

# Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report 20/21



Midlothian – A Great Place to Grow



## **Executive Summary**

The CSWO is required to produce an annual report. The format changed some years ago, when local authorities were asked to use a template devised by the Chief Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government to ensure consistency across Scotland in annual report submissions. As a result of the pandemic, this format has once more been altered to reflect the challenges that the pandemic has brought to social work services across Scotland.

### **Background:**

Every local authority must have a professionally qualified CSWO as per Section 45 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994. The role is to ensure that provision of appropriate professional advice in the of a local authority's statutory function as described in Section 5 (1B) of the Social Work A(Scotland) Act 1968. The role covers the full range of a local authority's social work functions to provide a focus for professional leadership and governance. The role also provides strategic and professional leadership in the delivery of social work services.

This is the first report written by the Chief Social Work Officer, Joan Tranent, following the departure of Alison White in July 2021.

### **Main Report:**

Give the workload implications of the pandemic, the government's chief social work advisor set out a requirement for this year's report to focus on the following areas:

- Governance and accountability arrangements
- Service quality and performance
- Resources
- Workforce
- COVID-19

The report acts as the required annual report to elected members on the operation of the statutory social work complaints process. The report highlights the impact that Covid-19 has had upon Midlothian's communities and its social work and public protection services, as well as indicating how these continue to affect and contribute to even greater levels of need and vulnerability for local people living in Midlothian.

### **Next Steps**

A draft of this report will be shared with the Chief Social Work Advisor to the Scottish Government by the end of September 2021. The report shall go to both the Council Meeting and the IJB for sign off in October 2021.

## **Financial impact**

The report is an overview of strategic and operations social work matters covering the areas of Children's services, Adult's and Justice based social work. There is no financial impact from this report, which will not have already been considered through existing Council Committees or the Integrated Joint Board.

## **Stakeholder/Community Impact:**

All social work services have the expectation to engage the participation of those citizens who require the support and assistance of those services. Each departmental area has existing mechanisms in place to address stakeholder and community impact.

## **Policy Implications**

There are no direct policy implications of this report. However, the report highlights the areas of practice, service delivery and policy that will require further review as the full impact of the pandemic on services becomes clearer.

## Introduction

I am pleased to present the Chief Social Work Officer's annual report for 2020/21, having just taken over the role in July 2021. The report provides a summary of social work and key social care activity, including key developments and information on statutory decisions made by the Chief Social Work Officer on behalf of the Council and Council services. The report is not intended to be exhaustive but gives an indication of trends, priorities, challenges and opportunities over the past year. In recognition of the arrival and impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the report includes a summary of how our services have responded and adapted during this time.

Staff have worked incredibly hard to meet the challenges of fulfilling the social work task within the context of COVID, and I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to them for their commitment and dedication to protecting and improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in our Midlothian communities.

Joan Tranent  
CSWO & Chief Officer Children's Services, Partnerships & Communities



**92,460** people living in Midlothian

**18%** of people are **over 65**

**20%** are under 16



**3%** of children looked after are on the CP register (as of 31/03/2021)



It is projected that the **over 75 age group** is to see the largest percentage increase **+40.9%** over the next 10 years

Section 1.

## Overview of Governance Arrangements

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 jointly deliver the Single Midlothian Plan which sets out its 4 priorities:

- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes
- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances
- Reducing carbon emissions in Midlothian to net zero by 2030

Social work services in Midlothian are delivered between Midlothian Council and Midlothian Integration Joint Board. Adult social work and social care services, including health visiting and school nursing services and justice social work are delegated to the IJB and delivered and managed by the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership services. Children's social work services are managed and governed by the council and part of the People and Partnership Directorate.

The role of the **Chief Social Work Officer** has just transferred to the Chief Officer for Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities in July 2021 following the departure of the previous Head of Adult Services who also held the CSWO role. Social work and social care services play a vital role in championing and addressing the impact of poverty and inequality in the lives of vulnerable people and are well placed to inform the prevention and early intervention agenda that is embedded in the key strategic plans for Midlothian. Most social work functions take place within the context of joint operational working with colleagues within the H&SCP and council services and across key partner agencies including the third sector. The principle strategic partnerships that lead and direct the work to protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people are:

- East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC)
- Getting it Right for every Child - Midlothian Children's Strategic Partnership (CSP)
- Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (MH&SCP)
- Midlothian Community Justice Partnership (CJP)
- MELDAP (Mid and East Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership)

Section 2.

**Service Quality and Performance –  
Justice Social Work:**



Unpaid work team delivered **3568** hot meals

**8924** hours remain outstanding for unpaid work group



**35** clients gained **SCQF recognised qualifications**

**15** active **Spring service users**



The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged all services including Justice Social Work and Community Justice. Adapting service delivery within the context of limited face-to-face contact has impacted on both service users and staff. The use of technology has been at the forefront of service delivery to provide consistency of contact giving some predictability in the pandemic. In line with 'Connecting Scotland', funding was sourced to ensure that digital poverty was addressed via the use of tablets and smart phones as well as data. Of which 400 top ups were provided. Continuation of the No.11 Allocations Service has been hugely beneficial to those individuals who were liberated from Scottish Prison Service establishments as part of the early release programme. Data gathered since the inception in 2019 of the No 11 Allocations Service shows that every individual liberated from HMP to Midlothian has an offer of suitable accommodation, voluntary support through Change Grow Live and if necessary substance misuse support.

Addressing employability during the pandemic became a greater need particularly for those within Midlothian communities who were involved with the justice system. Training sessions were delivered to staff in conjunction with Recruit with Conviction, a project that promotes safe, suitable and sustainable employment for people with convictions. This was to ensure frontline workers understood the legislative changes within the Management of Offenders Act (Scotland) Act 2019, which came into force on 30 November 2020.

The partnership continues to monitor actions within Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2020-2023. Relaying the importance of Community Justice and increasing awareness is embedded throughout the actions within the plan. To aid this, Midlothian's Community Justice Toolkit has been developed. This is now a compulsory learning module for all Midlothian Council Staff and will be available for partnership agencies and for young people in Midlothian's High schools.

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

Due to Covid-19, 20/21 was a challenging one in many respects, not least for the ongoing management of those who are assessed at risk of serious harm. At the end of 20/21 there were a total of 13 such offenders being managed by Justice Services within Midlothian. Throughout the last year agencies have continued to work effectively together to share information and to ensure that appropriate risk management strategies are in place.

The overall total number of individuals convicted of sexual offences and managed within our MAPPA processes was 54, the vast majority of whom are managed at MAPPA level 1. The numbers managed under MAPPA within Midlothian has remained fairly static over the last 2 years. The Justice Social



Work Service are the Responsible Authority for 21 individuals who have committed a sexual offence and are managed under MAPPA arrangements. The ability of all agencies to adapt to new ways of working, as a result of the pandemic, has been monitored and reviewed. The most recent quarterly audit of cases managed by both Justice Social Work Services and the Sex Offending Police Unit highlighted good practice and positive examples of multi-agency working.

The Team continue to work closely with colleagues on the Sex Offender Policing Unit and are aware of the potential for the lockdowns, which were part of managing Covid-19, to have increased the incidents of sexually harmful behaviour online.

### **Unpaid Work**

The 2020/21 reporting year proved to be a challenging time for the Unpaid Work Team due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns. Despite restrictions in place for much of the year the unpaid work team found new and creative ways to support both our clients and the communities that we serve. Our staff assisted with making telephone calls to those who had received shielding letters from the government to ensure that they had received and understood their advice letter and to promote the services available to them. The team also assisted local foodbanks and community larders by collecting groceries that were being donated from shops and supermarkets and transporting these to their distributions hubs. In addition to supporting our communities the Unpaid Work Team maintained regular telephone contact with our service users to support and manage the risks of the client group during a time of unprecedented stress. The team were trained in using, and training service users in the use of Naloxone to assist colleagues from the Substance Misuse Service minimise risks of overdose at a time when clients were having less face to face appointments with support services. The Team also delivered interventions including an individual offending behaviour pack to help promote client's desistance from further offending and to promote their engagement with the virtual recovery community.

Despite the reduction in work placements and face to face contact the Unpaid Work Team developed and implemented a training pathway for clients. This new pathway starts with all clients undertaking a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) award at Level 4 in Health and Safety. Working with the Community Lifelong Learning Team (CLL) a further pathway has been developed to allow clients to undertake a variety of training courses including: an adult achievement award, CSCS card (needed to work on building sites), digital skills, an introduction to wellbeing or to work to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

The Covid 19 pandemic resulted in the reduction in cases being dealt with by our local Court (Edinburgh Sheriff Court) and in the last year the team received 42 new Orders with conditions of unpaid work. This was significantly down on previous years, although as placements were unable to go ahead for much of the reporting year a backlog of hours started to build. The Scottish Government in recognition of the growing backlog brought in legislation to allow a 35% reduction in outstanding Orders. Due to social distancing, the size of unpaid work groups remain smaller than in the past and to support the Team getting through this backlog of hours a further unpaid work supervisor is being employed to increase the capacity of our team. This will also assist the Team prepare for any increase in work from Edinburgh Sheriff Court who will be employing expanded opening hours from September 2021 to get through their own backlog work.

### **Men's Group Work Service**

The Midlothian Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2020-2023 was published in April 2020 and sets out 40 actions that Midlothian Community Justice Partnership will take forward over the coming three years to deliver better outcomes for those affected by the justice system.

The Men's Group will be facilitated by social workers (from Justice and the Substance Misuse Service) and peer support workers with lived experience. The expectation is that all men placed on a CPO will be considered for the Men's Service. It is hopeful that as the group develops, other external services that aim to promote better outcomes for men will become involved. The Men's Group is set to start in mid-June 2021.

### **Women's Group Work Service – Midlothian Spring Service**

The Spring service has continued to develop as an example of a trauma informed and gendered specific service, supporting women who are affected by histories of complex trauma and have issues with substance use, mental health and/or offending behaviour. Spring is a collaborative service, involving staff from Women's Aid East and Midlothian (women's support worker), Access to Industry (Shine worker), Health in Mind (Peer support worker), NHS (Spring Occupational Therapist and Health Inequalities Team nurse) and Justice Social Work (Spring Social Worker, Caledonian Women's Worker and Justice Social Worker). Research indicates that there are significant benefits to creating a 'one stop shop', where women can access support for all of their needs under one roof.

There are currently 15 active service users and 22 women on the waiting list. Developments in the service have included revising the 'Stepping Stones' programme, which is renamed 'Stepping Forward'. The key focus of these

changes has been on integrating the theme of emotional regulation and distress management throughout all 11 sessions. The Spring Occupational Therapist has focused her time on refining the Stepping Forward programme and updating the afternoon sessions, focused on 'steps to wellbeing'.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19 women still reported improvements; 83% of women reporting improvements in 'identity and self-esteem' and 83% of women indicating an improvement in 'trust and 'hope' (these findings are based on the domains within the outcomes star for recovery). Both of these domains are often scored very low for women who have experienced trauma and are identified as being significant barriers to recovery. Therefore, achieving improvements in these domains is a key outcome measure for the service.

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## Children's Services



**765** children attended a hub or early years setting over the summer of April 20-21

Midlothian has **2 children's houses** run by Council which care for young people aged 12-18



**4%** rise in **Children Protection** referrals

**25%** rise in **Domestic abuse** referrals

**34%** rise in **financial assistance** claims



Over **100** children discussed in Team around the Child meetings

COVID 19 brought unprecedented times and associated challenges across the whole of Children's Services. At the commencement of Covid-19 the People and Partnership Directorate agreed the need to work together and share resources during school closures to make sure that all vulnerable families were supported. A directorate wide guidance document which included a gatekeeping process was introduced to review referrals for families in need and provide appropriate supports including 1:1 youth work and places at early years and school hubs.

The Care Inspectorate managed to complete their : **Joint Inspection of services for children and young people in need of care and protection in Midlothian before Covid-19 lock down happened at the end of March 2020.** The following grades were awarded;

- Leadership and Direction – GOOD
- Impact on Families – GOOD
- Impact on Children and Young People – GOOD
- Improvement in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people – GOOD

Following the inspection we are working collaboratively with partners in health, police, education, SCRA and the third sector, to implement the areas identified for improvement. The plan will be monitored via the GIRFEC Board.

The joint inspection highlighted the positive impact of our Early Intervention approach across the partnership which supports the identification and management of risk at an early stage of intervention. Relationships with colleagues in partner agencies have continued to strengthen and this is supported by the work of our two Early Intervention and Prevention Development Officers.

Despite the impact of COVID, Team around the Child (TATC) meetings continued to take place between April 2020 and March 2021 with referrals received from 9 different referral sources. The annual evaluation of TATC acknowledges a lack of available family supports for 5-12 age group. This is something the group will look into in 2021. An audit was undertaken in relation to secondary school wellbeing meetings with positive results.

The LAC attainment fund, jointly shared between education and children's services, agreed to employ 3 x children and families practitioners in an effort to drive down poor attendance and to support improved attainment. A positive evaluation of the intervention of these practitioners has been completed evidencing improved outcomes for the children and young people. In partnership with one of our commissioned services Artlink, we supported the development of the project, which now offers therapeutic

intervention for young people who are offending, LAC young people and those experiencing mental health issues.

The Youth Justice Strategy was completed and signed off by the GIRFEC board in September 2020.

### **Safe and Together**

Over the past year we have delivered nine 'Domestic Abuse: Revised Approaches in Midlothian' briefings to 125 people across the council and are training a further 19 workers in the Safe and Together core principles. Nine managers are also completing the supervisory training. Our second annual audit is due for completion which shall evidence how the training is impacting on practice.

We are continuing to develop the Families First Perpetrator programme and are now rolling out referrals into this programme to partner agencies. We acknowledge that we need to continue to develop work with perpetrators of Domestic Abuse and are in the process of introducing a Developing Dads Group that will create informal steps to engage with Safe and Together principles to support preparatory work to reflect on the impact of their behaviour on family functioning.

### **Income maximisation**

In September 2020 an income maximisation worker was commissioned via Penicuik CAB with a remit to work with families where children were either on the child protection register or subject to a CSO at home. Between October and the end of December 2020 this worker received 21 referrals which led to 10 direct contacts with parents. Outcomes of these referrals have evidenced an encouraging start with an evidenced service user financial gain of £5,757.50. A number of parents were also signposted onto other services for additional support i.e. fuel poverty, employment etc. We have commissioned this service for a further year.

### **Children Services – Looked after population**

At the time of writing this report, we have 235 who are looked out with their parents care and 32 who are looked after at home with a compulsory supervision order in place via the children's hearing system. The numbers change on a daily basis. Within Midlothian, the numbers of children being looked after has reduced year on year as our commitment and focus is towards keeping families together where safe to do so, in line with the recommendations from The Promise.

Much of the change can be attributed towards building local capacity and capability within our services. In particular, our move towards earlier intervention, increased outreach and strengthening families. The development of the Family Group Decision Making project has enabled a shift in the balance of care towards family care.

### **Family Group Decision Making**

Following the success of the pilot exercise we have now embedded FGDM into our mainstream work. Since October 2020 – January 2021, the service received 25 referrals with only two families choosing not to engage. This decrease in non-engagement demonstrates that with the appropriate resources local families will engage. This is an area of work that will continue to grow as we divert resources to earlier intervention and preventative work.

### **Midlothian Council – Young People’s Houses**

To strengthen the skills and capability of our staff working in our care homes we provided a range of learning and development opportunities. This included safe and together, confident staff-confident children, trauma informed and relationship based practice. We also introduced a nurturing approach throughout our care homes. An overarching document called ‘Building Positive Relationships’ was introduced after consultation with staff and carers from across the Local Authority.

While the impact of COVID cannot be underestimated in terms of how it has affected our most vulnerable young people, it is a testament to our staff that our young people have coped remarkably well during the pandemic. Our care staff continued to provide a high level of care and support throughout the pandemic through changing shift patterns and working in bubbles, despite dealing with a number of COVID related matters on a personal level.

### **External Residential Provision**

Children’s Services have seen a marked reduction in children and young people being placed externally. However, our recent data suggests that there is a real change in the age and profile of the few children who have been placed externally, mainly due to the level of distress and trauma these children aged between 5-12 years present. Some young children are unable to cope with the intimacy, which is part of family living, and can only cope with a residential provision at that point in their lives. In February 2021 Children’s Services were fortunate that the Elected Members agreed funding to purchase a house which will deliver a local therapeutic environment for a maximum of 3 children to help them heal and recover from their previous experiences and in doing so be able to be reintroduced into family living. A project board has



been established to begin planning with the aim of being fully functioning in April 2022.

### **Foster Care – Midlothian**

We currently have 52 fostering households in Midlothian and the team who support the carers have the responsibility for recruiting and assessing all potential foster carers. The recruitment of foster carers remains an ongoing challenge. This can be due to resignations or because some elect to permanently care or adopt the child/ren for whom they care for. While this is a good outcome for children it has an impact on our ability to provide resources for children and young people.

### **Adoption Service**

In the last year the team have undertaken 4 adoption assessments and are currently involved in 4 step parent adoptions, this is an increase of assessments compared with previous years.

As well as the recruitment and assessment the team are heavily involved in working with other children's services workers in relation to preparing children for living with alternative families, whether this be a permanent carers or adopter. The team 'track and family find' for individual children.

### **Continuing Care Service**

We currently have 38 young people in Midlothian who are supported and cared for under a continuing care arrangement and 12 carers who have been formally approved as adult carers for those young people. When the young person moves on the carers will revert to being foster carers.

### **Kinship Care**

Historically, Midlothian have had high numbers of kinship carers though we have noted an increase in the number of kinship placements during Covid-19 and believe this is in part due to the success of the Family Group Decision Making Project . Whilst this growth area is to be welcomed, we do acknowledge that our current kinship resources are directed towards the assessment and care planning demands of kinship care. As a consequence, there is little time to provide early interventions and supports within the wider community. Our proposal is that we align early intervention and engagement with kinship care alongside the Family Group Decision Making Service.

### **Independent Reviewing Team (IRO)**



Despite the Covid-19 challenges and a slight delay while workers and families adapted to using virtual technology, Child Protection Case Conferences and Looked after Child Reviews continued to take place. Again this is testament to the commitment of social workers, partner agencies and families who have worked together to address the many challenges these changes have brought.

Type of Review	Number of children reviewed between March 2020 – February 2021
Child Protection Case Conference	243
LAAC Review	321
LAC Review	129
	<b>Total: 693</b>

### **National House Project (NHP)**

The NHP was officially launched in Midlothian on 1 July 2020. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 September 2020, 10 young people were successful in gaining a place on the project. The young people are all care experienced and come from a range of placement/care backgrounds. A steering group was established with representation from: NHP; Children's Services; Residential Services; Police Scotland; Housing Services; NHS Lothian; Community and Lifelong Learning; Skills Development Scotland and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector (Gorebridge Community Cares). As part of the initial stages of the project, an updated housing nomination document was developed and as such, Housing Services have committed 6 properties per cohort. Meetings have been organised with the 3 Housing Associations who have indicated an interest in supporting the project. In early 2021 a successful application was made to Connecting Scotland for 30 iPads/Chromebooks (including Wi-Fi) to support the young people involved in the NHP.

An official press release was issued on 28 October 2020 which received positive and significant press and social media interest.

### **Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour (including Lothian Exceptional Needs Group (LENS))**

Five young people with complex and challenging behaviours reside in long stay houses in Woodburn and Penicuik. Action for Children and Barnardos are commissioned by Midlothian Council to manage these houses. A third house (2 bedded) has more recently been established.

### **0-12 years Practice Team**

Permanence planning remains the primary focus for the 0-12 Team. The 0-12 Team have operated throughout the pandemic and where possible have endeavoured to progress care planning for children in care. Nevertheless, for a variety of different reasons, COVID-19 has impacted on certain cases and as such, there are a few examples of timescales not being in line with the very high practice standard set via our PACE work. We shall endeavour to ensure we focus on this work over the coming year.

### **12+ Practice Team**

This service user group can often be chaotic and unpredictable and this requires the team to be flexible, creative and realistic in their approach. The team are passionate about promoting the life chances of care experienced young people (CEYP) and will often go to extraordinary lengths to achieve a positive outcome for a young person. The team have established relationships with a number of stakeholders, including: NHS Lothian; local schools/colleges; Police Scotland; National House Project; Community Lifelong Learning and Justice. The partnership work with the Community Lifelong Learning team is a particular example where a collaborative approach is helping to keep young people in local schools and communities where ordinarily they would be at risk of accommodation and/or school exclusion. It is extremely rare for the 12+ Team to remove a child from their home/community setting – this practice and culture has developed over time and is aligned to the current national drivers mainly The Promise.

### **Corporate Parenting**

Midlothian Council's revised Corporate Parenting Plan (2020-2023) is currently being reviewed and updated. Our Corporate Parenting Board meets 4 times a year to review the plan. In addition to the Corporate Parenting Board and in order to widen and encourage participation with CEYP, there are a range of groups held, including: a fortnightly core group for 12-26 year olds; monthly satellite groups at each of Midlothian's secondary schools and sessions for the mini-champs (under 12s). All of the groups focus on the positives and negatives of care in Midlothian, with a key focus on education; employment; health & safety; housing; care; communication and relationships.

### **Hawthorn Family Learning Centre**

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on Hawthorn and the way the service has been run. Most significantly, restrictions have limited the ability to provide day care and family support in the usual fashion. And yet it provided opportunities to learn, to try new and creative solutions and continue to develop our service and support for families and the community. The team were an active part in providing whole family support via a Hub in March – August 2020 supporting existing children, their siblings and new families. Over 18 weeks of lockdown and school holidays, Hawthorn provided 89 days of support. This included support for 121 children from 63 vulnerable families. During this time, 2162 children crossed the door, were provided food and supported with learning and activities.

The community engagement during COVID-19 lockdown and the increase of referrals has evidenced the changing nature of the service and the change in the community perception of the support that Hawthorn can provide. Based on the learning from COVID-19 Hawthorn has made a range of changes to make referral and induction to the service easier, to reintroduce 3-5 placements, routinely provide home learning packs and extend our registration and support from birth to the end of primary school.

Going forward the national drivers around UNCRC, The Promise and Child Poverty are all large areas of work that will impact upon Children's Services. In the coming year we shall ensure we are able to contribute to these significant issues at a national and local level to support change and improve service provision.

## Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership

Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) brings NHS Lothian and Midlothian Council together and is responsible for services that help Midlothian residents to live well and get support when they need it. This includes all community health and social care services for adults in Midlothian and some hospital-based services such as Accident and Emergency.

**1,623 carers** received an **adult support plan**

**2,278 carers** received 1o1 support by **VOCAL** during 2020-21



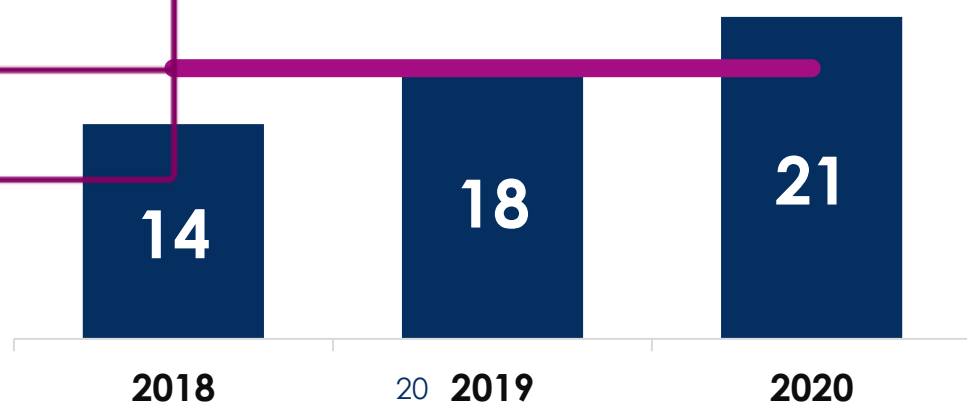
**316 carers** accessed short breaks



Midlothian has **10 care homes** for older people - 8 privately run and 2 run by H&SCP



Number of drug related deaths in Midlothian



Three year average (17.66)

The Midlothian Integrated Joint Board (IJB) has governance responsibility for the services that the Health and Social Care Partnership delivers and manages the allocation of the budget, approximately £131million a year. The IJB gives instructions to Midlothian Council, NHS Lothian, or both on the key actions they need to deliver for the

## VISION

People in Midlothian are enabled to lead longer and healthier lives.

## Values

Our services will provide the right support for you, at the right time and in the right place.

## HSCP COVID-19 Response

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges and much disruption to the Health and Social Care Partnership, its partners and the communities it serves. There was increased anxiety and pressure on many service users, unpaid carers and staff. While challenges may have changed over 2020, they continued into 2021.

As a Partnership, the top priority was the safety of clients, communities and staff. In response to the situation it was important to be innovative and support clients effectively and safely during this time. Staff continued to see people face-to-face where this was clinically essential, but in order to reduce face-to-face contact, where feasible, teams made a number of changes to how they delivered services throughout the pandemic.

## Care Homes for Older people

Health Boards and local Health and Social Care Partnerships continue to carry responsibilities for the clinical and professional oversight of the care provided to people resident in care homes in line with the Scottish Government guidelines (May 2020). Midlothian HSCP has local mechanisms in place to deliver its responsibilities and to link its work with pan-Lothian and national mechanisms.

Midlothian Care Home Support Team identified significant concerns about the quality of care being delivered to residents in Thornlea Care Home in November 2020. Following an inspection by the Care Inspectorate in December, the Care Inspectorate applied to the Sheriff Court to suspend its registration, and the Care Home was closed on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Appropriate alternative accommodation was arranged for the remaining residents and

significant HSCP resources were deployed to support the safe care of residents over the transition period. This incident represents a very difficult period for the residents and their families, and the staff involved.

Midlothian's Care Home Support Team has been funded to have increased capacity and provides a proactive and preventative support approach as well as a reactive response where care homes need additional support/advice/training. They provide advice, support and education directly and maintain strong links with Lothian-wide specialist teams, enabling the provision of additional specialist infection prevention and control, tissue viability, clinical education and quality improvement support. Partnership working with these teams, the Care Inspectorate and the social work teams within the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership delivers multidisciplinary perspectives on the care and support of older people within our local care homes. This enables proactive support of the delivery of person-centred care, and regular input to address issues and challenges being faced in the care homes as they arise using risk assessment skills to drive informal approaches and more formal procedures as required.

Substantial support has been provided to care homes for older people to address the challenges faced throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Examples include the provision of direct support to meet staffing challenges, input to meet the complex care needs of individual residents, vaccination, testing of staff and residents, support with the reintroduction of visiting and providing practical and emotional support to staff affected by the impacts of the loss of residents in unprecedented numbers. Quality improvement approaches have been utilised to develop checklists to build on the learning the team has acquired and to ensure a thorough and consistent approach.

The Midlothian 'Care home rapid rundown' takes place three times per week and provides regular senior oversight of emerging issues and improvement work and the opportunity to discuss any concerns raised by Care Home managers and/ or identified by the Care Home Support Team. The data gathered by the Care Home Support Team and that which is entered directly into the national 'TURAS' safety huddle tool enables local assessment of risk and the provision of assurance around staffing, care standards and the actions in place to address the risks posed to care home residents by the COVID -19 virus.

Midlothian HSCP continues to work closely with partners including Midlothian Council, NHS Lothian, the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Care. The Care Home workforce is an area of ongoing development and this will continue to be a focus for 2021. Midlothian is one of the partners involved in the plans to develop a Lothian Care Academy to provide a route into health and social care work.

## **Drug related deaths**

The local substance misuse team has robust links with the fortnightly Lothian wide drug related death meeting where trends, data, and up to date intelligence around street drugs are discussed. Standard harm reduction and Take-Home Naloxone training are part of one to one work in the service. Pathways are established to support people being released from prison and a new initiative to provide medication assisted treatment to people in police custody is in development.

Midlothian is the pilot site for 2 of the 10 new Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards. The MAT standard 3 pilot offers assertive outreach to individuals identified at a weekly multi-agency huddle as having experienced a near fatal overdose. MAT standard 9 aims to provide an integrated, person centred mental health and substance misuse service to people who present to Substance Misuse Services with a concurrent mental health problem.

## **Care at Home**

There was one internal and three externally contracted providers in Midlothian delivering Care at Home to older people in 2020-21. Within the Care at Home service an enablement model was adopted and this enabled MERRIT carers to co-work with intermediate care to facilitate patient flow. This work continues.

## **Support to Unpaid Carers**

In early 2021 services were re-commissioned in line with changes in Carer's Act legislation and the Midlothian carer support service review and comprehensive consultation undertaken in 2020 on this foundation.

Work continued to support carers in partnership with local organisations, in particular VOCAL Midlothian but also Alzheimer's Scotland and others. While traditional respite options were very limited due to the pandemic, especially for older people, alternative support to carers was progressed and additional funds were provided for Wee Breaks. Social Workers and others including VOCAL also discussed alternative ways to use SDS budgets.

## **Services to People under 18 Years**

Health visiting recruitment continued on rolling basis across Lothian. Health Visitors continued to manage larger caseloads with support from Nursery Nurses, as maternity leave and sickness absence impacted on staffing levels.

Nursery Nursing is fully staffed and only a small vacancy gap remains in HV admin.

Work continues to achieve full implementation of the Universal Pathway; work will be undertaken to achieve full implementation once COVID restrictions ease and the effects on capacity that staffing issues have created are fully resolved and we expect this to be addressed by November 2021.

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## Learning & Development



Offered **9** placements to **social work students**



**7** students completed and **graduated to become social workers** during last year

**2** social workers completed Practice Educators

**3** completed Link worker training



Developing the workforce continues to be a key priority for the Council and for the Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnership. Over the last 18 months it has proved particularly challenging to provide the essential training for the registered workforce to ensure they meet the requirements of the SSSC and the services are Care Inspectorate compliant. The Practice Learning and Development team have sought alternative models and forums to deliver training/assessment including the rapid induction for new care staff during the height of the Covid Pandemic in 2020.

**NQSWs:** We have continued to support our NQSWs by adapting support sessions to online delivery and have increased our support by working with Borders and East Lothian to offer a bi-monthly joint session for NQSWs across authorities- this has been well received and evaluated.

**Children & Families:** We were able to adapt some of our core training to an online format and have delivered regular sessions on Mental Health & Suicide Awareness; Child Protection level 1 and Domestic Abuse and Safe & Together (co-delivered with Safe & Together Champions).

In terms of postgraduate study staff members have access to: Leadership & Management, Adult Support & Protection, Child Welfare & Protection, Occupational Therapy, Dementia Studies, Practice Education and the Mental Health Officer Award.

It has been particularly challenging to keep up to date with Team Teach training to new staff and refresher training due to the nature of the training that needs to be face to face. This was ceased last year, however this was re-established this year with around 100 staff receiving Team Teach training to date.

The SVQ Assessment centre has managed to continue working and supporting staff with their qualifications despite the restrictions – all be it to a lesser extent. However a successful external verifier visit that was highly complementary about the SVQ Assessment centre is testimony to the team and their diligence to keep going and adapting approaches to support staff achieve their qualifications. We are recruiting an additional SVQ assessor to support the team to increase resource to ensure all new staff and existing staff have access to an SVQ assessor in a timely manner to complete their qualification for registration within the appropriate timescales.

### **Achievements with SVQ for 2020/21**

- Early years Modern Apprenticeships Level 3 (CYP) 56 completed, plus 25 in process
- Foundation Apprenticeships - 10 from year one completed NPA CYP and 9 Year twos completed whole qualification **CYP** = 19 and **H & SC** – 9 completed
- Commenced another 10 year ones
- Level 2 in H&SC = 20
- Level 3 in H&SC = 3
- Level 4 in H&SC = 5
- Level 3 in CYP = 8

- Level 4 in CYP = 2
- Level 4 in Management = 8 = 5
- IV award = 1
- Assessor Award = 4

There are many programmes in place commencing August 2021 which will include Community Justice – supporting unpaid work people to complete SVQ's while undertaking the unpaid work. In addition Foster Carers in Midlothian as well as, Childminders in Midlothian and East Lothian.

The challenges facing the delivery of learning & development for the workforce continue to reflect the national picture. As the pressure on operational staff increases, the ability to release staff for essential learning & development is challenging for managers in frontline services. The Learning & Development staff continue to liaise closely with managers in order to design the delivery of learning and development as closely as possible to meet their needs/capacity for release of staff.

## **Public Protection**

The East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) is the local strategic partnership responsible for the overview of policy and practice in relation to Adult Protection, Child Protection, Offender Management 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. It discharges its functions through four sub groups.

Over the past year due to the impact of Covid-19, we established a senior managers' partnership meeting on a weekly, then fortnightly basis. This provided the opportunity for additional information sharing about the impact of the COVID pandemic restrictions on service delivery, staffing and the operational delivery of the work of the East and Midlothian Public Protection Office (EMPPO) in its support of the work of the EMPPC and associated sub-groups. This arrangement enabled us to have a dynamic and early response to emerging issues and risks and in line with phases of lockdown and restrictions and issuing of national Guidance.

Adult Support and Protection: Midlothian received 453 referrals, a 3.25% reduction over the previous year. Police, followed by Health, were the largest single referrer accounting for 29% of referrals. In Midlothian over the past year the most common type of harm investigated under ASP was financial and the most common category of client group with an ASP investigation was 'infirmity due to age accounting for 45% of referrals.

Child Protection: In light of Covid-19 we produced local interim guidance to supplement the national child protection guidance which reflected our own local procedures. Hubs were quickly established to children who required to be in school and for those whose parents were deemed to be part of the critical workforce. During the year we implemented the national child protection minimum dataset to review our performance data on an academic quarterly basis.

Violence against women and girls: The impact of Covid-19 upon the number of referrals relating to domestic abuse seen a slight reduction of referrals from police (1.1%). There was also a decrease of 3.4% of the number of sexual crimes report to police over the year. Given a second lockdown happened during this reporting period it was acknowledged that the ability to report these type of crimes was restricted due to lack of opportunity for the victim and not all services offering face-to-face contact.

## Conclusion

This past year has continued to be a challenge for social work and social care staff with Covid-19 remaining the focus of much of our work. The competing demands of still having to manage, for some on a daily basis, the impact of Covid-19 and the impact this has on our workforce remain very much a live issue. Whilst the vaccination programme has been a success and invaluable in protecting us by reducing the numbers of people being admitted to hospital, we continue to face many challenges as we enter another winter. This coupled with the very busy landscape in social work services around new national policies and the National Care Service Consultation, which has just arrived in our inboxes means that the year ahead will require significant input from us as leaders.

The NCS and the proposed reforms around social care and social work represent one of the most significant pieces of public service reform to be proposed. The proposed inclusion of children's service and justice were not foreseen at the beginning of these discussions, and I hope when writing the next CSWO report in 2022 we have had the opportunity and time to fully consult and appreciate both the positives and the risks such proposals may bring.

Finally, my thanks once again to all staff during what has and continues to be a very challenging time.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**The Midlothian Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan 2020-2023**

**APPENDIX 2**

**Report of a joint inspection of service for children and young people in need of care and protection in Midlothian - August 2020**

**APPENDIX 3**

**Integrated Children's Services Plan- September 2020**

**APPENDIX 4**

**East and Midlothian Public Protection Annual Report 2020**

For access to these Reports, please contact Lorraine O'Malley, PA at Email – [Lorraine.O'Malley@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:Lorraine.O'Malley@midlothian.gov.uk)

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