

Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report



Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions	5
3.	Service quality and performance	8
4.	Challenges and improvements	43
5.	Resources	46
6.	Workforce	49
7.	Training, learning and development	52
8.	Looking ahead	53
	Appendix I – Performance of our Registered Services	56

I. Introduction

As Chief Social Work Officer, I am delighted to present my first Annual Report which describes our challenges and achievements over the last year and sets out the next steps in East Dunbartonshire's ambition to continue to deliver crucial services to our citizens.



The purpose of this report is to provide East Dunbartonshire Council and other key stakeholders, including the East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership's Integration Joint Board, staff and those who use our services, with information across the range of social work practice and on the statutory work undertaken between the 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 requires every Local Authority to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer. The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) provides professional governance, leadership and accountability for the delivery of social work and social care services whether provided by the Local Authority or purchased from the third or independent sector. The CSWO is also responsible for duties and decisions relating to the curtailment of individual freedoms, and the protection of both individuals and the public. The post holder is required to be a qualified Social Worker who can demonstrate extensive experience at a senior level and can provide effective professional advice at all levels. The specific role and functions of the CSWO are set out in guidance issued by Scottish Ministers, first issued in 2009, and updated in July 2016, for which a link is provided here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/role-chief-social-work-officer/>.

Social work and social care services enable, support, and protect people of all ages in East Dunbartonshire, by providing or purchasing services designed to promote their safety, dignity and independence, and by contributing to community safety by reducing offending and managing the risks posed by known offenders. Those services, which are required to meet national standards and provide best value, are delivered within a framework of statutory duties and powers. Where possible, services are delivered in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including the people who use them.

Every year presents its own unique set of circumstances, and this year has been no different. Social work and social care services have continued to be delivered within a complex landscape of increasing demand, high public expectation, economic uncertainty, substantial public sector financial challenges, and a constantly evolving legislative and policy landscape. Despite this, we have worked incredibly hard to support our communities, galvanizing organisational resources and professional resolve to meet these challenges, and our staff have shown sustained commitment, compassion and flexibility to help keep children and adults supported and safe.

I am incredibly grateful to all of our staff across East Dunbartonshire who have worked so exceptionally hard throughout the year, and I would wish to pass on my very sincere personal thanks to everyone for their hard work and ongoing commitment which continues to offer invaluable support for adults, families and children when they need it most, informed and underpinned by the values of our profession.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Aitken', written over a light blue horizontal line.

David Aitken
Chief Social Work Officer
East Dunbartonshire Council

A photograph of a modern building with a prominent curved section clad in teal-colored panels. Large glass windows are integrated into the curve, reflecting the sky and trees. To the right, a grey building with a flat roof and overhanging eaves is visible. The foreground shows a paved area and some low-lying vegetation.

Governance,
accountability
and statutory
functions

2. Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions

East Dunbartonshire Council provides services to around 109,000 residents across a mixed geography, comprising both urban and rural communities. Census data from 2022 identifies that East Dunbartonshire had a higher percentage of children aged 0-15 and a higher percentage of people aged 75 years and over compared to the rest of Scotland, with demographic challenges most significant in our population aged over 85 and 90 years old; with an increase of 78% in those aged 90 and over between 2011 and 2022 which follows the predicted trend of an ageing population.

Within East Dunbartonshire, the duties of the CSWO were discharged during the year by the Head of Adult Services of the Health and Social Care Partnership, with a deputy role being discharged by the Head of Children's Services.

The CSWO has a key role to play in shaping the planning agenda for social work across the Health and Social Care Partnership, Council and the Community Planning Partnership. The CSWO has also had the opportunity to influence budgetary decisions to ensure the needs of vulnerable people within our community are met, and that resources are deployed effectively. These arrangements are well established and operate effectively.

Within the Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership, there are clear structures and processes that enable the CSWO to fulfil their role and function.

The CSWO attends a range of key internal and external partnership meetings including;

- East Dunbartonshire's Health and Social Care Partnership Integration Joint Board – the CSWO is a non-voting member of the Board
- East Dunbartonshire's Child Protection Committee
- East Dunbartonshire's Adult Protection Committee
- East Dunbartonshire's Public Protection Chief Officers' Group, which brings together and highlights the work of the Child Protection Committee, the Adult Protection Committee, the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, statutory Mental Health work and any Prevent (safeguarding people from radicalisation) activity.
- The Community Planning Partnership's Executive Group and Board
- East Dunbartonshire's Community Justice Partnership
- East Dunbartonshire's Alcohol and Drug Partnership; the CSWO is the Chair of this partnership board.
- The CSWO also meets regularly with the HSCP Chief Officer and has regular contact with the Chief Executive of East Dunbartonshire Council.

The quality of social work practice is monitored through several mechanisms. The CSWO plays a key role as part of the HSCP's Clinical and Care Governance Group (CCGG). Chaired by the HSCP's Clinical Director, the group brings together senior professionals from both health and social work services. Its purpose is to offer assurance to the HSCP Board that services are being delivered safely, effectively, and in a way that centres on the needs of East Dunbartonshire residents.

The CCGG meets every two months and addresses a wide range of topics. These include the review of complaints, significant clinical events, duty of candour cases and the evaluation of quality improvement efforts within teams.

A key focus of the group has been to maintain a balanced approach that ensures both thorough oversight and meaningful assurance across all areas of health, social care, and social work. We are confident that progress continues to be made in this regard. Further details about the group's work can be found in the CCGG Annual Report, available on the Council and HSCP websites.

We have also continued to deliver a programme of systematic case file audits and quality assurance processes using several tools, which have contributed to improved standards. Last year the focus of our Adult Services Self Evaluation was on our adult mental health services and their interface with alcohol and drug recovery services, which was undertaken on an integrated basis lead by a social work services. In some contexts, specifically around child and adult protection, these audits are undertaken as multi-agency processes. We are now reflecting on and revising the procedures to ensure they remain current and effective and take account of any areas of learning identified through formal inspection of services, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement and a culture of sharing learning to support improvement such as the continued delivery against our Adult Support and Protection Improvement Plan.

Supervision and training remain a key priority to ensure our staff are supported to maintain the knowledge and understanding required to deliver on our statutory functions. We retain an active Social Work Training Group which address future needs, registered service requirements and oversee post qualifying training required by our workforce.

East Dunbartonshire Council hosts a well-established Health and Social Care Forum. Although it is not a decision-making body, it plays an important role by allowing Elected Members to engage with and offer input on a variety of social work and social care matters. These include inspection findings, service developments, policy considerations, and quality improvement initiatives.

The discussions held within the forum help to shape policy and strategy, while acknowledging the governance role and decision-making authority of the Health and Social Care Partnership Board.

The environment in which social work operates, and by extension, the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO), remains complex and demanding. Emerging and ongoing challenges include providing support to care homes, assisting families facing financial hardship and responding to the needs of refugees and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. The CSWO is supported in this work by a designated deputy, well-established local professional networks, and active involvement in the national CSWO network coordinated by Social Work Scotland.



Service
quality and
performance

3. Service quality and performance

Children and Families – Child Protection

Our Child Protection Committee is independently chaired and consists of representatives from a range of agencies including education, social work and housing services, Police Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration and the third sector. It is a well-attended and engaging forum. This year we welcomed a new independent Chair, Jacqueline Forbes, who leads both our Child and Adult Protection Committees.

The Chair and Committee are supported by the Council's Child Protection Lead Officer. Working in partnership, the Committee carries out its core functions which include continuous improvement, strategic planning and public information and communication. The multi-agency Committee produces an annual business plan and an annual report, and manages the required work through four standing sub-groups:

- Management Information & Self-evaluation Subgroup (MISE)
- Joint Public Information & Communication- Subgroup (shared with the Adult Protection Committee)
- Joint Learning & Development Subgroup (shared with the Adult Protection Committee)
- Learning Review Subgroup

We continue to develop our work to ensure that voice of children is at the heart of our work. Following consultation and review of Mind of My Own (MOMO) user data, the Child Protection Committee took the decision not to recommission MOMO this year. We have further developed our own consultation process by developing a series of online questionnaires.

In line with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) principles, these include seeking views of children, young people, parents, carers and professionals throughout the child protection process. In addition, the children and families social work department has introduced a monthly 'child's views' observation. This will be monitored through regular audits and scrutiny activity to ensure we are capturing children's views and that the Child Protection Committee is adhering to the requirements as set out in the new legislation. (Article 12, UNCRC, 2024.)

The inclusion officer within Education provided two training opportunities for multi-agency practitioners to learn more about the variety of ways to gather children and young people's views, with specific consideration of those who cannot communicate verbally. This also supports with ways in which we can represent their views.

As a result of recommendations from the Promise, a multi-agency working group highlighted local improvements to be explored through workshops with children and young people, parents, foster carers and social work and health practitioners focussing on language and communication. These all took place in the 2024-2025 session. This has led to the introduction of a Life Story Working Group which will be overseen by the Corporate Parenting Steering Group and will focus on training and processes across the multi-agency partnership.

In the Spring of 2024, we published our first Public Protection newsletter with a focus on regularly updating multi-agency practitioners around developments across both the Child Protection Committee and Adult Protection Committee. This was in response to findings of the Children at Risk of Harm Inspection which highlighted a need for better communication to front-line practitioners. These are published seasonally and held on the public protection website. Public Protection - Public Protection (protectingpeopleeastdunbarton.org.uk) The website itself has

recently been updated following an audit by the group. Reports and helpful documents are now more easily accessible to all staff and multi-agency practitioners.

In response to our 2022 report regarding Child A, in May 2024, project funding was confirmed to commission a service offering independent clinical psychologists to support multi-agency teams around children and families to learn and reflect together. This project will run until July 2025. The initial evaluations for the project have shown practitioners seeing the benefit of the reflective space and transferring their learning to other cases. Members of the CPC and multi-agency practitioners were also offered training sessions on common themes arising from the consultations, including professional curiosity.

Good Practice Example

Following the Children at Risk from Harm (CARH) inspection in 2022, gaps were identified in local advocacy provision for children and young people.

In conjunction with the local advocacy steering group, it was agreed that senior practitioners within social work children and families teams would be upskilled in advocacy principals and practice. Partners in Advocacy, a local advocacy provider, delivered bespoke training this year to an identified group of staff in order to develop this approach. The session focussed on practical skills and resources that could be used to gather views to ensure the development of more independent access to advocacy support. The approach has also allowed us to provide children and young people more choice and independence in who they share their views with, and how this can be presented.

Activity and Performance

Over the year, 100% of first Child Protection Planning Meetings took place within the target timescale.

We continued to ensure that Integrated Comprehensive Assessments were prioritised in line with the National target of 20 days with performance improving such that 98% of all such reports were completed to timescale and above target. Ensuring that these reports are available to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration on time, supports the best assessment of children and young people's needs and delivery of actions to ensure they have access to the right support at the right time.

The tables below highlight key Child Protection and Looked After and Accommodated data and performance indicators. Our Child Protection registrations figures at end of year remain consistent with last year's numbers, with slightly fewer Child Protection Investigations completed, with all of our Child Protection Planning Meetings taking place within timescales.

In terms of Looked After and Accommodated children and young people There has been a positive increase in the number of first Looked After and Accommodated Child reviews taking place within timescale from 81% last year to 100% this year, with the indicator meeting the target and all taking place within timescale.

	2022 - 2023	2023- 2024	2024- 2025
Child Protection Investigations	152	117	101
Child Protection Registrations	60	28	28
Child Protection De-registrations	44	47	28
Total on CP Register at Year End	43	24	24

Type of Planning Meeting	Number of Children Subject to Planning Meetings	Number of Planning Meetings
Pre-birth	*	*
Initial	30	17
Review	55	31
Transfer in	*	*
TOTAL	62	55

Note throughout this report - * denotes a number <5. Details are not further disclosed in the interests of protection of confidentiality.

	Target	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 – 2025
% of assessments (ICAs) requested by the Scottish Children's Reporter completed on time (20 days)	75%	92%	92%	98%
% of first Child Protection review case conferences taking place within 6 months of registration	95%	100%	100%	100%
% of first Looked After & Accommodated reviews taking place within 4 weeks of the child being accommodated	100%	87%	81%	100%
Balance of care for Looked After Children: % of children being looked after in the community	89%	83%	78%	82%

Performance Indicator – Looked After Children, Balance of Care

	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	% change over 3 years
At home with parents	41	20	20	-51%
Semi-Independent Living / Supported Accommodation	*	7	12	
With Friends/Relatives	45	46	32	
With Foster Carers	36	31	33	
With prospective adopters	*	0	0	
Total Community	124	104	97	-22%

	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025	% change over 3 years
LA Children's Home	8	8	4	
Residential School	8	9	5	
Secure Accommodation	0	*	0	
Children's Home – other sector	9	11	13	
Total Non Community	25	29	22	-12%
Balance of Care - % of Children in community	83%	78%	82%	

The balance of care has encouragingly improved from the previous year. Overall, there has been a decrease in the number of residential placements but also a decrease in the number of community-based placements, mainly friends/relatives placements. There has been an increase in demand for specialist placements due to the complexity of need presented by some children with disability. Overall, there has been a 20% decrease in our Looked After population during 2024-25.

In March 2025 there were 789 children and young people open across our Children and Families Teams with 1455 new case referrals received in 2024-25.

Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership

Our children and families social work services and our Delivering for Children and Young People Partnership (DCYPP) have had a very busy year continuing to deliver and develop services and approaches that support children, young people and their families, overseeing the delivery of key policy areas such as corporate parenting, Getting it Right for Every Child (GiRFEC), compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and delivery of 'The Promise'.

Despite the many challenges facing the service, including financial and workforce pressures, the commitment to the delivery of high-quality services and continuous service improvement remains evident.

A review of the Children and Families Social Work Service was undertaken during 2024-25. The aims of the review were to ensure statutory duties were delivered and outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and families were improved; to achieve transformational change and design sustainable Children and Families Services; and to achieve financial efficiency where possible. The review was completed with recommendations approved by the Integration Joint Board for commencement in March 2025.

DCYPP has also overseen the establishment of a Whole Family Wellbeing programme which is multi-agency and involves the extension of nurture support at the earliest stage and a family wellbeing hub with a focus on:

- Child Mental Health
- Poverty
- Alcohol & Drug Misuse
- Educational Attainment
- Attendance



Key Highlights demonstrating how we are #Keeping The Promise

The Promise Scotland launched Phase 2 of its engagement on 'Plan 24-30', which is a roadmap for achieving the goals outlined in The Promise. This phase focuses on engaging with people and organizations across Scotland to shape and develop 'Plan 24-30', the next iteration of how Scotland will keep its promise to care-experienced children, young people, and families. Our Promise Steering Group met regularly throughout the year to work towards progressing Phase 2, ensuring that local actions are completed.



The House Project which offers our care experienced young people the opportunity to take control of their future, by supporting them to gain the skills and experiences they will need to live independent lives and developing lifelong communities of support, had a further positive year and very successful fourth annual review in 2024. Over the course of the project, 22 young people have been supported to move into their homes, with another two moving since the review took place. The project currently supports 33 young people with a new cohort of eight young people due to commence. The review emphasised that over 70% of young people in the East Dunbartonshire House Project community were in education, training or employment, which is higher than the national average for care leavers. Staff and young people in The House Project were excited to host a Ministerial visit from Ms Natalie Don-Innes, Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise, in March. Ms Don-Innes was impressed with the positive impact the project had made and said it was great to speak to the young people and hear about the support the project provides in terms of moving into their own tenancies and understanding some of the challenges that can be faced. It was also highlighted how the project is a safe place for young people to drop in and for them to socialise and take a step back when things are a little bit difficult for them. This year we have also welcomed visits from our local elected members and Executive Officers.

North Strathclyde Partnership

We continue to be part of the North Strathclyde Partnership group along with East Renfrewshire HSCP, Renfrewshire HSCP, Inverclyde HSCP, Children 1st, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Scottish Government, implementing the Scottish Child Interview Model and a new trauma informed approach to recovery with the Bairns Hoose. We have committed two dedicated social workers to this model; both have been trained in SCIM at Tullyallen Police College. The North Strathclyde partnership was awarded pathfinder status in March 2024 along with a grant award to continue to develop the capacity and sustainability of this model.



The outcomes to date for our children and young people are: high levels of disclosure (around 75%) and positive feedback has been received from children and families, feeling supported through the process, with a trauma responsive approach to our children and young people involved in this system.

Better Hearings

In East Dunbartonshire we have a long-standing positive relationship with our colleagues in the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration and Children's Hearings Scotland. Over the last year we have continued to work in partnership to improve the experiences of and outcomes for children, young people and their families when involved in a Children's Hearing as we implement the Better Hearing's improvement agenda. Some examples of work we have undertaken include:

- Established a multi- agency Better Hearings group
- Asked children, young people and families about their experiences of social work involvement and of the Hearings: we listened to their views and have implemented improvements
- We have reviewed and improved our Social Work assessments to ensure the views of children are recorded and are evident in the recommendations made to the Children's Reporter
- Social Work leaders have regular meetings with Children's Hearings Scotland and Panel Members to learn lessons and continuously improve
- Supported children, young people and families to attend online Hearings by providing devices and digital support
- Ensured we prioritise the needs and views of siblings in relation to care plans and contact
- Involve our SCRA colleagues in regular multi-agency staff briefings and our Management Information and Self Evaluation Subgroup.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) is a government mandated programme for supporting the arrival of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in the UK. As part of this scheme, East Dunbartonshire is mandated to take a percentage of the number of arrivals in the UK. In addition to those young people coming via the NTS, East Dunbartonshire will also receive young people on an unplanned basis, who present as children and are requiring care and accommodation where there is no adult to provide this.

In 2024 we were proud to implement our supported accommodation model to provide whole system 24-hour support to our new Scots who arrived under the national Transfer Scheme and spontaneous arrivals who have been trafficked.

We are currently supporting 31 UASC, aged between 16 and 24, the majority of whom, (23 young people) are aged 16 and 17. Of this number 11 young people have been granted Leave to Remain. We are particularly proud of the success which this group have achieved and in our success in supporting our UASC young people into positive destinations. We have established good links with further education providers and all of our current UASC / young people are currently within either education or employment with 30 within some form of education and one young person now working full-time.

In terms of accommodation, we currently have four young people in Ferndale, thirteen young people in The Kelvin, which is our now accommodation model, two are within foster care and the remaining 12 either within their own tenancy or student accommodation.

Community Support Team

Throughout this year the Community Support Team have provided a support service to over 100 children and young people and their families in East Dunbartonshire. The 22-strong Community Support Team made up of Family Support Workers, Social Work Assistants, an Organiser and Team Manager, support our most vulnerable children and young people who have a range of additional support requirements and their families. The service has continued their hugely successful Christmas project and supplemented it with an Easter project, the winter Wrap Up program, running a local food and clothing bank and family days, including Cuppa and Chat events which have also supported the participation work that helps service users feel valued and part of the service design and delivery. Following an unannounced inspection in January 2025, the service received sector leading grades, and the Care Inspectorate praised the service for being understanding, insightful, committed to their work and reflective about their practice.

Children's Rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 came into effect in July 2024, and the Children and Families Social Work Team held a launch party to celebrate children's rights and acknowledge the work being carried out across services in East Dunbartonshire. The UNCRC embodies the idea that every child should be recognised, respected and protected as a rights holder and as a unique and valuable human being. The UNCRC principles were discussed by practitioners at the event and the importance of not only listening to the child's voice, but acting on what they say was highlighted.



Corporate Parenting Awards

Children's services were nominated in four categories of the 'Who Cares? Scotland' Corporate Parenting Awards 2024, with a number of nominations submitted by young people / service users.

The services were nominated and won the Excellence in Innovation category for the work of the East Dunbartonshire House Project which provides a scaffolding of support around Care Experienced people who are leaving care and entering their own tenancy. The House Project uses a trauma-informed, relationship-focused approach to ensure Care Experienced people are given choice on where they live, and feel prepared to live independently. The support offered is tailored to support individuals and allows Care Experienced people to plan for the future and create a timescale for entering their tenancy. Care Experienced people stated that the staff at the House Project ensure they feel "supported and safe", and "they are really transparent and honest, and they help us prepare for change".

The House Project was also nominated in the Outstanding Corporate Parent and Stable Foundations categories for the work to ensure that all Care Experienced people have an opportunity to build their life skills and help those looking for their own tenancy.

Staff were recognised as going above and beyond to provide support to Care Experienced people, ensuring their voices are heard and providing a listening ear. The Champions Board also gives Care Experienced people an opportunity to share their views and advocate for change within the local authority.

The services were nominated in the Changing the Narrative category following the introduction of a Language and Communication Group to understand the issues and concerns in terms of the language used across social work and wider services. A consultation with Care Experienced

people, foster carers, and practitioners led to further changes in practice and policy relating to language and communication, including the embedding of life story work as common practice.

Ferndale Children's Service

Ferndale Children's Service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in June 2024 and the service received outstanding grades based on the question, "How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?". Ferndale was evaluated as an excellent service, where performance was sector leading, resulting in gaining grade 6 for the full inspection. The Care Inspectorate commented on the team's practice, stating it was effective, innovative and sustainable across a wide range of activities which they offer. It was also reported that our staff team provided exceptional levels of care and more importantly one of the young people told the Inspector that this allowed them to feel safe, secure and nurtured. Stakeholders commented on the excellent communication and collaborative approach. The report states that staff prioritised their relationships with young people, and these were warm, nurturing and respectful. Relationships were informed by staff's knowledge of attachment, trauma and children's rights. Although Ferndale has achieved grade 6 for the second year running, this is first time that we have achieved the maximum grades in every area that was inspected. Ferndale has also been identified as a Promise Corporate Parent and can now coach the young people in their care through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and the Prince's Trust Awards.

b) Adult services

Adult Protection

Work around adult protection is grounded in the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007. There is a statutory duty to set up and support East Dunbartonshire's Adult Protection Committee; to make inquiries where an adult is suspected of being at risk of harm; and to apply for protection orders where these are required to safeguard the adult.

Qualified social workers continue to be trained and authorised to carry out "Council Officer" duties in East Dunbartonshire, as required by the legislation and in accordance with the Code of Practice (2022)

The Adult Protection Committee is independently chaired and has representation from all key agencies. The Convenor and Committee are supported by the Council's Adult Protection Coordinator. A report on the Committee's activity is submitted to the Scottish Government on a biennial basis, with the next due for submission by October this year.

The Adult Protection Committee's strategic planning framework operates on a three-year cycle to align with the Child Protection Committee, and four standing sub-groups are established in respect of its statutory functions:

- Continuous Improvement
- Quality and Development Partnership
- Joint Learning & Development (shared with the Child Protection Committee)
- Joint Public Information & Communication (shared with the Child Protection Committee)

The Committee's Learning Review sub-group is only convened when required to consider or undertake a Learning Review and was not convened during 2024-25. Opportunities for shared learning and training from external learning reviews were reviewed during the year with the Child Protection Committee's Learning Review Sub-group.

The Adult Protection Committee and services have been involved in a number of work streams associated with the national improvement program which have potential to assist services to work more effectively in partnership with adults to secure their safety and wellbeing and prevent future harm. We have continued to act as a learning partner in the implementation of the National Minimum Dataset (NMD) for Adult Support and Protection (ASP), which seeks to improve the range, consistency and quality of information available about ASP activity across Scotland. Additionally, we continued to contribute to the national work streams focusing on Chronologies, Lived Experience and Advocacy, and Large-Scale Investigations.

This year, we also presented information to the annual Missing People's conference on the impact of using an ASP lens to monitor and develop early intervention mechanisms in response to older adults with dementia going absent or missing from their own homes in the community. This workstream has run locally since 2018 and has seen a halving of community-based absent or missing incidents for people aged over 75. The work was initially led by the Adult Protection Committee's Quality & Development Partnership and is now being overseen by the Missing Persons Steering Group.

After the Joint Inspection of our ASP services last year, an Improvement Action Plan to take forward the improvement areas that were identified was implemented last April and has since resulted in revisions to Social Work's ASP recording form which now enable managers to monitor:

- Explicit consideration by Council Officers of the need for a chronology and rationale for not preparing one
- Whether an initial risk management plan has been prepared where the Council Officers has assessed ongoing protection risks
- Council Officers' consideration of the need for advocacy support under Section 6 of the legislation.

New quarterly monitoring reports on attendance by the adult, carers and partner agencies at Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences have also been provided to the Adult Protection Committee.

Following the publication in 2022 of the refreshed Code of Practice to accompany the 2007 Act, we moved rapidly to adopt changes in the Code which shifted from viewing inquiries and investigations as distinct processes towards the use of investigatory powers during inquiries. We have been monitoring the use of the powers for some years and began formally reporting them to the Committee and through the pilot National Minimum Dataset in 2022. Information on the use of the investigatory powers is therefore now available over a three-year period. The first interim report suggests that East Dunbartonshire does not feature as a significant outlier in terms of any key indicators included in the dataset and is very closely aligned to the Scottish average in terms of the rate of Case Conferences held during the period.

The table below details our Adult Support and Protection Statutory Activity across 2024-25

Adult Support and Protection Statutory Activity 2023-24

Nature of Activity	Number 2021/22	Number 2022/23	Number 2023/24	Number 2024/25
Duty to Inquire	505	566	495	519
Inquiries using Investigatory Powers	N/A	293	276	256
Case Conferences	24	27	26	46
Review Case Conferences	9	9	10	19
Protection Plans Initiated	6	6	11	23
Protection Orders	0	*	*	*

Concerns about older adults living with dementia and in care homes continue to trigger 70% of our inquiries, reflecting the significant demographic trend within East Dunbartonshire in terms of an aging population which continues to have an increasingly influential impact on local services.

A review of our performance over time shows the following.

Performance Indicator	Target	2022/23	2023/24 Delivery	2024/2025 Delivery
% of Adult Protection cases where the required timescales have been met	92%	94%	90%	91%

Adult Support and Protection performance levels were on target for most of the year but were affected by additional demands on the Social Work Council Officer function in the first quarter associated with a Large-Scale Investigation (LSI) which commenced in 2023-24, and increased demand and capacity pressures affecting the minute-taking team in the final quarter.

No further Large-Scale Investigations commenced during 2024-25.

Adult and Older People's Social Work Services

In our adult and older people's social work and social care services the majority of our performance targets were met or exceeded this year. Our Annual Performance Report 2024 – 2025 which can be found on the HSCP pages of East Dunbartonshire Council's website provides more detailed information however a summary of key information can be seen within the table below.

Performance Indicator	2024/25			Note
	Status	Value	Target	
Percentage of people 65+ indicating satisfaction with their social interaction opportunities	✓	95%	95%	Local performance indicator based on a sample of 50 case reviews analysed each quarter.

Performance Indicator	2024/25			Note
	Status	Value	Target	
Percentage of adults in receipt of social work / social care services who have had their personal outcomes fully or partially met (aim to maximise)	✓	96%	95%	Local performance indicator based on a sample of 50 case reviews analysed each quarter.
Percentage of adults in receipt of social work / social care services who have had their personal outcomes fully or partially met (aim to maximise)	✓	100%	90%	As a minimum, outcomes should reduce risks from a substantial to a moderate level, but the arranging of informal support may additionally contribute to improving quality of life.
% of customers (65+) meeting the target of 6 weeks from completion of community care assessment to service delivery (aim to maximise)	✓	99%	95%	The national standard is to operate within a six week period from assessment to service delivery, which encourages efficiency and minimises delays for service-users.

Positive performance examples include the percentage of adults in receipt of social work and/or social care services who had their personal outcomes fully or partially met, which was above target at 100%. The percentage of people 65+ indicating satisfaction with their social interaction opportunities and the percentage of services users satisfied with their involvement in the design of their care packages were also both at or above target at 95% and 96% respectively. We also completed 98.7% of community care assessments within the target of a six-week time scale from receipt of referral.

For the small number of targets which were not met, improvement actions are being taken forward to improve performance.

Our adult fieldwork Social Work services received a total of 7806 referrals in this year which represents a slight drop on last year's figures of 8070, with a total of 3915 new Assessments of Need completed during the year. Almost half of our total referrals are in relation to older adult care needs which are reflective of known demographic challenges within East Dunbartonshire. Adult services collectively across the year have an allocated caseload at any time in the region of 2500 people.

Last year we experienced challenges meeting our target for the percentage of people newly diagnosed with dementia and receiving Post-Diagnostic Support, however this year due to sustained improvement actions, we are now exceeding this performance target.

As in previous years, a key area of challenge is around the rate of falls for people over the age of 65. East Dunbartonshire has a high rate of falls which reflects particular demographic challenges locally with a higher proportion of adults aged over 65 compared to national comparison and the fastest growing population of people aged over 85 in Scotland. The associated increasing levels of frailty and complexity of care needs arising from advancing age follows the predicted trend locally of a significantly ageing population. Implementation is underway on our Falls Reduction and Management Strategy 2022-27; 'Staying Safe, Strong and Steady' across HSCP services. Our Falls Lead and Community Follow-Up post holder been responsible for delivering preventative Falls Awareness sessions to over 300 people across a range of established groups. Follow-up referrals are taken from these sessions and can include personal assessment, walking aid interventions, telecare support, and the offer of walking aid clinics within these sessions. Falls Awareness sessions are now delivered to newly qualified Social Workers as part of lunchtime learning sessions and feedback from these has been positive. We are also pleased to continue to lead the way in the roll out of the Caring About Physical Activity (CAPA) programme to address frailty and falls amongst people who live in local care homes.

We have started to implement our East Dunbartonshire 'No One Dies Alone' project in 2024 – 2025 following recruitment to leadership capacity and this will continue to deliver across 2025 and next year to support compassionate community support for people at the end of their lives.

Hospital Assessment Team

In relation to hospital discharge where a 72-hour target from referral to discharge is applied, East Dunbartonshire have had strong performance in this area. However, this year there has been an increase in the number of people being delayed in their discharge.

Although referrals to the Hospital Assessment Team (HAT) have decreased during 2024-25 from 741 to 604 people, much greater complexity of need has been experienced and reported through our respective governance and reporting structures which has required substantially increased social work intervention to facilitate timeous discharge from hospital.

Enhance local recording and annual analysis of all hospital discharges has been developed across this year. This has evidenced that 55.5% of discharges occurring in less than 72 hours.

With the remaining 44.5% discharges occurring over 72 hours, this were predominantly delayed due to lengthier AWI process, an increase in complex housing issues, and family related choice/ issues. Referral Outcomes for 2024 evidence a near equitable trend between Long Term Care Placements and discharges home.

The challenges the team have experienced this year have notably included greater family related complexity; family disputes around patient readiness for discharge, increased delay as result of families exerting the right to await their preferred care home choice and an equivalent decline in accepting an interim placement which have been significant features throughout this year. Additionally, the requirement for complex house cleans, repairs, equipment delays and lack of available or suitable housing to support discharge has correspondingly affected discharge back home.

Referral timescales from the respective hospitals throughout the year have also significantly varied with referrals often received with less than 72 hours' notice; 15.5% of referrals to HAT were submitted with less than 24-hours' notice which requires immediate allocation and impacts clearly on the likelihood of discharging within less than 24 hours.

Adults with Incapacity delays also continued this year, to be a contributing factor in 43% of all discharges in excess of 72 hours in 2024-25.

Historically referrals to our Hospital Assessment Team trend with seasonal fluctuation, however, 2024 data reflects consistent levels of referrals throughout all quarters:

January – March	27.5%
April – June	27%
July – September	23%
October – December	22.5%

Our Community Rehabilitation Team (CRT) works very closely with our Hospital Assessment Team to provide rehabilitation advice, care and treatment. Services delivered include working with people with frailty, prevention of admission, supported discharge, rehabilitation in intermediate care, and working to deliver rehabilitation in care homes. The service also provides rapid response for GPs and Scottish Ambulance Service to support avoidable admissions and community follow-up. In 2024, we have seen 3,800 people referred through our services, including 370 from our 14 local care homes. Referrals have increased year-on-year; increasing by 62% when compared to 2019, and 13% for the same period from last year to 2024-25.

Care at Home Service

In March 2025 in East Dunbartonshire, we were providing Care at Home support to 1314 customers, which is a small decrease of 28 customers from last year. Of these, 419 were supported by in-house provision and 895 via private/third sector supports. Numbers of people requiring 2:1 support, which indicates that individuals will have much greater and more complex support needs, remains reasonably high with around 15% of customers requiring care from more than one carer. Despite recruitment pressures across the sector, our Care at Home service has continued to provide effective support and operates well with acute services, having had very few hospital delays over the past year relating to access to Care at Home services.

The Care at Home reablement team 'Home for Me' in tandem with the Health Community Reablement team, continues to support in the promotion of independence to individuals who require short, intensive and focused support. Of the customers supported by these teams, 80% progress sufficiently to require no further package of care and a further 16% of customers supported have a reduction in their support package.

The service has recently reviewed the function of their response service and has reconfigured this to allow a better response time to emergency calls. The service will be commencing on a full review in 2025 which will provide the opportunity to look at best practice, effective ways of working, service structure and any possible efficiency savings.

Day Activities and Services for Older People

The Older People Local Area Co-ordination team continued in 2024-25 to receive a significant number of referrals for older people wishing to be supported to be active citizens in their communities. Of the 327 referrals received throughout the year, 39% involved supporting the older person to connect with local volunteer-led groups and clubs, whilst the remaining 61% required a more formal social support service due to physical frailty and/or impaired cognition for example, attending a local Day Centre. The team also witnessed a 50% increase in the number of referrals received for older men living in the communities.

During the summer of 2024, the team undertook telephone surveys with customers who had been supported to access local clubs and groups during the previous financial year. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the impact of social support opportunities. By changing methodology from postal surveys to telephone surveys increased the response rate to 45% (an increase of 32% from the previous year).

Over 15 different benefits of attending community resources were cited by participants, including:

- Social company
- Friendship/companionship
- Getting out of the house
- Reducing loneliness and isolation
- Mood lifting
- Confidence boosting
- Reducing anxiety and depression
- Giving me a routine
- Giving me something to look forward to
- Making new friends
- Trying something new
- Reconnecting with people

Participants' unpaid carers also reported indirect benefits for their relative/friend attending local clubs and groups.

The team continues to work closely with third sector partners, including voluntary organisations, churches, community groups. Their activities are highlighted in the team's annual newsletter: <https://health.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/media/ygoa0tcu/older-people-local-area-co-ordination-service-annual-newsletter-2024-25.pdf>

Good practice examples are provided below to highlight the practical impact and the examples of some of the work undertaken during 2024-25 between the Local Area Coordination team, local community assets and individual customers. They include:

Good Practice Example

Contact Point at the Park Centre, Kirkintilloch

Contact Point is a non-profit making organisation. Their vision is for people with disabilities to achieve their full potential in a supportive community. They are a voluntary service which aims to improve quality of life for vulnerable people within their community. The volunteers run different groups and clubs within the Park Centre. The Centre is based in Kirkintilloch Town Centre. The OPLAC team has been working closely with the volunteers to help support and promote their valuable services.

Last year the volunteers identified that a significant barrier for some individuals attending the Centre was the need for assistance to get to and from the group including transport. Some people

needed support to get in and out of their homes and vehicles. Contact Point secured some grant funding and the Bboard agreed that they wanted to utilise the funds to address these barriers.

The Older People Local Area Co-ordination team supported the Board by making contact with a local transport contractor who could provide appropriate vehicles, drivers and escorts. Following successful meetings and negotiations, a suitable contract was established between the Board and the transport provider.

East Dunbartonshire HSCP in partnership with third sector partners maintains a web-based Community Assets Map which is regularly updated by the Older People Local Area Co-ordination team, which offers a valuable community directorate and interactive map with community services and supports which can be accessed within our communities; a link to which is provided here <https://www.eastdunassets.org.uk/>.

Good Practice Examples

Connecting with your community:

Mrs A is 97 years old, lives alone and has a number of age-related frailty and health conditions. Mrs A was struggling to access social activities and local resources in her community which resulted in her feeling isolated and lonely at home.

A referral was received into the OPLAC team and following a home visit to Mrs A, the Local Area Co-ordinator was able to connect Mrs A with a local club, The Monday Club. Mrs A started attending the club with the support of local volunteers and transport. The provision of these resources encouraged Mrs A to leave her home.

Mrs A is now regularly attending The Monday Club and has reported that she is “overjoyed and so thankful for having the opportunity to mix with new friends and to leave her home”.

Mrs A said that the club and its members have made a big difference in her life, and she looks forward to attending each session.

Mrs A is also waiting to be matched with a volunteer befriender in the near future and is hopeful that she will also be able to attend a new befriending group that is being established.

Alcohol and Drug Recovery Services

The Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) and Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service (ADRS) continue to focus on the implementation of the Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards. Reporting on MAT Standards to Public Health Scotland was submitted during the final quarter of 2024-25.

The following areas of improvement are just a snapshot of the work being done by Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service:

- Adding a new Harm Reduction Service, including sexual health
- Increasing access to choice for opioid substitution therapies (OST)
- Timely responses to high-risk events such as near fatal overdoses
- Increased access to blood-borne virus testing (BBV), including a Tuesday morning drop-in clinic
- Modernised and trauma-informed clinical treatment rooms
- Offering a whole day clinic for injectable protective medication for those with low BMI or at

risk of developing liver or cognitive decline

- Offering two onsite physical health clinics for screening and early detection as well as two outreach satellite clinics
- Offering home visits for those unable to attend in person
- Providing three weekly Buprenorphine clinics and working towards obtaining a home office license to stock medication for same day or restarts.
- Offering timely mental health assessments for those requiring access to treatment or in patient services.

The table below shows the 'Red Amber Green' status from 2022 to 2025, highlighting that East Dunbartonshire achieved green across all 10 standards, for noting that MAT 6 and 10 were jointly submitted across GGC, but also achieved green. It is anticipated that East Dunbartonshire will receive a blue RAGB status across some of the standards in 2026 which indicates implemented for two years or more.

ADP	Reporting Year	MAT 1	MAT 2	MAT 3	MAT 4	MAT 5	MAT 6	MAT 6 & 10	MAT 7	MAT 8	MAT 9	MAT 10
East Dunbartonshire	2022	Red	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
	2023	Orange	Green	Orange	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
	2024	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey
	2025	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Green	Green	Green	Green	Grey

Since the implementation of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards in 2021, the number of open referrals to our Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service has varied between 520 and 580. Based on a snapshot at the end of March in 2025 open referrals for ADRS are sitting at 543 people, with 23 awaiting treatment and 520 already in treatment.

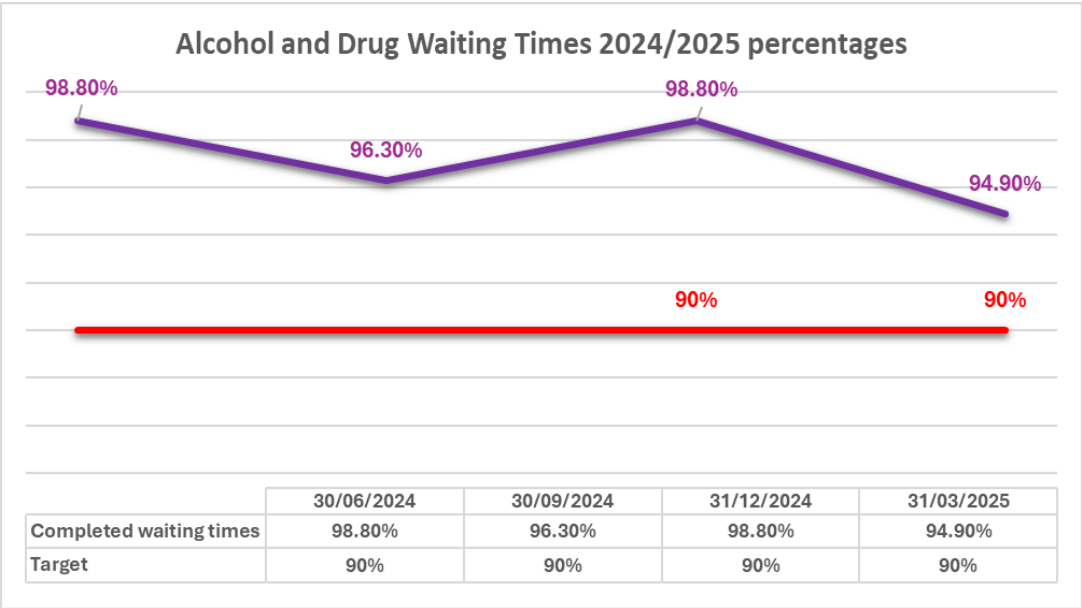
The referrals are also broken down into the type of substance, alcohol, drug and co-dependency; for our Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service alcohol referrals make up nearly 50% of the total number of referrals, drugs at 37% and co-dependency at 13%. For commissioned services 61% of referrals are for alcohol, 33% for drugs and 6% for co-dependency. In HMP Low Moss figures reflect custody-based perspectives with only 4% of referrals for alcohol, 85% for drugs and 11% for co-dependency.

The table below highlights ADRS, the commissioned services and HMP Low Moss activity included for East Dunbartonshire.

ADRS	In Treatment	Awaiting Treatment	Total Open Referrals
Alcohol	259	10	269
Co-dependency	66	6	72
Drug	195	7	202
Total	520	23	543

ADRS	In Treatment	Awaiting Treatment	Total Open Referrals
Commissioned Services	In Treatment	Awaiting Treatment	Total Open Referrals
Alcohol	26	3	29
Co-dependency	3	0	3
Drug	16	0	16
Total	45	3	48
Low Moss Prison	In Treatment	Awaiting Treatment	Total Open Referrals
Alcohol	6	0	6
Co-dependency	18	0	18
Drug	140	2	142
Total	164	2	166
Grand Total	731	28	759

East Dunbartonshire’s Alcohol and Drug Recovery service (ADRS) has met and exceeded the waiting times target of “90% of referrals to treatment within 21 days” throughout 2024/25. The chart above shows the waiting times for Q1 to Q4 of 2024/25. Work has commenced by Public Health Scotland (PHS) on amendments to the DAISY recording system, to ensure enhanced MAT



compliance which could mean a more efficient way to report on MAT and waiting times in the future.

Good Practice Example

Alcohol and Drugs Recovery Service – Harm Reduction Service

Harm reduction support has been provided within the Kirkintilloch Health and Care Centre (KHCC) for many years by the Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service (ADRS). To improve on service provision and support in line with the MAT Standards, the ADRS treatment room was moved and refurbished so as to be more accessible and trauma-informed.

The development of this room/service ensures that there is a safe space for individuals to receive harm reduction support and advice, such as blood-borne virus testing (BBV), wound care, naloxone, access to injecting equipment provision (IEP), sexual health support including free condoms and a range of information.

This service is available as a drop-in, Monday to Friday, within the KHCC with a dedicated mobile number to access the service. Individuals do not need to be open to ADRS to access this service and can receive the full harm reduction service in one room. Alternatively, they can come into the KHCC to pick up IEP, naloxone, condoms and resources.

The staff running this service have many years of experience in harm reduction and have completed trauma training, safety and stabilisation, as well as harm reduction specific training to be able to provide a holistic approach to support.

Mental Health Social Work Services

The Social Work Mental Health team has successfully implemented a service review during 2024-25 which has established a new role for the first time in East Dunbartonshire of Mental Health Officer Senior Practitioner in response to sustained recruitment and retention challenges of Mental Health Officers (MHO). Provision of statutory Mental Health Services and Mental Health Officers remains a local authority duty. Positively, the new team model is now established with all Mental Health Officer Senior Practitioners posts now recruited, enabling the removal of agency MHO staff. This will benefit the team by establishing much greater continuity and consistency of practice and allowing for the development and delivery of statutory mental health social work services. The Mental Health Officer Senior Practitioners all retain specific leadership roles across Mental Health Officer practice for the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, Forensic Mental Health, Adult Support and Protection and Practice Learning (MHO course).

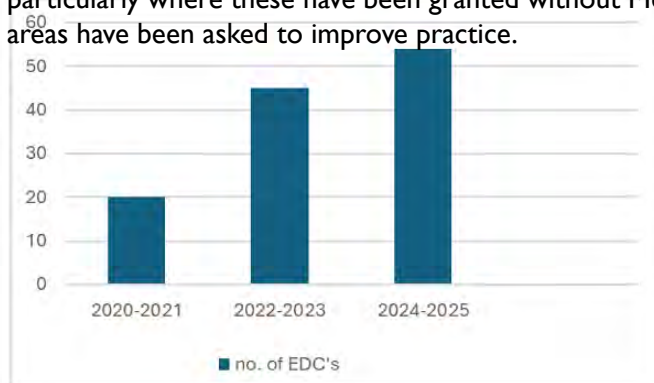
The Mental Health Officer Senior Practitioners lead on several quality improvement work streams to improve practice across statutory mental health work in East Dunbartonshire across the following areas of practice;

- **Community Compulsory Treatment Order (CTO) Action Plan response to Mental Welfare Commission Themed Report**

A local Community CTO action plan has been completed and a working group established to implement practices across the multi-disciplinary team in terms of best practice around mandatory reviews, care plans and improved recording on EMIS system. Enhanced joint practice has been established between psychiatry and MHOs in terms of mandatory reviews with the support of medical records. A review of these practices will be undertaken at the end of the year.

- **Emergency Detention Certificates (EDC's)**

The use of Emergency Detention Certificates has continued to rise, which is reflected in the table below which shows a consistent rise in numbers between 2020 and 2025 in East Dunbartonshire. This is a particular area of concern for the Mental Welfare Commission, particularly where these have been granted without Mental Health Officer consents, and all areas have been asked to improve practice.



The majority of Emergency Detention Certificates are undertaken by the out-of-hours social work standby service delivered by Glasgow and Partners Emergency Social Work Services, however, there is evidence of increased use of EDCs during working hours as a result of challenges to the availability of Approved Medical Practitioners (AMP). East Dunbartonshire has established recording systems on Carefirst to monitor/review MHO practice around EDCs and to ensure provision of detailed information regarding practices in this area. This information is audited monthly to establish trends/themes and areas for improvement.

- **Social Circumstances Reports (SCR)**

Improvement work is underway in terms of best practice around the completion of Social Circumstances Reports which are completed after an individual has been detained under mental health legislation. Recording systems have been enhanced on Carefirst to improve the completion of SCRs and ensure that statutory timescales are met. Monthly case file audits are now undertaken to quality assure this practice and which will be fed back to East Dunbartonshire's Mental Health Officer Forum.

The number of Short Term Detention Certificates completed during 2024-2025 is 119 which represents a slight reduction on the previous year's figures (135).

Over the past year there have been 82 guardianship reports completed, which again has been a reduction from the previous year's figures. This could be for various reasons e.g. the mental health team moving over to a new staff structure, resulting in staff vacancies and delays with the time for guardianship reports being completed and the court granting orders, due to changes in legal practices at court.

- **Adults with Incapacity (AWI)**

In East Dunbartonshire, we updated and revised our Adults with Incapacity procedures in December 2024 and a series of AWI briefings were delivered across all social work teams throughout March 2025. One of the key areas of change was around consolidating practice when using section 13za of the Social Work Scotland Act, in response to the Mental Welfare Commission's 'Authority to Discharge' report.

In respect of Welfare Guardianship, there continues to be a challenge for the Mental Health Social Work team in terms of the volume of Welfare Guardianship referrals received by the Mental Health Team and orders being granted at court. Over the past year, there have been 110 suitability reports completed by Mental Health Officers for court under the AWI (Scotland) Act 2000. We are currently operating a waiting list for Welfare Guardianship suitability reports with currently 19 reports awaiting allocation; these are prioritised in line with risk, Adult Support and Protection concern or where transitions are required particularly to facilitate hospital discharge. It is anticipated that with the new team structure, outstanding reports should be allocated in line with statutory timescales.

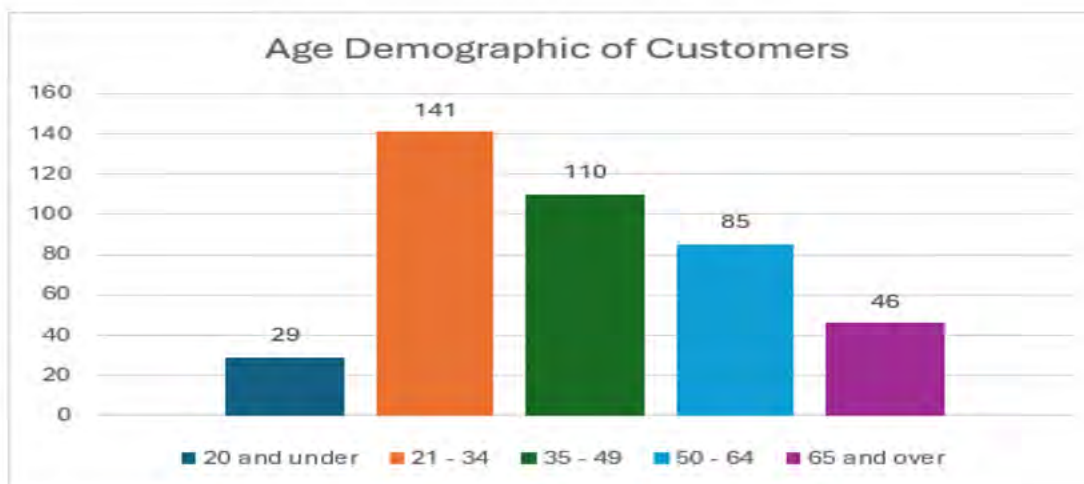
There is currently a total of 285 private Guardianship Orders being supervised by the Local Authority. The Chief Social Work Officer is currently Welfare Guardian to 37 individuals.

A short-life working group has also been established this year to develop enhanced practice guidance around the supervision of Welfare Guardianship for both CSWO and private Welfare Guardianship orders to develop improved and consistent practice across Adult Social Work Teams. Once finalised, briefing sessions will be delivered in 2025-26 across all social work teams to ensure implementation of best practice in this area.

Services for people with Intellectual/Learning Disabilities and Autism

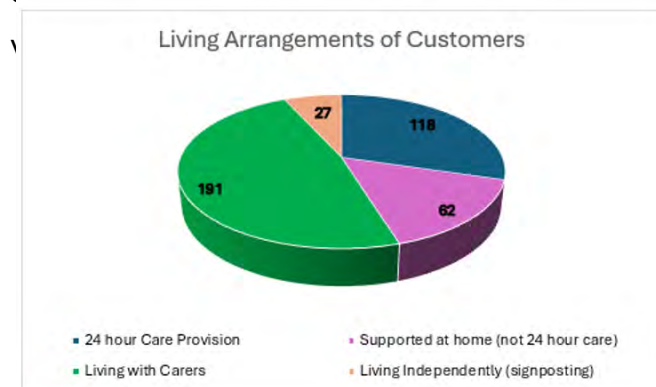
Throughout 2024–2025 there has continued to be significant challenges to Intellectual/learning disability services and across the learning disability community. The Joint Learning Disability Team has continued to provide an integrated Health and Social Work service to 420 people and their families, who actively receive support by way of support at home, day care provision, respite services through the continuum to 24-hour residential care services.

Adults with intellectual/learning disabilities in East Dunbartonshire cover an age demographic as



The Health and Social Care Partnership is facing considerable financial challenges and increased costs of service delivery. It is within this context that we have continued our review of learning disability services to ensure we continue to provide a level of support which will meet the needs of learning disabled adults across a number of areas of work to ensure our support services are sustainable, affordable and continue to be fit for purpose. We have focussed review activity this year on respite and supported accommodation with a view to ensuring that existing and future

accommodation models provide the most appropriate settings to meet a continuum of individuals' needs. We presently provide 24-hour supported living arrangements to 118 people within our local area. These types of support arrangements include residential/nursing care, shared and individual tenancies and supported accommodation housing. We are always aware that things will change for people - and that includes their housing needs - for many differing reasons.



rangements;

As well as services provided to people living in East Dunbartonshire, we also deliver care and support via commissioned services to a further 31 people with complex intellectual/learning disabilities who are placed out of authority, however no one is assessed as inappropriately placed and subject to requirements to return to local provision.

As part of measures under the National Learning Disability Strategy and following the 'Coming Home Report', we will continue to support as many people as possible to live in their own communities in suitable settings, rather than experience extended hospital stays or placements far from their local area. In support of this policy directive, the Dynamic Risk Register which is a national reporting tool has been introduced. The purpose of the Dynamic Risk Register is to better and earlier identify those most at risk and avoid people with learning disabilities living in hospitals or in out-of-area placements which they/their family have not chosen. It has been designed to help professionals working with people with learning disabilities to better respond to situations where there is a need for a more intensive level of care management. During 2024/25 we have provided accommodation to three individuals who have been identified from the Dynamic Risk Register.

We have also focussed on reviewing our processes for delivering respite and short breaks provision to carers. The present format of building-based respite and self-directed support approaches has proven successful in the past. However, with an increasing demand and increasing care costs, the model requires to be adapted to ensure fairness and an equitable share of the resource is provided to all users. This year we have undertaken a consultation process over a number of events. This involved inviting families and carers to contribute to what will hopefully result in much improved delivery of this support service.

The Allander Resource Centre, which provides a mix of building and community-based day service to adults with learning disabilities, was a winner this year in the Diversity in the Public Sector category at The Herald & GenAnalytics Diversity Awards 2024. Judges noted the integration with the community, fostering partnerships, and the delivery of a vital, inclusive service in a public sector space. The accomplishment of the service is a testament to the dedication, hard work and excellence of keeping diversity and inclusion at the forefront of the outcomes for the service. The Allander was also the winner in the Leisure and Arts category of the Glasgow Institute of Architects awards.

Support to People with Autism

Our Local Area Coordination Team (LAC) continues to lead on our work with people with autism, alongside partner organisations and autistic people and their families.

Our LAC team provides one-to-one support for people with a learning disability or autism, including young people transitioning to Adult Services. The team also facilitates a Parents/Carers support group that meets regularly.

A new East Dunbartonshire Autism Strategy was developed in 2024, however its implementation has been delayed as we await the draft publication of the Scottish Government Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill which will further address issues related to rights, support and inclusion.

This year, some of the achievements of the LAC team and partners have included the completion of an Inclusive Environment Checklist developed and circulated to all East Dunbartonshire Council services and third sector organisations to raise awareness of the needs of autistic people in their teams. The LAC team continued to provide autism-specific training this year across the Council, HSCP and third sector. Outreach groups meet and offer social and other experiences for autistic people.

An Employment Group led by the LAC team has supported 32 people this year into employment and eight people into internal work placements with the Leisuredrome, Day Services, Libraries, EDC IT team, Twechar Health Living Centre and 'Green Space'. This has supported people to build confidence, increase skills and knowledge and gain experience. The LAC team signposted 208 people to other services over the past year and supported a further 17 people into volunteering.

Recognising the importance of information at the point of diagnosis, the team, with support from NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Adult Diagnostic, has prepared a local resource pack which is given to everyone from East Dunbartonshire who is given a first diagnosis and is also offered an appointment with a member of the LAC team.

Our Autism Community Group which includes autistic adults and individuals with lived experience of autism has grown and flourished this year. The group aims to positively influence decision-making bodies, other local agencies and the wider community and they have recently undertaken a survey for the neurodivergent community across East Dunbartonshire to develop lived experience feedback to support these approaches.

c) Community-Based Justice Services

The three national outcomes for justice social work services below, underpin the Justice service in East Dunbartonshire, to meet the needs of public safety, justice, and social inclusion;

1. Community safety and public protection
2. The reduction of re-offending
3. Social inclusion to support desistance from offending

In terms of activity during 2024-25, the Criminal Justice Service furnished local courts with 238 full Justice Court reports which represented an increase of 12% on last year. These reports include the assessment of risk to the individual and community and the assessment of the suitability of the full range of sentencing options available to assist the sentencing process.

Despite challenges, the table below highlights the strong performance of our Justice Service.

Our Key Performance Indicators (KPI) were consistently met, with 100% of reports submitted on time to aid sentencing and risk management. In addition to Justice Court reports, there were 68 Diversion from Prosecution Assessments, 20 Home background/TARL reports for our Custodial Through Care clients, 21 Home Leave Reports, and three Drug Treatment Testing Order assessments completed throughout 2024-25.

Performance Indicator	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	KPI Attained
% Criminal Justice Social Work Reports submitted to Court by due date	98%	95%	95%	100%	✓
% of individuals beginning a work placement within 7 working days of receiving a Community Payback Order	83%	93%	80%	100%	✓
% cases allocated within 2 working days	100%	100%	100%	99%	✓
% of Breach Reports submitted within 5 working days of breach decision	100%	100%	100%	100%	✓

In relation to Community Payback Orders, these have increased by 65% since they were introduced in 2011. During this current review period, 149 Community Payback Orders were managed by Justice social workers spanning 131 individuals. This includes Orders with Supervision, Unpaid Work (UPW) and other requirements.

It is noted that within this review period the number of Community Payback Orders with supervision decreased by 11.99%. There has been a focus within the team to ensure that supervision is only recommended if it is proportionate to the risks and needs assessed by the Justice social worker.

The Justice team continues to deliver a range of justice interventions, including the adoption of the 'Moving Forward 2 Change' Program for men convicted of sexual offences.

The 'Moving Forward Making Changes' Program has now been phased out, in line with the national rollout strategy, and by March 2026 we are aiming to have all Justice staff accredited to deliver the new program. For those with convictions for domestic abuse, we continue to run the 'UP2U' program and continue to deliver bespoke interventions underpinned by the person's individual risk and needs formulation.

Improvement activity within Justice Social Work services has continued with the development of the co-location of Senior Addiction Workers from the Alcohol and Drug Recovery Service, enabling us to ensure that people with substance misuse issues have access to recovery services timeously. This is especially for cases where clients are making the transition from custody to community to support this transition safely and to minimize the risk of drug-related overdose. Our Peer Navigator (Wayfinder Service) continues to have an integral role in supporting clients to navigate community-based services. Furthermore, our Female Specialist Service continues to provide a distinct service for female clients who access our service. We have also expanded the range of services offered by securing a forensic psychologist in trainee placement, which has allowed our service to provide onsite cognitive assessments.

Community Payback - Unpaid Work 2024-2025

At the end of this year there are 120 people on Unpaid Work and Community Payback Orders, and the data is summarised below:

- Number of hours issued in 2024/25– 16,047

- Number of people for orders issued in 2024/25 – 120
- Number of hours completed in 2024/25– 12,474 (77%)
- Number of hours completed in total – 23,325 (this is the total completed in year, including orders issued in previous years).

Our Community Payback Unpaid Work teams continue to work seven days a week to enable clients to undertake work that benefits the community. Unpaid work has continued to be a constructive and visible form of justice that benefits both the offender and the wider community. The unpaid work service undertakes a range of activities, inclusive of; garden tidy up, landscaping, painting and decorating, fly tipping/litter picking, woodwork workshop/DIY, furniture removal/delivery and snow clearing/gritting. Community beneficiaries have included individuals, groups, charities, or organisations including churches or faith-based groups, schools, voluntary organisations etc. These groups can request help with projects that would benefit the wider public or local environment. Listed below are a list of beneficiaries:

Allander Resource Centre

Carers Link - Community of East Dunbartonshire Council - Dementia Centre Bearsden

EDC Sheltered Housing

Hillhead Community Garden

Hillhead Housing Association

Kirkintilloch Men's Shed

Mugdock Country Park

Milngavie Community Development Trust

Milngavie in Bloom

Project 101

Rosebank Allotments

Right There – Housing Support

Schoenstatt Scotland

St Cyprians

Twechar Healthy Living Centre.

Good Practice Example

Justice Employability Service in Action

Mr A had previously worked as a carer and was excelling in his role, demonstrating compassion, reliability, and strong interpersonal skills. However, following his arrest and subsequent conviction, he was unable to continue in this profession due to PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) scheme restrictions. This had a profound impact on his well-being.

Mr A struggled to see a way forward, his mental health deteriorated, and he turned to alcohol as a coping mechanism, which deepened his sense of hopelessness and isolation.

He was referred to the Community Justice Employability Service through Justice services as part of his reintegration support. When his employability advisor first met him, he lacked confidence and felt overwhelmed by the barriers his conviction had created. He believed his options for future employment were extremely limited and was unsure how to move forward.

Mr A expressed a strong interest in working outdoors, feeling that a physically active job in nature would greatly benefit his mental wellbeing. His employability advisor helped him explore opportunities in landscaping and outdoor maintenance.

Practical support included guidance, updating his CV and interview preparation, which improved his confidence and direction to take the necessary steps toward employment.

As a direct result of engaging with the employability project, Mr A has successfully achieved a qualification related to his new role and secured employment in landscaping where he has improved his confidence and motivation for the future.

Client Quote that sums up his experience

"I don't know what I would have done without (this service). They are kind, caring, compassionate, and incredibly knowledgeable in all aspects of life and employability. She truly helped me turn my life around. When I was first told to speak to (them), I was a bit wary because the last time I didn't give it my all. I missed appointments, ignored phone calls, and didn't fully engage. But Social Work held me accountable and gave me another chance. I can honestly say I now have someone who, despite only knowing me for a couple of months, took the time to understand my history, showed no judgment, and has been in my corner ever since. Their constant support has meant everything to me. Grateful doesn't even cover it. If I'm being honest, the support I've received has been crucial to getting me to where I am now."

Multi-Agency Public Protection (snapshot 3 1st March 2025)

Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) is the framework for the management of offenders who present a risk of harm to the community. Local analysis evidences that, in line with the national trend, there has been a significant ongoing upward trend in the number of registered sex offenders (RSO) in East Dunbartonshire over the last five years, with a further increase of 18 during 2024/25.

This increase has placed considerable demands on our justice service. The greatest proportion of MAPPA cases are managed at Level 1 which is the lower of the three risk levels, with six cases managed at MAPPA level 2. These cases require intensive planning and risk management strategies, reflecting the higher levels of risk presented to the community.

East Dunbartonshire also has three MAPPA 3 cases, all of whom are currently within custody which require intensive yearly risk management review and planning in preparation for their potential release.

The table below reflects the number of registered sex offenders within East Dunbartonshire and annual increase from 2019.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Number (RSO)	49	50	63	75	90	108
Change from previous year	+15	+1	+13	+14	+15	+18

This upward trend requires an increased contact regime in line with risk, enhanced joint environmental scanning with police and provision of appropriate groupwork provision. Justice continues to direct additional resources to manage the demand of men subject to statutory orders and MAPPA.

MAPPA performance remains very strong across this critical and high-risk area of work, and in line with requirements; with 100% of Level 2 MAPPA cases reviewed within twelve weeks, MAPPA level 2 meetings all held within twenty days of receipt of referral by the MAPPA Coordinator and MAPPA Level 3 within five working days of receipt of referral.

Prison-Based Social Work – HMP Low Moss

It has been a challenging year for our Prison-Based Social Work (PBSW), who have experienced considerable staffing challenges resulting in some priority allocation of statutory tasks; this has been reported within the HSCP Risk Register.

Despite the challenges, the team has prioritised the completion of assessments and reports for high-risk cases, supporting safe decision-making. Prison-based social workers have maintained effective multi-agency engagement, attending Integrated Case Management (ICM) meetings, group programs, Case Management Boards, and contributing to Risk Management Team meetings with senior Scottish Prison Service (SPS) staff, psychology and healthcare staff.

The Social Work team manager ensures regular communication with the Scottish Prison Service to highlight pressures, ensure transparency and promote joint problem-solving.

The Prison-Based Social Work team completed 248 Parole Reports and 50 Short-Term Sex Offender Reports during 2024-25 and attended in excess of five hundred case management and MAPPA meetings.

Prison-Based Social Work Thematic Review, 2024

This is the first time the Care Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (HMIPS), have undertaken a joint focus on prison-based social work services. The thematic review focused on the governance, leadership, and accountability of prison-based social work in Scotland. Prison-based social work services were seen as essential and critical to protecting the public and supporting change for people serving sentences and subject to statutory social work supervision upon release.

Care Inspectorate Justice Self Evaluation and Validation 2024-25

The Care Inspectorate developed a two-part self-evaluation exercise which was applied nationally in Phase 1 between September and November 2024 and all thirty-two local authorities were required to complete a structured self-evaluation template. Phase 2 of the review took place between January and March 2025. Informed by the emerging themes from the national submissions from a further four local authorities, East Dunbartonshire, Aberdeenshire, Fife and Perth and Kinross were chosen to ensure the review included a range of service delivery models, governance structures and a broad geographic spread. The Care Inspectorate's self-evaluation and validation concluded that Justice Social Work services were committed to driving improvement and that people using Justice services consistently reported that the support and supervision they received had a positive impact on their lives and that this should be supported by enhanced performance management and governance arrangements.

East Dunbartonshire Justice Social Work Team was chosen to participate in Phase 2 and further scrutiny was undertaken following the Phase 1 self-evaluation return. Strengths were identified

within East Dunbartonshire including our performance framework and data reporting. Strong governance arrangements were seen to be in place and these processes provided significant oversight and assurance to East Dunbartonshire Chief Officers Group. Justice staff locally were had a clear understanding of the standards of practice required and were committed to meeting those standards. Service users talked positively about the effect the Justice service had on their lives.

Areas for improvement included the development of an efficient performance dashboard to reflect the performance framework in place and establishing systematic audit exercises.

Community Justice Strategic Partnership

East Dunbartonshire Community Justice Partnership (CJED) has been in place since the introduction of the Community Justice (Scotland) Act in 2016. The partnership is made up of both statutory and non-statutory partners, including a number of third sector organisations. The partnership meets every eight weeks. The current chair is the Head of Children's Service and Criminal Justice, with the Police Scotland Divisional Commander for East Dunbartonshire, acting as vice chair.

The 2016 Act requires community justice partners to publish a Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan (CJOIP) for the local authority area and to send a copy to Community Justice Scotland. This forms the high-level framework and details the local outcomes and priorities developed by the partnership.

The three-year Community Justice Outcomes Improvement Plan 2023-26 can be found on the HSCP website using the following link;

<https://health.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/services/a-z-of-services/justice/community-justice-partnership/>

The partnership has two working/subgroups; the Reintegration Group and the Prevention Intervention and Diversion Group. The Reintegration Group is a multi-agency forum which case manages residents returning to the community following a custodial sentence to ensure all supports are in place for the individual in order to reduce the risk of reoffending, and that all victim safety issues are addressed. The group case managed 38 people in 2024-25 and achieved engagement with 60% of individuals referred.

The Prevention Intervention and Diversion Subgroup continues to promote increasing intervention options for Diversion from Prosecution and worked to deliver innovative approaches to address the complex needs and inequalities that affect our residents who are in contact with, and/or on the cusp of entering, the justice system. During 2024-25, 53 Diversion cases commenced, with 94% of these completed successfully without further offending, good evidence that our Diversion from Prosecution process is effective in East Dunbartonshire.

A key focus for the partnership in the coming year is to incorporate the voice of experience to strengthen the activities and actions. The experiences of women in contact with the Justice system, in particular victims/survivors is a key aspect of the agenda, and the partnership will continue to incorporate this into future meetings as a priority to underpin the multi agency work that is carried out.

Good Practice Example

One-Stop-Shop in Justice Services

An initiative introduced in 2024-25 was a collaboration with services in East Dunbartonshire to develop a One-Stop-Shop for people in contact with Justice Services to access support services when attending the Justice Office for either unpaid work or supervision. The aim was to bring together recovery, benefits, housing and related supports to reduce barriers to attending appointments at other locations and minimising disengagement from services.

Eight support service providers participate in the initiative; EDC Housing and Homelessness Services, Citizens Advice, Men Matters, Glasgow Council on Alcohol, We Are With You, GRACE, The Foundry (SAMH) and Venture Trust.

All services attend the Justice Office on a Wednesday morning on a timetabled basis. Each service has a one-hour slot with 4 x 15-minute appointments, which are made by supervising Social Workers on behalf of the person attending.

To promote the initiative and services further, a mini 'Meet the Services' event is being organised in the group room in Justice Services. This will allow people to talk directly with services and find out how each can potentially support them in aspects of their lives that can break the cycle of offending.

Since the inception of the One-Stop-Shop, 40 people have benefitted from the service.

d) Self-Directed Support

The HSCP implemented their updated Self-Directed Support (SDS) Implementation Plan covering the period 2024 – 2027. <https://health.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/services/a-z-of-services/adults-older-people/self-directed-support-implementation-plan-2024-2027/>

The Plan, has recently completed its first year which saw the completion of a number of activities including:

- Raising awareness across all stakeholders through the delivery of in-person, multi-agency training sessions which focused on SDS, Carers Legislation, Eligibility, Assessment and Asset Based Support Planning.
- In partnership with third sector organisations, raising awareness about early intervention, prevention and community assets for older people.
- Adoption of an Asset-Based Support Planning (Just Enough Support) approach, with training and mentorship delivered by in-house trained Social Work practitioners.
- Promoting the continued inclusion of benefits advice and signposting as part of the assessment and support planning process.

An evaluation of SDS was undertaken in late 2024 to determine the impact of choice, control and flexibility, through the use of a postal survey method issued to 300 customers across all SDS options to establish, with those individuals, whether there were improvements since 2022 in the continued implementation of SDS.

The survey analysis showed a positive percentage increase in a number of areas:

- The number of responses received in total (+1.5%).

- The number of people reporting that they found out about SDS from social work practitioners and social care providers(+16% and 3% respectively).
- The number of people who felt that they had received enough information about SDS during the assessment process (+16%).
- The number of people who felt that they were fully prepared to participate in the assessment process (+19%).
- The number of people who felt that the SDS options were fully explained to them (+36%).
- The number of people who felt that their experience of receiving social care support was fully improved (+16%) and partly improved (+8%). No one reported that they did not see any improvement in comparison to 24% who reported this in 2022.

The benefits that were cited by survey respondents included:

“SDS has enabled my father to continue to live in his home with the assistance of his carers which he is highly dependent on...” (Option 1)

“...Our social worker was very helpful with setting up the process. We are happy with how smooth the process is. We find the audit process straightforward...” (Option 1)

“My mother now receives help with personal care, meals and medication...she is better cared for... As a result, I have increased peace of mind too” (Option 2)

“Stability of care knowing which carer and when they will visit, quality of care and friendship provided...as a carer 24/7 SDS option has given me time to myself which is vital...” (Option 2)

“I received...services which help me tremendously...home care...respite” (Option 3)

The overall positive survey feedback demonstrates the work that is being undertaken across the HSCP, in partnership with third sector partners, supporting the continued implementation and development of SDS.

The statistical data for the SDS options, as per previous years, shows the continued national impact faced by social care recruitment and retention challenges and its impact in the areas of choice, control and flexibility across the social care sector.

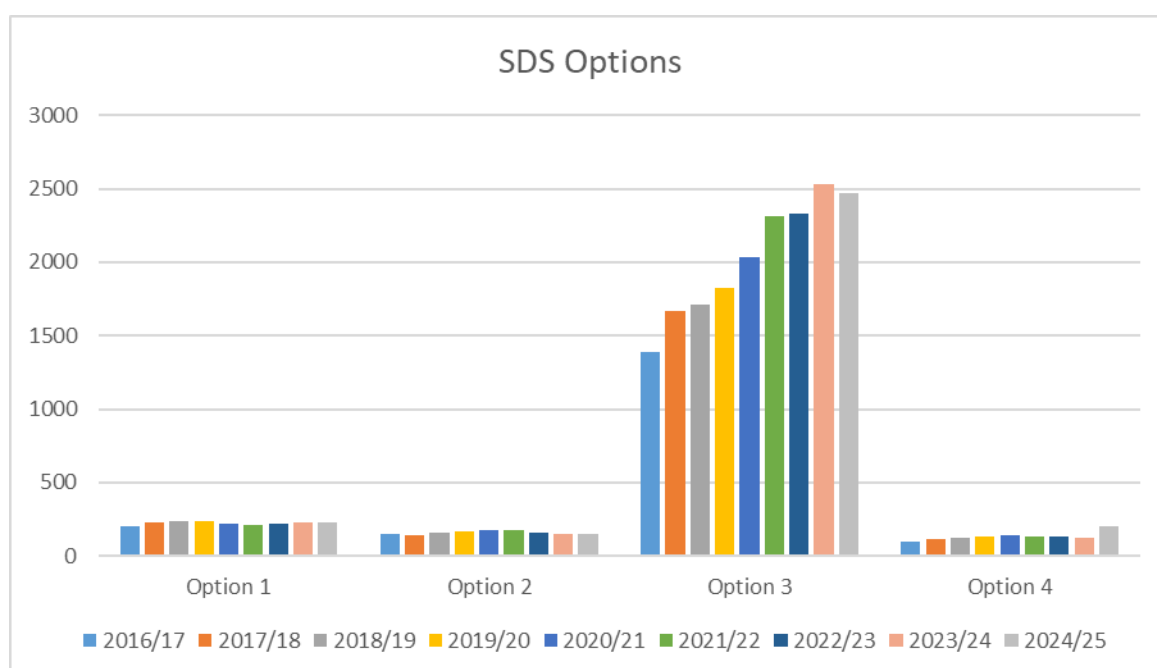
SDS Option 1 (Direct Payments) shows a very slight decrease in uptake of -1% during 2024-2025, with practitioners supporting individuals who are experiencing difficulties recruiting Personal Assistants, to explore more creative and innovative ways of meeting their eligible needs and attaining personalised outcomes.

SDS Option 2 (Individual Service Fund) very slightly increased in uptake during 2024-2025 (+3.5%), with many customers and their families taking control through choosing their preferred social care providers, many of whom are part of the HSCP's provider framework.

SDS Option 3 (HSCP provided or arranged services) has, for the first year since 2016-2017, reported a slight reduction (-2%). This option is used by customers and carers who do not want to accept the responsibilities associated with the other SDS options, or where there are issues relating to capacity (without legal powers in situ), capabilities, adult and child protection, are allocated this particular option.

SDS Option 3 remains the preferred option for the majority of customers and carers who are eligible to receive formal social care support. The HSCP has been focussing on implementing asset-based support planning, ensuring that where needs can be met through the use of asset-based supports, that these are arranged for in the first instance. Where early intervention/prevention resources, which are not formally funded social care packages, there is no requirement to implement a SDS option.

East Dunbartonshire HSCP publicised its annual SDS Newsletter which provides full details about the survey feedback and reports on the SDS activities that have been undertaken, locally and nationally, over the year and can be accessed by the following link; <https://health.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/media/42jkbm5c/self-directed-support-newsletter-february-2025.pdf>



Option 1 – Direct Payment

Option 2 – Individual Service Fund

Option 3 – HSCP/Council arranged services

Option 4 – A mix of any of the above

e) Support for Carers

At the time of preparing the Carers Strategy in 2023, there were 1402 carers known to East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Social Work Services. The number of carers known to services remains at around 8% of the estimated number of people undertaking informal care in East Dunbartonshire.

A total of 2028 new Adult Carer Support Plans were completed by Social Work services in 2024-25.

East Dunbartonshire's Carers Strategy 2023-26 sets out 12 priorities for improving carers' support and is currently under review reflecting the financial challenges affecting the third sector. East Dunbartonshire HSCP has continued in 2024/25 to commission a number of third sector

agencies to provide information and support to carers, including 'Carers Link', and Buttercups and Twechar residential respite facilities.

East Dunbartonshire Carers Partnership Group continues to support delivery of our Carers Strategy and is a multi-agency forum with representation from Social Work, health, our local third sector carers organisation 'Carers Link', Education, and with strong representation from carers themselves.

The group continues to meet several times a year to explore carer statistics and data, consider issues that matter to carers and monitor the progress of the Carers Strategy.

A review of Short Break and Respite provision for East Dunbartonshire Carers commenced in January 2025, starting with public consultation events between January and February 2025. The aim of the review is to ensure maximum benefit for carers, service users and the HSCP through existing commissioned services and the development of alternative and flexible support options in future. The review is anticipated to take up to 12 months to complete.

This review is timely, coinciding with the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill, approved by Scottish Parliament on 10 June 2025. The Bill will bring forward a number of enhancements to social care including strengthening support for unpaid carers by establishing a legal right to breaks.

Good Practice Example

Provision of Formal Support and Impact for Carer

Mr B, a gentleman living at home with advancing dementia, requires 24-hour care from his wife. His wife is also his unpaid carer and supports him with all daily living activities. Due to increasing confusion, Mr B also has to be supervised to monitor any risks of harm and danger. He is unaware of his surroundings and often disorientated to time and place.

Mr B attends the local Day Centre to socialise with his peers, but it is also an environment where his personal care needs can be met and he is in a safe and supportive environment.

Mr B's wife also benefits from him attending the day centre because it gives her a break from the caring role and allows her time to rest and recuperate. Mr B's wife reports that she is appreciative that her husband has excellent care and support whilst also receiving social stimulation. She said she is; "very grateful for the support of day care services...really benefit from having time away from caring role...feel guilty at times but then I have to be realistic and acknowledge that I have to rest and prepare myself for caring for him on his return home from day care".

Mr B's wife added; "I really do not know how I managed before, and I suppose I was naïve and unprepared for my role as a carer 24/7...I cope better knowing that I have this support to look forward to and this gets us both through the week".

f) Advocacy

The first local Advocacy Plan for East Dunbartonshire 2024-27 was developed this year in collaboration with local and national advocacy partners and was published in September 2024. It builds on the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Joint Advocacy Strategy 2023-26, bringing national and board-wide aims and objectives into the local arena. The plan is supported by a local Delivery Plan, and both can be accessed utilising the following link; <https://health.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/services/a-z-of-services/adults-older-people/local-advocacy-plan-2024-2027/>

The plan covers all customers groups: children; young people; adults; and older people. Some groups and individuals require the provision of advocacy as part of our statutory responsibilities, whilst others require advocacy of a more informal nature to support their right to citizenship within the local communities, including the right to independent living. The aim of the plan is to ensure that the HSCP, in partnership with local advocacy partners, delivers locally tailored actions which contribute to the delivery of effective advocacy services in East Dunbartonshire. Areas highlighted for development were to support our black and minority ethnic communities to tackle exclusion and racism and to ensure for all of our communities that advocacy was available to address barriers and imbalances of power, and ensure that an individual's human rights are recognised, respected, and secured.

Access to independent advocacy also contributes to our strategic ambitions to support engagement, promote the voice of lived/living experience and for those who access our services and their carers to be partners in shaping and improving services.

East Dunbartonshire HSCP has statutory responsibilities, under legislative, affecting both children and adults, including the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, to provide access to independent advocacy for specific groups of people. The HSCP continues to commission advocacy services from Ceartas Advocacy (for adults age sixteen and over); Who Cares? Scotland' who provide advocacy services in East Dunbartonshire for care experienced young people up to the age of 26, and 'Partners in Advocacy' who are the primary national provider for Children's Hearings and advocacy services support children between 5-18 years old for all new or review Children's Hearings.

East Dunbartonshire HSCP Advocacy Plan Implementation Group includes membership from the advocacy partners, Children and Adult Social Work teams, mental health officers' forum, self-directed support, alcohol and drug partnership and is chaired by the team manager of Social Work Services Mental Health Services.

The group, with an established term of reference, meets on a quarterly basis to progress the actions contained within the local Advocacy Plan. Some of the actions that have been completed include:

- Training delivered to Children and Families' Senior Practitioners to ensure that they are fully skilled in the role of advocacy and can act as local champions.
- Input to Social Work development sessions from advocacy partners.
- A reviewed and updated Public Protection page which includes full advocacy partner details. (<http://www.protectingpeopleeastdunbarton.org.uk/im-a-childyoung-person/advocacy/>);
- Talking mats training has been delivered to Children and Families Social Work practitioners and thereafter is being rolled out on a multi-agency basis.

The Implementation Group will continue to work through the remainder of the Plan before reviewing and refreshing during the latter half of 2026.

g) Complaints and Duty of Candour

East Dunbartonshire Council's Complaints Team administers the recording and progressing of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints within the agreed timescales, regularly liaising with officers based within the HSCP.

The HSCP, on a quarterly basis, analyses all social work complaints, which by way of governance are reported to the HSCP Senior Management Team, and team managers for the purposes of undertaking development activities where required.

When a complaint is received from the Council's Complaints Team, we have a clear process for assigning the complaint, based on its subject, to the most relevant /appropriate Social Work manager.

Social Work complaints processed during 2024-2025:

Complaint Stage	Total Number of Complaints	Complaint Outcome
Stage 1	31	24 Not Upheld
		4 Partially Upheld
		3 Upheld
Stage 2	23	11 Not Upheld
		9 Partially Upheld
		3 Upheld
Total No of Complaints	54	35 Not Upheld
		13 Partially Upheld
		6 Upheld

Complaint themes, for those complaints which were upheld or partially upheld, broadly focused on Communication, Reduced Resources, Policy and Procedure and Information.

There are no Duty of Candour incidents to report for Social Work and Social Care services in 2024-25.



Challenges and improvements

4. Challenges and improvements

Throughout the CSWO Annual Report, many of the challenges and improvements are highlighted throughout the body of the report. In this section a few significant points of note are highlighted in addition to the body of the main report.

Care Inspectorate Review of Social Work Governance and Assurance

The Care Inspectorate undertook a national review, commissioned by the Scottish Government, during this year to evaluate social work governance and assurance across all local authority areas. This focused on statutory compliance, staff support and accountability and the promotion of professional values.

The report highlighted the complexity of social work governance structures across Scotland and national themes highlighted challenges such as staffing/recruitment, financial pressures, and concerns about the erosion of relationship-based social work practice. Despite these pressures, local systems were seen to demonstrate effective oversight, confident leadership, with social work values continuing to remain at the heart of our practice.

East Dunbartonshire stood out positively when considering the national staff survey. We have a very strong response with performance exceeding national averages on 30 out of 32 questions our staff were asked anonymously. Notable strengths included high levels of staff feeling valued (74% vs 52% nationally), strong governance awareness (99% vs 94%), and confidence in supervision (91% vs 79%) results which provide assurance that our workforce in East Dunbartonshire is well-supported, engaged, and aligned with the values and ethics of our profession.

The Care Inspectorate's report concludes by recommending national action to address the recruitment challenges and funding constraints threatening the sustainability of statutory social work functions.

For East Dunbartonshire, while survey results reflect strong local practice and workforce engagement, the underlying structural pressures mirror national risks, reinforcing the need for continued strategic workforce planning and national reform.

Positive inspection outcomes

Throughout the year we have been pleased to be able to report on positive inspection findings for both our local registered services and our strategic and partnership approach. I am particularly pleased to highlight Ferndale Children's Service which was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in June 2024 which was evaluated as an excellent service, with sector leading performance resulting in attaining Grade 6 'Excellent' for the full inspection, and whilst Ferndale has achieved Grade 6 previously and for the second year running, this is first time the service has achieved the maximum grades in every area inspected.

This year our Care at Home service achieved grades of 5 'very good' and 4 "good" in their 2024 inspection, and similarly our Adoption Team achieved grades of 5 "very good" against all areas inspected which again is a credit to the hard work and endeavors of our staff teams across these important areas of our work,

National Care Service

The development of the National Care Service has been reported within previous CSWO reports. The Care Reform (Scotland) Bill (originally the National Care Service Bill 2022) received Stage 3 approval in June 2025 and currently awaits Royal Assent. Once signed into law, several key reforms will be implemented including; Anne's Law which enshrines rights for care home residents to essential visits, rights for breaks for unpaid carers, the development of a new role of Chief Social

Work Adviser, the establishment of the National Care Service Advisory Board and a range of enhanced information sharing arrangements. We look forward to further clarity over the following year and I will advise on these reforms and their implications further as implemented.

A challenging financial future

Throughout this report there is reflection on the rise in both the complexity and demand for a wide range of social work and social care services. This has been experienced against a context which sees us facing sustained and far-reaching financial challenges, rising unit costs for service delivery and reducing public funding to deliver upon.

We face a significant financial challenge in year and for the future. This year we have faced the challenge of a multi-million-pound financial gap and have delivered against significant efficiencies and saving requirements, and this will certainly continue into 2025-26.

We have had to withdraw funding from a number of commissioned services, review staffing arrangements, and reduce service delivery. This has required us to reconsider how we assess for and provide services to individuals to 'live' within the available budget whilst continuing to provide services to those who need them most in as fairly, equitably and efficiently a manner as we possibly can. This will be increasingly challenging as we move forward, and the impact will undoubtedly be felt within our communities. There will need to be significant changes ahead and during the coming year these will be developed further and shared. Our focus will continue to be on meeting the breadth of our statutory requirements, supporting our communities and protecting and safeguarding the most vulnerable citizens across East Dunbartonshire.

Growing workforce challenges

I will explore workforce in greater detail in section 6 of this report, but I would highlight growing challenges in recruiting sufficient social work and social care staff. There is a range of factors which impact upon this, but the net effect is to hamper our ability to meet people's needs and deliver the best services we can. This will be an area of close attention in coming years. The challenge as we work through the range of service reviews to achieve enhanced efficiency in service delivery will be to ensure that we minimise the potential anxiety and uncertainty for our workforce whilst continuing to support them and their wellbeing in such challenging times to minimise retention and recruitment issues during the process of these reviews.



Resources

5. Resources

The HSCP is projecting an overspend on budget for 2024–25 of £0.123m in the delivery of our strategic priorities. The overspend on budget relates to pressures in relation to Social Work services in the areas of learning disability, older adult and children's services and was mitigated in year through a number of workstreams engaged in achieving financial efficiencies throughout the financial year, reductions to commissioned service delivery, and delays in recruiting to a number of posts across the HSCP.

Cost pressures related to the pay uplift for Social Work staff for which funding was not sufficient to cover the full extent of the costs. Social work payroll pressures continued within learning disability residential units, mental health officer cover, learning disability day services and challenging turnover savings across social work staffing budgets.

There also continues to be in year pressures in relation to Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children where placements within in house provision is at capacity and requires the purchase of costly externally purchased placements to address the needs and demands as they are presenting.

Funding continued to be received to support specific priorities including the Primary Care Improvement Plan, Mental Health Action 15, Alcohol & Drug Partnership funding, Mental Health Recovery and Renewal (specific to Children & Adolescent Mental Health services) and Adult Winter Planning.

Managing public sector austerity and reducing financial resources within a climate of increasing demand for services is a key risk area for the Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Like other local authorities, East Dunbartonshire Council has faced increasingly difficult financial challenges over recent years and the reduction in public sector budgets will continue over at least a medium-term financial planning period.

Our demographics present a challenge through our ageing population and increased populations of people with learning and/or physical disabilities and multiple long-term health conditions. This challenge is seen in community settings and also in our ageing and growing prison population, for whom the increasing needs for what would otherwise have been community care support and community equipment, is a growing issue for consideration.

There is also a growing challenge to support people's mental health and wellbeing, to address Scotland's significant drug related deaths and to respond to increasingly sophisticated types of offending and abuse including an increased rate of online causes of harm and issues such as trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Responses are essential but can be complex and costly and are set against a context of heightened national and public expectation.

There are also areas of government policy change that bring service demand costs and while they are welcome, from the point of view of their objectives, there are some elements which are unfunded, leading to questions as to how they can be applied and responded to with compassion and a thoroughly person-centered approach, it is notable that funding provided for some services does not meet the true cost of delivery.

The financial performance of the Health & Social Care Partnership, including Social Work and Social Care services, is regularly reported to the Health and Social Care Partnership Board and to both East Dunbartonshire Council and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, as the key funding partners.

Social Care service provision in East Dunbartonshire continues to be a mixture of commissioned and in-house delivery. Over 70% of services are provided by the third, independent and private sectors, with the remainder provided in-house by the Council on behalf of the Health and Social

Care Partnership. Market fragility and increasing issues of provider sustainability impacted further by changes to national insurance contributions remain a concern. We retain enhanced monitoring and oversight arrangements with an emphasis on long-term viability and sustainability, however more providers are seeking sustainability payments and this remains a concern.

Overall, a balanced budget was able to be set for 2025-26 which included a combination of a challenging savings programme alongside the use of reserve balances. The use of reserves is a short-term solution and requires recurring savings options to be identified in future years. Work continues within the HSCP to scope recurring savings options to meet the financial challenges ahead and there is a range of service reviews currently being undertaken across Social Work and HSCP services to achieve transformation and related efficiencies with an expectation that this will have an adverse impact on the range and scale of services delivered within East Dunbartonshire unless additional funding becomes available to address the challenges within Social Work services.

The years ahead will see significant financial challenges in the context of rising demand for services, increasing unit cost of service delivery and constrained overall public funding available. Increased provider sustainability and impact of national insurance contribution changes bring further pressures. We continue to assess the financial position and risks in an ongoing manner to develop a medium-term financial plan to support delivery of our key strategic priorities. We will continue to engage with key stakeholders and undertake public consultation as options emerge to elicit views on where we can meet our financial challenges.

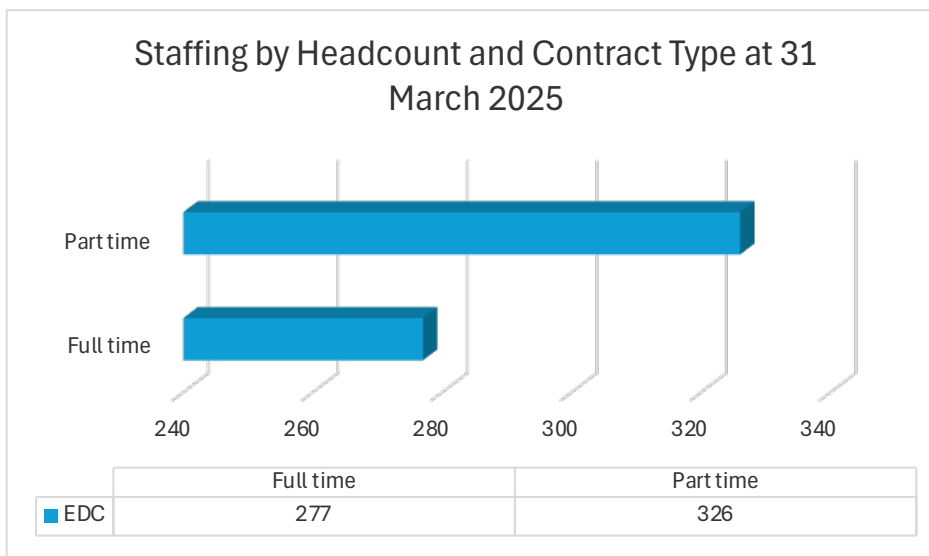
Performance of the registered services in our area can be found at appendix I.



Workforce

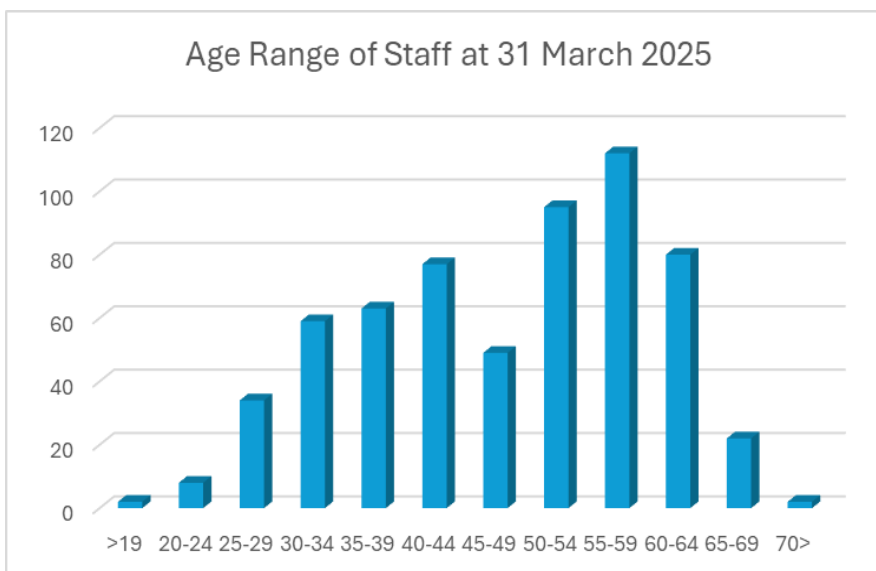
6. Workforce

East Dunbartonshire HSCP had 603 Social Work and Social Care staff employed across all services at 31 March 2025, which is a decrease of three staff since 1 April 2024.



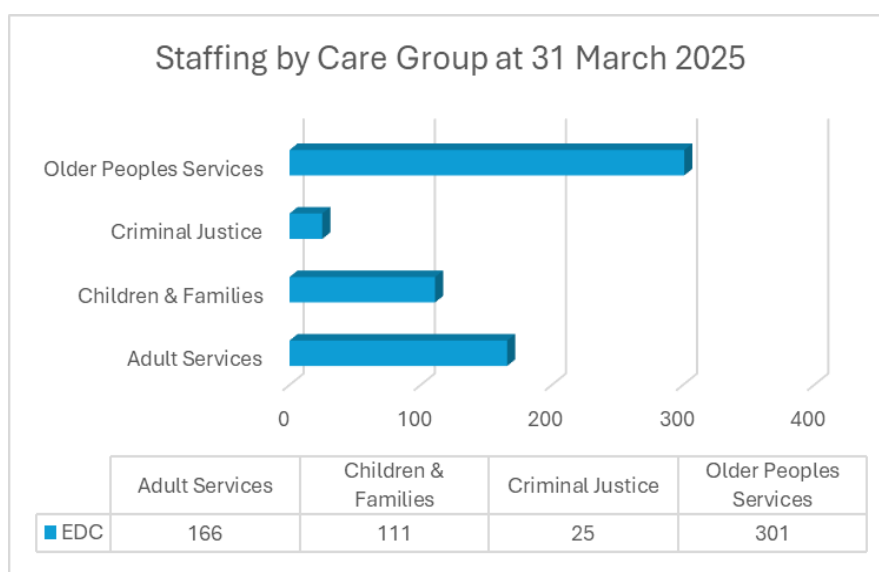
Whilst there are slightly more part time staff than full time staff, this is mainly due to the varied working patterns across our services and being able to be flexible in our recruitment strategies.

We have a wide range of age groups employed across the workforce, but it does continue to highlight a low number of under 25yrs old staff, which might account for the number of staff who require a formal Further Education qualification.



Our gender split for staff has slightly changed, with our workforce being 83% female, compared to 81% female in 2024.

In relation to our main Care Groups, as expected, the majority of staff are employed across our Older People Services which accounts for around 50% of the overall workforce.

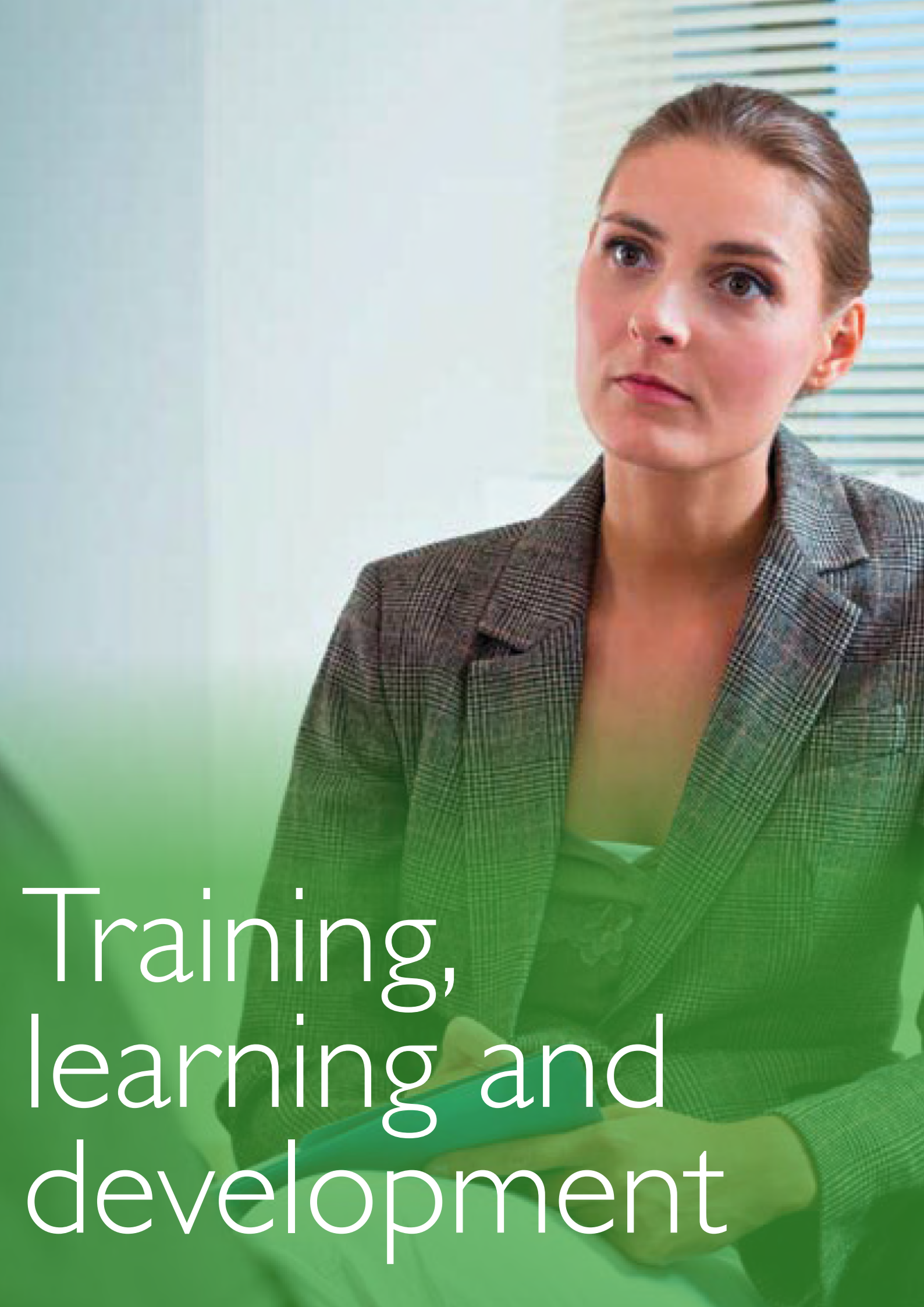


The HSCP continues with a Corporate Induction process to ensure that staff have a better understanding of how we work as a Health and Social Care Partnership and introduces the members of our Integration Board, and Senior Management Team to build on our culture of openness delivered through our Vision and key values.

The HSCP continues to demonstrate that our staff do value the way they are treated through the National “iMatter” Staff Survey which was completed in 2024-25. Positive feedback from this process - which extends to both social work and NHS staff - has evidenced positive and improving feedback on the staff experiences, support from line management and contribution they as individual workers feel able to make within East Dunbartonshire, as shown within the Matter table below;

iMatter Questions	Staff Experience Employee Engagement Components	Average Response				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
I am clear about my duties and responsibilities	Role Clarity	87	88	90	92	91
My direct line manager is sufficiently approachable	Visible and consistent leadership	88	89	92	91	91
I would recommend my team as a good one to be a part of	Additional Question	85	86	88	89	90
I feel my direct line manager cares about my health and well-being	Assessing risk and monitoring work stress and workload	85	87	90	89	90
I have confidence and trust in my direct line manager	Confidence and trust in management	86	87	90	88	90
I am treated with dignity and respect as an individual	Valued as an individual	84	86	88	89	88
My team works well together	Effective team working	83	84	86	88	88
I am treated fairly and consistently	Consistent application of employment policies and procedures	82	84	86	86	87
My work gives me a sense of achievement	Job satisfaction	83	84	85	86	87
I understand how my role contributes to the goals of my organisation	Sense of vision, purpose and values	85	85	86	86	87
I have sufficient support to do my job well	Access to time and resources	79	82	84	84	86
I get the information I need to do my job well	Clear, appropriate and timeously communication	80	82	84	85	86
I would be happy for a friend or relative to access services within my organisation	Additional Question	79	80	82	82	84

Work has also continued throughout 2024-25 on reviewing our three-year Workforce Plan to prepare for our 2025-30 Plan to align with our Strategic Plan. The plan will look to make staff wellbeing and SSSC Registration activity “Business as usual activity” whilst also ensuring that the Health & Social Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 is fully implemented.



Training, learning and development

7. Training, learning and development

In setting out the CSWO annual report many of the training, learning and development aspects which are reflected in this report are woven throughout the body in service sections. In this section a few significant points of note are highlighted that are additional to the body of the main report.

Over the course of 2024-25 a further program of 'Just Enough Support' - which is a strength and asset-based support model - was delivered to Social Work practitioners using our train-the-trainer approach. Attendees represented a wide range of services and very positive feedback was received from participants.

In partnership with East Dunbartonshire Council, trauma training and awareness sessions have been delivered and made available to the entire workforce. As part of the Scottish Psychological Trauma Training Plan, members of our Social Work service also co-facilitated Trauma-Skilled Practice Training Events across sections of the council workforce who are likely to come into contact with people who may have been affected by trauma.

Practice Learning and Education

East Dunbartonshire has continued this year to positively support social work education in the West of Scotland. Social work students must complete two mandatory placements during their studies. In the West of Scotland, the main Universities offering social work programs are University of the West of Scotland, Glasgow Caledonian University, and Strathclyde University. Over the past year, the local authority has maintained a strong commitment to offering student social work placements. In 2024–2025, we provided 13 placements and one observational placement, involving four practice educators and eleven link workers. The local authority received income for each placement, amounting to around £30,250 in total for the year. We also conducted evaluations over the past year and received mostly positive feedback from students, managers, and university tutors. Additionally, we have implemented a protocol that guarantees social work students undertaking placements within the authority an interview for vacant social work positions. Several students have taken advantage of this, resulting in up to four students gaining employment with us which has also acted as an effective recruitment source as well as developing future social workers.

Over the past year, both nationally and locally, practice learning has been going through a period of transition. There continues to be ongoing consideration at a national level regarding the structure of practice learning.

A significant change in the last year has been the end of the Learning Network West, which coordinated student placements within the West of Scotland, including East Dunbartonshire. A significant aspect of the work of the practice learning coordinator has been to develop alternative arrangements for allocating student placements. These are still being developed, however, there has been positive progress through constructive partnership between the authority and the universities. One consequence of the demise of the Learning Network West, has been the loss of the practice teaching qualification. The Learning Network West provided this training annually, enabling the local authority to process several new practice teachers. Over the last year, the closure of the network has meant we have not had any new practice teachers and the pool of practice educators remains relatively low.

In the coming year, there will be an aim to establish a viable alternative that could enable social workers within the local authority to progress towards undertaking a practice teaching qualification.

Overall, this has been another positive year for practice learning with all key stakeholders working effectively together.

8. Looking ahead

Looking ahead, there are a number of challenges and potential issues on the horizon. Notably in relation to the continued financial pressures facing public services, where we will need to continue to strive to innovate in our approach. Our Social Work and Social Care staff have risen to these challenges and continuing to support the most vulnerable people in our communities, promoting social justice, equality, protection and safety, but the steps that are required ahead to achieve financial sustainability will be ever more challenging and may be more keenly felt by those accessing our services.

Across Social Work and commissioned services, we currently have a number of substantial service reviews which are being undertaken with expectations of achieving both service transformation/development and financial efficiency. We will be undertaking a significant review and redesign process across our Adult Social yWork services in 2025-26 of services to older adults recognising the demographic and demand challenges locally. The scope of the review will extend across our Locality Teams, Hospital Assessment, Occupational Therapy and Care Home Review teams.

Service review activity continues additionally across our services to adults with intellectual/learning disabilities with redesign focussing upon our accommodation and respite services due to complete later in 2025.

This year we have developed our approach to service reviews to ensure that these are co-produced with our staff teams and consistent in their engagement and review processes and approaches.

Innovation remains fundamental to the delivery of high-quality, responsive, and enduring services. Our strategic focus will include strengthening early intervention and preventative practices; empowering individuals and communities through stronger informal support networks; and enhancing access to timely and accurate information so that people can more easily access appropriate support when they need it.

Looking forward, the long-term sustainability of our services will depend heavily on securing and maintaining a skilled, stable workforce. A priority will be the continued development and strengthening of approaches to recruitment and retention of our Social Work and Social Care workforce.

We continue to develop our support to newly-qualified social workers and embed an approach to student recruitment which offers an interview guarantee to all students in placement within East Dunbartonshire. A Workforce Strategy Group is being established to develop a workforce plan that will support these ambitions and that which will complement East Dunbartonshire Health and Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan 2025-30.

We continue to embed a community-led support model, informed by best practice, which aims to reduce waiting times and offer effective alternatives to traditional service pathways. This will remain a core element of our future operating model, alongside further development of locality-based planning and delivery. Given the scale of financial pressures, we are reviewing how services are delivered, how resources are allocated and how best to manage the growing demand and our capacity to respond. We fully recognise that this will influence how services are experienced by the public and it would be unrealistic to suggest that this would not be a process which will be felt by those accessing services. We remain committed to managing this transition with care, prioritising support and protection for the most vulnerable within our communities.

We will continue to ensure that lived experience is at the centre of our service planning and delivery. Initiatives to strengthen feedback and ensure that the voice of lived experience is embedded within our practice and improvement ambitions continue to develop across all of our

services to strengthen good practice and service provision which truly is aligned to the needs of our communities and demonstrate the impact those voices make on how services are designed and delivered. We have developed our peer support arrangements within adult mental health and alcohol and drug recovery this year to support initiatives to strengthen the role and voice of lived experience.

In conclusion, the year to follow will undoubtedly be another challenging year, most notably in relation to public service funding, recruitment and retention issues, local demographics and escalating demand and complexity of need. The breadth and strength of our social work services in East Dunbartonshire - which are set out within this annual CSWO report - demonstrate the strength, resilience and innovation across service delivery and practice and assurance of the commitment to meet these challenges again.

David Aitken
Chief Social Work Officer



Performance of our Registered Services

Appendix I – Performance of our Registered Services

Performance of Registered Services

The Care Inspectorate is the national regulator for care services in Scotland. The Care Inspectorate inspects services and evaluates the quality of care they deliver in pursuance of the National Care Standards. They support improvement in individual services and across the care sector nationally.

The Care Inspectorate will award grades for certain 'quality themes' that they have assessed. These 'quality themes' cover the main areas of a service's work. How well the service performs in these areas will indicate how good the service is. One or more themes will be assessed, depending on the type of service and its performance history. A grade is given to each of the quality themes assessed using a six-point grading scale, which works in this way:

Grade 6 – Excellent	Grade 3 – Adequate
Grade 5 – Very good	Grade 2 – Weak
Grade 4 – Good	Grade 1 – Unsatisfactory

The functions delegated to the HSCP Board include a statutory obligation to provide or arrange services to meet assessed care needs. The HSCP Board "directs" the Council to provide or arrange these services on its behalf. Some of these services are delivered directly by the Council and others are purchased from the third and independent sectors. It is important that the services we directly provide and those purchased are of the highest quality. The HSCP works to improve its own services through direct management and operational oversight. Purchased services are subject to detailed specification and contract monitoring by the Partnership's Commissioning Team. The grades of the services delivered by the Council and those purchased by the HSCP are set out below. The grades below are the most recent assessed by the Care Inspectorate for services based in East Dunbartonshire. Inspection reports can be found at on the [Care Inspectorate](#) website.

The Care Inspectorate now applies the National Care Standards. These have introduced new quality themes which will eventually apply to all registered services. The Care Inspectorate has begun applying these new quality themes.

Good Practice Example

Ferndale Children's Service was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in June 2024 and the service received outstanding grades based on the question, "How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?". Ferndale was evaluated as an excellent service, where performance was sector-leading, resulting in gaining grade 6 for the full inspection. The Care Inspectorate commented on the team's practice, stating it was effective, innovative and sustainable across a wide range of activities which they offer.

The tables below have therefore separated out registered services by the framework of quality themes that were used as the basis of the inspections:

The tables below have therefore separated out registered services by the framework of quality themes that were used as the basis of the inspections:

Service	Wellbeing	Leadership	Staffing	Setting	Care Planning
HSCP / Council In-house Services					
Adoption Service	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	5
Allander Resource Centre*	5	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	N/A
Community Support Team for Children and Families	6	6	6	Not Assessed	5
Ferndale Care Home for Children & Young People	How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? - 6				
Ferndale Outreach for Children & Young People	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	6
Fostering Service	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	5
John Street House	2	3	3	3	3
Homecare Service	5	Not Assessed	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Meiklehill & Pineview	5	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Commissioned - Supported Accommodation					
Cornerstone Community Care	5	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Key Housing Association (East and West Dunbartonshire)	5	5	5	Not Assessed	5
Living Ambitions (West of Glasgow and East and West Dunbartonshire)	5	5	5	Not Assessed	5
Orems Care Services	5	4	4	Not Assessed	4
Quarriers (Phase 1)	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Quarriers (Phase 2)	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Quarriers (Phase 3)	4	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Real Life Options East Dunbartonshire Service	5	4	5	Not Assessed	4

Service	Wellbeing	Leadership	Staffing	Setting	Care Planning
The Richmond Fellowship East & West Dunbartonshire Support Living Services	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Independent Care Homes					
Abbotsford House	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Antonine House	4	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Ashfield House	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not assessed
Birdston Care Home	5	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Boclair Care Home	5	4	5	5	5
Buchanan House	4	4	4	4	4
Buchanan Lodge	4	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Buttercup House	How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? - 6				
Campsie View	5	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Lillyburn	5	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	5
Mavisbank	5	Not assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Milngavie Manor	4	3	4	4	4
Mugdock	6	Not assessed	5	Not assessed	Not assessed
Springvale	4	4	4	4	4
Westerton	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	4	5	Not Assessed
Whitefield Lodge	4	Not assessed	4	4	4

Service	Wellbeing	Leadership	Staffing	Setting	Care Planning
Commissioned – Care at Home Services					
Bluebird Care	5	5	5	Not Assessed	4
Cornerstone	5	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Delight Supported Living	5	Not Assessed	5	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Extended Personal Care	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
Hands-On Homecare	4	4	4	Not Assessed	4
Home Instead	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed
The Richmond Fellowship – East and West Dunbartonshire	5	4	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed

*Not yet assessed under current assessment model. Allander Resource Centre assessment relates to previous inspection of Kelvinbank Day Service.



 East Dunbartonshire
Health & Social Care
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1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025