



**Midlothian Chief Social Work Officer  
Annual Report  
2024-25**



**(Roslin Glen, Midlothian)**

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## Introduction

I am pleased to present my first *Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report* for 2024-25. As Head of Adult Services, I succeeded Joan Tranent (formerly Head of Children's Services) in the role in October 2024. Joan retired in October 2024 and my thanks go to her for her contribution to social work in Midlothian over many years.

The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 requires local authorities to appoint a single Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO). The CSWO role was established to ensure the provision of appropriate professional advice in the discharge of a local authority's statutory functions.

As a matter of good practice, it is expected that the CSWO will undertake the role across the full range of a local authority's social work functions to provide a focus for professional leadership and governance for these functions.

The CSWO should assist local authorities and their partners in understanding the complexities and cross-cutting nature of social work service delivery - including in relation to particular issues such as corporate parenting, child protection, adult protection and the management of high-risk offenders - and also the key role social work plays in contributing to the achievement of a wide range of national and local outcomes. The CSWO also has a contribution to make in supporting overall performance improvement and management of corporate risk.

CSWOs' reports seek to provide an overview of the social work services in the area by providing carefully selected information. The reports when analysed together should provide a concise overview of the social work services nationally. Together, the reports can be used to highlight experiences, challenges, learning opportunities, and good practice. The reports should also enable CSWOs to present focussed reports for local governance structures.

The social work landscape both nationally and locally remained busy and challenging in 2024-25. There remained uncertainty over the development of a National Care Service for much of the year. Within Adults Services (which are part of Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership), alongside the expected Care Inspectorate service inspections of registered services, there was a multi-agency Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection undertaken by the Care Inspectorate, Health Improvement Scotland and HMICS. Children's Services continued to have visits from the Care Inspectorate in relation to their registered services. Children's Services also continue to lead in Midlothian on our response to those unaccompanied children seeking asylum. Justice continued to have discussions regarding the proposed implementation of the Multi-agency Public Protection System (MAPPS) that is being developed by the Home Office to better report and monitor those individuals who are assessed as high risk in our communities.

Staffing and resources across all areas of social work remain a challenge. We welcomed a number of newly qualified social workers in 2024-25 and have developed a programme to support them in their first year with us but staffing all areas of social work requires more work. Acuity and demographic changes are

placing particular pressures on the transitions of young people with disabilities to adult services, mental health services for all ages, services for those who are care experienced and, care for older people. Social work and social care, either via direct service provision or through commissioned services, are under significant pressure to meet rising demand and complexity.

It is not possible to convey in detail every aspect of social work within one report. The report focuses on key achievements, activities, outcomes and learning.

It is an immense honour and privilege to serve as the Chief Social Work Officer for Midlothian. I am ably assisted by the Deputy Chief Social Work Officer, Rebecca Hooton, who succeeded Joan Tranent as Head of Children's Services. I am fortunate also to have the support of a skilled and committed group of staff across all the areas of social work who perform consistently under challenging circumstances. Moreover, the work of third sector and commissioned services should also not go unappreciated. My thanks go to them all for all their hard work in 2024-25.

**Nick Clater**  
**Chief Social Work Officer – Midlothian Council.**



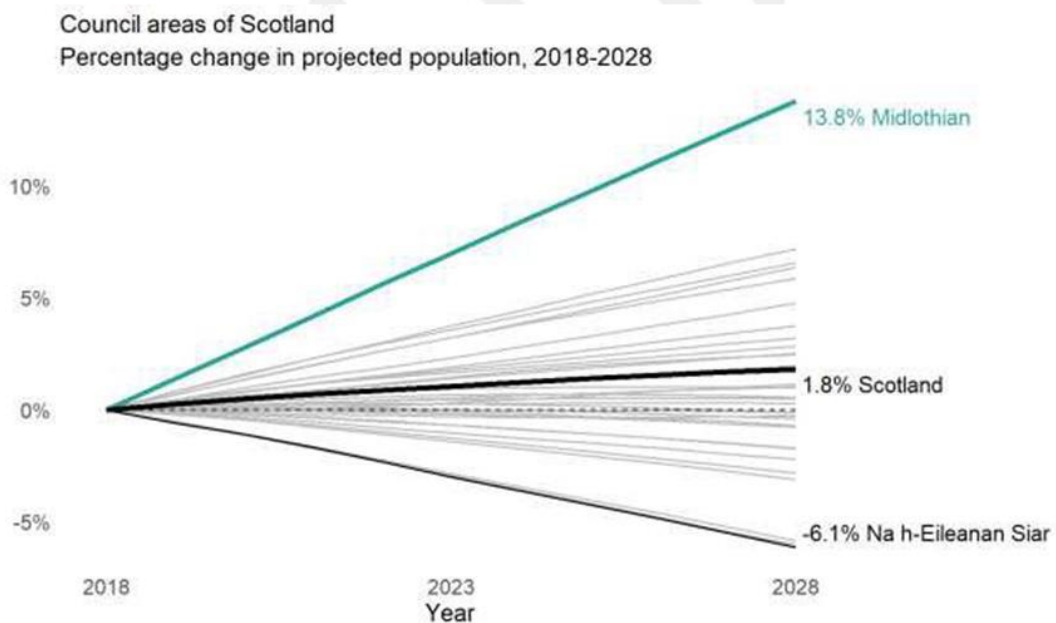
## Midlothian Profile

Midlothian's population in the 2022 census was 96,600. This is an increase of 16.1% from the 2011 census. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of households in Midlothian grew from 40,993 to 41,009 and is still projected to increase in the future.

Midlothian's current population can be characterised by 19% being over 65 years of age, 63% between 15-64 years of age, and 17.8% under 14 years of age.

Midlothian continues to be the fastest growing local authority in Scotland, and will see a growth rate of 13.8% until 2028 compared to the Scottish average of 1.8%.

Fig 1: NRS 2018-28 % Change in Projected Population



Our demographic profile shows growth in all age groups but particularly acute in the 0-15 years and over-75 age groups and therefore there will be significant demand for early years, schools, children's services and older people's services.

There is a gap in outcomes for people in different parts of Midlothian. Some areas have poorer levels of employment; lower wage rates; lower average life expectancy, greater concentrations of people who are elderly or disabled; poorer access to physical amenities such as shops, health care, public spaces and play facilities; lower than average qualifications and higher levels of crime.

In Midlothian there are 3 communities in the top 20% of most deprived areas in Scotland. These are Central Dalkeith/Woodburn; Mayfield/Easthouses and Gorebridge.

## Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions

The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) role ensures the provision of appropriate professional advice in the discharge of a local authority's statutory functions as set out in Section 3 Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The role also has a place set out in integrated arrangements brought in through The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. The CSWO's responsibilities in relation to local authority social work functions continue to apply to functions which are being delivered by other bodies under integration arrangements. The appointment of a CSWO is a statutory requirement of the local authority.

The strategic direction for the role and contribution of social work and social care services in protecting and improving the wellbeing and outcomes of Midlothian residents sits within the context of community planning and the integration of health and social care. The Midlothian Community Planning Partnership and associated sub-groups deliver the *Single Midlothian Plan 2023-27* which has 3 outcomes covering the next 4 years:

- Individuals and communities have improved health and skills for learning, life and work;
- No child or household living in poverty;
- Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

In their role, the CSWO sits on the Community Planning Partnership Board, which is a Board comprising senior leaders across Midlothian in both statutory and third sector organisations. It is chaired by the Leader of Midlothian Council.

Social work services in Midlothian are well established and are delivered between Midlothian Council and the Integration Joint Board (IJB). Adult social work and social care services, and Justice social work are delegated to the IJB and delivered and managed within the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Children's social work services are managed within the Council structure as part of the People and Partnership Directorate which includes Education and Community Lifelong Learning and Employability.

As highlighted in the Introduction to this report, the role of the Chief Social Work Officer currently sits with the Head of Adult Services, which is a role within the Health and Social Care Partnership. The CSWO attends the IJB as a non-voting member to provide professional advice and guidance to social work functions which have been formally delegated. Midlothian IJB is well established and evidences good governance and accountability. This arena allows for robust discussions around the pressures within both council and health services and for solutions to be sought at a strategic level. The importance of the role of the CSWO was highlighted within the IJB when discussing the efficiencies required to set a balanced budget. The Professional Leads (CSWO, Chief Nurse, Chief Allied Health Professional and Clinical Director) provided a paper outlining their position on the efficiencies and how these should be managed in a way which prioritised safety, statutory responsibilities and protecting the most vulnerable. The CSWO contributes fully to the strategic planning processes within the IJB and the consequent variety of plans:

- *Strategic Commissioning Plan 20225-25;*

- *Strategic Plan 2025-35;*
- *Carers Strategy 2022-25;*
- *IJB Directions.*

The anomaly of having health visiting and school nursing within the IJB but not aligned with Children's Services requires good engagement and communication between the services at all levels which is evident within the *Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026*.

The Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) Board and associated sub-groups has 12 priorities and is also key to ensuring the progression of the aforementioned *Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026*. The GIRFEC Board is chaired by the Head of Children's Services and Deputy CSWO and whilst the CSWO sits on the Board, attendance was sporadic and is an area of development.

Within Midlothian we have a joint public protection committee across Midlothian and East Lothian. The Chief Social Work Officer attends the East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) as well as being a member of the Chief Scrutiny Oversight Group (CSOG) along with other Chief Officers and both Council Chief Executives. This partnership allows for the sharing of practice and learning across the public protection arena which includes adult support and protection, child protection, violence against women and girls, Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). The inception of a joint Public protection committee in 2014 means it is well established and has over the years evidenced robust challenge and scrutiny. Having a Public Protection Committee has reduced the risk of the Public Protection agenda being fragmented into siloed committees. This recognises that there are cross-cutting issues and areas for learning and has made the agenda more streamlined for the CSWO.

MAPPA governance, whilst sitting with CSOG, is also managed via a pan-Lothian and Scottish Borders Strategic Oversight Group (SOG). The SOG, chaired by the CSWO in East Lothian brings the 5 CSWOs in Lothian and the Scottish Borders together with the MAPPA Office, NHS Lothian, NHS Borders and Police Scotland. It is a key decision-making body for MAPPA policies, practice and procedures and, for example, is playing a fundamental role in the approach to the implementation of MAPPS in Lothian and the Scottish Borders.

Midlothian and East Lothian have a joint Alcohol and Drug Partnership (MELDAP) and this is chaired by myself as CSWO.

The social work landscape has remained busy with a large number of strategic drivers in all our service areas. It is challenging for an established, never mind new, CSWO to fully grasp the impact of all the new developments, policies and agendas that come across the desk of a CSWO. This challenge is further exacerbated by the modern reality in social work whereby a CSWO invariably has experience in either Adults, Justice or Children and seldom experience in all areas. In relation to Children's Services, I am reliant on the managers there, not least the Head of Service, to keep me apprised of issues and developments. I meet with her every

week and, in reality, we speak nearly every day. Developing that close working relationship has been key and works well.

It is vitally important that as leaders we can engage in strategic discussions so that we can influence policy and share any concerns we may have. As CSWO I attend the fortnightly CSWO meetings operated by Social Work Scotland where all 32 CSWOs from across Scotland discuss a very full agenda and offer our views around new initiatives and the potential impact this will have, changes to legislation and any other relevant business. I also chair the Mental Health Officer sub-group for Social Work Scotland and am Vice-Chair of the Adults Standing Committee. Work is ongoing to ensure the Adults Standing Committee has a larger and sufficiently senior membership. In early 2025, Social Work Scotland established a group to look more closely at how social work has a sufficient voice within a health and social care integration space and I am involved in that group.

The Head of Children's Services who deputises as CSWO also attends groups at a national level that involve Children's Services and a Group Service Manager in the HSCP is significantly involved in the Justice committees in Social Work Scotland. In addition, many Service Managers across the three areas are involved in national arenas thereby sharing their own experiences and gaining knowledge and information from others which may be helpful in improving their own areas of work. For a small local authority, Midlothian has historically had significant involvement in Social Work Scotland work, recognising that it is the main professional body for social work in Scotland. Consequently, we have been able to both contribute to national debates and also take learning and information from other areas. Moreover, by having so many people involved in national work, it reduces the onus on the CSWO to take sole responsibility for this. Not only is this positive for staff development, it also ensures that knowledge is not held solely by one individual. This creates resilience in strategic thinking within the social work services in Midlothian.

My predecessor reported in the previous two CSWO Reports that we were in the early stages of developing a Social Work Assurance Group (SWAG). This group was established in May 2023, with a Terms of Reference and agreed membership. As CSWO I chair the group and have the Deputy CSWO and the Group Service Manager in attendance. Since inception, the group has developed and matured. What started out as a group to essentially get assurance on a small number of registered care areas, has become a group that provides governance and assurance for all areas of social work in Midlothian including the following:

- Service inspections and associated improvement plans;
- Strategic inspections and associated improvement plans;
- Mental Welfare Commission Reports learning;
- Approval and oversight of policies and procedures;
- Learning Review oversight;
- Freedom of Information Request oversight;
- Complaints oversight, patterns and learning (including SPSO notifications);
- SSSC Registration issues.

It is fair to say that some of these areas remain works in progress for the group but there is ambition there and it is the one meeting in Midlothian for social work that covers all areas. It is important for me as CSWO that this group provides me with the

level of assurance I seek for all areas of social work particularly in relation to the area of practice. The group provides strategic assurance, governance and scrutiny to Executive Directors, the Chief Executive and where appropriate Elected Members on the progress of actions derived from the aforementioned work. The group also provides leadership to create a culture of transparency and openness to support learning and practice improvement as well as overseeing the approval of policies within children and families and adult services. Sessions on the work of the group have been delivered to staff. The work of the group is reported to Elected Members through both Council Cabinet and the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Panel.

All social work and social care services in Scotland have a duty of candour. This is a legal requirement which means that when unintended, or unexpected events happen that result in death or harm as defined in Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016, the people affected understand what has happened, receive an apology and the organisations learn from the experience and put in place improvements. An important part of this duty is the requirement for organisations to provide an annual statement detailing how the duty of candour is implemented across services. Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, there was one incident in a care home where it was deemed that the duty of candour be applied.

Learning from complaints is an area, as noted above, that we have been keen to bring under the auspices of SWAG. This remains one of the works in progress. 2024-25 did not see any notable change in pattern in complaints across social work services. There remains an issue that many of the complaints are complex and require to be triggered to Stage 2 of the process but, again, this is managed in line with the policy. I am assured that learning is taken from any SPSO notifications via reporting through SWAG.

In conclusion, the governance and accountability functions for social work are well met within Midlothian. This is despite the challenges integration brings and the management of social work sitting in different directorates. The ongoing embedding of the Social Work Assurance Group (SWAG) is a definite positive and gives me as CSWO a degree of confidence that the while system is being considered. Nationally, the landscape remains challenging but Midlothian is well-placed through engagement with Social Work Scotland to keep abreast of national workstreams and we are well embedded in regional work in all areas of social work.

Scrutiny is provided via SWAG, the Care Inspectorate, Midlothian Council and Midlothian IJB and is both meaningful and sufficiently challenging and supportive. It is important to recognise that the role of the CSWO in terms of governance, accountability and statutory functions cannot be done in isolation and that support is provided by a range of staff. This is well managed in Midlothian and further enhances robustness around the assurances sought by myself as CSWO.

# Service Quality and Performance

## ***Introductory Considerations***

In an ever changing landscape, social work is still often seen through the prism of three key areas: Children and Families, Community Care (or Adults and Older People) and Justice (and Community Justice). This report sets that out below but it is worth highlighting some context in relation to this. Firstly, it is now unusual for social workers (including CSWOs) to have significant experience of ALL Areas of social work – most have experience of one or two. For a CSWO this means that, more than ever, there needs to be good working relationships between the CSWO and key staff and managers.

Secondly, there is increasing overlap between service areas. This is evidenced in Midlothian by the existence of No.11, our Recovery Hub which comprises NHS, social work and third sector staff from Justice, Substance Use and Mental Health. Moreover, we are also working increasingly across Adult's and Children's Services around disabilities, particularly young people transitioning into adult disability services. The Alcohol and Drug Partnership is a further example of overlap.

Lastly, whilst the sections below are divided in line with the three aforementioned three key areas, I want to start with a section on Public Protection which is more cross cutting. Public Protection is central to what social workers do and recent years have seen greater scrutiny and greater complexity. It is right, I believe that I set this area of work out as distinct.

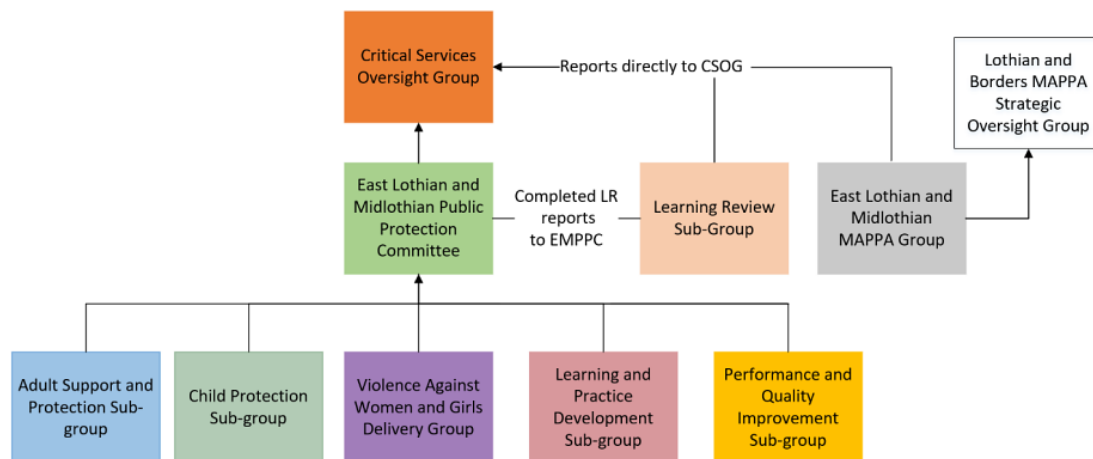
## ***Public Protection***

### **Public Protection Arrangements**

Through the Critical Services Oversight Group (CSOG), the Chief Officers of our core partners (Councils, NHS and Police) provide strategic leadership, scrutiny, governance and direction to EMPPC.

The East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) is the local strategic partnership that is responsible for the overview of policy and practice in relation to Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls. The primary aim of the Committee is to provide leadership and strategic oversight of Public Protection activity and performance across East Lothian and Midlothian. The reporting arrangements are shown below. The Committee is chaired by Keith Mackay who works independently. A number of sub-groups sit below the EMPPC.

The East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Office (EMPPO) supports the delivery of the operational and strategic objectives and priorities of the EMPPC and its Sub-groups.



### Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection

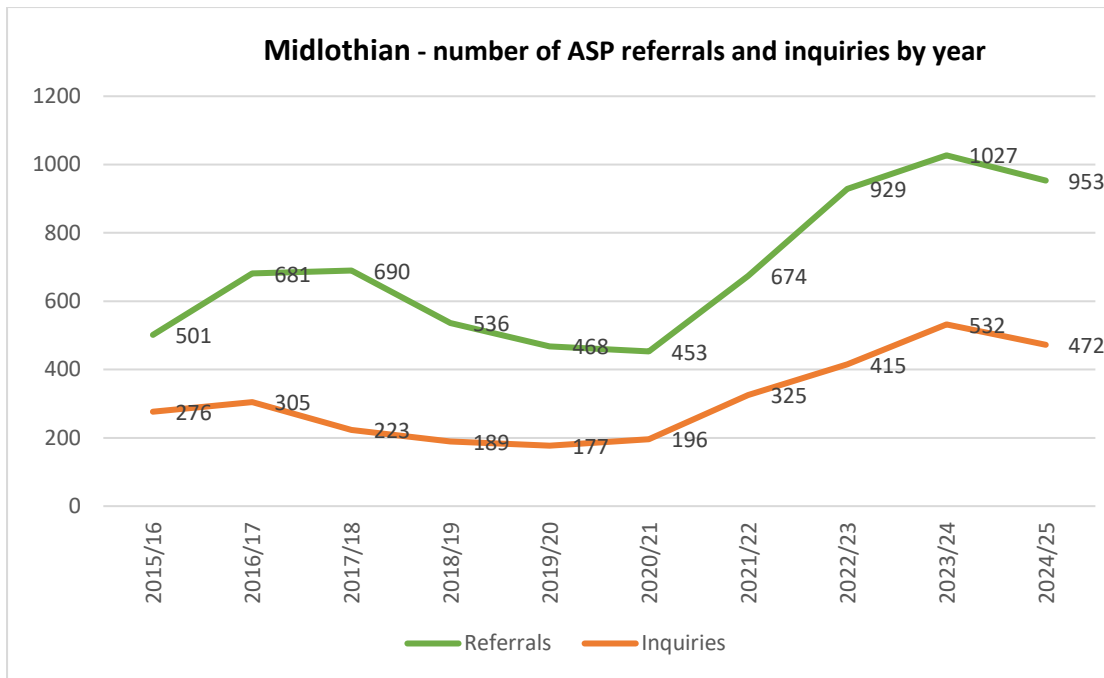
The Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian came to its conclusion with the publication of the report in June 2024. A lot of the work to prepare for and engage in the inspection had taken place in the previous reported year.

The inspection programme involved the analysis of a Position Statement which was developed on a multi-agency basis, where we identified our strengths and areas for development. Inspectors also reviewed the findings of a staff survey of 77 staff from a range of organisations, including Health, Police, Social Work and Third Sector providers, scrutinised 90 records, held focus groups with staff and engaged in Professional Discussion with strategic leaders.

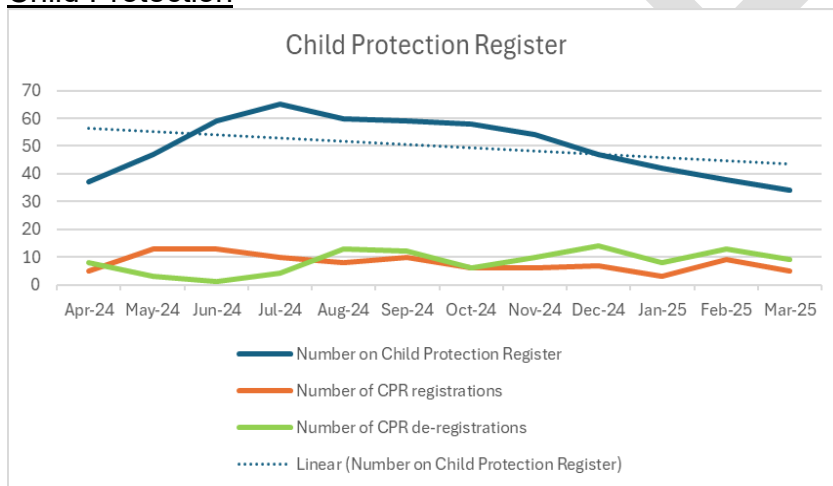
The inspection was broadly very positive with a number of areas of strength and some areas for improvement and a subsequent improvement plan was developed which is reported back through SWAG and to the Care Inspectorate at intervals.

### Adult Support and Protection

There continued to be an increase in the number of referrals received under Adult Support and Protection. Consequently, there was an increase in the number of Investigations undertaken (with or without the use of Investigatory Powers), in 2024 - 2025 Council Officers undertook 472 investigations, a 14% increase on the number completed in 2022-2023. In the majority of cases the risk was reduced or mitigated without the need to apply for a Protection Order under the Adult Support and Protection Act. One Banning Order was successfully applied for which prevented the perpetrator of the harm from contacting the adult at risk. In total, 46 Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences were held during the reporting year; 20 were Initial Case Conferences and 26 were Review Case Conferences.



## Child Protection



The number of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) in Midlothian (95 children across 2024-25) remained relatively stable in 2024-25 with some expected fluctuations, particularly around the end of the school summer term. This pattern was consistent with previous years and was likely linked to education colleagues protectively raising concerns in advance of the long summer break where children are less visible to professionals.

A notable shift in 2024-25 was observed in the categories of registration. Across the year parental mental health emerged as the most frequent category of registration. While domestic abuse has historically been the leading reason for registration, both this and emotional abuse now followed closely behind parental mental health. This change reflects both a broader recognition of the impact of adult mental health on children's wellbeing and improved multi-agency identification and recording practices. This evolving profile of risk highlights the importance of a trauma-informed,

family focussed approach to child protection and underscores the continuing need for close collaboration with multi agency partners and adult services.

The joint East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee and wider partnership continue to monitor trends in registration categories and work proactively to strengthen early identification, assessment and multi-agency planning around child at risk of significant harm.

#### Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, a statutory framework in the UK that brings together agencies like the police, Scottish Prison Service, and social work to assess and manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders in the community. The goal of MAPPA is to protect the public by ensuring these individuals are appropriately supervised and monitored through coordinated efforts and shared information. Quarterly reporting of MAPPA arrangements in Midlothian is made to the East and Midlothian Management Group (EMMG) Sub-group of EMPPC. The number of registered sex offenders being managed in the community on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 was 71. In relation to the number Justice social work were supervising in the community, this number was 27 on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. MAPPA is functioning efficiently and effectively, with no registered sex offenders reported for any sexual re-offending, and audits of MAPPA cases identifying strengths in risk management and partnership working.

#### Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Looking at the national figures, we estimate that over 3,500 children in Midlothian are likely to have experienced domestic abuse – these are children we all know in our nurseries, schools, health settings and community groups. The victims and perpetrators live and work in our communities and encounter our health and social work and social care services on a regular basis.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. This law focuses on the behaviour of the perpetrator, requiring a course of behaviour rather than a discrete incident. An increased use of this legislation is welcomed as it recognises the complexity of domestic abuse. The number of cases recorded by Police under this legislation increased from 35 to 51 between 2023 and 2024 in Midlothian. Domestic abuse as a vulnerability factor features most commonly at Child Protection Planning Meetings.

Each and every one of us who works and lives in Midlothian has a responsibility in challenging and tackling gender inequality and working together to improve outcomes for some of the most vulnerable people and communities in Midlothian. In recognition of this, partners in Midlothian came together to develop an Equally Safe in Midlothian Strategy, which was approved by the Community Planning Board in March 2024. This has been an important step in acknowledging and tackling gender-based violence and delivering the national Equally Safe Strategy needs, to be led and owned on a multi-agency basis, and across all services, not just the core services with operational responsibility for responding to domestic abuse. A Leadership Group was established, which the CSWO chairs, to take forward the priorities on a multi-agency basis.

We continue to deliver Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (Marac) in Midlothian as our key response to supporting the victims at the highest risk of domestic abuse. Marac is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies come together to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse and develop safety plans to reduce risk and increase safety. There were 123 victims heard at Marac meetings in Midlothian in the year, a reduction of 2 from the previous year. The total number of Marac meetings was 15. 120 victims were female and three were male.

### ***Children and Families***

#### Early support and intervention

To keep *The Promise* and better support children, young people and their families Children's Services engaged in tests of change in 2024-25, redesigned service delivery and realigned budgets to adapt how we deliver our statutory and voluntary services. Central to these changes was the increase of early intervention supports, holistic family support, supports that address the cost-of-living crisis and those living in poverty and strengthening the way children, young people and their families' voices are included in decision making. This is a process of continual improvement, and we are committed to listening to how this feels and impacts the families we work with.

#### Family Wellbeing Service

The Family Wellbeing Service (FWS) was established in January 2023 to address the gap in support between universal and statutory services. The FWS works with children aged 0-17, their families', schools, health and third sector partners to improve low school attendance, and other wellbeing concerns. In 2024 referral numbers to the FWS rose by 56%, with a total of 285 received. On average the team support 150 individual children/young people at any time.

#### Key Successes:

- The combined Team Around the Child (TATC) referral and resource allocation processes for early years and primary and high school age groups are now well established. With this comes an agreement by third sector and council services to identify the most suitable support and allocate without need for additional referral processes to minimise delays.
- The team is working with several families where it is recognised that without the scaffolding of support provided by the FWS, these families would require statutory social work intervention. Additional capacity for social work level assessment and planning has been created in the team with the recruitment of a second senior practitioner to support efforts to keep families together and out of statutory services in line with the aspirations of *The Promise*.

#### Impact on Families:

- A 13 year old was supported by the FWS and a multi-agency plan to rebuild relationships with school and move from online learning to being back in school for the first time in over a year.
- A mother of 2 children was experiencing low mood and struggling to manage the competing needs of her children. The parent was able to engage in support with FWS where she built up confidence and addressed health needs, routines and poor sleep patterns in the home. The parent and

professionals could see a significant improvement in how she was feeling and coping which has had a positive impact on the children's school attendance, the conditions of the home environment and the parent's engagement with health services.

### Hawthorn Family Learning Centre (HFLC)

Hawthorn continues to be the only service of its kind in Midlothian, providing support to children, parents and carers in Midlothian via Early Years placements for 60+ children, groups, outreach, and other supports. The centre works closely with both Children's Services and Education to provide high quality learning and support to families.

Across 2024-25, Hawthorn supported an increasing number of children who had complex care and health needs. 72% of Hawthorn children have additional support needs including being on the child protection register, developmental needs, a diagnosis of Autism or have a severe and complex medical need.

Recruitment and staffing remain one of the biggest challenges for Hawthorn, particularly given the increasingly complex support and health needs of the children as this requires additional staffing and training.

At the end of 2024, Hawthorn was successful in receiving funds via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support the 2025 Supper Club activities and to develop the centre's 'Secret Garden'. This work has now taken place, enhancing the available outdoor space, to create fun, secure breakout spaces for children and their families. During 2024-25, Hawthorn staff teamed up with staff from FWS to deliver monthly supper clubs to families. These events are open to anyone in the community. Feedback from families and staff attending these events was overwhelmingly positive and every family attending received a gift prompting family learning to take home.

### Income Maximisation

As part of our effort to reduce child poverty, Children's Services work with Citizens Advice Bureau to fund three income maximisation projects. This work has been prioritised based on evidence that child protection concerns and care experience is more prevalent in areas of deprivation and for those living in poverty.

The provision now enables any family who has contact with Children's Services to access income maximisation, this includes those referred to Team Around the Child or dropping in at Hawthorn, families do not need to be allocated to our service.

The project workers work directly with families to increase household income and reduce debt. Since 2021 the income maximisation projects in Children's Services have collectively generated over £1,213,000 for 365 individual families.

### Young Carers

Over the past few years Midlothian have invested in identifying and supporting our young carers. Schools are now well versed in completing carers statements and linking young carers with support and activities targeted at these young people. Over the past 3 years we have gone from approximately 150 identified young carers to almost 500 young carers who are supported via 1:1 and group supports.

### Systemic Family Practice (SFP)

SFP focuses on improving communication, reducing conflict and improving relationships in families. In 2021 we committed to 2 workers having a dedicated role to support systemic family practice. Since 2021 the team have had over 191 referrals and supported 88 families. Families reflect *'these sessions are a set time the family is together and can talk about the difficult stuff'* Evaluation following a period of Systemic intervention demonstrated improved communication, family cohesion, improved relationships and family resilience and a reduction in family conflict. Families have also reported that the intervention supported them to remain together as a family.

In 2024-25 our family systemic workers started our 'Calm and Collected' group. Group work sessions are based on the principles of Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) - a systemic family intervention approach that focuses on changing how parents address challenging behaviours rather than focus on changing the child's behaviour. Feedback from parents attending the programme has been positive.

### Family Group Decision Making

Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is now firmly embedded into practice across Children's Services and fully encompasses the foundations of the Promise supporting children and their families being centrally involved in decision making. Our lifelong links service continues to support those who become looked after to remain connected with those who are important to them. The service remains small but does important work with those young people who wish to explore their heritage and identity and reconnect with those once important to them. We have recently increased the number of FGDM co-ordinators to 3 FTE.

### Children Disability, ASN and Transitions

The Children's Disability Team was created in November 2024, as a recognition of the growing number of children and young people with disability who are requiring support to reach their potential. In line with much of Scotland, numbers of ASN have grown, with 44% of Midlothian's children supported with an additional support need in school. The growing CAMHS's waiting lists have seen the demand for support from Children's services for those affected, primarily by neurodiversity, grow. As a result, in Midlothian our focus has shifted to parenting support for those without a diagnosis and utilising Self-directed support for those with a diagnosis. High levels of demand have resulted in having to create clear parameters for the team, which at times is challenging.

The overlap between the Promise and Self-Directed Support (SDS) principles and values is evident within their work, supporting children to remain in their family home and being creative and responsive in that approach. Challenges have included supports coming too late, and families already at breaking point. This has resulted in some children with disabilities being accommodated, with little hope of return home. Positively the team provide over 215 packages of care, many via direct payments, promoting choice and empowering family to create their own support. Whilst this highlights the principles of SDS, a continued dearth of services has resulted in this being a necessity. Success has focused on key outcomes, identified with families.

Key trends for support has been around social activities for children to feel included and achieve and respite for parents.

Good Transitions has continued to be a focus, with a workstream under Midlothian's GIRFEC Board leading on improving practice. A worker seconded from Adult Services to Children's Services has helped improve practice, skilling up workers to consider those points of transition and early preparation. The development of an assessment forum, a reflective space for workers to bring their assessment and discuss outcomes and agree budgets, has been pivotal in raising standards of practice, considering the challenges provided. However there remain challenges around the differing eligibility criteria between Adults and Children's, and those falling between services or hitting cliff edges of support.

The greatest challenge facing the team is the sheer number of young people with additional support needs requiring statutory assessments. This has led to further waiting lists for families. As numbers grow, conversations continue around where the most appropriate place for support lies, and the role of community and engagement – who is best placed to support this child.

#### Looked After and Accommodated Children

The overall number of children looked after away from home was relatively stable throughout the first nine months of the year, with a decline in the last three months. The total in April 2024 was 218 reducing to 198 in March 2025, with a yearly average of 213. Throughout 2024-25 we continued to support approximately 40% of children who required alternative care to remain with family members in kinship placements (ranging between 144 and 168 children, with an average of 159).

The number of children placed with Midlothian foster carers reduced throughout 2024-25, from 59 to 54, with an average of 58 throughout the year.

We have also seen an increase in the complexity of needs of children, meaning that at times it has been difficult to identify appropriate resource, sometimes for quite young children. The number of children in external residential placements ranged between six and eight throughout 2024-25 but was a slightly higher overall percentage at the end of the year, rising from 3.7% to 4%. We reduced by 60% the number of children in external foster placements over the course of the year (reducing the total from 15 to six).

Throughout 2024-25 the number of children looked after away from home on a voluntary basis rose by around 17% (from 63 children to 74 children) which, in the context of a decreasing overall figure, could be seen to indicate positive working relationships with families.

We have achieved positive outcomes with a significant number of children being supported to return to their parents or moved on to alternative permanent care.

All of this is in the context of significant issues with social worker recruitment, particularly of experienced staff, who have the skills and expertise to support complex homes circumstances.

### Children Looked After at Home

The number of children looked after at home saw a gradual decline over 2024-25, with the figure dropping from 45 to 37, with an average of 42 children looked after at home each month.

### Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

We have continued to work with our Home Office colleagues to support the distribution of UASC who arrive mainly in Kent on small boats. Across 2024 we supported a number of young people via the Home Office National Transfer Scheme alongside a small number of spontaneous arrivals.

The young people are well supported by our local team of workers and offered the same opportunities as our local Care Experienced young people.

Most local authorities in Scotland are at capacity with no more foster carer or residential capacity to accommodate these young people. We are trying to develop more creative solutions and further capacity to meet this ongoing demand.

### Whole System Approach – Children in Conflict with the Law

Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) and Whole System Approach (WSA) are key components of Scotland's youth justice framework aimed at reducing youth offending and improving outcomes for children involved in or at risk of offending behaviour. EEI focuses on providing timely and proportionate responses to children's offending behaviour, ideally diverting them from formal court processes. Early Intervention is at the heart of diversionary meetings in Midlothian. Once a fortnight the Police Scotland Youth Justice Officer meets with the Early Intervention Manager to discuss the Police Scotland Concern Reports and agree a way forward, often involving existing supports/ relationships.

### Midlothian House Project

The Midlothian House Project is an additional support for care experienced young people as they move into adulthood. The Project supports young people move from care towards independent living arrangements. The approach promotes quality relationships which are trusting, secure, and consistent. Core to the project is long term support and learning that supports young people into adulthood. This is especially significant for our care experienced young people who generally have less informal or family supports to help navigate this process.

The fifth cohort of young people to be supported by the project started in Autumn 2024. There are currently forty-six young people involved with the project. Only two young people have disengaged from this support since the team began and we continue to have no tenancy breakdowns or evictions for young people supported by the team. This work has been well supported by positive working relationships with partners, most notably colleagues within housing.

### Family Centred Care

Following inspection in September 2023 the Family Centred Care (FCC) team has continued to strengthen. Based on a growing trend of children being assessed for permanence a decision has been taken to resume adoption assessments and wider post adoption support. This has been supported by permanent funding being

approved for an additional FCC Team Leader and Supervising Social Worker within the team.

Whilst foster carer recruitment remains a challenge both locally and nationally, we have invested in a tailored fostering recruitment campaign and have a number of carers being assessed as a result. We aim to adopt a more flexible fostering approach over the coming year to respond to the differing needs of the children and young people requiring alternative care and to fully utilise the broad range of skills across our foster carer group.

Over the past year the kinship service has been re positioned into the FCC team. In response to ever-growing kinship numbers, we have ringfenced a further dedicated kinship role within the FCC raising our kinship worker numbers to 1.5 FTE. We have strengthened our relationship with third sector partners to ensure kinship support is available and accessible for all our kinship carers. Our updated kinship policy is due to be rolled out across the service in coming months which will ensure clear review processes and a pathway for kinship support is in place and understood.

### Residential Services

Our children's residential service has continued to flourish. A recent unannounced inspection concluded with a VERY GOOD grading and the following key messages;

- Children and young people experienced therapeutic trauma informed care;
- Management had a clear vision and ethos for the service;
- Children and young people had opportunities to express their views;
- The service worked well with family members and external professionals;
- Transitions from the service were well managed and planned at the young person's timeframe.

The service has continued to strengthen working relationship and with colleagues in health and education and work closely with our educational psychologists to ensure that trauma informed individual profiles are created and understood for all young people using the service. These have proved invaluable to staff in residential services, across the wider service and with partners in ensuring consistent trauma and nurture informed care and response.

### Edge of Care Service

In recognition of an increasing number of young people having to be placed in out of authority foster or residential care placements due to lack of internal resource and the increasing demand for intensive support at points of crisis, funding has been approved to create an Edge of Care Service. This service is in the early stages of development however aims to maintain young people within the care of their family and within their local communities, to support fostering, adoption or kinship placements to prevent breakdown and to support the rehabilitation of young people placed externally back into Midlothian. Recruitment into four children and Families practitioner posts is progressing and we are hopeful that our new service will be operational by end October 2025.

## **Adult Services**

### Drug and Alcohol Misuse Deaths

In 2024 there was a total of 17 Drug Misuse Deaths (DMD) a small but welcome reduction of 3 from the 2023 figure. The deaths involved 13 males and 4 females. Like the national rate the highest rate of deaths involved people aged 35-44 years. Most deaths involved poly-drug use with an average of 4 drugs being implicated in deaths. Opioids, methadone, street benzodiazepines and Gabapentin were the drugs most frequently cited. There has been the increasing presence of Nitazenes in Drug Misuse Deaths. These drugs, many times more potent than heroin are often hidden within other illicit drugs and counterfeit pills greatly increasing the risk of drug poisoning and overdose. This type of drugs and their derivatives are likely to pose an increasing risk to people who use drugs. There has also been a significant increase in cocaine and crack cocaine being implicated in Drug Misuse Deaths.

Based on national data it is likely that Drug Misuse Deaths are more likely to occur in the Midlothian's most deprived communities Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) with deaths in the most deprived communities SIMD1 15 times higher than the least deprived communities SIMD 10.

Midlothian and East Lothian Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (MELDAP) and its partners continue to use a number of evidence led interventions including assertive outreach approaches to engage with people most at risk of harm, providing a range of harm reduction interventions, making it as easy as possible for people to access treatment services including same day start, choice of medication as part of the national 10 Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards. Services also work hard to distribute Naloxone kits to reverse the effects of opioid overdose. See below for further details.

20 people died from an Alcohol Specific Death in 2024. This is 5 more than in 2023. In 2021 and 2020 there were 18 deaths in each year. The 3 year average is 17 and the 5 year average is 18. The highest number we have had in the last 10 years is 23 in 2018. It is recognised that alcohol-related harm cuts across a range of services and is a nuanced challenge for health and social care.

### Substance Use Service (SUS) Treatment Service

The Midlothian Substance Use Service (MLSUS), Mid and East Lothian Drugs (MELD) and Health In Mind Peer Support as part of Mid and East Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership (MELDAP) services continue to implement and progress the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards. MLSUS is based at our Recovery Hub at No.11 which co-locates Justice, Substance Use and Mental Health Services. MLSUS comprises nursing and social work staff. Performance indicators regarding access to treatment, including rehabilitation placements remained positive throughout 2024-25.

The development and implementation of the Vulnerable Person Database reports (VPD) evidenced partnership working between SUS treatment service and Police Scotland, where individuals were highlighted directly to services where the police have attended someone's home and have concerns about their alcohol and drug use.

### Mental Health Wait Times

Mental Health Assessment refers to assessments by Mental Health Social Workers not Mental Health Officers (MHO). Work continues to look at how best to improve the wait times but, due to staffing capacity which has also been impacted on due to long term absence in 2024-25, continued to demonstrate an average longest wait of 19 weeks. The waiting list is monitored weekly, and priority is given to urgent referrals which also impacts on the longest waits. Further consideration needs to be given to a reasonable target wait for mental health social care waiting list, but assurance can be given that the service continues to meet the needs of high-risk priority individuals in a timely manner.

The Mental Health service continues to experience challenges due to the lack of dedicated mental health providers for specialist packages of care as well as a lack of appropriate mental health housing, mainly complex care where an individual requires a step down from acute/Rehab but still requires the 24/7 nursing intervention which can be provided through a hospital-based model or community setting.

### Mental Health Officers (MHO) - Adult with Incapacity (AWI)

Midlothian Mental Health performance indicator over 2024-25 continued to demonstrate significant improvements to the management of AWI, through the commitment to reduce the waiting time for Guardianship applications and ensure all reports are allocated to a dedicated MHO within 12 weeks,

Some positive outcomes in 2024-25 were as follows:

- MHO engagement at the right time means that complex issues related to decisions about finances and care can be dealt with as quickly as possible;
- Early MHO allocation means that people can be moved from inappropriate environments and safeguarded sooner rather than later;
- Hospital discharges are always prioritised however early MHO involvement means that any further admissions or changes to care can be managed more efficiently;
- The rights of individuals living without capacity are properly overseen within the framework of AWI legislation;
- Promotes an improved and timely approach to adults with incapacity;
- Provides consistency of practice to the client and their family.

During 2024-2025, Welfare Guardianship Orders could be broken down as follows:

Period	Granted	Individuals
2024-25	53	52

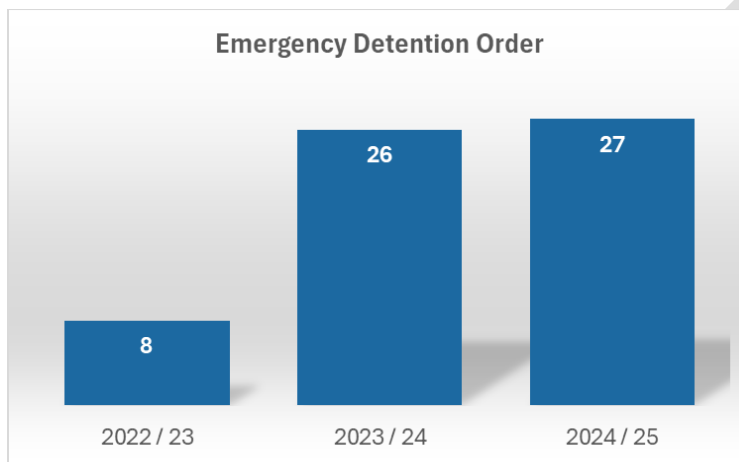
Application	2024-25
Local Authority	26
Private	27

Type Granted	2024-25
Interim Guardianship Order Granted	2
Welfare & Financial	18
Welfare only	33

### Mental Health Care and Treatment Scotland Act 2003

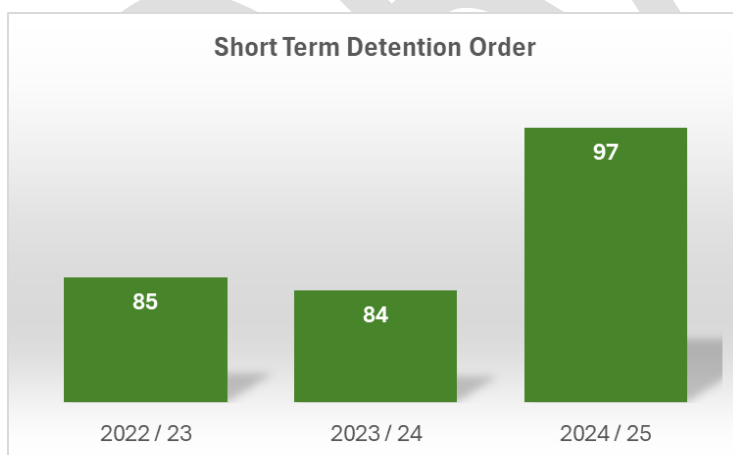
#### Emergency Detention Order (EDC)

In 2024-25, there was a slight increase of 1 in EDC's carried out for Midlothian compared to 2023-24. 27 EDCs were granted, of which 16 were conducted out of hours, 3 not recorded and 8 within hours. On 13 occasions MHO's were involved in the EDC compared to 10 not involved and 3 not recorded.



#### Short Term Detention Order (STDO)

In 2024/25 there has been a 15% increase in the use of STDO orders,



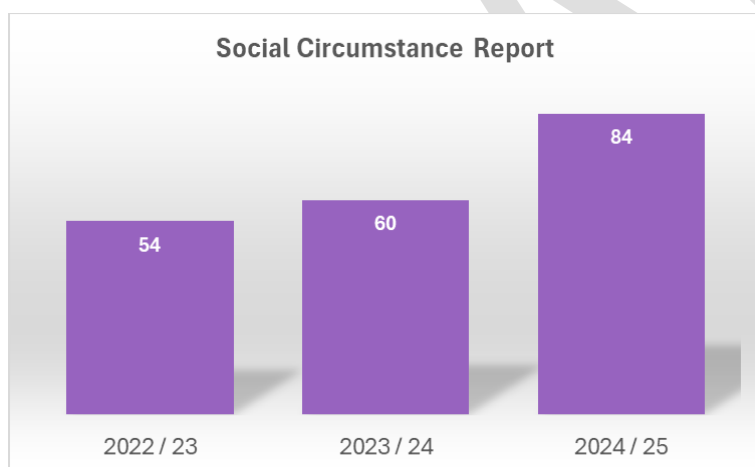
In 2024-25, there were 129 Short-term Detention Orders (STDOs) and 32 Compulsory Treatment Orders (CTOs) issued in Midlothian. This represents a 15% increase in STDOs (from 84 to 97) and a 22% decrease in CTOs (from 41 to 32) compared with the previous year. The table below provides a summary by age groups.

Age Group	2023-24 CTO	2024-25 CTO	% of Total CTOs (2024-25)	2023-24 STDO	2024-25 STDO	% of Total STDOs (2024-25)
Under 18	<5	<5	6%	<5	<5	3%
18–64	21	21	66%	45	60	63%
65 and over	19	9	28%	35	33	34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100%</b>

Approximately 0.13% of the Midlothian population were subject to STDOs during the reporting year. The largest share involved adults aged 18–64, who accounted for nearly 63% of STDOs and 66% of CTOs.

#### Social Circumstances reports

A key aim of improvement over 2024-25 in Midlothian was to ensure there was improvement in completion of social circumstances reports completed. MHO service continues to make steps to improve in this area.



#### Dementia Team

The Midlothian Dementia service comprises 4 social workers and 2 community care assistants. Currently in Midlothian, social work waiting times continue to be monitored within the agreed performance target of being allocated to a Social Worker or Community Care Assistant within 6 weeks - the service continues to demonstrate in 2025 improvement and consistency within the agreed performance target.

The Social Work team continue to receive a high volume of referrals, most of which are in a crisis. The Social Workers are also managing a high number of Guardianships and Corporate Appointeeships. The Social Work team have been working hard to reduce wait times for allocation for an assessment and have been

proactively liaising with the Team Leader when they are able to be allocated more cases.

Social workers continue to use person centred, outcomes focused approaches to keep people supported in their homes for longer and assessing for long-term care where all other options have been exhausted. There have been several cases of younger people with dementia who have required intensive case management, not only for the younger people with dementia but also their carers (mainly parents and partners). The bulk of their work is with assessment of need to recommend supports to keep people living as independently as possible but very often needing to place people in long-term care placements.

There is a shortage of suitable care home vacancies, meaning the social workers are managing ongoing high-risk situations to support people and their carers whilst awaiting an appropriate care home placement. There is also a lack of appropriate and available care accommodation for individuals aged under-65 with mental health issues.

### Disabilities

Disabilities services within Midlothian remained extremely pressured throughout 2024-25.

St Cuthbert's, a newly built development of eight single tenancies for people with learning disabilities in the centre of Bonnyrigg, was opened in late-2024. The tenants are a diverse group of young neurodiverse people, and their support will be highly individualised and tailored to their particular needs, strengths and interests. Many are young people in their first tenancy and there is a strong focus on enhancing and transforming the health and wellbeing of tenants using innovative digital technologies.

Making Choices Keeping Safe Midlothian is designed to support young people who expose themselves to risk whilst navigating the complex world of relationships and social media. It is a series of themed workshops developed and designed around the lived experience of six young people with the aim of supporting them to stay safe whilst promoting their right to healthy relationships and a full life. The project demonstrates the value of partnership working and early intervention by bringing together the different perspectives of the young people themselves, their families and carers, the social work learning disability team, Police Scotland, The Enable Local Area Coordination Service.

The Pavilion Project is an imaginative developmental day opportunities programme for neurodiverse young adults with complex needs for whom group day services aren't suitable. A close collaboration between the learning disability social work and community health teams, Midlothian Leisure, Midlothian day services, and a number of third sector providers has created a programme of highly individualised, developmental opportunities for young neurodiverse adults which builds upon their skills and discovers new interests.

Midlothian provides support at any one time to approximately 350 adults with a learning disability. We have seen an increase in the number of people transitioning

from Children's Services with complex needs and, as has been highlighted elsewhere, a Transitions Group was established in 2024-25 to work on a more ageless model of assessment and care management for people with disabilities. We still had a number of people attending day service provision out of area (usually City of Edinburgh) and we are keen to address this as whilst there should remain choice for people, we are concerned that people spend long parts of their day travelling which could be avoided were people to have day opportunities closer to their homes.

We have seen increasing pressures in our physical disabilities services particularly in relation to respite provision and care packages. This is further impacted by the lack of under-65 specialist residential provision. It is fair to say that, overall, disabilities account for some of our largest financial pressures and wait times for assessment can also be longer than we would like. Overall however, I am assured that our day opportunities particularly provide positive outcomes for people and the internal day services are consistently evaluated well by the Care Inspectorate.

### Carers

The HSCP has continued to work with and invest funding in third sector partners to expand the offer and range of opportunity for support within the community for unpaid carers. VOCAL, carer support and carer centre, have led new service developments expanding services to develop locality provision; promote and support future planning including Power of Attorney; and increasing community capacity to support carers at the beginning or wherever they connect with support on their caring journey. The range of engagement from very early intervention via grass-root activities, though to specialist support with issues such as legislative orders has seen Third Sector partners work collaboratively to deliver the diverse range of support needed. Looking forward, we plan to develop a new *Carer's Strategy for 2025-28* that will also link to a changed commissioning model.

### Self-Directed Support (SDS)

Development of social work practice in relation to Self-Directed Support continues to be an important area of work. An SDS planning officer is taking forward the implementation of SDS standards within Midlothian. Work is being progressed in several priority areas for development that includes support planning, resource allocation systems and a system of accountability. This is across the age span and focuses on areas where we have less traction in SDS – children and young people and people with mental health issues.

### Old Age Social Work

Our Inreach Team continued to provide a service to all Midlothian clients who require social work support to return home from hospital. In 2024-25, Unscheduled Care money was used to further recruit 4 additional social workers.

Using our new additional staffing we have located clusters of social workers for acute wards and the longer stay awards. The allocation of workers to acute wards has allowed a faster process of work. This allows ward movement on acute units, freeing up valuable beds for scheduled care and is a much better place for someone to decide about care home choices. We have built up links with wards at Midlothian Community Hospital, including psychiatry and rehabilitation staff to allow discharge outcomes to be achieved.

There continue to be challenges with clients who have lost capacity to make decisions but have no legal proxy. However the Team leader is now a qualified MHO which is has good overall understanding and linking with the mental health teams and mental health officers to have hospital work allocated quickly to MHO's and progress Welfare Guardianships as required.

Our Old Age Social Work Team also increased in capacity in 2024-25, albeit with largely newly qualified staff. This reflected the acuity and demand from the community as the old age population grows.

#### Care Homes and Extra Care Housing

Midlothian HSCP operate a care home (Newbyres), an intermediate care facility (Highbank) and an Extra Care Housing complex (Cowan Court).

Newbyres remained open with a reduced bed base due to staffing challenges and the need consolidate improvements made to the service. The decision to reopen the remaining beds remains with the Social Work Assurance Group (SWAG).

Highbank is an intermediate Care facility, opening in 1987. In 2011, Highbank changed to focus on short term support and intermediate care. There are 40 rooms, located in 6 units (Skye, Mull, Lewis, Iona, Jura and Harris), accommodating 3 beds for respite support, and 37 beds for assessment, rehabilitation, waiting accommodation and Interim for long term Care Home placement. Clients can be admitted to Highbank Intermediate Care from hospital or home. Looking forward, the home is due to move to a new site in 2025-26.

Cowan Court continued to provide a service to older people in Midlothian who have been assessed as requiring extra care housing. There is an inhouse staff group to support residents and emergency support is provided as required. A second Extra Care Housing complex is due to open at a new site in Bonnyrigg which should open in early 2026.

#### Care at Home

Midlothian care at home services delivers on average 9000 hours per week. However the longest wait for community packages of care sits at around 52 weeks. This is expected to significantly improve with dedicated social workers and OT's reviewing each one.

The percentage of staff within care at home qualified for their post sits around 84%, this does change if staff retire and new staff commence who require to be supported to undertake their SVQ 2.

Staff retention increased by around 25% with our external care at home providers which therefore created more consistency of care and an improved service for the client.

The inhouse service was inspected in November 2024 and the service were awarded the following grades:

How well do we support people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good

## ***Justice & Community Justice***

### **Community Justice Improvement Plan**

The current Community Justice Improvement Plan (CJOIP) is over five years (2023-2028) with 26 actions that align with the National Strategy for Community Justice. The reporting period is the second year of the plan.

Changes in staffing in 2024-25 across a number of community justice partners created challenges in maintaining effective partnership working; key changes in personnel included two changes of Community Justice Co-ordinator.

### **No.11 Allocation Service**

The No.11 Allocation Service is a bespoke multi-agency meeting, operated through our Recovery Hub at No.11, that was set up in 2019 to ensure that the needs of Midlothian residents, on leaving custody were met following the suspension of the Scottish Prison Service's Throughcare Service staff. The aims of the service are to:

- Share and review information;
- Coordinate support services for individuals due from release from custodial sentences.

The No.11 Allocation Service brings together key partners from statutory and third sector agencies within the Community Justice Partnership to consider the release of men and women indicating that they will be returning to Midlothian at the end of their period in custody and ensure that they have ease of access to key services to ensure that they are able to reintegrate into their local community and are supported to achieve desistance from further offending. The evaluation of the service focused on qualitative and quantitative data from 1st September 2023 and 30th June 2024 and is based on 56 cases, all of whom were male. The following outcomes were noted:

- **Recidivism:** Of the 56 cases discussed at the No.11 Allocation Service between 1st September and 30 June 24, 85% of individuals discussed (n=48) were not convicted of a further offence that resulted in them being returned to a custodial setting. 8% of names discussed (n=8) committed an offence that resulted in a period of further imprisonment;
- **Housing & accommodation:** In terms of accommodation, all individuals had accommodation on release. For those that did not have a fixed abode on release, 22 individuals were provided with secure accommodation on liberation and 10 clients were placed in temporary accommodation with a homelessness application completed. These were mostly council tenancies but there are 2 Housing Association tenancies noted. Most of these

individuals have successfully maintained their properties, unless they were again placed in custody;

- Substance use: of the 56 individuals, 10 were linked in with the Substance Use Service. The Allocations Service ensured that: most people were released with a prescription or were seen on the day of release to have their script continued. Continuity of treatment has a significant positive impact on helping reduce people's potential of relapse.

To support ongoing evaluation partners have agreed priorities for the next two years as part of an improvement plan agreed priorities will support ongoing evaluation of the service against the following outcomes:

- Individuals leaving custody have access to high quality community interventions to meet criminogenic needs and support desistance;
- Individuals referred to the No.11 Allocation Service will have access to stable accommodation on release;
- There is a reduction in the number of individuals caught up in the revolving door of custody;
- Service users are able to access health and wellbeing seeing services at the earliest possible opportunity;
- All Midlothian clients leaving custody have access to voluntary throughcare.

### Women's Justice Network

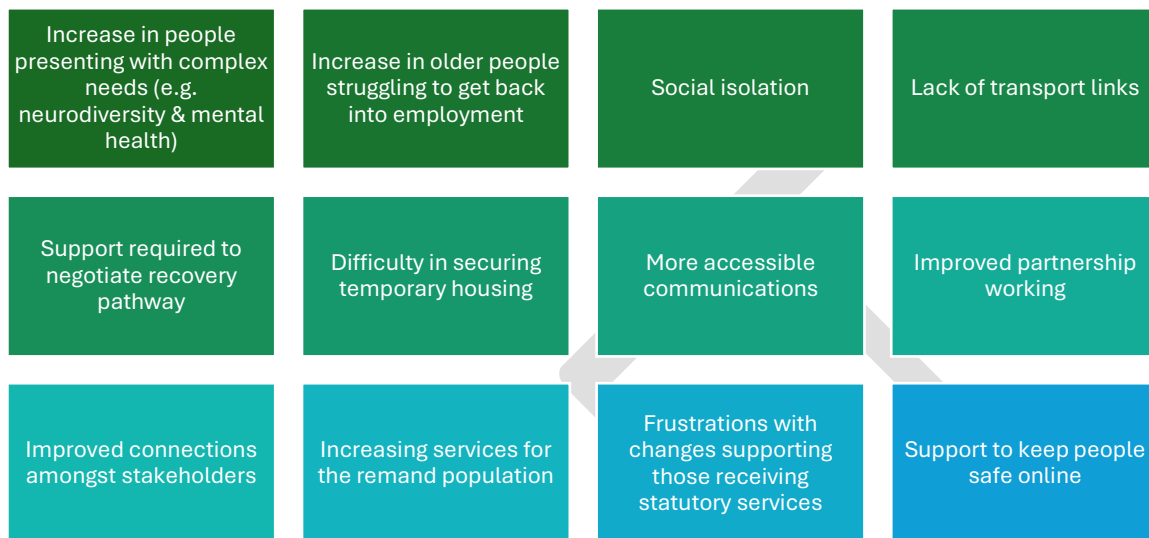
The Women's Justice Network is a national forum founded by Midlothian Justice Social Work Service in 2023 to share best practices, advocate for women's issues and inform prevention policy into practice and service delivery. During the reporting period the Network prepared and planned for it's biggest event to date featuring Professor Jane Monkton Smith, to discuss and review her theoretical framework: the Homicide Timeline. This Timeline is based on research analysing hundreds of intimate partner homicide cases and identifying a common pattern of coercive control and stalking behaviours and is used to support professionals assess risk and predict potential threats. The research is key to developing robust safety plans and, where necessary, effective risk management plans.

### Service User Involvement in Justice

Service User Involvement is important. It is essential to establishing and maintaining confidence in community-based sentences that there is assurance that robust action is taken on non-compliance. To be able to comply with the requirements of the order the individual has understand the expectations and consequences of non-compliance and therefore how this information is communicated is critical. Staff have been working closely with colleagues in Speech and Language, Communications and in collaboration with service users to ensure that the information and communications we send out is accessible and trauma informed. This has resulted in all leaflets and letters, including formal warnings, being reviewed and updated. The new documents have been used from the start of 2025 and have been positively received.

Work has also been undertaken to ensure that we maximise the potential for service users, and those with lived experience, to provide feedback to mould partnership actions and shape service delivery. It was acknowledged that here have been a number of consultations over the past few years on a number of issues impacting on

Midlothian residents. As such we undertook a rapid review of previous engagement activities that link to community justice, to avoid duplication of questions and findings. These included, evaluation feedback, consultation reports, discussions with staff and people experiencing and using services. The following themes were identified and will continue to be considered as part of the work streams within the current Community Justice Improvement Plan.



Families Outside worked in collaboration with Edinburgh College media students to create a film highlighting the challenges faced by families of those in prison, aiming to reduce stigma and promote the work of Community Justice. The film will be featured at upcoming events over 2025-2026.

Agencies within the Community Justice Partnership are also involved with the Local Employability Partnership to ensure that progress is maintained in addressing the barriers to volunteering and employability for those completing Community Payback Orders. Work was undertaken by Midlothian Community Action and Access to Industry to raise the profile of the benefits of volunteering to individuals as a progression pathway for completing their Community Payback Order. A session was delivered to individuals which focused on the routine, positive structure and social connections that can be made through volunteering alongside gaining key skills, experience and evidence of commitment as well as being a point for reference. Attendees noted concern about the impact of disclosing their convictions and offending history becoming known through local knowledge. This led to a partnership approach to provide training to third sector organisations to support recruitment of staff and volunteers who have criminal records. The information session aimed to 1) Increase understanding and confidence in: what to do if conviction information come back on a PVG/Disclosure during recruitment, assessing the relevance of conviction information to the role being offered, considering the risks, making reasonable adjustments and considering details within disclosure letters and 2) Encourage more organisations to provide people with a 'second chance'. The session was delivered in February 2025 to 8 representatives who had influence on recruitment in their organisation. Feedback was received from 7 attendees which overwhelming indicated that the aims had been achieved:

- 100% Strongly agree to feeling better informed about recruiting volunteers/staff with convictions;
- 100% Strongly agree/agree to feeling more confident and willing to engage individuals with criminal records;
- 100% Strongly agree/agree to feeling able to ensure a robust & fair recruitment process is in place within their organisations.

The success of the session meant that it will be delivered again in June 2025.

### Justice Social Work

Individuals become formally involved with Justice Social Work at the point of conviction when a Court makes a request for a Justice Social Work Report. The main type of report is the Justice Social Work Report (JSWR) and these are requested by a Sheriff or Judge to inform sentencing. The Justice Service also complete reports for Scottish Prison Service and the Parole Board for those who are progressing through their custodial sentence. During the reporting year the Justice Service completed 440 Justice Social Work Reports.

Staff in the Justice Service work with men and women supervises men and women aged 16 and over, subject to Community Payback Orders, Parole, Life and Non-Parole Licences, Extended Sentences and Supervised Released Orders. People present with a wide range of presenting risk and needs, including mental health, substance use, adverse childhood experiences, trauma and negative experiences of education and or employment. Staff working within Justice Services require the appropriate level of support and training to enable them to effectively engage with people in order to progress interventions towards positive changes in behaviour. The interventions the service undertakes with people are informed by effective practice research and underpinned by the ideals of reparation, rehabilitation and reintegration.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 the Justice Service were supervising 242 people on a statutory order or licence. Of this total 228 people were subject to a Community Payback Order, which is the community-based sentence and can have several requirements attached to it. The most frequently imposed requirements are Supervision and Unpaid Work. During 2024-2025 men and women subject to Unpaid Work completed 8143.5 hours to the benefit of the local community. Through work undertaken as part of unpaid work we aim to provide meaningful benefit to local communities. In the reporting year the service completed 207 projects supporting vulnerable beneficiaries, victims of crime, community groups and charities. The table below highlights the categories of beneficiary and the percentage of referrals within each category.

<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Percentage of referrals</b>
Disability	39%
Mental Health	28%
Social Work Involvement	12%
Charity	8%
Community Group	4%
Elderly	4%
Victims of Crime	3%
Not recorded	1%
Homeless	Less than 1%
NHS Referral	Less than 1%

In addition to providing opportunities for those subject to unpaid work to make reparation for their offending and provide clients with opportunities to complete certified training courses to improve their employability and promote desistance from further offending. In the reporting year, 96 people gained 120 qualifications as noted in the table below. These qualifications are delivered by Unpaid Work staff alongside colleagues from Community Lifelong Learning, Access to Industry and through Open University online training courses.

<b>Qualification and Provider</b>	<b>Number of qualifications</b>
Health and Safety in the Workplace (Level 4)	72
Other	39
Emergency First Aid at Work	1
CSCS card	7
First Aid at Work	1

The Justice Service also provides a range of early intervention and prevention interventions. These include bail services, structured deferred sentences and groupwork services for both men and women at risk of becoming involve in the justice system. During the reporting year the service worked with 17 people on pre-sentence interventions (Bail Supervision Order or a Structured Deferred Sentence).

#### Your Chance to Change

The *Your Chance to Change* service allows men to participate in the Caledonian Programme domestic abuse perpetrator programme on a non-Court-mandated (voluntary basis). The service received 6 referrals in the reporting period, one of which progressed to a full assessment for the programme. Over the course of the year, four men completed their involvement with Your Chance to Change.

#### Spring Service

The Spring Service is a multi-disciplinary team which recognises the barriers to women accessing services. It is for women in Midlothian who may have experienced past or current trauma, may be struggling with their mental health and/or substance misuse and may be in contact with the Justice system. In June 2024 Spring

commemorated its ten-year anniversary. The occasion was marked within Spring and a number of women celebrated with staff and senior managers from partner agencies. Marking the anniversary included promoting of the service across community groups and partners contributing to a 23% increase in the number of referrals (n=53).

Engaging with service users is key to understanding the impact of the service and ensuring that we meet the needs of women. Women are asked to contribute to the planning and delivery of justice services and to provide feedback. Women engaged with Spring have supported the review of written communications (letters and leaflets) used by the Justice Service and been involved in recruitment of Justice social work staff and in the planning events for the 10 year anniversary of the Spring Service.

The positive impact engaging with Spring has on women is evidenced by the 9 women who successfully completed the programme and move onto employment or further education, taking time out to travel or starting a family. During the reporting year staff from Spring facilitated delivery of Survive and Thrive, a 10-week groupwork programme. 7 women progressed from assessment phase to groupwork.

- I found it all to be really beneficial. How to cope with emotions really helped me. SPRING has put me in touch with the forest group at Rosewell which was really good. Meeting new people was also good. I also done survive and thrive which helped me to get a better understanding of how I cope with things and how I react.

Spring has enlightened me the importance of every emotion and it's all normal. I have learn[ed] about communication and how it is split into 3 categories. And now I am aware how other person see us when we communicate with them

### Men's Groupwork Service

The Men's Groupwork Service is for men on statutory supervision or subject to a Supervision Release Order, Structured Deferred Sentence or subject to an Unpaid Work requirement. There are currently two groups available: a 6-week programme focused on supporting men to recognise their thoughts feelings and behaviour and to manage their mental health and emotions in positive ways and a 20-week trauma responsive intervention based on neurophysiological and neurobiological principles.

Based on feedback from men undertaking the decider skills programme (Stride) the length of delivery increased from an initial 4 weeks to 6. This provided attendees with

additional time to spend on skills development and reflection to embed the learning and to provide space for external services to meet with men to support engagement by reducing barriers to access. The focus within Stride is to offer strategies to better process their different experiences with emotions. Initially a 4-week programme, following feedback from men we have increased delivery to 6 weeks. Following completion of the Decider Skills programme we have collaborated with Venture Trust, Skills Development Scotland and Access to Industry to support men to consider next steps and move onto a positive pathway to increase employability. 25 men were referred to the programme and 10 successfully completed.

Throughout the year managers in the Justice Service undertook a range of quality assurance and audit activities to ensure that staff had completed relevant training and key performance indicators were being met. Working in collaboration with staff from the Community Intervention Service for Sex Offenders, an audit of the use of the Stable and Acute Risk Assessment tool was completed. This identified that assessments were being completed on time and used a good range of sources to inform the assessment. Feedback was provided to all staff and updated training and guidance provided were required.

### Trauma

Work around trauma is cuts across all areas of social work and beyond. The Midlothian Trauma Awareness Steering Group is chaired by myself as CSWO. A Trauma Informed Practice Lead Officer is employed by Midlothian Council and they are managed via Adult Services. Their role is wide ranging and includes strategic development and training.

## Resources

It is not realistic to have any conversation about social work services without referencing the challenging financial landscape. Since previous CSWO Reports, the financial position for social work has not shown any notable improvement. Financial pressures continue for both local authorities and health services with demand and complexity increasing. As the fastest growing local authority in Scotland the increase in families and older people residing within our communities is growing at a rate that far outweighs our current resources.

Within Children's Services the picture is very similar to previous years with a continued shortage of foster carers across both the local authority and Scotland coupled with the ever-increasing demand upon us being mandated to receive unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) which is placing significant pressure on local resources.

Again, the ongoing concerns around ring-fenced or short-term funding streams do not promote confidence for future planning within services. The demands on children and adult services are ever increasing in Midlothian due to the population growth therefore budgets need to be aligned to this growth.

Moreover, there are examples of what might be Scottish Government priorities that may not align with priorities a CSWO may have. The best example of this has been the money the Scottish Government has provided to unscheduled care. Whilst it is undeniable that unscheduled care is an area requiring attention and focus, it could reasonably be argued that there is greater risk and acuity in the community and that areas such as mental health and learning disability, where the balance of care has shifted from hospital to the community in recent years, are more pressured and more in need of additional resource. It is frustrating that "social care" is too often seen through the prism of delayed discharge.

Within adult social work and social care there are significant budget pressures one of which is attributable to demographic pressures within the learning disability population. These pressures arise from a combination of an increasing number of young people with complex needs transitioning to adult services and increased life expectancy. Steps are being taken to ensure we have clearer and more consistent approach to the transitioning of young people with additional support/complex needs into adult services and that our planning and budgeting are more transparent within all 3 service areas, children, education and adult services. Furthermore, we are developing a more ageless transitions model that aims to ensure budgeting siloes are no more within this area of work. Depending on progress, this is a model we would look to replicate in other service areas, most notably mental health and justice.

Much time was taken up in 2024-25 by the financial challenges in the IJB. The pressures regarding the social care element of the budget were considerable and attributable to the aforementioned demographic and acuity issues. A raft of savings measures were brought forward, the majority of which were related to social care elements of the budget. The key pressures were on the Resource Panel which was the main means of allocating adult social care and linked to assessed care packages. We undertook a large-scale piece of work whereby every care package

was reviewed against eligibility criteria. This reduced some spend but it did not achieve enough to fully close the gap. Consequently, other decisions such as care at home spend reductions and reductions in commissioned day care services have had to be made with the likely impact that this will increase waits for services. As CSWO, my role is to seek assurance that risk can be mitigated and that those who most require support receive it. Within the HSCP, the Executive Leadership Team met every week to discuss progress against the financial savings plans. Templates were completed for each saving measure with evidence attached and I was consulted as CSWO. The templates included sections for highlighting risk. As CSWO, it was important I contributed to these and was certainly afforded the opportunity to do so.

Whilst the budgetary pressures in Children's Services are not quite as pressing, there remain pressures around external placement costs and staffing costs. These are discussed at the departmental management meetings but the Head of Children's Services also discusses them with myself as CSWO and we continually discuss ways to mitigate against these pressures.

Justice Services in Midlothian have, historically, managed adequately with the level of funding they receive and 2024-25 continued this trend. The funding algorithm for Justice is via a direct s.27 Scottish Government grant and is ring fenced. This algorithm is helpful and ensures that the money is spent directly on Justice services. As CSWO, I meet with the relevant Service Manager to be assured regarding spending plans and how they impact on positive outcomes for people.

As CSWO I attend budget setting meetings in both the Council and the IJB and would assess that there are sufficient processes in place that allow me to share or voice any concerns around potential efficiencies that would impact or increase the risk to those we work with. I have monthly meetings with my Chief Executive and regular meetings with key finance managers.

Looking forward, concerns remain around the level of budget required to manage the demand. Within the HSCP, a transformation programme was initiated in 2024-25 and will become more fully developed in 2025-26 but it should be noted that whilst there is undoubtedly scope to transform the way some services are provided and delivered, not least day care provision, transport and some mental health services, there will remain a resource gap in all areas of social work and statutory work will clearly have to take precedence over preventative work which may, ultimately, result in costs being higher in the long run. This short-term way of working can be frustrating and it would be my aspiration as CSWO to have longer-term commissioning arrangements in place for third sector organisations. We plan to work on a different commissioning framework which takes account of the financial challenges but also aims to direct resources to those most in need.

I am also keen to ensure there is relevant financial training for managers – budgetary management can be an area that social work managers find challenging and more training would be helpful.

Finally, I will contribute to the burgeoning work Social Work Scotland is undertaking regarding financial pressures in social work. It is an increasing area of focus for the fortnightly CSWOs meeting and is an area I intend to contribute to.

## Workforce

Maintaining a consistent and skilled workforce has been a significant challenge again, particularly in the social care sector, however social work has also been impacted. Within Midlothian we are fortunate to have a dedicated practice learning and development team for social work which comprises a range of highly skilled and experienced trainers, practitioners, assessors and administrative staff. The team skills are diverse and cover a range of training areas and development opportunities. Although the team sits under the Head of Adult Social Care, it also reports into other directorates including Children's Services and Education due to the range of training delivered to staff in these service areas.

Developing the workforce continues to be a key priority for both Children's Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership in Midlothian. In 2024-25, there was a continued focus on the learning and development frameworks across both areas.

In recent years, Midlothian has increased our investment in Open University Social Work Modules that enable staff to work towards a degree in Social Work. Whilst this route is welcomed, we increasingly have to balance service needs with our ability to send people via this training route.

In Children's Services in 2024-25, we continued to see experienced social workers and team leaders undertaking a range of post qualifying courses including Child Welfare and Protection, Practice Education, Leadership and Management along with PG Cert Young People in Conflict with the Law.

In Adult Services we continued to see staff commit to the Practice Educator and Adult Protection post-graduate training. In addition, we have an ongoing successful completion of social workers completing the Mental Health Officer training each year. We generally send two social workers every year and 2024-25 continued this trend. This policy of internally managing our MHO cohort is helpful to us and we are looking at ways of ensuring MHO knowledge is then shared across our teams.

The SVQ Assessment centre continues to deliver a range of programmes across SCQF frameworks from level 5 up to SCQF 8 for our social care staff across Adult and Children's services. This includes Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships for Health and Social Care as well as Children and Young people. An investment in an SVQ assessor is being developed to meet this demand to ensure all staff meet the registration and qualification requirements in the appropriate timescale for the SSSC registration.

The Public Protection Office for Midlothian and East Lothian continue to run a range of training for staff across the full spectrum of Public Protection albeit with a particular focus on Child Protection and Adult Protection.

In the last year the social work Learning and Development Team have delivered and coordinated over 1000 learning opportunities. This covers a broad range from SVQ programmes (Levels 2, 3 and 4) to Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection, Team Teach, Trauma Informed Practice, Motivational Interviewing, Dementia Awareness and Medication training.

<b>Course Attended 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025</b>	<b>Number of attendees</b>
Child Protection Level 1 (Health & Social Care Staff only)	88
Level 1 Adult Support and Protection - all services	85
Medication Training/Workshop for Care at Home Staff	59
Motivational Interviewing	15
Safe & Together Model - Certified Trainer	1
Safe & Together Model Core Training 4 days	3
Self Directed Support (SDS): For H&SC Children & Families Staff ONLY	23
Stoma Care for Health and Social Care Staff	16
SVQ Core Skills: Information, Communication & Technology SCQF 5	5
SVQ Core Skills: Numeracy SCQF 5	4
SVQ Foundation Apprenticeship – CYP	12
SVQ Foundation Apprenticeship – H&SC	6
SVQ: Assessor Award L&D9DI	1
SVQ: Introduction to Unit CHS3 Administer Medication to individuals	37
SVQ2: Social Services & CYP SCQF6	3
SVQ2: Social Services & Healthcare SCQF6	23
SVQ3: SVQ Social Services & Health Care SCQF7	17
SVQ3: SVQ Social Services CYP SCQF7	4
SVQ4: Social Services & CYP SCQF9/10	3
SVQ4: Social Services & Healthcare SCQF9/10 (L4)	3
SVQ4: SVQ in Management SCQF 9/10	5
Team Teach Level 1 - New Training for Foster Carers	5
Team Teach Level 1 (6 hours) (Education only)	56

Team Teach Level 1 (6 hrs) (Health & Social Care staff)	64
Team Teach Level 2 (12 hours) (Education Only) (From Jan 2024)	31
Team Teach Level 2 (12 hours) (From Jan 2024)	27
Team Teach Level 2 Refresher (6 hours)	14
Transportation of Children	25
Trauma Informed Training - Level 1	235
Trauma Informed Training - Level 2	48
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>918</b>

In addition to this staff have also staff accessed post graduated courses through the University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, Stirling University, The Open University and Napier University.

Midlothian has committed itself fully to the Foundation and Modern Apprenticeship scheme for Health and Social Care. 102 people completed Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships for Health and Social Care as well as Children and Young people in 2024-25.

The requirements for newly qualified social workers (NQSW) is to be welcomed and in 2024-25, Midlothian supported 23 NQSWs with 9 completing their first year in 2024-25:

- 18 x 2 hour predominantly in-person NQSW Supported Year briefings delivered to 13 Team Leaders and 18 NQSWs;
- 13 x 2.5 hour in-person NQSW Forum Meetings: wellbeing and progress check ins, and peer support and guest speakers/topics including:
  - Child Protection and LAC/LAAC Processes;
  - Values wor, including anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice;
  - Transitions Briefing;
  - Impact of Transforming Connections Trauma Training on practice and trauma-informed self-care;
  - Resilience Research/Discussion and MLC Wellbeing Supports;
  - Joint Mental Health Team & Role Briefing;
  - Midlothian Mental Health and Resilience Service (MHARS) Briefing;
  - Family Group Decision Making, Life Long Links and MLC Systemic Family Service Briefing;
  - Coercive Control, Domestic Abuse and the importance of the Safe & Together Model Briefing;
  - Y2K Overview;
  - Who Cares Scotland Overview;
  - CLLE Overview;
  - Meet the CSWO;
- 1 x additional Teams briefing: Self-Directed Support Overview and Awareness;

- 5 x Protected Learning Days in-person: opportunity for NQSWs to work collaboratively on Mandatory Learning Activities (MLA), peer and PL&D support and protected time to work on lengthier MLA's and CPL Review Template;
- Development of local resources to supplement SSSC resources and creation of NQSW intranet page;
- Supported/chaired 19 x key meetings + ad-hoc 1:1 meetings with NQSWs and/or TLs when required;
- 1 x Quality Assurance Support meeting with SSSC: sampled 3 x Midlothian Council NQSW CPL Review Templates.

In 2024-25, Midlothian co-ordinated 18 social work student placements across all areas of social work. Internally, we supported 21 staff to undertake social work training and these progressed at varying stages in 2024-25. In 2024-25, two senior managers were undertaking the CSWO post-graduate diploma.

Use is made of Learn Pro for social work staff and LearnPro modules relevant to registered staff are fully up to date and compliance to completion is around 90 per cent on a consistent basis.

Midlothian Council has a dedicated Trauma Development Worker who is managed within the HSCP. In 2024-25, they delivered training to a wide range of staff across Midlothian as follows:

- Total number trained: 558 participants;
- Total number of training events – 53 training events;
- Level 1 - 446 participants;
- Level 2 - 112 participants.

A Trauma Steering Group is chaired by myself as CSWO and the accompanying Trauma Strategy focusses on working towards a more trauma-informed community in Midlothian. The training has been well received and staff are feeling more confident in supporting people who may have experienced trauma in their lives.

Both the HSCP and Midlothian Council have developed Workforce Strategies and social work is central to both. We have been involved in career fairs, university visits and have considered various recruitment campaigns. Whilst we continue to experience some recruitment challenges, particularly in Children's Services, we are planning on doing more targeted and focused recruitment campaigns that links also to our work around practice standards and induction. We do make use of agency staff but are working to reduce that. Whilst starting some of this work in 2024-25, it was expected that the bulk of this activity would not be undertaken until 2025-26.

Staff wellbeing is at the core of our Workforce Strategy. The HSCP has invested in a dedicated Wellbeing Lead and they offered a range of supports in 2024-25 from 1-1 support through to Team developments. The latter had a particular focus on areas that experienced high volumes of sickness absence and a range of supports were offered including activities such as yoga as well as wellbeing spaces for staff. A HSCP Staff Communication and Engagement Plan was also developed and linked in with the Wellbeing offer.

## Looking Ahead

It has been highlighted already but the biggest issues facing social work are resource challenges and workforce. Funding for local government remains precarious and Midlothian IJB also faces significant budgetary pressures, particularly on the social work and social care side of the business. This coupled with the significant increase in our local population is going to result in some very challenging discussions and difficult decisions having to be made.

One of the most significant pieces of work being undertaken is a review of Adult Social Work (and Occupational Therapy). This forms part of a wider Transformation Programme within the HSCP. The high-level purpose of the project is to streamline and identify gaps and effective working in Social Work and Occupational Therapy practice within Midlothian Council and to better meet the needs of the population of Scotland.

Since the creation of sub-teams within Social Work and Occupational Therapy in 2017, there has been no formal review carried out. The intended review was impacted and delayed due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Following a survey circulated in 2024 and completed by staff working within Social Work and Occupational Therapy in Midlothian, it was identified that staff experience some areas of difficulty within organisational service structure and procedures. There is increasing demand and pressure (workforce, complexity, resources, collaboration) on Social Work and Occupational Therapy staff.

It is possible that the existing processes could be developed and improved to provide staff with more effective, and clearer, direction and approaches to practice. This could support in reducing worker stress that results from confusion, and support to address the lack of consistency arising from different approaches/understanding of processes.

Initial work streams have been proposed to take this next phase of work forward:

1. Policies and Procedures;
2. Learning, Development, and Improving Practice;
3. Service Structure;
4. Engagement and Communication;
5. Data Collection and Analysis.

This work is complex and multi-layered. The review will ensure that all relevant areas of Social Work and Occupational Therapy are included and reflects the different legislation and policy guidance that current teams and professionals are required to adhere to. It is anticipated that the review will be concluded by mid-2026.

As alluded to elsewhere in this report, a significant area of work is our transitions work, primarily with young people with disabilities but also Justice, mental health and older people. Working with colleagues in Adult Services and Education a Service Manager in Children's Services and a dedicated Planning Officer continue to develop and improve our transition processes to ensure that young people transition between Children's Services, Education and Adult Services will do so in a seamless manner ensuring the right support at the right time.

Across all areas of social work, we will continue to develop Practice Standards and recording around undertaking risk assessments and good case recording. A particular area of focus is induction for staff that is specific for the area of social work they are employed in. We are considering how best we lift aspects of our aforementioned NQSW programme for all staff coming to work in Midlothian. A further aspiration is to better use the annual SSSC data that tracks the workforce. Currently, we do not utilise that report sufficiently and it is an area for development

In terms of the wider context, we will track progress in respect of the development of the proposal for a National Care Service, as well as the many other pieces of legislation and policy that require input from CSWO's and others. The National Social Work Agency will develop further in 2025-26 and the intention would be to participate fully in this area of work.

On a pan-Lothian basis, we would like to see a greater commitment to commissioning services on a more regional basis, particularly in relation to people with learning disabilities. Currently the commissioning frameworks whereby individual HSCPs commission with the same service providers are problematic. Within mental health, we will continue to develop our community resources, particularly community rehabilitation, and I would wish to see a greater shift from acute hospital care to community accommodation and a stronger social work and MHO voice.

The Head of Children's Services is doing work around service development in terms of communication and engagement with staff and induction as per above. We will also do a focussed piece of work regarding external placements and how we bring more children and young people back to Midlothian.

Within Justice, there will be continuing work on the implementation of MAPPS as well as a focus on ensuring the allocated budget meets justice and community justice strategic priorities. I am also keen to ensure Justice staff are consistently include within the HSCP structures.

In conclusion, this report offers a high-level summary of some key developments, improvements and challenges across social work and social care services in Midlothian during 2024-25.

The operating environment for social work and social care remains both complex and fluid with a high degree of uncertainty regarding the future arrangements for service delivery and governance as well as a busy legislative and policy development landscape, challenges in relation to workforce capacity and availability, constrained resource availability and increased demand.

The report highlights clear challenges in relation to unmet need and a requirement to continue to improve timely access to services within our communities, ensuring that we prioritise a preventative approach. Maintaining a balance of focus and prioritisation of the provision of support for people in the community will be of critical importance in the coming year.

Despite the challenges social work and social care services face across Midlothian, in conjunction with our third sector providers we continue to evidence a high level of commitment in providing good quality care that ameliorates risk, and empowers, supports and protects people.



**(Vogie Country Park, Midlothian)**