

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	26 November 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Children's Social Work; Workforce Development Plan (2024-2030)
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/24/331
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Alison McAlpine
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1 and 1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a Children's Social Work Workforce Plan (Appendix A) designed to build the capacity we need to meet demand based on our analysis of current and future need.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 notes that the Workforce Plan available in Appendix A aligns with the vision, values and goals of the children's social work service, and is in line with the Children's Services Plan 2023-2026;
- 2.2 notes the focus on employee wellbeing as a necessary component to ensure the workforce grows in confidence and competence to meet the increasingly complex needs of our most vulnerable children and their families;
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Officer for Children's Social Work and Family Support Services to align the service Learning and Development programme to the workforce plan; and
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Officer for Children's Social Work and Family Support Services to present an evaluation of progress against the workforce plan to Committee in 2027.

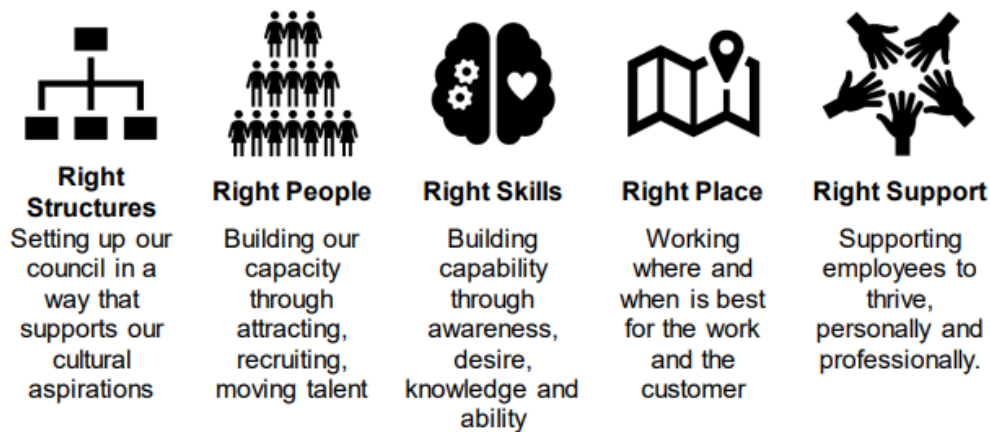
CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Background and context

- 3.1.1 Children's Social Work (CSW) provides statutory services from pre-birth to 18 years of age, extending to 26 years of age for care experienced young people in line with legislative responsibilities and supported by national and local policy and guidance.

- 3.1.2 In recent years, unprecedented, unforeseen challenges from a worldwide pandemic and global conflict, austerity cuts and a cost-of-living crisis have led to increased need within those who were already among our most disadvantaged in the city. This escalation of need and vulnerability has impacted on children's services locally and nationally at a time when there are considerable constraints on Local Authority resources. This has triggered a need to consider how we can maximise the impact of our most valuable resource, our staff.
- 3.1.3 A report to the Staff Governance Committee in April 2024 entitled "[Workforce Deep Dive – Approach to Workforce Capacity and Hard to Fill Roles](#)" identified many posts in CSW as being "hard to fill". Operationally this presents significant challenges to service delivery.
- 3.1.4 In 2022 Social Work Scotland commissioned independent research to examine the challenges facing the social work service. The report '[Setting the Bar](#)' (2019) and the follow up report '[Taking the Wheel](#)' report (2022) highlighted recruitment and retention challenges, the impact of excessive workloads, the fast pace of policy and legislation change and public portrayal of social work as challenges. The challenges faced by CSW were deemed to be more acute than those faced by other social work sectors; in recognition of the high levels of emotional challenge associated with this work, the report also proposed indicative maximum caseloads.
- 3.1.5 The current policy and legislative context in which CSW operates is fast changing (*Appendix B*) with increasing complexities for the workforce to navigate which can be daunting. We need to consider how best to mitigate this.
- 3.1.6 The Independent Care Review, [The Promise](#), acknowledged the complexity of the task, and the challenges faced by staff delivering services to children, young people and their families. The Promise highlighted the duty on employers to provide 'scaffolding' for the workforce; quality professional supervision, learning and development opportunities to equip them for their role whilst also recognising the mental wellbeing needs of a workforce who are exposed daily to the impact of abuse and trauma. **'Scotland must hold the hands of those who hold the hand of the child.'** - The Promise.
- 3.1.7 The Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) undertook research in relation to delivery of children's services alongside a proposed introduction of the National Care Service (NCS), and to adhere to the service transformation commitment made within 'The Promise'. In December 2023 CELCIS published [Children's Services Reform Research](#). It acknowledges the current climate; too many children experiencing the effects of poverty; the implications of the cost-of-living crisis; the rippling impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on health and wellbeing; and the increased demand for social work and social care.

- 3.1.8 The research identifies a range of elements that create the optimal conditions needed to enable success in improving the lives of those who need the support of services. This includes a focus on supportive, trusting, consistent relationships; rights; sufficient and skilled workforce; structures that provide needed help and support; measures to combat poverty; simplified legislative landscape; and an approach to change that gives cognisance to the complexity of human relations and systems.
- 3.1.9 The proposed CSW workforce development plan (Appendix A) takes cognisance of all known local and national challenges. It is aligned to Aberdeen City's [Local Outcome & Improvement Plan](#) (LOIP), [Children's Services Strategic Plan](#) and our [Child Protection Improvement Plan](#).
- 3.1.10 The Plan also takes full account of the Council's [Workforce Delivery Plan](#), approved by Staff Governance Committee in January 2023, which identified five key levers to delivering workforce transformation. Each of these levers have been used to help support the development of the Plan.



3.2 Right Structures

- 3.2.1 As part of the planning for a National Care Service (NCS) the Scottish Government have committed to establishing a National Social Work Agency (NSWA). The proposed NSWA will have responsibility for a range of elements that will directly impact on the profession. This is likely to include pay grades, workforce planning, training, development, and qualifications. Our Workforce Plan will need to evolve to take account of the creation of an NSWA as well as the development of the Advanced Social Work Practice Framework being introduced. Both these national structural changes are due to come into effect in the coming years.
- 3.2.2 CSW sits within the Family and Community Services Function, alongside Education and Lifelong Learning and the Housing Service. This arrangement enables opportunities for integration to be maximised, particularly for children who need targeted and specialist support. Responsibility for delivery of a Family Support Model sits with the Function. Collaboration with others is crucial in terms of how we provide early and preventative support to families to mitigate

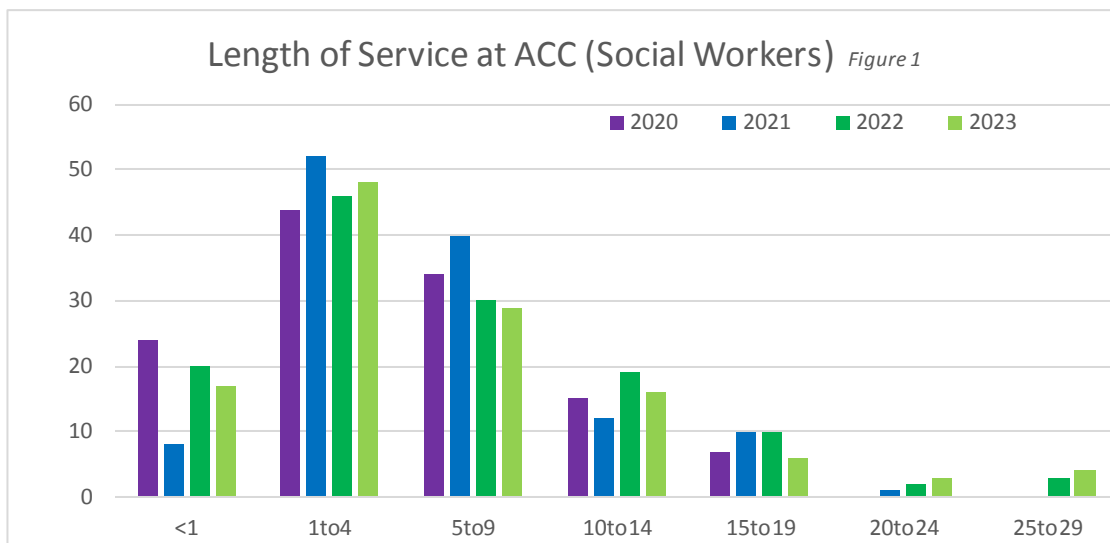
the need for statutory social work intervention. New ways of working will require to be adopted and CSW will require to be open to new more integrated structures being established over time. This will include helping build the capacity of community caseworkers as part of our model of Family Support.

- 3.2.3 Intervention focussed on keeping children within their families and community has been a key priority for many years now; with legislative, policy and practice drivers endorsing this ethos at pace both nationally and locally. Timely support aims to provide effective intervention at the right time, ultimately reducing the need for children to come into the care of the local authority. This will see changes in how the range of services from across the Community Planning Partners work together to support families to prevent and mitigate risk.
- 3.2.4 Despite the current provision of universal and targeted supports, demand for social work assessment and intervention remains high:
- Around 400 children are newly referred into our Intake services every month. The highest referral route being from Police Scotland, followed by Education.
 - We also receive new information of a care and protection nature for around 350 children already open to our service.
- 3.2.5 Most new referrals leave the service after short-term intervention, but longer-term cases go to locality teams based in the three localities across the city. Complex cases that require strong assessment and intervention are handled by frontline social workers, who often act as Lead Professionals, a crucial part of our fieldwork services. There is a need to ensure that our frontline workers have the scaffolding and casework size they require to work confidently. This may have implications for our structure.
- 3.2.6 Crucial enhancement to service delivery is afforded by professionals across CSW, with a diverse range of knowledge, skills, qualifications and experience, who hold risk through intervention identified within individualised Children's Plans. These children will very often be at risk of falling into crisis, may require alternative family, care or housing settings, and some are known to be struggling to access education, training or employment due to their complex needs. Recognising that these children, young people and families will require a multi-agency plan to meet their needs and keep them safe continuing to develop collaborative and colocated opportunities will be essential going forward.
- 3.2.7 Professionals within our Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Teams are a vital component of our service delivery. Staff prioritise identifying, recruiting and supporting carers who can offer high quality care to children who cannot safely remain in the care of their parents. Residential staff work 24/7 across our local children's homes to offer therapeutic care to our children and young people, all of whom have experienced adverse childhood experiences. All children require extremely patient, reparative care each and every day.

- 3.2.8 Across all areas of service, demand is greater than service capacity resulting in workers and their managers striving to balance the competing needs of children and families in order to mitigate the deficit between resource availability and demand. For this reason, workforce risks are recognised in our service cluster risk register and will continue to be mitigated by supporting the professional development of staff in an agile and responsive manner. This recognises the changing shape of demand and complexity that have been very prominent in recent years.
- 3.2.9 We broadly welcome the intention to establish a NSWA and the focus this will bring to the professional development of social workers. We also recognise the intention of The Promise to ensure families have ready access to early and preventive family support. As we develop our integrated Family Support Model the knowledge and skills of social workers will be critical to shaping the model and ensure the principles of intensive family support, outlined in The Promise, are fully considered in our next steps.

3.3 Right People

- 3.3.1 We are exceptionally proud to have a dedicated and committed workforce who work hard to deliver skilled assessment and intervention to our most vulnerable children and their families. We recognise our staff are by far our most precious asset, and we are committed to supporting and developing them, creating a climate and culture that is conducive to the social work values we are shaped by. We know this will best preserve and protect our workforce but also maximise their collective capacity to deliver highest quality of service provision.
- 3.3.2 The total number of CSW employees has decreased by 5% since 2019 as a result of budget contraction and service redesign. Given the on-going financial challenges facing Local Authorities our model of delivering statutory social work services will need to continue to evolve. Ensuring the voices of those who access our services as well as those who deliver front line social work services will be central to shaping the design of services going forward.
- 3.3.3 Our CSW workforce is comprised of approximately 384 employees across all service areas (December 2023.) The average length of service of qualified children's social workers is 6.6yrs (*Figure 1.*) This is considerably lower than the average years of service of the wider children's social work workforce which sits at 10 years.



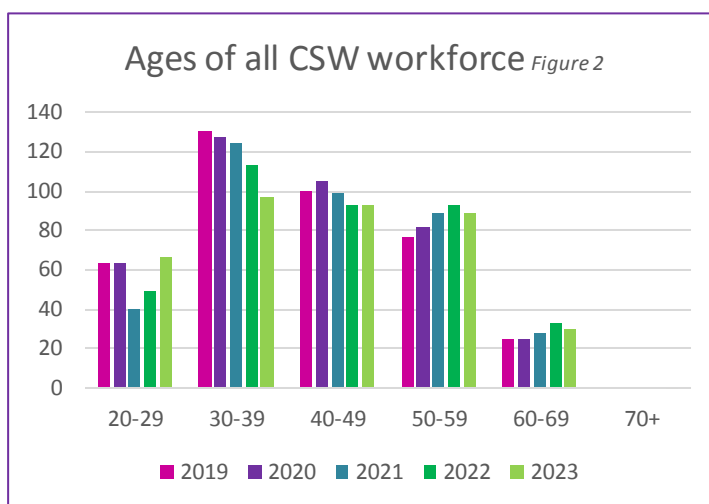
3.3.4 We recognise the challenge we have in retaining social workers in statutory services. This is both a local and national challenge. This is particularly challenging where workers fulfil the role of Lead Professional as well as those within our residential services. By nature, these roles are challenging, require specific knowledge, skill and crucially, demand considerable resilience. We are clear that when the right people are recruited into these posts and are subsequently nurtured, supported and afforded the required training and development opportunities, the rewards are reaped by both staff themselves and by our children and families.

3.3.5 One in four graduating social workers do not make it to 6 years in the profession. In Aberdeen, our data tells us that when our workers do remain in the service beyond their initial years, many actually remain in the longer term, their years of service offering us a robust skill and experience base. There is a need to do all we can to retain our people. We plan to carefully scrutinise exit interview records so that we can take action to address identified risks.

3.3.6 Alongside the benefits of retaining staff in our service in the longer term, we are then challenged by a workforce that in some areas, is ageing in keeping with the national position. 19% of our workforce are approaching retirement age. Succession planning is therefore as much a key factor as is our ensuring effective recruitment and retention within the service. To support our employees to reach their potential, consideration to what training and development is most appropriate for staff takes place within supervision sessions with staff, and as part of the continuous review and development (CR&D) process. We work hard to ensure our service training budget suits the variety of development needs of our workforce. This includes allocating funding, in collaboration with colleagues in People & Citizen Services, to post qualifying training staff in key roles who evidence commitment to enhancing service delivery. The next steps in this are detailed in the action plan, that the Learning & Development Officer and CSMT management carry out an audit of training needs annually and training needs are logged, reviewed and contribute to future planning of service wide training

requirements. We also review the current CSW workforce demographic and actively promote leadership and shadowing opportunities and have a clear structure and progression plan.

3.3.7 The average age of our Children's Social Work workforce has increased from 37 to 38 years, over the past five years, with the average age of male social workers increasing to 50, and females to 37 years old. There are currently more Children's Social Work employees aged between 40-44 years old, than in the other age brackets. Compare this to the 2019 data, where the biggest



group of employees were those aged between 30-34 years old. Currently, there are no employees under 20 years old, and only one aged between 70 – 74 years old. We recognise that 20% of our CSW workforce are in their 20s, but within our qualified social workers, this age group make up 30%, with a significant proportion in frontline services. Due to this, additional care is required and factored into our Action Plan to support this group.

3.3.8 We want to do all we can to recognise and retain experience within our service through offering flexible working wherever possible. Alongside this, it is also critical to develop a pathway to help recruit, develop and retain , young people into our wider service, so that we can continue to address the significant numbers who exit the profession prematurely. There is a need to work closely with the Education and Lifelong Learning, People and Citizen Services and the Employability team to develop this pathway.

3.3.9 A measure to support our recruitment challenges is our ‘grow our own’ approach to succession planning. Currently we have 8 trainee social workers within the service. These are all internal employees, who were in non-qualified roles within the organisation who evidenced a desire to progress as well as displaying the necessary experience, transferable skills and a strong alignment to social work values. Recognising the transferability of skills and knowledge from related disciplines i.e. Community Learning and Development and Early Learning and Childcare our grow our own opportunities extend beyond the CSW workforce.

3.3.10 Our newly qualified social workers (NQS) are in the main, recruited from the Robert Gordon University (RGU) (19 at August 2023). Undoubtedly this local connection endorses a need for a close partnership, as well as realising the benefits of offering social workers in training a valuable placement experience that will inspire and encourage their motivation to work in CSW in Aberdeen. In order to strengthen our partnership with RGU, we will continue to hold recruitment events that will raise awareness of CSW among social work

students, we aim to increase the number of student placements on offer, and will develop our communication and discussions with the RGU social work department, to ensure that CSW is promoted and encouraged as a career path.

3.3.11 The vast majority of CSW employees are female (*Table 3*) and are dispersed as follows. 93% social workers, 85% Team Managers, and 75% Senior Managers. More female employees work part-time, however most Team Managers and all Senior Managers work full-time. The number of male employees working part-time has increased in recent years. In recognition of the needs of our staff and to encourage retention, we have embraced flexible working options, where this can fit with the exigencies of the service. This option will continue to be promoted across the workforce.

Employees	Female	Male	Total
2023	331	46	377
2020	346	57	403
2019	340	56	396

3.3.12 The majority of CSW employees identify their ethnicity as 'white-Scottish' (45%), with a further 27% identifying as 'white – other British' (2022.) This data largely mirrors the ethnicity of the children and young people our service works with. Given the increasing diversity in the city we recognise that greater diversity across our workforce would enrich and enhance service delivery. Social workers who share cultural backgrounds with their clients can better understand and address specific challenges, fostering trust and effective communication as well as creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for those we serve to protect. We are conscious of national [reports](#) reflecting on the racism challenges that minority ethnic social workers continue to experience at work and are committed to ensuring that everyone is included, empowered, and treated with respect. Our [Diversity in Recruitment](#) report which was approved at Council on 11th of October 2024, details how we will progress this. Implications for CSW include attracting candidates from groups that are underrepresented, ensuring that managers have training and guidance that address barriers such as unconscious bias and language, and that everyone within our workforce is welcomed from the outset and has a strong sense of belonging. This can be further strengthened within the new professional supervision guidance and training that will be delivered across the service.

3.3.13 We have looked more closely into the volume and context surrounding vacancies across service given the impact that vacancies has on service delivery. Our vacancy factor has improved (18 social worker vacancies out of 102 as at December 2022 to 10 vacancies in June 2024.) Improvements in capturing relevant data allow us to factor learning into workforce planning; for the 26 social workers who left the role during the most recent SSSC reporting period 5 December 2022 to 4 December 2023:-

- 31% (8) moved 'sideways' to another role within social work,
- 1 reached the end of their fixed term contract,
- 1 was promoted,
- 1 retired early,
- 1 left through Voluntary Severance / Early Retirement,
- 12% (3) resigned

- 1 very sadly passed away.

Feedback from staff who have moved to other social work roles indicates that the emotional impact of the work of children's social work is a primary driver for them to explore alternative employment options. This is particularly prevalent for social workers in frontline social work roles who are in the role of lead professional. We are committed to maximising the opportunities offered by technology to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens to make the best possible use of staff time and expertise.

3.3.14 Previously, we have had to rely on the additional supply pool and experience from external recruitment agencies. This reliance is cost prohibitive and the short term nature of agency contracts is not conducive to the relational working practice we promote within our workforce. We have made considerable improvement reducing from over 15 agency workers in 2011, to 5 in December 2019 and as of July 2024, just 1. This is a shift we are committed to sustaining.

3.3.15 In September 2024, the absence rate amongst children's social work was 9.9 days. This is lower than the ACC average of 12.05 days for the same period. In recent years, there has been a move to take more cognisance to providing scaffolding to the workforce, working in a trauma informed way, and to the complexities of working day-to-day within social work, therefore the professional supervision training will aim to better equip supervisors to respond to absences and aid returning to work.

3.3.16 Challenges in recruitment are similar to national trends. Moving experienced social workers to service areas with gaps is rarely feasible. Ultimately it can result in leaving another area with need and does not recognise there are some roles that require a particular skill base or motivation that is not universally held. We have however worked hard to cultivate a culture that recognises we are greater than the sum of our individual parts. This ethos has allowed us to be more supportive, where we can, to the internal movement of staff where this will benefit overall service delivery, whilst working on strengthening links with RGU and providing sessions for students to attract them to the CSW service.

3.3.17 Getting the right people managers is critical given the role they play ensuring our most vulnerable children and young people are able to claim their rights. Our workforce plan notes the development of selection tools for promoted posts in terms of interview format, selection and assessment. This includes ensuring that our care experienced children and young people and others who have lived experience of receiving services are part of our decision-making process.

3.3.18 Our action plan includes our continued commitment to learning and development; building workforce resilience and openness; retaining staff; 'growing our own'; reducing vacancies and absence rates amongst our Social Workers; reviewing and adapting our services; and attracting workers from underrepresented groups.

3.4 Right Skills

3.4.1 Social work intervention aims to enable families to leave statutory services as soon as possible. The expertise and proficiency of our workforce significantly

influence how swiftly families can be supported to do this. There is an inextricable link between this Workforce Plan and our learning and development programme.

- 3.4.2 The CSW learning and development programme is aligned to service priorities, self-reported areas for development, compliant to statutory and regulatory responsibilities and is managed in-house or via the corporate training budget within People & Citizen Services. In addition, there are multi-agency training sessions offered via [Aberdeen Protects](#). CSW also now have access to CareKnowledge, a professional development platform that provides access to expert, evidence-based information and resources/tools that help maximise learning and development opportunities for staff. Staff report that whilst time constraints can compromise usage of this, when they do, they find it informative for their roles. There is a need to continue to ensure that staff dedicate time to their own learning and development through our supervision arrangements and continue to ensure that platforms such as CareKnowledge are available to our staff to respond to the individual needs of our staff in order to continue to build a highly knowledgeable and proficient workforce.
- 3.4.3 In recent years, we have seen an increase in areas of work including migrant families and unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive spontaneously or via the National Transfer Scheme. We have also seen an increased volume of older children who arrive in the city, often from England, having become involved in criminal exploitation; high levels of substance misuse with an associated high level of drug related deaths. Also, the numbers of children with additional support needs (ASN) and complex disability has increased year on year, significantly those who have autism or are neurodiverse who are often referred when the family is in crisis. As a result of on-going changes in need, there is both a need for our workforce to benefit from the skills of others (for example specialists in neurodiversity) and work with other staff across the organisation and group (such as those supporting families impacted by drugs and alcohol). As a service, we will diligently seek opportunities to learn from others and extend reciprocal offers.
- 3.4.4 Data shows an increase in the number of referrals requiring medium to longer term social work intervention. Employees tell us that this can feel relentless and exhausting. There is a need to focus on the wellbeing of our staff.
- 3.4.5 Whilst our remit focusses on the needs of unborn babies, children, young people and those for whom we have a statutory duty to provide throughcare and aftercare services, we acknowledge the majority of children's needs are codependent or interrelated to the needs of their parents/carers, their wider family, and communities around them. Work is ongoing to work collegially with partner agencies to see the family as a holistic unit and expertise is offered to provide whole family support, by those best placed to intervene.
- 3.4.6 Nurturing positive multi and inter agency relationships in a climate where demand exceeds resource availability remains challenging for all. Learning and development for all staff on the importance of this, as well as targeted focus on professional supervision development and training is a crucial area of our

Action Plan. We strive for all of our leaders to be highly skilled and able to bring staff, and indeed multi-agency partners together to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people at risk of significant harm or those for whom we have corporate parenting responsibilities.

- 3.4.7 Our action plan focuses on specific areas of improvement for building workforce capacity, including the need to develop better communication on promoting CSW values, opportunities for personal continuous learning and development, along with tools and information to help navigate the ever evolving day-to-day challenges faced in CSW.

3.5 Right Place

- 3.5.1 In July 2024, there were approximately 1,600 children open to our service, with varying levels of need, including just under 500 'looked-after' children and young people. Of the 1600 children circa 60% live in SIMD 1 & 2, where unsurprisingly there is a greater level of generational trauma, unemployment and lone parent households. These factors increase the vulnerabilities for families and have implications for all services whilst correlating to lower outcomes in attainment within the city's education data.

- 3.1.1 The Care Inspectorate recently noted the strengths of the co-location model in operation for our Children with Disabilities Team. They noted that this model is helping to keep children safer and address wellbeing needs. Plans are in place for social work staff to move into a community resource aligned with a school. While recognising the potential benefits of colocation the needs of delivering statutory social work services need to be carefully and fully considered.

- 3.1.2 Collaboration with partners across the public, voluntary and the private sector is crucial to how we provide early and preventative support to families that mitigates the need for children to be referred to the social work service. Working collaboratively with multi-agency partners is critical to delivering flexible and responsive support that recognises the holistic needs and vulnerabilities of all family members.

- 3.1.3 This is as much the case when children's social work do require to intervene in order to ensure that those in need are able to access the services and support they require at the point they require it. As noted above, timely support aims to provide effective intervention at the right time, ultimately reducing the need for children to come into the care of the local authority.

- 3.1.4 CSW continues to review and re-design services for the benefit of children, young people and families we work with. Aims within our action plan include co-designing and improving services with the children, young people and families we work with, along with enhancing our communication, co-working, and opportunities offer with our partners.

3.2 Right Support

- 3.2.1 Our CSW workforce development plan is driven forward by our Children's Services Management Team, led by the Chief Social Work Officer, supported

by the Lead Service Manager and six Service Managers, each with strategic oversight of respective interdependent and related areas of service.

- 3.2.2 There is a relational, strength and value based approach to practice within CSW. This is as important for our children and families as it is for our workforce. The contribution from all staff to ensure that all colleagues feel supported and respected is fundamental to effective operational delivery of services. Whilst modelling this is a particular focus for those in leadership positions, this is as relevant for every one of us. This is vital to helping create a culture that maximises benefits for all, as well as in building resilience and promoting wellbeing. We will strive to ensure this golden thread permeates all elements of our Workforce Development Action Plan.
- 3.2.3 Ensuring all our staff have the knowledge and skills they require to undertake their respective roles is vital. Central to our delivery of statutory functions is of course, the role of our qualified social workers. We recognise that for this group, their initial post qualifying years form a career blueprint which can either make or break whether they remain within their roles.
- 3.2.4 NQSW make up the highest proportion of our applicants to social work posts. We have been running a successful programme of support for NQSW for a number of years now as part of our commitment to ensuring this group have our particular focus whilst they put new knowledge into practice and build up their skills and experience. We are clear that when we provide the necessary support and development opportunities many remain with us for much of their career. Our NQSW programme is now led by clinical practitioners with expertise in systemic practice. We welcome the mandating of the NQSW Supported Year (October 2024) and are pleased that current practice in Aberdeen is aligned to this pathway from qualification through to advanced practice.
- 3.2.5 We acknowledge the impact that every member of the CSW workforce makes on our children, young people, families as much as on each other. We are proud of the support those in leadership positions afford our staff and we will continue to ensure a visibility of managers at all levels, to ensure that the workforce feels connected and supported.
- 3.2.6 We equip key staff with tools from the field of systemic family therapy and social learning theory; supporting them with expert and intensive case supervision; business support; reduced bureaucracy; and devolved decision making, so that families get the right support, at the right time, to make and sustain change.
- 3.2.7 A foundation of our action plan is promoting mental health and wellbeing by supporting healthy work-life balance; effective supervision, and developing a culture that promotes mental health and wellbeing.
- 3.2.8 Whilst recognising the importance of visibility and connection, we embrace the benefits of technology alongside hybrid working. We have embraced flexible working provisions which have seen some of the workforce adopting different working patterns, within areas where service delivery can benefit from delivery

over longer days. These arrangements can help to maximise wellbeing and recovery from stressful working whilst supporting workers to manage their own family commitments.

3.2.9 In recognition that people who work in CSW experience increased risk of vicarious and secondary trauma and burnout, more targeted supports are offered to CSW workforce. This support is probably most widely seen within the practice of supervision, offered for almost all posts through 1-1, regular individualised sessions to employees by their line manager. Following a service wide survey on professional supervision, a working group reviewed feedback highlighting several areas of good practice and some areas for improvement. In developing supervision guidance, the practitioners reviewed current supervision practices, within ACC and other Local Authorities, taking into account deficiencies highlighted by recent inspection findings; and analysed different supervision models. Training that will complement and build on supervisor's experience, knowledge and skills will be delivered early 2025; with initial commitment to roll this out to line managers across our service.

3.2.10 Our focus on wellbeing will remain a significant feature of workforce development planning. This approach was formally launched in March 2023, when our Practice Improvement Day, coinciding with National Social Work Day, highlighted our ongoing commitment to ensuring that in Aberdeen, mental health/wellbeing is prioritised. Staff feedback overwhelmingly illustrated that this emphasis was welcomed across all levels of our organisation. Further supports for our staff now range from wellbeing sessions and resources targeted at social work staff as a group, such as weekly guided journalling sessions, to more specific clinical supervision, support and training for specialist practitioners undertaking specific roles. We point our staff towards ACC's [Employee Assistance Programme](#) when counselling sessions might be beneficial, and bespoke arrangements when particular circumstances deem this more appropriate. In April 2023, we introduced an initiative for our employees, to consider ways that they can prioritise their wellbeing, in discussion with their manager, through individualised self-care or learning activities that will enhance mental and physical wellbeing. This initiative has been very well received by staff and we will continue to measure the impact of this via annual feedback.

3.3 WORKFORCE PLANNING

3.3.1 Our workforce development plan (*Appendix A*) will be delivered in accordance with our [Aberdeen's Children's Services Strategic Plan](#) and the Workforce Delivery Plan (as detailed in the [Workforce Deep Dive – Committee Report \(April 2024\)](#)). It sets out our aims over the next six years, crucially, how we are going to measure the impact of what we develop and deliver.

3.3.2 The aims of this workforce development plan are to ensure a high-performing, diverse and resilient local children's services workforce that can meet the current and future needs and expectations of those for whom we have a duty to care for and protect. As such, our objectives are to:

- Attract and retain diverse talented and committed staff who share our values and vision.
- Develop, nurture and enhance the skills and competencies of a staff group who we acknowledge will be working in a highly complex and demanding area of service, to enable them to perform their roles effectively and to adapt to changing demands.
- Ensure a high level of support and guidance is offered to our workforce in line with their respective needs.
- Support and empower staff to achieve their potential and career aspirations, whilst ensuring a healthy balance of their work and personal lives.
- Promote and celebrate the inclusion and diversity of our staff, always offering equal opportunity to progression and other training opportunities and ensuring they are treated fairly and respectfully.
- Foster a culture of excellence, innovation and collaboration amongst our staff that extends to the wider city partnership and delivers best practice to the children, their families and our wider community within the city

3.3.3 Our workforce development plan is split into three sections, recruitment and retention; supervision to support mental health and wellbeing; and growth and development opportunities.

3.3.4 The plan details the specific actions and measures of how we will achieve the aims stated. In addition, each aim is linked back to foundations of the Promise (Family, Voice, Care, People, and Scaffolding), so that we can monitor our progress with implementation of the Promise, and focus on the key challenges that are facing our sector.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Improved learning and development opportunities, high quality supervision and wellbeing support for employees should improve retention of social workers and attract more potential applicants to come and work within CSW in Aberdeen. In order to ensure that we comply with our regulatory duties under the SSSC Codes of Practice, effective learning and development opportunities alongside wellbeing support to staff will be critical.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from this report.

7 RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Many of the improvements required to support and retain social workers in the city are part of the workforce development plan	In line with the Children's Services Plan 2023-2026	M	Yes
Compliance	Risk that ACC can't provide service that complies with legislative duties.	This is managed through the Cluster Risk Register	M	Yes
Operational	Risk that ACC cannot recruit/retain social workers	This is managed through the Cluster Risk Register	M	Yes
Financial	No direct financial impact		L	Yes
Reputational	Organisational failings in relation to child protection can bring significant media interest and scrutiny of services delivered to children and young people.	The public can be assured that: the Council ensures compliance with legal requirements, national standards and guidance; partners respond to self and external scrutiny; and identified areas for improvement are addressed.	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Not applicable for this report			

8 OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 24-25</u>	
	Impact of Report
	The information in this report has no impact on the Council Delivery Plan but is in line with the aims of the Children's Services Plan
<u>WorkinginPartnershipPolicyStatement.pdf (aberdeencity.gov.uk)</u>	
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan (refresh April 2024)</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The report seeks to provide an update on how CSW plans to develop and support its workforce.</p> <p>In line with the delivery of the Children's Services Plan and associated Stretch Outcomes 4-9 of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together as a Community Planning Partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people within Aberdeen City • Leading the implementation of national policy and legislation pertaining to children and young people

9 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	Not required

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Children's Services Strategic Plan 2023-26](#)

11 APPENDICES

Appendix A - Children's Social Work; Workforce Development Plan '24-30
 Appendix B – Key Recent Changes to Children's Services Landscape

12 REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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