Services regarding Environmental Risk Assessments. The framework provides partners with structured opportunities to ensure risks are appropriately understood and mitigated.

Over the period, the service also worked with the Scottish Prison Service and other national and local partners to coordinate the release of short-term prisoners subject to the Early Release Scheme triggered by Scottish Government in response to a growing prison population. Locally, this involved the early release of 20 people with less than 180 days remaining of their sentence, not convicted of either sexual or domestic abuse offences and subject to a Governor veto where there were any concerns about other risks of harm.

Adult Services

In Adult Services, all teams continued to respond to increased demand driven by demographic pressures involving increased scale and complexity of need. Integration across the whole system of health and social care services and supports has continued to underpin a strong focus on shifting the balance of care from hospital and residential to community settings, particularly the delivery of care and support in people's own homes. This shift will need to continue with an emphasis on ensuring that all people receive the type and quality of care they need.

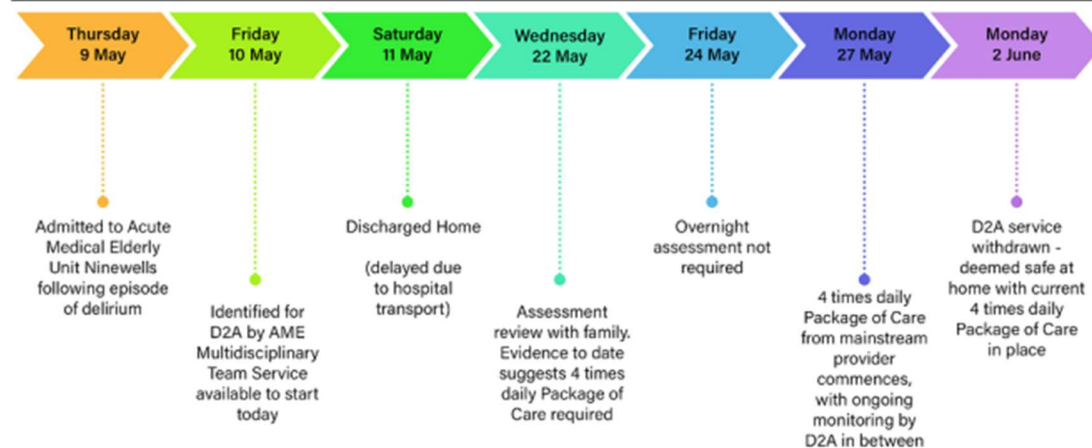
Hospital Admission and Discharge

The rate of admissions to hospital for people aged 18+ continued to increase from 12,456 in 2019-20 to 15,124 in 2024*. Conversely, emergency bed days for people aged 18+ continued to reduce, from 113,813 in 2019-20 to 103,847 in 2024*. Moreover, 98% of people were discharged from hospital without delay and the number of bed days lost for people aged 18+ reduced from 9,861 in 2019-20 to 7,917 in 2024-25. Please note that Scottish Government has published calendar year 2024 data and are yet to publish financial year 2024-25 data.

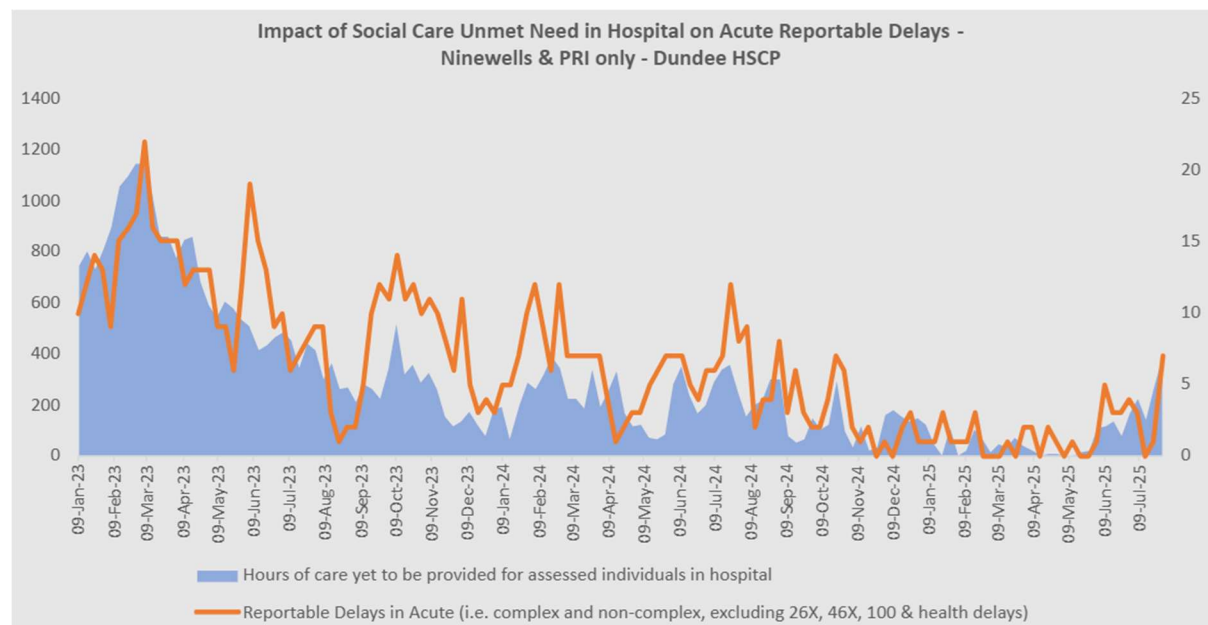
The Discharge Without Delay: No Place Like Home Programme has ensured that frail older people spend as little time on hospital as possible, maintaining greater independence and preventing additional demand on social care services. Over the last year the Discharge to Assess Red Cross Service has been mainstreamed and from May 2024 focused its resources on supporting the timely discharge of patients from the Acute Medical Elderly unit within Ninewells Hospital. This has included at-home assessments and bridging the care gap for patients awaiting long-term care.

Discharge to Assess (D2A) Patient Pathway Example 1.

Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delirious/confused in the last few days and wandering. Son was struggling to manage at home. Diagnosed with a lower respiratory tract infection and commenced on oral antibiotics for this. Mobilising independent. Ongoing issues with confusion likely to be caused by infection and environmental changes. Awaiting Psychiatry of Old Age (POA) review in the community.
Length of time on Service	24 days
Outcome of Assessment	Remain home with Package of Care.



This focused work is an example of targeted prioritisation of support to key groups and has resulted in the partnership being recognised as one of the top-performing in Scotland, where it has evidenced a sustained reduction in bed days lost due to unnecessary hospital stays. As a result of the ongoing improvement work with the Partnership's Care at Home services, bed days lost to delay have gradually reduced over the year. In April 2023, 604 acute bed days were lost to reportable delays, compared to 12 in April 2025.



This work will need to remain a key priority for the IJB and partners, as in addition to growing admission rates the city has a high rate of readmissions for people aged 18+ where the patient had been discharged within the last 28 days. In 2019-20, the rate was 128 readmissions per 1,000 population

and 139 readmissions in 2024. It will need to include a concerted focus on slips, trips and falls, as the city also continues to have a high rate of falls related admissions to hospital for people aged 65+. The rate increased from 31.1 admissions per 1,000 in 2019-20 to 34.0 admissions per 1,000 in 2024*.

Carers

In 2024-25, the Carers Partnership finalised their Involvement Framework, which has been developed to actively promote engagement and participation of carers regardless of their age, background or characteristics of the person they are caring for. The partnership has undertaken activities such as targeted engagement with young carers and parent carers, a survey of the workforce and service providers and focus groups held in localities. This has informed a statutory review of the Carers Strategy, which is now being revised to reflect the changing context and priorities for carers in the city.

Mental Health

Over the last year, Hope Point has continued to provide accessible 24/7 support for people experiencing distress. During 2024-25, 1,078 new individuals were supported with 6,015 instances of support being provided. Feedback from people accessing the service reflects the impact on their lives:

“I am leaving much more uplifted than when I arrived. I am extremely grateful for your help. Hope Point is an amazing service, all the staff here do such a great job and you should be proud of yourselves in what you do.”

“It was good to speak to someone who has been through the same experiences, more personal instead of medical.”

“Exactly what I needed at the time, not someone trying to fix me, just being there, understanding and caring”

The **Working Better Together, Substance Use and Mental Health project** (funded by CORRA), commenced in 2022 with the aim of improving collaboration between substance use and mental health services. There has been a focus on listening to and learning from the experiences of individuals and families. A Multi-agency Collaboration Hub (MASCH) has been established to provide quick joint assessments to access services and an information sharing system has been developed to support this approach.

Since the implementation of MASCH to December 2024, 85% of the referred individuals received support from or are engaging with at least one other services for their identified co-occurring condition. Individuals supported report they can access a wider range of services, reducing risks of suicide and psychological harms.

“I am now getting specific support for my substance abuse with Thrive thanks to and this meeting and I’m on the waiting list for community mental health for more support”.

The **Mental Health and Learning Disability Whole System Change Programme** in Tayside has continued to make positive progress over the last year. One of the programme aims is to co-produce a model of care ensuring equitable, effective, treatment, care and support for people living in the community with complex and severe mental illness. A comprehensive and co-produced engagement plan has been developed to ensure all stakeholders are involved in shaping and ownership of the final model, and service design workshops have taken place.

Following the publication of the new national strategy in 2022, local arrangements to support suicide prevention were also revised. Suicide prevention has now been fully integrated as part of the remit for

the new Children at Risk and Adults at Risk Committees within the multi-agency protecting people structure.

During 2024-25 a key priority for suicide prevention has been enhancing the availability of multi-agency training. A new training alliance called Every Life Matters has been established (funded by NHS Charitable Foundation) and 652 people have completed training at informed (210 people), skilled (396 people) and enhanced (46 people) levels. Having completed training:

- **94% of participants reported increased knowledge of suicide risks and protective factors.**
- **99% of participants reported feeling confident in having sensitive and compassionate conversations about suicide.**
- **94% of participants reported feeling more confident to support someone at risk of suicide to develop a safety plan.**

Mental Health Officer Service

The Mental Health Officer (MHO) Service continues to experience a high demand in both areas of Mental Health and Adults with Incapacity (AWI). In respect of mental health, there has been a slight decrease in the number of all Orders compared to the previous year. There continues to be difficulties in the number of practicing MHOs but the service continues to try and maintain capacity. One new MHO has commenced in role, whilst 3 experienced MHO's have left the service over the same period. One of these is hopefully temporary. A further 2 will now start this year's MHO course.

In relation to Adults with Incapacity, requests for new Guardianship applications have increased slightly this year. The trend of increasing numbers of requests for reports related to renewals of Welfare Guardianship Orders has continued with this now a significant demand on resources. However, the overall capacity of mental health services continues to be a key priority, as well as work in relation to supervising private Welfare Guardianships. A training program by the MHO Service for AWIA has been rolled out to all Health and Social Care Teams and some in Children Services.

It is intended that all operational teams in Dundee will receive this training and that it will form a part of a rolling program going forward. The MHO Service in collaboration with our Learning and Workforce colleagues are developing a separate AWIA program for all Newly Qualified Workers as part of their supported year. Further developments will be informed by the findings of the current Care Inspectorate inspection of mental health services for adults, due to be published towards the end of 2025. It is anticipated that the inspection will confirm self-evaluated strengths and areas for improvement.



Older People

Work to support older people was encompassed within approaches towards hospital admission and discharge; carers; and mental health. This this was augmented by specific initiatives focused on care homes, designed to enhance the experience of residents and their families. One such initiative was the **Dundee Activity Network (DAN)**, which aims to improve the quality of life and physical and mental health and wellbeing of care home residents by offering person-centred meaningful activity focused on the needs, interests and hobbies of residents.

Some benefits of being involved in the network include sharing good practice, activity ideas and resources; networking and support; training opportunities for care home staff; and collaborative working opportunities and inter-home activities. In September 2024, working in conjunction with Leisure and Culture Dundee and DVVA, the Network relaunched Going for Gold. The theme was the Dundee Olympics and care home, and daycare services took part in a variety of creative and physical activities. It was very well received by residents.

Drug and Alcohol Services

In 2024-25, 159 people were supported following a near-fatal overdose, with 75% of those people receiving contact from support services within 24 hours. In 2024, there were 46 drug-related deaths in Dundee, an increase of 8 deaths from the previous year and 36 alcohol specific deaths, an increase of 1 death from the previous year. These trends are concerning, involve a disproportionate number of women and often occur when people are at home alone. It is informing further improvement activity, including gender informed preventative support to women and naloxone training.

More positively, where people are accessing treatment and support the implementation of the national Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards was a key aspect of the work of the Alcohol and Drug Partnership in 2024-25. The national benchmarking report on MAT implementation was published on 17 June 2025 (see [MAT Benchmarking 2024](#) for full report) and demonstrated considerable progress:

	MAT 1	MAT 2	MAT 3	MAT 4	MAT 5	MAT 6	MAT 6 (& 10)	MAT 7	MAT 8	MAT 9	MAT 10
2022						N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2023							N/A				
2024						N/A					N/A
2025						N/A					N/A



Red
Provisional Amber
Amber
Provisional Green
Green

2022 MAT 6 to MAT 10 were not assessed
2023 MAT 6 and MAT 10 were assessed separately
2024 MAT 6 and MAT 10 were assessed jointly

In terms of what this means in practice for local people with a substance use concern:

- ✓ **The number of days between people's first engagement with services to assessment has reduced to 0.**
- ✓ **All individuals who would benefit from it are offered Harm Reduction support at the point of MAT delivery.**
- ✓ **Services retained and continued to support 91.3% of people in treatment for six months or more.**
- ✓ **All MAT delivery is psychologically and trauma informed; 89% of staff have completed appropriate tier one training.**
- ✓ **People can access MAT via Primary Care (including GPs and Community Pharmacies), with 27 people now prescribed OST through these arrangements.**
- ✓ **There is good access to Independent Advocacy and support in relation to housing, welfare and income.**

In addition to progress around the MAT Standards, other key developments led by the Alcohol and Drug Partnership include the development and implementation of a training programme on Cocaine Brief Interventions. Dundee has also continued to develop their whole family approach through a joint project with Scottish Families and the decentralised fund was allocated for a third year to support Local Community Planning Partnerships to work with local services to tackle stigma. This work will continue in 2025-26 and will form part of planned place-based approaches.

Out-of-hours Service

The Social Work Out of Hours Service (OOHS) continued to coordinate responses to vulnerable families and adults in crisis, in partnership with key professionals from Health, Police, Private and Third Sector Agencies. The service still covers both Angus and Dundee and in the last year provided the following services to local people:

- Responded to 4,621 calls and undertook 9,063 visits concerning children and young people across the Dundee area.
- Out of hours staff also OOHS responded to 3,966 calls and undertook 104 visits to adult service users in the Dundee area.

Resources

Given growing levels of demand and/or complexity in several key areas, alongside reductions to funding and intermittent recruitment challenges, most services have reported that resources were stretched at times and outline concerns about sustainability. This was mirrored in the findings of the Care Inspectorate thematic review of governance and it is recognised that there will continue to be financial constraints which require services to innovate and adapt. In 2024-25, the total Social Work budget was £144.775m:

Service Area	2023/24 Budget
Children's Services	£38.312m
Community Justice Services	£5.305m
Adult Social Care Services*	£112,278k
Total	£144.775m

* Delegated to Dundee Integration Joint Board – net of funding transfer from NHST

Children's Services

Over the period, Children's Social Work continued to respond to financial pressures by adapting support to families where there is a risk of a child or young person escalating into external residential care; returning young people from external residential care to Children's Houses and Kinship Care; providing enhanced leadership and practice support to the Children's Houses; enhancing Kinship Care supports; developing internal provision of Supported Accommodation; and strengthening care planning arrangements for all children and young people.

The integration of management arrangements of Locality Teams and Children's Houses has resulted in a reduction in the number of young people being accommodated in external residential provision or Secure Care. The service invested in a leadership programme for Children's House Managers and this has led to the shared development of an overarching Improvement Plan designed to continue to build the capacity, competence and confidence of teams. One house also participated in a Winning Scotland Growth Mindset Programme which concluded:

- **'... staff who took part in the programme began approaching challenges differently. They focused on setting meaningful goals. Staying consistent and viewing setbacks as opportunities to learn rather than signs of failure. Staff described improvements in resilience, emotional regulation, communication and confidence'.**

The service also completed a review of Self-Directed Support (SDS) assessment processes, to ensure support is equitable and mirrors types/levels of need. It will enable this part of the service to operate within budget or use evidence from assessments to demonstrate and respond to any identified unmet need. A key part of this process entails the team confirming existing assets and supports available to families to provide a baseline on which any additional support needs to be coordinated or provided.



Community Justice

In Community Justice, there were no financial pressures in 2024-25 and the service continued to meet requirements via its ringfenced budget. However, following a Scottish Government led review of the Justice Social Work core funding formula and changes to the formula for the allocation of funding for the Caledonian Programme, challenges are expected in 2025-26. The service is therefore currently exploring contingency options to mitigate the impact of any reduction and ensure requirements can continue to be met.

Adult Social Care Services

In the context of a challenging overall financial settlement, the IJB continued to deal with increasing levels of demand associated with the requirements of people with disabilities, mental health and substance use issues, alongside the legacy impact from the pandemic and cost of living crisis. It reported a year end overspend of £7,216k, including £5,825k in social care budgets. Some key factors contributing towards these challenges include:

- Teams continue to experience vacancies because of recruitment and retention challenges, which has resulted in use of agency, overtime and sessional staff where necessary with a total of £3,150k spent over 2024-25.
- Increasing demand for community services for older people has resulted in increased hours for services such as Care at Home, which has also seen an overspend of £6,056k in 2024-25.

However, it should be recognised that the increased Care at Home activity has had a beneficial impact for in-patient services through significant and sustained reductions in Delayed Discharge, as well as reducing unmet need for service users in the community awaiting packages of care and minimizing unnecessary hospital admission.

Long-term financial sustainability and making best use of resources is critical to delivering the IJBs Strategic Commissioning Framework priorities at an appropriate pace and scale that matches the population needs but there are clear challenges. Continuous service redesign through transformation, collaborative working and further integration of services is critical.

Given the financial challenges during 2024-25 and anticipated demands and constraints going forwards, the IJB agreed a programme of savings and transformation activity to support the 2025-26 budget. The successful implementation of this activity across Social Work and Social Care services will be key to developing a sustainable service model which meets strategic priorities within existing resources, including financial, workforce and property.

Workforce

Recruitment and Support

The Social Work and Social Care workforce provides support to vulnerable groups in sometimes challenging situations. Teams frequently support people who have been traumatised and who, in various ways, may present a risk of harm to themselves, to others or from others. They are required to engage with service users and empower them whilst sometimes informing statutory decisions made by the Children's Hearing, Sheriff Court or Parole Board which may restrict their liberty, including in relation to Secure Care, mental health detention and enforcement of community sentences.

The workforce is therefore highly valued and currently consists of 1,325 people employed within the Children and Families Service (387) and the Health and Social Care Partnership (938). As an overview of their employment status, age, ethnic identity, recruitment, retention and absences in 2024-25:

- Over 99% are employed on a permanent basis
- Just over 12% of the workforce are aged 30 years or under
- Almost 45% are aged 51 years or older
- At 81% most of the workforce are women
- Over 5% identify as having a disability
- Just under 5% identify as being of black or minority ethnic origin
- Workforce leavers in children's and community justice services was 8.53%.

- Workforce leavers in adult services were 9.17%
- Just over 38% of new starts were aged 30 years or under
- Over 15% of new starts were 51 years or older.
- Days lost to absence was 22.67 days lost per FTE
- This is higher than the overall Council figure of 15.32 days lost per FTE
- There was an increase in working days lost across Children's and Justice Services
- There was a decrease in working days lost across Adult Services.
- There were less long-term absences at 81% compared to the Council at 85%%
- The most common reason for lost days was mental health at 45.64%

It is therefore apparent that the workforce is under-represented across some of the protected equality characteristics and that absences from work continue to present a challenge. All services have been involved in broader developments to enhance welfare support to people in the workplace, encourage early responses to any emotional or mental health concerns, support teams to manage workloads through prioritisation and use of such tools as Magic Notes, ensure tasks are equitable and manageable and appropriately apply absence management procedures but this remains a priority.

The recruitment pattern also provides some indication that some progress is being made in addressing challenges related to an ageing workforce and a desire to increase the young workforce but this will also need to continue to be a priority, whilst building on a range of measures introduced to enhance support and retention:

- ✓ Collaboration with Dundee University to increase student placements
- ✓ Delivery of mandatory qualifications to meet SSSC registration requirements.
- ✓ Fair Work First Commitments, such as payment of the Living Wage.
- ✓ Introduction of the national Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) Supported Year and Continuous Professional Learning Mandatory Learning activities
- ✓ Support with manageable caseloads informed by a Setting the Bar report
- ✓ Using Artificial Intelligence to record and transcribe assessments and support
- ✓ Ongoing [Navigating Individual and Organisational Resilience](#) workshops
- ✓ Ongoing [Reflection and Resilience](#) work with teams
- ✓ The Employee Health & Wellbeing Service SharePoint site wellbeing information
- ✓ The Scottish Government's [National Wellbeing Hub](#)
- ✓ An increase in the past year from 6 to 130 wellbeing ambassadors
- ✓ 21 of which are from across the HSCP and Children and Families Service.
- ✓ Trauma informed response to potentially traumatic events in the workplace
- ✓ Absence Review Learning
- ✓ Targeted focus group work where data indicates there are wellbeing concerns
- ✓ Able Futures Access to Work Mental Health Support Service
- ✓ A focus on race discrimination towards both the workforce and service users

Over the past year, services have continued to prioritise employee wellbeing through the dedicated work of the Employee Wellness Advisor. The service has offered confidential 1:1 support, team wellbeing interventions, and manager consultations. This has included bespoke sessions on burnout, stress and vicarious trauma with teams from across the social work and social care workforce. We have also held wellbeing roadshows and monthly themed events which have been aligned with national wellbeing and equality calendars – examples of events have included:

- Menopause Cafe
- Self-Care Week Yoga & Meditation sessions
- Grief Cafe
- Brew Monday: Wellbeing Workshop Virtual Brew Morning

- Time to Talk: Wellness Walk & Talk
- Heart Awareness Month: Cardiovascular Health Checks
- Celebrating Neurodiversity Week: Neurodiversity Workshop
- Endometriosis Awareness Month: Endometriosis Session

Services have also developed a comprehensive suite of resources which have included the Employee Health and Wellbeing SharePoint Site, referral pathways and training packs which have enhanced access to self-help tools and guidance. Feedback indicates improved awareness, confidence and wellbeing outcomes following interventions, with employees reporting increased satisfaction and a stronger sense of support in the workplace.

Training and Development

Protecting People Multi Agency Framework

In addition to general support, training is key to build the confidence and competence of teams and a comprehensive multi-agency framework was launched in February 2024 providing a basis of protection learning for all workers across the city. There is also now a greater emphasis on learning opportunities associated to equality and anti-discriminatory practice, including highlighting a new cultural humility module produced by colleagues at NES Scotland. In addition, we now have an equality section within the framework and as we review the framework, we are working towards making this section more visible to the workforce.



Going forwards, in addition to this generic training a training needs analysis will also be explored with Learning and Organisational Development. Teams across Children's and Community Justice Social Work and the Health and Social Care Partnership will implement Quality Conversations.

Additional Protecting People Learning Opportunities

Children and Families Risk Assessment Training

- A two-part workshop for practitioners from social work and education was launched to explore risk assessment and analysis. The workshops were developed and currently co-facilitated by the Learning and Organisational Development Service, Social Work Senior Management and Educational Psychologists.

Child Protection e-Learning Modules and Online Resources

- A range of new online e-learning resources and guidance relating to Child Protection has been introduced which has included 'Working with Resistance in Child Protection', 'Supporting Young People who Self-Harm: A Guide for School Staff & those Working with Young People', and a 'New Approach for Protecting 16/17 Year Olds in Dundee'.

Action Learning Sets

- A recent trial of Action Learning Sets focused on the issue of non-engagement in protection work. Participants reported the sessions provided them with a safe space to intensively reflect and be professionally curious in a supportive environment. The sets not only provided professional development but provided action plans for workers to test in practice in relation to the difficult topic of non-engagement and protection

IRISS Chronology Tool Pilot

- IRISS and the National Implementation Group have developed a chronologies tool designed to support reflective practice among leaders. The tool aims to foster critical reflection within leadership and across teams, with the goal of influencing practice and culture around the use of chronologies. The pilot phase in Dundee includes participation from both adult and children's services, and the work is set to continue through to the end of 2025.

Mental Health Legislation Learning

- A new SharePoint page has been launched to support practitioners in understanding and implementing mental health legislation. In addition to targeted face-to-face learning sessions on topics such as 'Crossing the Acts', our Mental Health Officer Team has created a series of short, recorded sessions covering specific aspects of the legislation.

Further programmes

- Council Officer Programme and Refresher Sessions
- Multi-agency Second Worker and Suicide Prevention full-day learning sessions
- Defensible Decision-Making learning Programme
- Adult Support and Protection, and Child Protection Awareness s

Adult Support and Protection Week

In 2025, the partnership again coordinated a calendar of events for Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Week. This included learning facilitated by the Learning and Organisational Development Service and multi-agency partners, covering key topics such as self-harm, independent advocacy, trauma-informed practice and the role of the Office of the Public Guardian.

Newly Qualified Social Worker Supported Year

In response to the national implementation of the Newly Qualified Social Worker Supported Year, we have continued to introduce and update the support and resources available to our Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). The introduction of the mandatory learning activities prompted us to review our monthly continuous professional learning (CPL) sessions and embed some of the learning activities into these sessions, encouraging opportunities for NQSWs to reflect and learn together. A further development in 2024/2025 has been the launch of our NQSW Mentoring Programme which involves NQSWs being matched with more experienced social workers, who are provided training and regular supervision to support NQSWs using a coaching approach.

Practice Learning

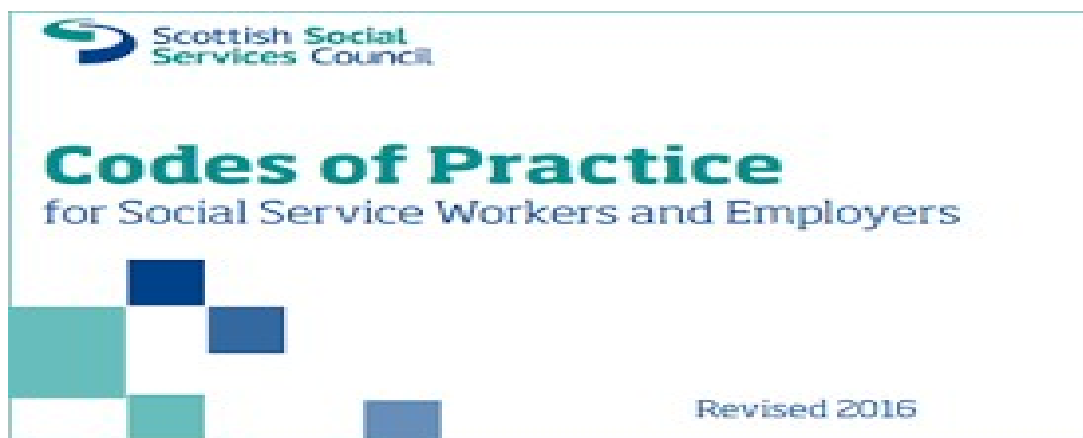
In 2024-25, services continued to work in partnership with Dundee University to increase our offer of statutory placements. We moved into the second phase of a test of change which involved a social work student being placed within one of our secondary schools, with additional learning opportunities from a social work team. Whilst we continue to test out this model, initial feedback and learning has highlighted benefits including the direct work with young people and families, the opportunity to build relationships and the importance of understanding roles in different settings.

Practitioner Forums

Our Practitioner Forums have continued to develop and provide opportunities for our workforce to learn together and be involved in service development and improvement activity. For example, the Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Forum has played a key role in shaping guidance and procedures to ensure they are reflective of current practice, fit for purpose and user-friendly for practitioners. Recent discussions around templates, policies, and guidance have led to the creation of a dedicated SharePoint page for Adult Services, providing practitioners with a centralised resource hub.

Scottish Social Service Council requirements

The Learning and Organisational Development Team have coordinated the delivery of vocational qualifications which enable employees to demonstrate that they can work to national occupational standards, along with academic credits to meet management registration requirements. In addition to professional Social Work training, this training ensures that the values, knowledge and skills of the workforce are maintained. It contributes to both the Council as an employer and the workforce meeting the SSSC Codes of Practice, which clearly outline joint expectations.



Inspection Findings and Improvement Actions Children's Services

Inspection of Children's Houses focus on Key Question 7 of the Care Inspectorate's Quality Framework for care homes for children and young people. It is comprised of a single key question with two quality indicators. The key question is 'How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?'. The quality indicators are children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life; and leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet needs and rights. Three of the houses were inspected last year and current grades and dates of all inspections are:

- **Craigie Cottage (May 2025)** - Very Good
- **Foresters House (March 2025)** - Very Good
- **Gilburn House (December 2024)** - Good
- **Drummond (April 2023)** - Good
- **Millview Cottage (October 2022)** - Good
- **The Junction (January 2025)** - Adequate
- **Fairbairn House** – not yet inspected

Adult Services

In total, 53 inspections were undertaken during 2024-25 across 44 registered adult services. This included 24 inspections carried out across 17 care homes and 29 inspections carried out across 27 other adult services. Four care homes operated by the HSCP were inspected during the reporting year.

Table 2 illustrates:

Table 1: Grade Received by Service	Care Homes		Other Adult Services	
Year	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24
Number of Services Inspected	17	24	27	22

6 'excellent' in one or more key questions	2	12%	2	8%	0	0	0	0
5 'very good' in one or more key questions	8	47%	5	21%	15	56%	11	50%
4 'good' in one or more key questions	11	65%	17	71%	20	74%	17	77%
3 'adequate' in one or more key questions	7	41%	15	63%	8	30%	7	32%
2 'weak' in one or more key questions	2	12%	4	17%	0	0	0	0%
1 'unsatisfactory' in one or more key questions	1	6%	-	-	0	0	-	-

4 'very good' and above in all grades (initial annual inspection)	10	59%	9	38%	18	67%	17	77%
3 'adequate' or below in all grades (initial annual inspection)	7	41%	8	33%	9	33%	0	0%

The grading data evidence an improvement in grades between 2023-24 to 2024-25 for care homes. Particularly of note are the grades 5 'very good' and 6 'excellent'. Other adult services grades remained similar even although there was a 20% increase in the number of services inspected. Whilst other adult services did not receive an 'excellent' in any Key Question they also did not receive a grade of 'poor' or 'weak'. One inspected care home received a grade 1 (unsatisfactory) and the service has provided direction and support to ensure the home addresses requirements and areas for improvement.

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

This was published in January 2022 and services were graded as Good overall with 4 areas for improvement, which mirrored a local partnership self-evaluation. Progress over the last 12 months has included:

1. **Approaches to recognising and responding to concerns about risk of harm and providing support to young people were not as effective as those for younger children** - funding has been secured for a co-located Hub in the city centre to support young people and respond to complex needs through a joined up partnership approach and will ne open early 2026.

Developments in multi-agency approaches to this age group are overseen by Dundee's Young People's Strategic Group which consists of senior managers from across the council and partnership, including Third Sector. Learning and Organisational Development have supported those involved in the new initiative through development sessions and training in risk assessments.

The model will also involve collaboration with The Corner for sexual health services and with Employability colleagues to promote positive destinations for vulnerable young people on leaving school. A new infrastructure has also been put in place to support implementation of the Care and Risk Management protocol; leadership and management of Young People's Houses have been revised; Supported Accommodation facilities for Care Leavers have been extended; and a Transitions Protocol is being revised.

2. **Children and young people at risk of harm and their parents or carers were not consistently being supported to participate in protective processes** – a Child Protection Charter which mirrors the principles of Trauma Informed Practice was developed by young people and widely circulated across the multi-agency workforce. This involved several briefing sessions and agency leads being identified to embed the principles of the charter Further work in relation to the charter is now integrated into the protecting people engagement and participation subgroup.

The service has introduced a Mind of My Own app, which enables children and young people to comment on the support they receive in their own time. The Champions Board now operates in all 8 Secondary Schools and young people have participated in Columba 1400 Values Based Leadership Academies.

"I'm not the greatest with technology but I explained what Mind Of My Own is to a 15-year-old and he downloaded the app onto his phone - he enjoys having a way to communicate with me and working through some of the questions in his own time that he normally would avoid answering."

The service also continued to commission an independent advocacy provider in 'Who Cares? Scotland', who have a strong presence in the Young People's Houses. Feedback from young people indicates they value the support they provide in enabling them to present their views to inform professional decisions.

3. **The partnership did not yet have in place arrangements for the joint and systematic review of outcomes data to evidence the difference it was making to the lives of children at risk of harm and their families** – this has been a key focus and developments over the last year have included:

The Child Protection Committee Data Scrutiny Group has now been integrated into the Protecting People Performance Management (PMG) subgroup, however, quarterly reporting of the minimum dataset continues to the Children at Risk Committee. The PMG are in the process of developing an integrated protecting people dataset which will link all the protection datasets in a more effective way.

The Dundee and Angus Learning Review Project has taken place with a successful transition to the new approach to Learning Reviews. A Learning Review group is in place and now incorporates all learning reviews, adult, child and violence against women.

An integrated Quality Assurance subgroup has also been established within the Protecting People structure with responsibility for both single and multi-agency quality assurance activities. An overarching, integrated Quality Assurance framework is in development which will outline the approach

to triangulation of information from data, quality assurance and learning reviews and will include a focus on measuring outcomes and impact.

Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection

The Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection was published in November 2023. The inspection focused on two key quality indicators in the [ASP Quality Indicator framework](#) of key ASP Processes and Strategic Leadership. It graded both as Effective with clear strengths which collectively outweighed areas for improvement. Progress over the last 12 months has included:

1. **Improve the consistent application and quality of investigation, chronology and risk assessment templates** – key processes have been reviewed and updated guidance included within HSCP adult protection procedures. This has been supported by extensive learning and development activity, with a focus on Council Officers. Recording templates for both meetings and within case management systems have also been updated to reflect the revised guidance.

Multi-agency case file audits completed in October 2024 indicated that 74% of cases with a risk assessment were found to have a good or better quality of risk assessment. Small improvements were also found in the presence and quality of chronologies and the HSCP continues to work on this area as a priority in 2025-26.

2. **Adult support and protection guidance and procedures should be updated as a matter of priority** - HSCP adult protection procedures have been revised and are now available to the workforce, supported by learning and development resources. Large Scale Investigation guidance has also been fully reviewed and updated.
3. **Quality assurance, self-evaluation and audit activities were embedded but to varying degrees across social work services** - these captured areas for improvement but the approaches were inconsistent. Greater cohesion and strategic oversight were needed to ensure the necessary change and improvement.

The HSCP has developed, tested and then amended a peer audit tool, with final questions evaluating trauma-informed practice being considered for inclusion. The Protecting People Quality Assurance Framework has been drafted, and a range of specific quality assurance activities progressed, including:

- New learning review guidance and process implemented.
- Implementation of the National Minimum Dataset
- Development of a PowerBi dashboard for adult protection.
- Completion of multi-agency case file audit.
- Single and multi-agency audit calendar.

The final 3 areas of improvement, relating to strategic leadership and pace of change have been addressed as a group.

- The Partnerships Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer and support team should ensure they remain sighted on the quality of practice and prioritises the necessary improvements, including adherence to guidance, under its new public protection arrangements.
- The pace of strategic change and improvement needed accelerated. The Partnership were aware through joint inspection in 2017 that improvement was required across key areas of practice and strategic leadership. Their own audit activity had reached similar conclusion, but progress was limited in key areas.
- The Partnership should ensure that strategic planning and implementation of new initiative across key processes and strategic leadership are well resourced, sustainable and impact assessed.

Some key developments include the completion of work to transition from an Adult Support and Protection Committee to an Adults at Risk Committee; the launch of a new sub-group structure with a greater focus on quality assurance and improvement; the appointment of a permanent Lead Officer with a portfolio for adults at risk; re-development of the strategic risk register; review of COG membership and terms of reference; and a review of the HSCP internal oversight infrastructure for Protecting People work.

The development of the Adults at Risk Pathway was progressed with the establishment of the Adults at Risk Leadership Group, Team Around the Adult Workstream, Adult MASH workstream and resources allocated to the redesign of the Front Door Model for Health and Social Care Partnership. Implementation plans for these key pieces of work were developed and approved. With the appropriate infrastructure in place, the design and implementation work is now well underway with all partners.

Learning Reviews

During 2024-25, the Protecting People Committees focused on responding effectively to a rising number of referrals for Learning Reviews. The Dundee and Angus Learning Review Guidance provides a single process for undertaking reviews, applies to all types of harm and is aligned to national guidance. Overall, there were nine areas of work associated with active Learning Review activity. Seven new referrals for consideration of a Learning Review to be undertaken were also submitted to the Children and Adults at Risk Committees. Five of these proceeded to a formal Learning Review, 1 was not accepted as it did not meet the criteria and the other did not proceed but identified key actions for improvement plans. Of the five learning reviews that proceeded, they are currently ongoing and outcomes are pending.

Quality Assurance

Children's Services

For the last 4 years, Children's Social Work has been carrying out regular audits using a Care Inspectorate evaluation tool focused on the quality of chronologies, assessments, plans and support. The audits are undertaken by pairs of managers in the service and reports are completed on a quarterly basis highlighting key themes. The most recent audit in May 2024 found that 94% of files were rated as 'Good' or better, compared with 93% in the previous audit and 53% when the process commenced in 2020-21. It illustrates a clear trajectory of overall improvement, whilst confirming further support is required to improve chronologies.

Categories of case file audit tool	Number rated good or better	Percentage rated good or better
Overall	16	94%
Accuracy of Information	25	88%
Assessment	16	94%
Chronology	11	65%
Care Plan	13	76%
Supervision/ Support	11	65%

The service-wide audit programme has been expanded to include quality assurance of family-based care, where results have been mirrored in terms of percentages rated as Good or above. In addition to this, the service has also undertaken a specific case file audit of adolescent services, where 83% were rated as Good or above.

Community Justice

This auditing process is mirrored in Community Justice, where over 80% of Court Reports were assessed as being Good or better; 100% of LSCMI risk assessments were assessed as Good or better; and 70% of Risk Management Plans were assessed as Good or better.

Areas for improvement were noted as ensuring all relevant documentation is uploaded and available on the case recording system and increasing the number of home visits in line with National Standards and Objectives. These are being progressed by the Service Manager and management team.

Adult Services A multi-agency audit of Adult Protection focused on cases where the adult had been the subject of an investigation or case conference (initial or review) in the year between September 2023 to October 2024. The tool required case file readers to consider all stages from duty to inquire onwards and asked whether all partners were involved, all relevant files were shared and what the quality of decision making, chronologies, risk assessments and outcomes were. The audit process identified some areas of strength:

- How partners work together to assess whether adults are at risk of harm. This includes how Adult Support and Protection legislation is applied and how inquiries are made to support the initial assessment of risk.
- How case conferences are used to identify, assess and manage risk and to plan supports for adults at risk of harm.
- How adult support and protection processes and supports make a positive impact of outcomes and quality of life for adults at risk of harm.

The audit also identified areas for improvement, including improving chronologies, risk assessments, information sharing and involvement of adults at risk and all relevant professional partners are each stage of the adult protection process. Significant work has occurred in the partnership focusing on improving chronologies and risk assessments. They have been improving:

- **Chronologies** - 60% were Good or better in 2020 and 82% in 2025
- **Risk assessments** - 67% were Good or better in 2020 and 74% in 2025

To continue to address the areas for improvement, the Partnership is focusing on two areas of work:

1. **Participating in a national pilot project alongside the Children and Families Social Work Service and IRISS focused on improving chronologies.** A reflective practice tool has been developed nationally which is now been implemented across social work teams. Team managers are leading discussions within their own teams and testing different ways of using the tool, meeting every six weeks to learn from each others successes and agree what needs to change to support further improvement.
2. **Working with multi-agency partners to implement a new pathway of support for adults at risk.** This includes a multi-agency risk management approach (Team Around the Adult) and a collaborative approach to initial assessment of adult concern reports (Adults Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub). It will also include co-location of Partnership staff with colleagues from Police and NHS Tayside to help promote joint working and communication.

Looking Ahead

This report has shown how our Social Work and Social Care services have continued to provide and improve support to vulnerable groups, including children on the edge of care; people subject to community sentences; people released from short and long-term imprisonment; people at risk of hospital admission or leaving hospital; older people; and people with substance use concerns.

In some areas, there have been some major achievements, such as our approach towards The Promise as a finalist in the LGC Awards, What Matters to You winning a COSLA award, Forrester House described as 'sector leading' by the Care Inspectorate, grades of Very Good and Excellent in adult care homes and performance in respect of MAT Standards and Delayed Discharge.

It shows a focus on providing crucial support to the workforce, with numerous measures on recruitment, induction, wellbeing, training, shared learning via quality assurance processes and joint responses to the findings of Care Inspectorate inspections of Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection and regulated services such as children's and adult care homes.

The Care Inspectorate national thematic review of governance and assurance arrangements has been informative and influenced the Strength in Practice event, where the professional values, practice, performance and improvement requirements will be further explored with the workforce across all 3 areas of Children's, Community Justice and Adult Services.

However, the report highlights some continued challenges, such as concerns about vulnerable pregnant women and babies/infants; Foster Carer recruitment; hospital admissions/re-admissions/discharge; mental health; and substance use. There are also some enduring workforce issues, including an under-representation of key groups, absence and recruitment challenges in some key areas.

The Care Inspectorate finding in the governance review that services are experiencing difficulties in matching supply with demand exacerbated by increased levels of complexity is mirrored locally and involves both financial and individual risks. There will also be further challenges as services respond to expected new legislative requirements across all 3 service areas.

It is therefore imperative that services continue to innovate and transform, whilst mitigating identified risks and escalating any current or anticipated concerns which cannot be addressed or tolerated. The CSWO will need to play a key role in this both nationally with Scottish Government and the new National Social Work Agency and locally with Elected Members and Chief Officers.