

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 12 December 2023

BY: Chief Social Work Officer

SUBJECT: Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2022-23

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report presents to members the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report for 2022-23. The report is attached at Appendix 1.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council is asked to note the content of the 2022-23 Annual Report of the Chief Social Work Officer and its implications for the provision of social work services in East Lothian and their role in assuring the safety and welfare of vulnerable children and adults across the county.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The requirement that every local authority should have a professionally qualified CSWO is contained within Section 45 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1994. This report is prepared in line with the national guidance – The Role of the Chief Social Work Officer – published by the Scottish Government in 2016. Further, this report fulfils a statutory requirement for the CSWO to produce an annual report on the activities and performance of social work services within East Lothian including those delivered within the Health and Social Care Partnership.
- 3.2 The format for the report follows the template as set out by the government's Chief Social Work Advisor:
- Governance and accountability arrangements
 - Service quality and performance
 - Resources
 - Workforce
- 3.3 The report reflects the strategic and operational delivery of services across children's (social work) services, justice social work, mental health social and adult social work services. It provides an overview of the professional activity for social work in East Lothian through the delivery of the statutory functions and responsibilities held by the Chief Social Work Officer.

- 3.4 The timeframe of this report broadly aligns to two years post the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the continued and continuing impact of the pandemic on East Lothian citizens with whom our services work to help them live safely and as independently as possible. The report illustrates some of the significant challenges ahead for services with the changing landscape of social care services and the increase in vulnerability for children and young people and families that will inevitably be compounded by the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- 3.5 I am proud to have the opportunity to share some of the many achievements from 2022-23, that are firmly aimed at improving the experiences and outcomes of those who are being supported or cared for by social work services. This is testament to the commitment and resilience of the social work workforce and the support of managers and leaders.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – there are no direct financial implications arising from the report; however, it does refer to the financial challenges facing the delivery of social work and social care services.
- 6.2 Personnel - None
- 6.3 Other – None

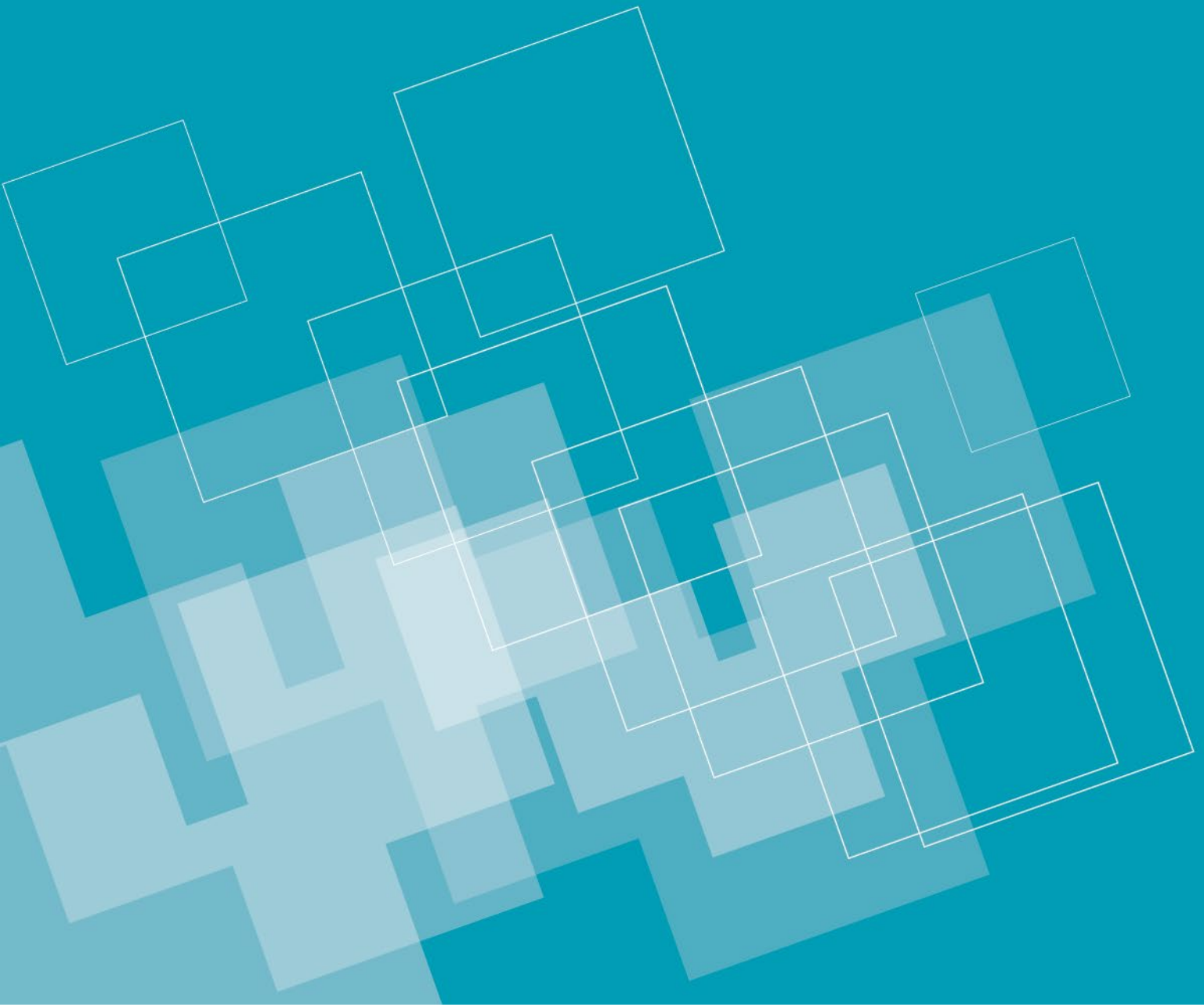
7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Chief Social Work Officer Report 2022-23 attached at Appendix 1

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SOCIAL WORK **CHIEF OFFICER REPORT**

2022-23



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Introduction

I am very pleased to introduce the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) report for 2022-23. The report shares data about the performance of social work services in East Lothian, as well as exploring the reality of delivering social work in a post pandemic landscape. It shows that people and communities continue to be affected by the pandemic and this, twinned with the cost-of-living crisis creates a challenging backdrop for supporting people to live as safely and securely as possible. The report illustrates some of the significant challenges ahead for services, including the changing landscape of social care services and the increase in complexity being experienced by children, young people, adults, and families. This will inevitably be compounded by the resource and staffing crisis across the social work and social care sectors.

It is not possible to convey every aspect of social work services within one report. This report focuses on key areas of development and improvement, with a view to showing how we continue to prioritise supporting people within their own homes and communities.

In this report, I will share some of the many developments and achievements designed to improve the experiences and outcomes of those who are being supported or cared for by social work services. This is testament to the commitment and resilience of the whole East Lothian social care and social work workforce, who continue to do their best to deliver high-quality services, at times under very difficult circumstances.

Governance and Accountability

Social work and social care services play a vital role in championing and addressing the impact of poverty and inequality in the lives of vulnerable people. These services are well placed to inform the prevention and early intervention agenda that is embedded in the key strategic plans for East Lothian. Most social work functions take place within the context of joint operational working, with colleagues within the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), council services and across key partner agencies, including the third sector. The CSWO is a member of the council management team, a non-voting member of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) and is a member of the following key strategic partnerships that lead and direct the work to protect and improve the lives of vulnerable

people:

- East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee
- East Lothian Partnership Governance Group
- East Lothian Children's Strategic Partnership
- East Lothian Community Justice Partnership
- Midlothian and East Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership

Role of the CSWO in social work practice

The role of the CSWO is to provide professional advice and guidance to Local Authorities, Integrated Joint Boards, Elected Members and officers in the delivery and associated risks of social work services. There is a statutory requirement for all local authorities to appoint a professionally qualified CSWO who is registered with the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC). This regulation is set out in Section 45 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994.

As Head of Children's Services and CSWO, it is necessary to balance the challenge of maintaining objectivity in line management and strategic decision-making, alongside accountability for professional practice standards and ensuring the safety of those who use our services. The human and financial impact of the pandemic on council and IJB services continues to test this balance. It is essential for the CSWO to maintain a good understanding of practice, in order to remain connected to the core business and standards of assessing and responding to risk and need for vulnerable people. This is achieved through:

- The role of agency decision maker, endorsing decisions of the fostering and adoption panels;
- Authorising decisions about secure care placements and monitoring assessments and plans for young people whose liberty has been removed;
- Chairing senior officer resource panels and reviewing plans of children placed in external resources;
- Implementation of the performance and care governance framework in children's services;
- Membership of the East Lothian care home and care at home oversight groups;

- Core member of multi-agency meetings (Large Scale Investigations and strategy meetings) to consider risks to service users in regulated care services;
- Strengthening the arrangements for oversight of local authority welfare guardianship applications;
- Single Point of Contact for Prevent¹;
- Monitoring of MAPPA business and co-chair of MAPPA 3 meetings;
- Member of learning review sub-group for public protection;
- Principal counter-signatory for Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) endorsements.

The IJB chief officer supports the role of the CSWO in providing professional accountability for social work practice in the services delegated to the IJB. Senior social work managers in adult services consult with the CSWO about practice issues. Regular meetings for social work managers across children's, justice, and adult services with the CSWO provide important opportunities to discuss cross-cutting themes, feedback from national meetings such as the Social Work Scotland CSWO network and standing committees and an opportunity to reflect on practice challenges and dilemmas.

¹ Duties for specified Scottish authorities in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Children's Services

During 2022-23, Children's Services continued in its commitment to keep the Promise². I am pleased to be able to share the detail of how our services have changed throughout 2022-23 and to show how we continue to work collectively to provide the right support at the earliest possible opportunity. Our desire to support children to thrive within resilient and loving families at the center of everything we do has remained in focus during service and structure changes. Engaging with children and young people and hearing their voices guides our practice work and our approach to service delivery. We continue to seek ways to strengthen this important work.

Following initial implementation in early 2022, the continued implementation of the redesign of children's services has remained a strategic focus. The redesign workstream was part of the Council's Transforming Services for Children programme.

The redesign came from evidence gathered through self-evaluation, that we needed to redesign our services to ensure the best possible outcomes for children, young people, and their families. We identified key pressure points in the child's journey through services and acknowledged that we could not change one part of the structure, without impacting upon other areas of the service.

To truly commit to the values of the Promise, we knew our services needed to be redesigned to ensure:

- We are truly prioritising early intervention and preventing children, young people their families from requiring statutory or child protection measures.
- We are equipped and able to provide flexible, responsive, timely and relational family support for as long as required.
- When children are unable to stay within their family, our social work service is built around the needs of the child to promote relationships and consistency throughout their care journey.

² The Promise Scotland was established to take forward the work of the Independent Care Review. In 2021, it published its plan for 2021-2024, outlining key outcomes that aim to ensure that Scotland's children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected, so they can realise their full potential.

- We are able to intensively support our most distressed and at-risk young people in their own communities with patience, persistence, and hope.

The redesign process involved an extensive mapping of systems and processes and a variety of consultations events with staff, people with lived experience and stakeholders. From this, we identified our key purpose, outcomes, and operating principles for the service as a whole, and for individual service areas. This led to mapping our existing staff resources and the building of possible new structures to meet the desired purpose.

The redesign shows our commitment to being self-aware about the level of change required to make a difference in the lives of the people we work with. It shows that we sought to improve people's experiences in every area of our service, and we continue to work tirelessly to meet the following objectives:

- To deliver high quality social work services for children, young people, and their families.
- To deliver our statutory responsibilities to protect children and young people from harm.
- To provide statutory social work services at the right time for children, young people, and families at risk to overcome difficulties and achieve safe and loving relationships.

While our goal is to ensure we provide a service that produces better outcomes for children and families, it has not been without its challenges. In 2022, East Lothian had an estimated population of 108,972, the 21st highest of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland. In 2018, the population was projected to increase by 9.7% to 116,006 in 2032. This is the second highest increase in Scotland.

The Council's ongoing significant financial challenges and a growing population within East Lothian have created a challenging landscape when delivering services at all levels, but particularly around prevention and early intervention.

A national shortage of social work staff has impacted our recruitment drive and has resulted in a number of teams running at reduced capacity. Recruitment challenges impacted our ability to fully implement the service redesign and we had to accept that some of the new priorities and processes would be slower to show impact due to insufficient staffing numbers in key

areas.

Signs of Safety refresh

Developing the workforce to ensure professional social work practice is of the highest standard and is focused on helping to deliver the Promise was recognised as an essential part of the redesign and implementation phase.

Signs of Safety³ has been our practice approach within child protection for many years. To compliment the redesign, we have invested in whole service training to update our Signs of Safety practice and embed it further into all areas. We paid particular attention to how it is incorporated into all social work practice and our use of paperwork. Within the model, our workforce strives to build effective relationships and use a strength-based, family first approach to keep children living safely within their own families wherever possible.

We also integrated learning from 'Each and Every Child' into our practice and are working to ensure what we say and how we write is trauma informed and does not reinforce a negative perception of care experience. We are working to consider what all children and young people need in their lives to thrive in our work.

This children's service section of this report will focus on the work being carried out in each team. Relevant data will be presented to demonstrate how we are planning and delivering our service to bring about better outcomes to children and families. Attention will also be given to our approach to quality assurance, voice, and supporting our workforce.

Intake and assessment and child protection – early support to families

The newly designed intake and assessment teams provide effective interventions to support families to reach a place of safety and stability with a view to avoiding longer term or statutory social work involvement where possible. Practitioners work alongside families to understand their long-term support needs and help identify suitable supports, interventions and community

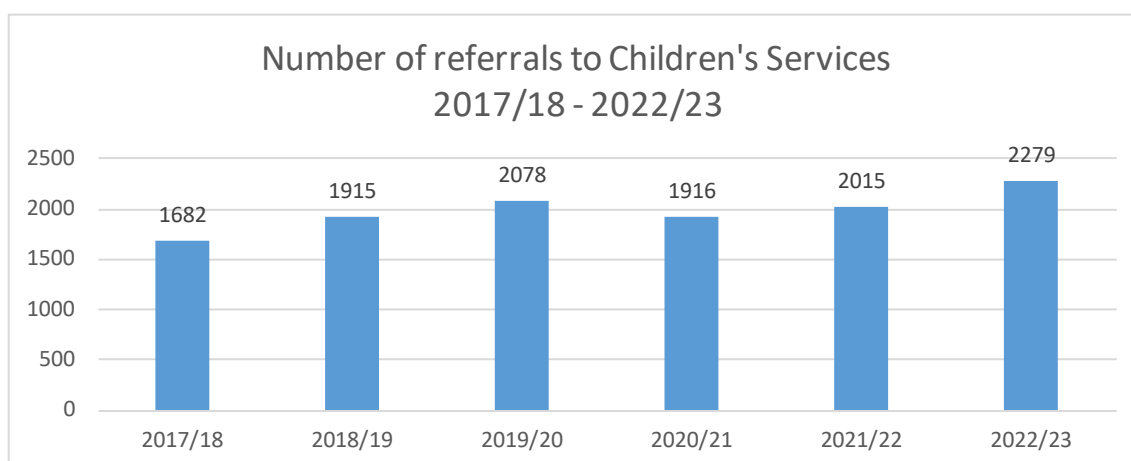
³ The Signs of Safety approach is a relationship-grounded, safety-organised approach to child protection practice, created by researching what works for professionals and families in building meaningful safety for vulnerable and at-risk children.

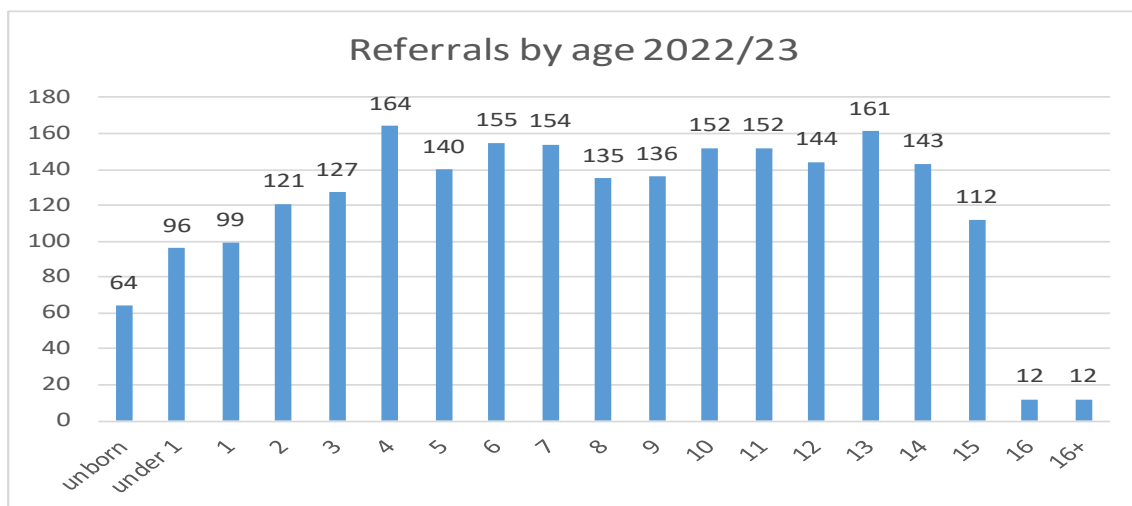
options where appropriate.

Our child protection team, based within intake and assessment works to strengthen existing practice and provide a high quality and strengths-based child protection response for newly referred children and young people at risk of significant harm. It provides a team base for the dedicated Video Recorded Interview (VRI) and Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) coordinator. This approach to joint investigative interviewing with the police is trauma informed, child focused and aims to achieve the best evidence through improved planning and interview techniques. Our approach will be fully embedded by 2024. Whilst the aspirations of the approach are fully supported, we believe that the resource impact of the extensive training and evaluation programme on busy teams in small local authority areas has yet to be fully recognised or provided for by the Scottish Government.

Referral activity data

Referrals to children’s social work have continued to rise. The figures for 2022-23 show a record high of 2279 referrals, a 35% increase over five years. We have also experienced an increase in the complexity of people’s circumstances which have been compounded by the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.





The increase in referrals reinforces the importance of a relentless focus on Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) – providing effective early help and support for families within universal services to prevent difficulties escalating to the stage where targeted interventions are needed.

Children’s Services is part of a shared directorate with Education and there is significant joint working, along with other council services, to prioritise initiatives that will lead to a reduction in referrals. A number of exciting projects and services have been introduced including:

- Child Planning Framework – Locality Teams, which are part of a continuum of support to facilitate multi-agency, solutions orientated discussions around the wellbeing of identified children and young people.
- Mental Health – Single Point of Access, which is the gateway for a wide range of targeted services including school counselling.
- Families Together East Lothian which is funded by the Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
- Early Intervention Support Team which is a dedicated group of Family Support Workers supporting children and young people who have disengaged from education.

Child protection activity data

The number of children on the child protection register remains consistent with a slight decrease from last year. The most common concerns at point of registration are parental ill-

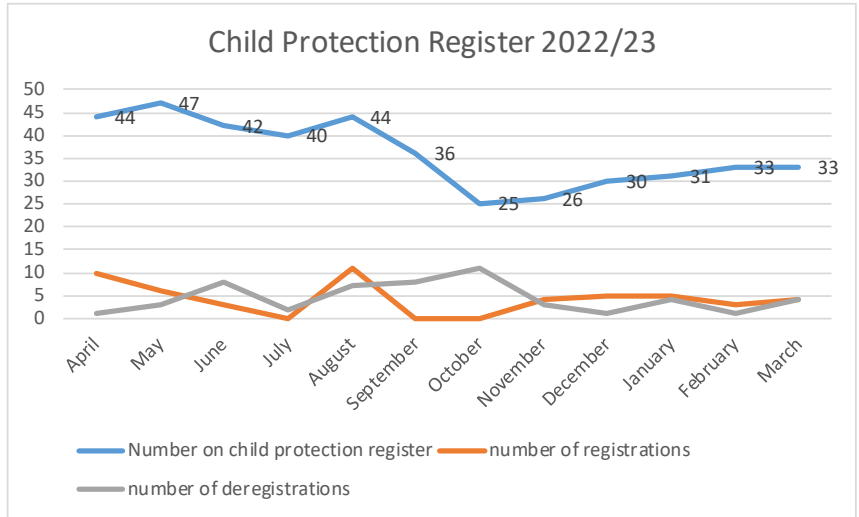
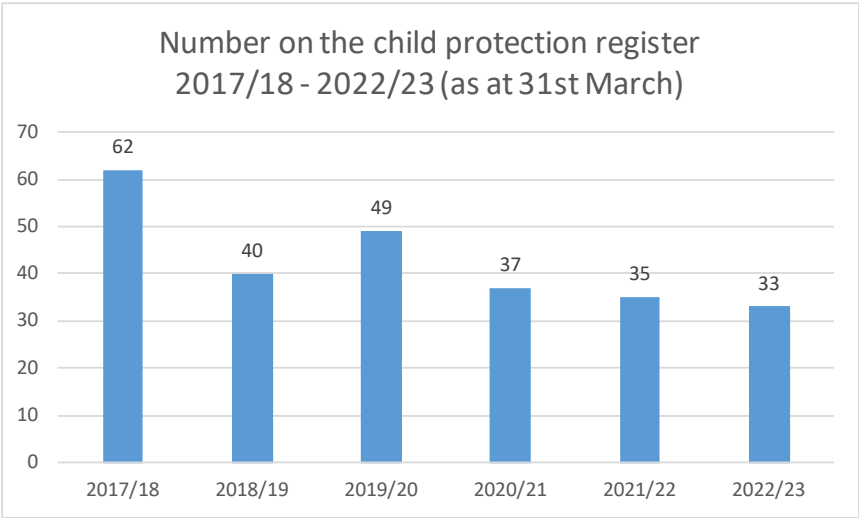
mental health, domestic abuse, and parental alcohol misuse. This corresponds with the national picture where the most common concerns raised at registration over the year were parental drug misuse and domestic abuse, followed by emotional abuse and issues associated parental mental illness.

Despite the disruption in light of COVID-19, parental or carer attendance at Initial Child Protection Planning Meeting (ICPPM) and Initial Core Group meetings has remained at 100%. We use a blended approach of virtual and face-to-face meetings. Due to the sensitivity of the meetings, we encourage more people to attend in person if they are able to.

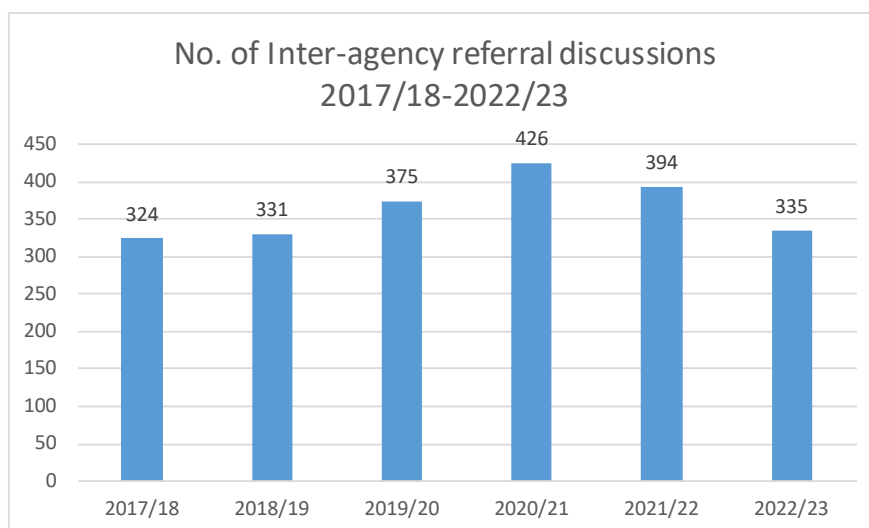
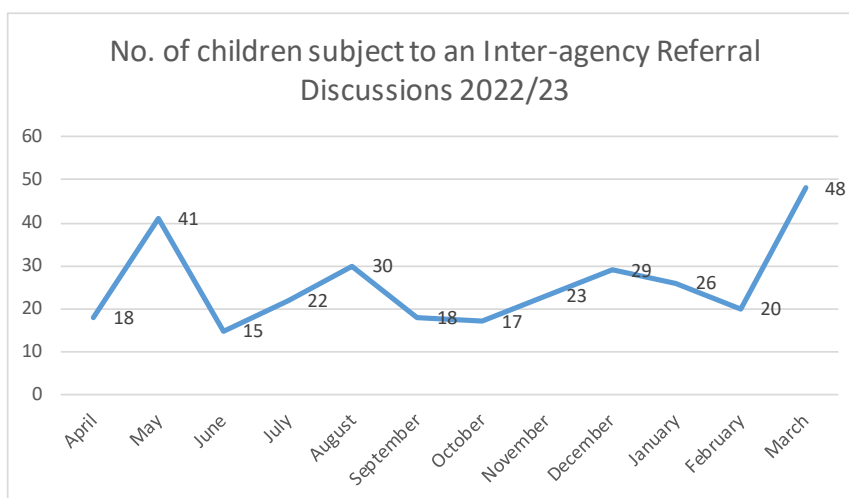
How people are treated throughout child protection processes is extremely important to us and we have strengthened our Signs of Safety practice to ensure that our approach is strength and safety focused at all times. As part of our Signs of Safety refresh, we undertook a baseline audit which helped develop our understanding of the impact our organisation is having in terms of improving outcomes for children and their families. This included parent or caregiver and children surveys, leadership and staff culture surveys, collaborative case file audits and creating a core data set. This showed evidence of some strong working relationships with the majority of people reporting that their social workers listen, know them, and help them. It also highlighted key areas to focus on including being clearer about assessments and plans and needing to spend more time with families to be able to identify family-based solutions.

The ways in which we continue to hear the voices of people who experience social work services is a key priority and something we are always keen to improve.

The Performance and Quality Improvement sub-group of the Public Protection Committee closely monitors child protection data and audits to provide assurance to chief officers about multi-agency practice. Improvement priorities include adopting City of Edinburgh's Neglect Toolkit to promote a consistent approach across Edinburgh and the Lothians. East Lothian will be taking part in a Harmful Sexual Behavior Framework Audit which will be facilitated by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).



Inter-agency Referral Discussions



Inter-agency Referral Discussions (IRDs) involve senior officers from police, health and social work who jointly consider information that could indicate a child has been harmed or is at risk of significant harm. When information about a child potentially at risk of harm is received by one of the core agencies, an IRD is initiated within a shared electronic system (E-IRD). Each agency checks their own recording systems and shares any relevant information to help reach an agreement about the risk and what action is required.

IRDs are unpredictable and require staff to be able to respond quickly, often having to reprioritise work to ensure swift action can be taken. In East Lothian, our core agencies will always initiate an IRD in the following circumstances:

- Unexpected child deaths;
- Children presenting with unexplained injuries, no explanation for injuries or injuries that are inconsistent with explanation given; or injuries to a non-mobile child in conjunction with other child protection concerns;
- Evidence to support physical assault;
- Under 13 years old engaging in sexual activity (as per national and local procedures);
- Chronic neglect;
- Evidenced pattern of emotional abuse;
- Parental problematic drug or alcohol misuse that is presenting a significant or immediate risk to the child;
- Drug / alcohol related parental deaths;
- Domestic abuse – chronic pattern of incidents, child directly involved, or when a parent sustains a significant injury;
- Parental death by suicide if the child is present or witnesses incident;
- Child / young person placing themselves at risk due to their behaviour – behaviour meets criteria of significant or persistent risk to child / young person or another person (i.e. significant mental health issues, significant pattern of drug / alcohol misuse, significant violence);
- Significant contact with a registered sex offender such as living in the same household or parental relationship with a Registered Sex Offender (RSO);
- Unborn babies where there is evidence of historical risk (e.g. previous children removed from parental care, known history of chronic drug / alcohol abuse).
- Any child or young person subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (*Edinburgh and Lothians Inter-agency Female Genital Mutilation Procedures*);

- Child or young person is being groomed and/or evidence of childhood sexual exploitation (*EMPPC – Inter-agency Guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation*);
- Any child that has been a victim of human trafficking (*EMPPC – Multi-agency Support Protocol for Victims of Human Trafficking*).

There has been a reduction in the number of IRDs in the last year, compared with the previous 3 years. Due to the high-risk nature of child protection work, IRDs are always the priority for children's social work services.

The IRD Oversight Group is made up of senior leaders from Police, health and social work who meet fortnightly to review all IRD work from the previous fortnight. The group provide crucial oversight to our IRD practice, quality assurance and data collection in relation to decisions made as part of the IRD. The group use an electronic template to record the discussion and collate the information required.

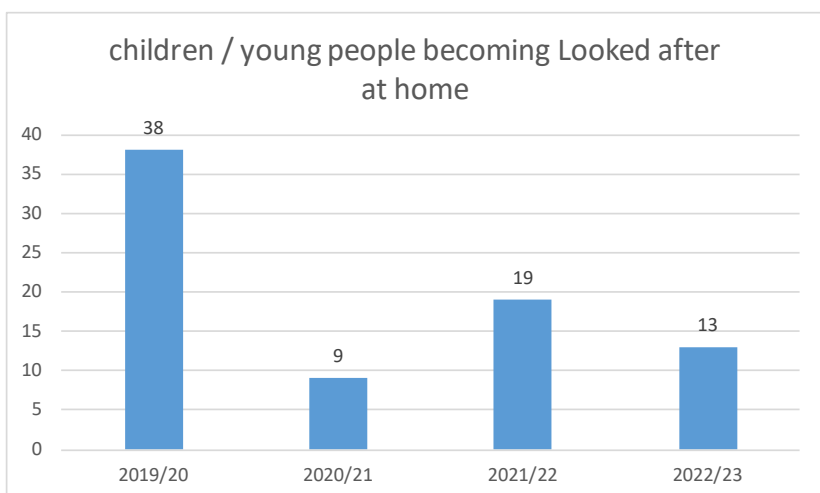
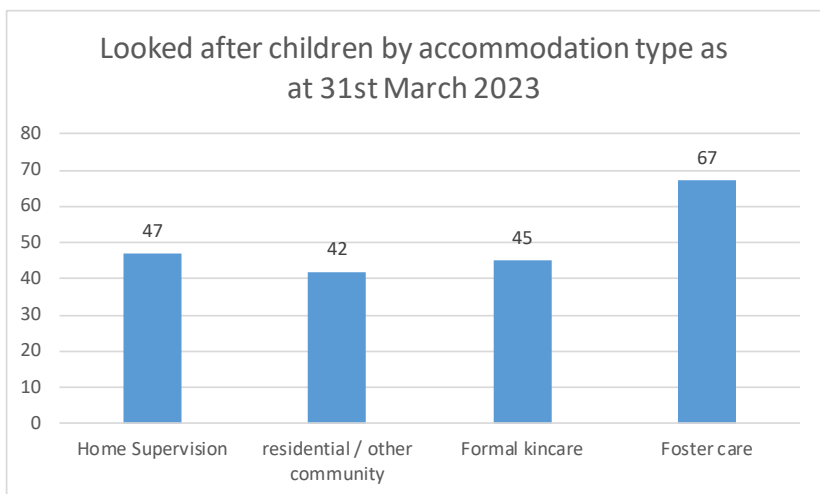
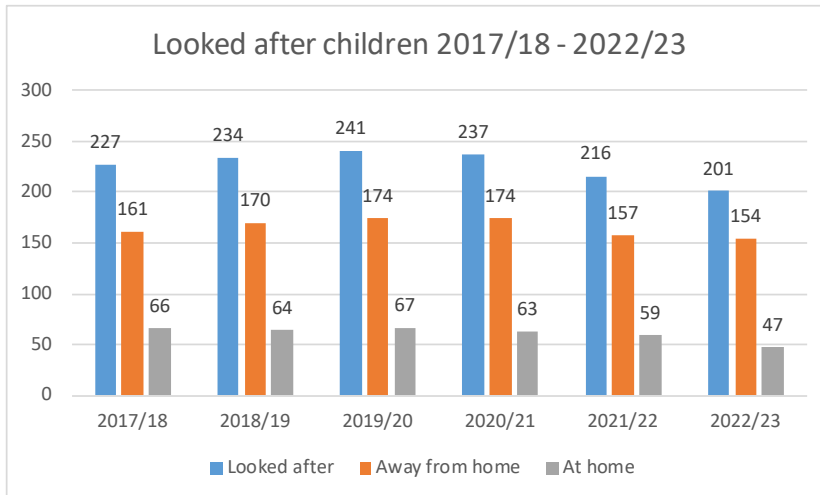
Themes identified throughout the year have highlighted a number of strengths in practice in relation to our IRD processes. Regular audits identified that there are effective multi-agency relationships, timely sharing of relevant and proportionate information and co-ordination. The rationale for decision-making was identified as clear, with appropriate use of the Safe and Together⁴ approach, professional curiosity, and interim safety plans. Areas for further learning and development included the management of repeat IRDs, recording within the IRD process and ensuring that the voice of the child is sought and evidenced throughout the process.

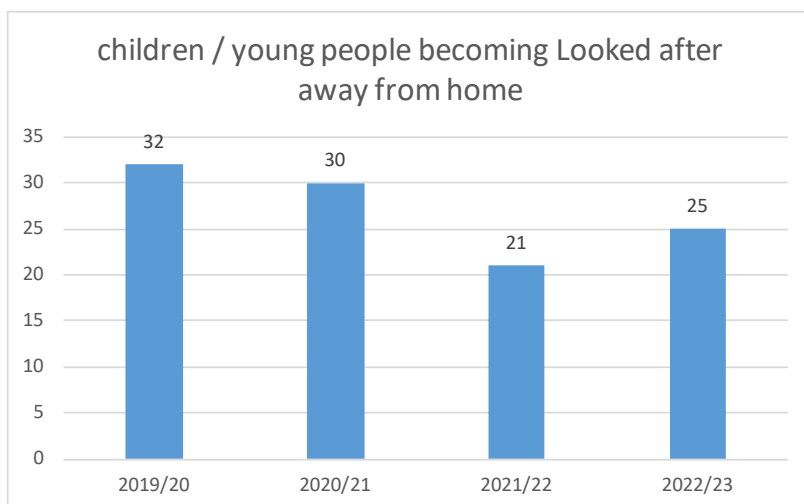
Our multi-agency approach to the IRD process is key to ensuring we are effectively responding to children at risk of harm in East Lothian. Figures show that in 2022-23 there was on average six IRDs per week. The work that this entails is significant and social work relies on highly skilled and experienced team leaders to coordinate agency information to inform joint critical assessments and the support and intervention that may be required. The majority of IRDs are conducted within Support and Intervention and Child Protection teams. Due to the recruitment issues experienced throughout

⁴ Safe and Together: is a model containing a suite of tools and interventions designed to help staff improve their awareness and understanding of domestic abuse.

2022-23, these teams were one team leader down which created significant additional pressure for the existing staff.

Looked after Children





Despite the increase in service demand, the overall number of East Lothian children who are looked after, both at home and away from home, continues to reduce. The number of children looked after in East Lothian in 2022-23 was 201 (this is a decrease of 6.9% from 216 in 2021/22). East Lothian's current rate per 1000 (0-17 population) is 9.1. This is below the Scottish average of 12.3. This is a national trend and we believe this reduction is related to our ongoing commitment to keep the Promise.

Our service redesign addressed our staffing structure, but also our culture. We knew that in the past we were accommodating more children than ever before and as a leadership team, we committed to challenging legacy practice on a case-by-case basis. We encourage staff to think creatively about how to support families to stay together when it was safe to do so.

External residential childcare

Throughout 2022-23, we have continued to focus on our prevent and return agenda in relation to the number of children and young people who required external residential care.

While we are delighted to report that we have successfully returned five young people over this timeframe to East Lothian, it has not been possible to stop other young people from moving out with East Lothian. A main focus of this work is ensuring all children and young people have strong assessment, planning and review arrangements in place. By keeping the Promise and paying attention to voice, family, and scaffolding, we are working to ensure all children are able to live in family care where this is safe

to do so.

As a small local authority, we have only a small amount of internal residential provision and we have been particularly affected by the national fostering recruitment crisis. While we welcome the national approach to investing in early intervention and community supports, there remains a cohort of children and young people's whose needs are so complex that we are unable to meet them within local resources.

Not only do external placements result in significant and unsustainable budgetary pressures, we know that most children who move out with East Lothian do not achieve positive outcomes. This is driving our changes in practice and culture and our aim is to meet the needs of children and young people within their own communities. We continue to review our internal resources with a view to increasing capacity, but this is particularly challenging within the current financial landscape.

Support and Intervention

The Support and Intervention Service holds the majority of longer-term social work with children who are usually subject to statutory orders, been involved in child protection processes or supported under Section 22 or 25 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. All children have an individualised child's plan and an allocated social worker.

A key function of Support and Intervention is to progress permanence plans so that a child can reach a stable position as quickly as possible. This involves establishing whether children are safe to stay at home, whether the need to be accommodated, whether they can be returned from care to their parents or whether they require long-term care with extended family, foster carers, adopters, or residential care. There are clear structures, support, and oversight in place to minimise drift for children and ensure children can always remain within their families where this is safe to do so. We adopt a family first practice model and use Signs of Safety assessment principles to ensure that families are given every opportunity to create their own solutions before we introduce our own.

For children who are involved with legal care proceedings, the delay in court processes post pandemic has continued to impact this area. The move nationally for independent expert reports being requested in contested Permanence applications can build in additional delays for the child and cause additional financial pressure for the local authority.

The family support team provides targeted, practical, and emotional support to families on the basis of a clear and mutual agreement set out in an outcome-focused care plan. The team also supports permanence planning through coordinating, delivering, and assessing family time arrangements.

The Independent Reviewing Officer team is now responsible for chairing reviews for children looked after at home, as part of our commitment to ensuring children's care plans maximise opportunities for improving outcomes. The first review is now three months after the children's hearing and three months before an annual children's hearing review to assess whether progress has been sufficient to recommend the order can be terminated.

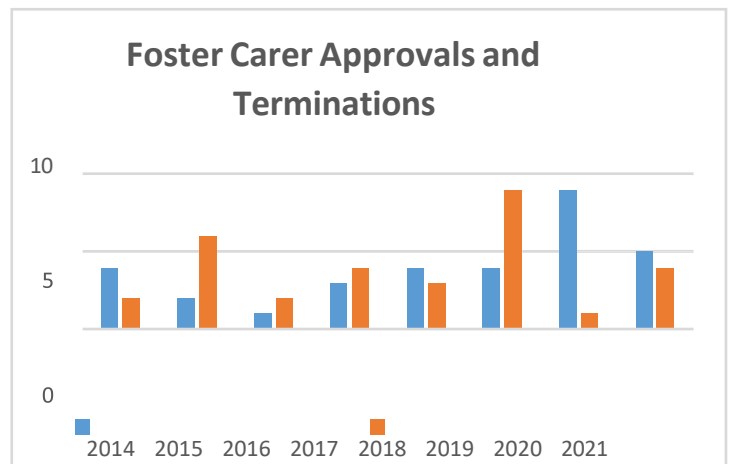
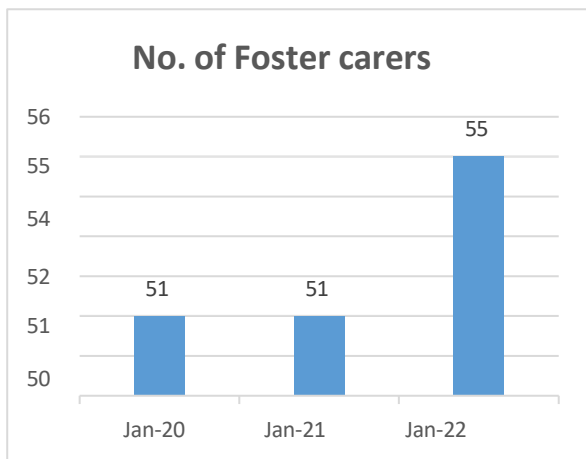
In a similar pattern to the national picture, we have experienced recruitment challenges in this area. We remain committed to achieving a fully staffed position and through a targeted campaign, we were close to achieving this at the end of 2022-23.

Specialist Social Work Services

Fostering

As outlined above, as part of the service redesign, we changed our Fostering and Adoption team into a separate Fostering Team and an Adoption and Kinship Care Team. Our aim is to provide children who require foster care with a strong, loving care experience. We know children need responsive support which can flex and adapt as they grow. We acknowledge that providing this standard of care can be challenging and exhausting, so our fostering team continues offering a high level of support and training to assist our foster carers in managing the daily issues they face.

We have seen an increase in the complex behaviors of children who require foster care. This includes a higher proportion of children who have diagnosed or suspected neurological diversity, attachment issues and signs of extreme distress.



During 2022, there has been an increase in requests for respite breaks as foster carers recognise the impact full-time caring can have on their own health and families. The team continues to have a very low number of new foster placements and the pool of available carers for respite or full-time care continues to reduce.

The low number of new foster placements has not resulted in a decrease in activity for the team, as the number of children and young people moving between foster placements, often due to placement breakdown, has continued to increase. A project is underway to analyse the reasons for placement breakdowns to see if there are any areas of learning for us as a local authority. We acknowledge that placement breakdown can have a devastating impact for the child. We have made significant steps to improve our pre-placement planning processes to try and prevent problems before they arise.

We believe that the lack of foster placements is directly linked to difficulties in matching children to the right placement.

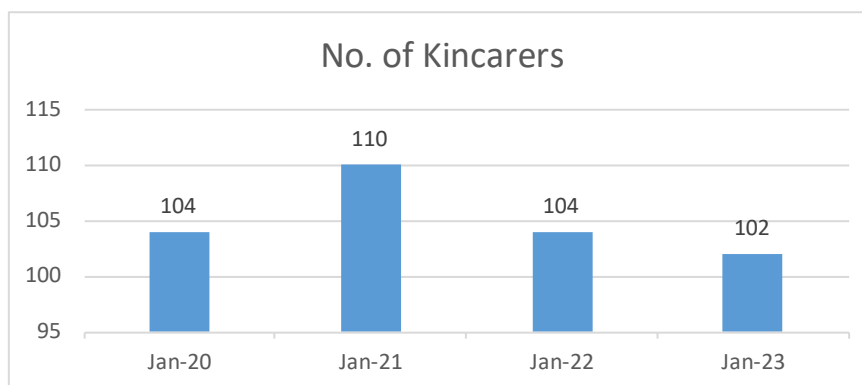
We continue to focus on the recruitment of foster carers and this is one of our main priorities. We believe having a consistent and constant recruitment message will help us grow our fostering family.

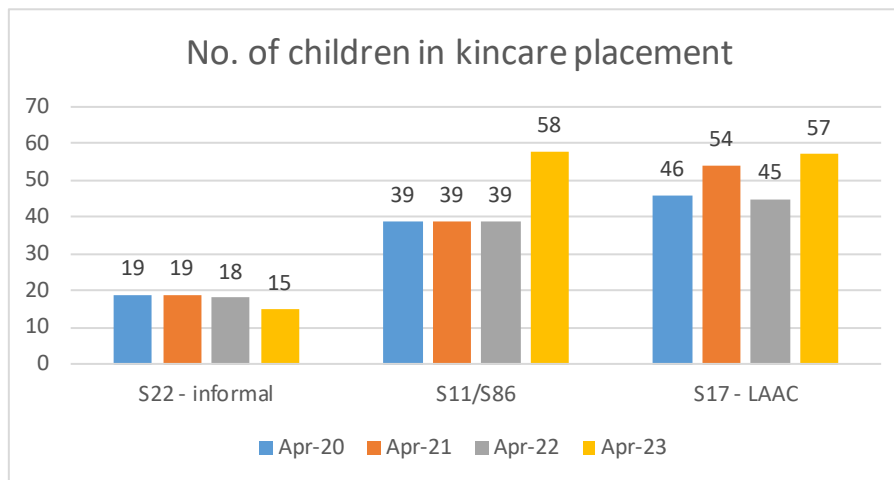
Continuing care

Children’s services has a strong track record in supporting young people to remain within their placement until they are ready to leave in line with the policy and legislative framework of Continuing Care. During 2022-23, five foster carers were approved to provide continuing care to enable the young person in placement to remain with them. Whilst this is very positive for our care experienced young people, it reduced the number of placements available for younger children. The reviewing officers are now conducting regular audits to ensure planning is clear, especially in relation to moving on from foster care. We have been developing a training presentation, including a video interview of one of our young people, and we are now planning to roll this out to foster carers and to fostering panel members in 2023.

Adoption & Kinship Care

Our promise to keep families together is evidenced through our investment in kinship care. Kinship care is routinely considered as the first option when parents cannot provide the care that a child requires. Our service works with other agencies to support kinship carers because we want to keep children safely together with their families wherever possible. We know that providing care can be challenging and exhausting and that we must scaffold our kinship families with support as much as possible.





The service continues to support families that are considering or wishing to adopt a child, and it is a challenge for the team to keep up with demand for assessments. We expect the implementation of the service redesign and the principles of the Promise will lead to a year- on-year reduction in children who require to be adopted. With this in mind, the service needs to attract more families who are willing to consider fostering and in particular, permanent fostering, to meet the changing needs of the looked after children population.

The demand for post-adoption support continues to grow, reflecting the challenges for adoptive families who are struggling to cope with and meet the complex needs of children. It is likely that the profile of the county, as a good place for children to grow up, may well attract adoptive parents to move to East Lothian.

Adoption panel Business 2022	8 children registered for permanency	3 children matched with forever family	1 adopter approval	1 long-term fostering approval
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Children's Disability

We have continued to provide a high level of support to children affected by disability and their families in 2022-23. This includes the following key stages of intervention:

- Assessment of need to truly understand the daily lived experience of the child and family;
- Using self-directed support principles to underpin support planning with the child and their family;
- Using available support and small budgets to meet the identified needs;
- Reviewing the support and / or budget provided to ensure it continues to meet the identified needs.

We support children who have severe and enduring disabilities. This can often involve child protection and statutory looked after processes. We have seen an increase in the number of referrals to this team and an increasing complexity of need. We know the impact of caring for a child with disability can cause significant pressure for families. There can be a high risk of family breakdown for the children allocated in this team.

The support provided by the team has led to improved outcomes for many children, including their ability to remain cared for within the family home.

The service's ability to meet the needs of children with disabilities has been significantly impacted by the lack of availability within Care at Home providers in East Lothian. Care at Home providers who are on the East Lothian Council framework have been unable to accept new referrals for children who live at home throughout 2022-23. The figures provided below reflect the shift away from Care at Home provision and towards direct payments so that the family can employ their own support via personal assistants.

There is a concerning lack of balance within this support system that is resulting in a lack of choice and in some cases, an absence of support where most needed in the family home. The disability team work closely with stakeholders to address this concern. We are aware that there is real risk of some parents being unable to sustain children living at home without the critical support they require.

The disability team also provide a Share the Care (STC) service to 11 children. This

involves providing daytime and / or overnight respite for children with disabilities. As is the case across the sector, the STC service has faced challenges in the recruitment of new carers. The service has developed their offer and following the pilot of Share the Care Activity Days in 2021, provided 7 days of support for children and their families during the school holidays in 2022. Diversifying STC to be more efficient and increase capacity with the carers we do have has provided opportunities for doing things differently. Families have had the opportunity to connect with one another in a positive, inclusive environment and the feedback received from families is testament to the success of this project and the true difference it makes. Being able to grow this critical service would allow us to support more families to care for their children at home and reduce the risk of expensive external placements being required.

Table : Number of children receiving support options						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Direct Payment	45	47	57	70	89	95
Care at Home	30	35	33	36 (pre pandemic)	16	7
Share the Care	24	21	20	16	12	11
Residential Respite in ELC	10	9	8	11	9	12
Residential Respite out with ELC	4	3	3	5	4	4
Funded out with funding table Living at home	Table not in Place	17	14	15	18	19
Children supported at home	113	132	135	117	148	176
Looked after away from home	10	8	5	4	4	10
Total number of children supported by Disability Team	108	122	129	121	152	186

Throughcare and Aftercare

The throughcare and aftercare (TAC) team has been redesigned to ensure transition to this service is determined by the young person's developmental age, stage of their lives and their needs and not just their age. There is a much stronger focus on pursuing

long-term destinations and this is now considered from the beginning of a young person's care journey. In line with the Promise, we encourage all young people to protect and nurture lifelong connections within their family and beyond, to support them into adulthood.

As of 31st March 2023, there were 119 young people eligible for aftercare with 44 receiving an active service. 75 young people were assigned to the TAC duty service and can request support when they need to. Within the service, 28 young people have been supported to remain in fostering, residential or formal kinship care placements. Of the 119 eligible for aftercare, 47% are either in education, employment, or training.

The reality of life for young people leaving care continues to be extremely challenging. This has been exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many young people experience poor mental health, substance misuse issues, financial hardship, and relational poverty. The experience of childhood trauma can be a significant contributor to the difficulties they can face, and a big focus of our work is to support young people in their recovery from this.

Midlothian Young People's Advice Service (MYPAS) is a local third sector substance misuse support agency, which has worked in partnership with the TAC team to support young people to access substance misuse education and counselling. We have recruited a new TAC nurse who provides advice, guidance, and support to young people with all matters related to their health and wellbeing. She connects young people with the appropriate universal and targeted health services in the community.

In partnership with the Financial Inclusion Team, there is a dedicated financial advice drop in for young people one day a week. We understand the importance of maximising a young person's income by ensuring they are claiming all their benefits and entitlements.

A monthly Education, Training and Employment meeting with our partners, reviews individual young people and identifies opportunities tailored to their individual support needs and interests in line with the *No One Left* behind agenda. This also enables our partnership team to identify gaps in provision for education, training, and employment.

Having a secure and stable home-base is an essential component for a young person to make a successful transition into adulthood. All our young people have a plan for leaving care that includes accommodation and support. The service works closely with housing colleagues to plan for appropriate housing options and to forecast future needs. However, the significant shortage of housing in East Lothian that can impact this particular group of young people. The level of trauma that some young people have experienced means that managing to sustain their care and support plan is not always possible. Many young people find themselves struggling to maintain relationships or accommodation, which can lead to homelessness.

We have continued to develop our supported accommodation offer to young people leaving care. This includes the My Place peer mentoring project which matches young people with a supportive flat mate. Local supportive accommodation options have continued to deliver mostly positive outcomes for young people. The transition to their forever home is regularly impacted by delays in the availability of housing, which in turn can increase instability for young people. This creates a block in the system which delays other young people having the opportunity to take their next steps towards independence.

Young People Seeking Asylum

In October 2021, the UK Government moved from a voluntary to mandatory national transfer scheme for young people seeking asylum who arrive in the UK unaccompanied. The transfer scheme is designed to relieve the pressure on the English local authorities at the main points of arrival into the UK. Like other Scottish local authorities, we raised significant concerns about the lack of accommodation and placement options within East Lothian, but this did not change the expectations of the Home Office.

As of March 2023, eight young people have arrived and remained in East Lothian. We have worked in partnership with other council and partner services to provide accommodation and support to the young people with a view to helping them settle and begin to plan for their lives. Supports required can include accessing education,

language support, ensuring they have a guardian and a lawyer and ensure their practical, emotional, and cultural needs are met.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people obtain looked after status until they turn 18. They are then eligible for aftercare until they turn 26.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who report to be 16 or over are supported to access housing primarily through the *My Place* project. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who report to be 15 or under must be placed within a suitable provision for children such as foster care or residential care. These resources are often operating at capacity, and it can be challenging to find suitable options for all children referred to us via the transfer scheme.

Wellbeing and Justice

Despite some delays in recruitment our Wellbeing and Justice service provide support and intervention for children and young people who are in conflict with the law, with the aim of preventing further offending. All social workers are trained in Start:AV risk assessment and deliver a wide range of offending-focused interventions to address the presenting issues and support needs.

We have introduced a concerning sexual behaviour consultation service for professionals and are able to deliver specialist assessments for young people displaying harmful sexual behaviour. We have also delivered dedicated courses such as *Inform Young People* which is an intervention for young people displaying technology assisted harmful sexual behaviour.

We have strengthened our focus on Early Effective Intervention and carried out 42 initial visits, of which 22 (52%) agreed to intervention work. We are also developing a restorative justice program alongside Includem.

The service now provides youth justice workers to work alongside social workers of allocated young people where problems of offending arise. This allows us to utilise specialist knowledge, whilst also protecting existing working relationships when

appropriate.

This year we have seen an increase in requests for reports from the Procurator Fiscal. In accordance with the national picture, we have seen an increase in requests for diversion from prosecution reports for a range of offences as the national policy direction is to keep 16 and 17-year-olds out of the adult criminal justice system.

We continue to focus on delivering the Promise for young people in conflict with the law. We support the national desire to keep under 18s out of prison, reducing the use of secure care and using community alternatives where possible. We are looking forward to seeing the impact of the Children's Care and Justice Bill if passed in the coming months.

Children's residential service – Lothian Villa

Our local residential childcare provision is delivered over two houses. Lothian Villa Ravenshugh is in Musselburgh and Lothian Villa Meadowmill is just outside Tranent. We currently have space for 13 young people across the two houses.

In 2022, we implemented a new management structure for residential services with a newly appointed service manager and a new team leader for each house. The team leaders are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of high quality care experiences for the young people who live there. They also supported the service manager to develop two new services - the Intensive Outreach Service and formalising the Lothian Villa Throughcare and Aftercare offer. These projects seek to utilise the skills of our residential workers and increase our ability to support people who are not currently in one of the residential houses.

The intensive outreach service was designed to support families when there is a risk of family breakdown. It uses a relationship and strength-based approach to work with young people and their families in the community, particularly to reduce the risk of the child coming into care. The service also supports fragile foster placements and is available in evenings and at weekend when people would need support the most.

In addition, we piloted a Lothian Villa 'step down' provision to provide a different type of support for older young people. This helped to create capacity within the houses whilst also supporting the young people to take important steps towards independence when they were ready for this transition.

Quality Assurance and Improvement

The Performance and Care Governance group within children's services oversees all quality assurance work. It is a key forum for reporting and scrutinising information to ensure the service continues to develop and improve. Each quarter, we report on key performance indicators and data points related to various aspects of the service, including referral data, numbers relating to looked after children, throughcare and aftercare, and child protection data. Key areas of work discussed at this group between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023 are highlighted below.

The audit calendar was updated for 2023 to 2026, identifying priority areas and timescales for various pieces of audit work. This continues to be updated each quarter, providing updates on work underway and making sure any additional pieces of work are added in.

Some key audit updates from 2022-23:

- The Signs of Safety Baseline audit was undertaken at the start of 2022 and outcomes and recommendations are now finalised. The relaunch of Signs of Safety continued through 2022 with training provided to all staff. In addition, the Signs of Safety consultant facilitated team days with each area of the service to consider how to apply the model within their area of work. In November 2022, the new Signs of Safety assessment and plan template were launched, and work has continued since then to support staff to embed this in practice.
- We undertook a Safe and Together audit and the resulting actions are being taken forward by the Safe and Together implementation group. This file audit showed the progress made across children's services in applying a domestic abuse informed approach to practice and highlighted specific areas for future work to ensure all aspects of the model are consistently embedded.

- A whole staff wellbeing survey was undertaken between June and August 2022. This highlighted the impact of the Covid pandemic on our workforce, the challenges of high caseloads and the significant pressures on worker's time. It provided insight into the service re-design showing that while many staff supported the redesign, there was frustration with the length of time this took to implement.
- A report produced in December 2022 outlined the various improvements and work underway in response to the themes highlighted in the survey. This included dedicated funding for team development days, sessions delivered about wellbeing and trauma, and positive feedback regularly reported back to staff at weekly briefings. A staff wellbeing action plan was also developed and this survey is due to be repeated in 2024.
- We undertake a child protection file audit every two years with the latest audit starting in January 2023.
- Towards the end of 2022/beginning of 2023, preparation was started for an audit of Care and Risk Management (CARM) cases which involved seeking views from young people and their families who had recently experienced the CARM process. This work continued into 2023 with the survey undertaken with young people in spring 2023.
- In 2022, the Children's Disability Team developed an online parent's survey to gather the views of people who have experienced the service. This was developed in early 2023 and went out to parents in summer 2023. This will be completed annually to gather ongoing feedback to inform the evaluation and development of this areas of the service. This work will be shared across children's services and we will consider where else in the service this approach could be replicated.

Voice and Participation

Children's services continue to consult and engage with children, young people, families, and communities and we now plan to strengthen our approach in this area.

Engagement takes place in a variety of ways including focus groups for those with lived experience and liaison with the Champions Board, which provides a platform for

care experience young people to directly influence service development and improvements.

Our Promise lead undertook a series of consultations in early 2023, specifically on the vision of children being happy, healthy, and heard. This involved gathering opinions of those who may be underrepresented in decision making and participation It involved speaking to young people with disabilities, those within the youth justice system, young carers and those receiving TAC services.

Consultation feedback tells us what matters to children, young people, and families. Common themes included:

- Relationships with the important people in my life;
- Understanding my rights;
- Supports for children with hidden disabilities;
- Access to sports and activities;
- Healthy food;
- Networks and connections through having access to family, friends and pets;
- Opportunities to play.

Viewpoint is another way of hearing the views of a child and young person through an online questionnaire. The responses provide us with the child or young person's reflections on their life and covers health, care and education and the support they receive from children's services. As at the 31st of end March 2023, there were 127 children and young people who had completed a Viewpoint questionnaire. We would like to improve these figures and are actively promoting the use of Viewpoint across all services.

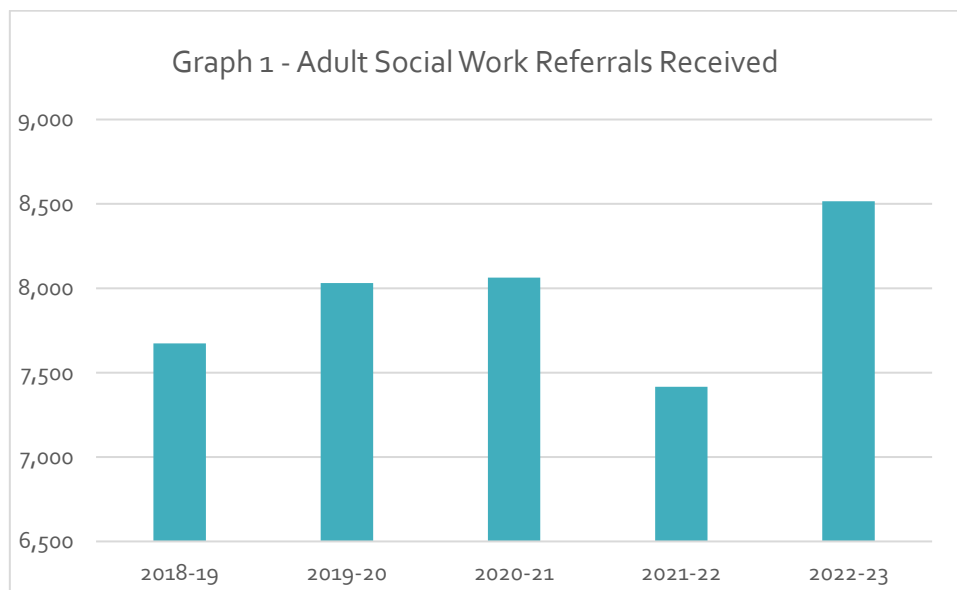
Questionnaire completed	April 2023
Child wellbeing	4
Young person wellbeing	7
Early Intervention	15
Young carers referrals	91
Young carer statement	101

Adult Health and Social Care

Social Work Duty and Assessment

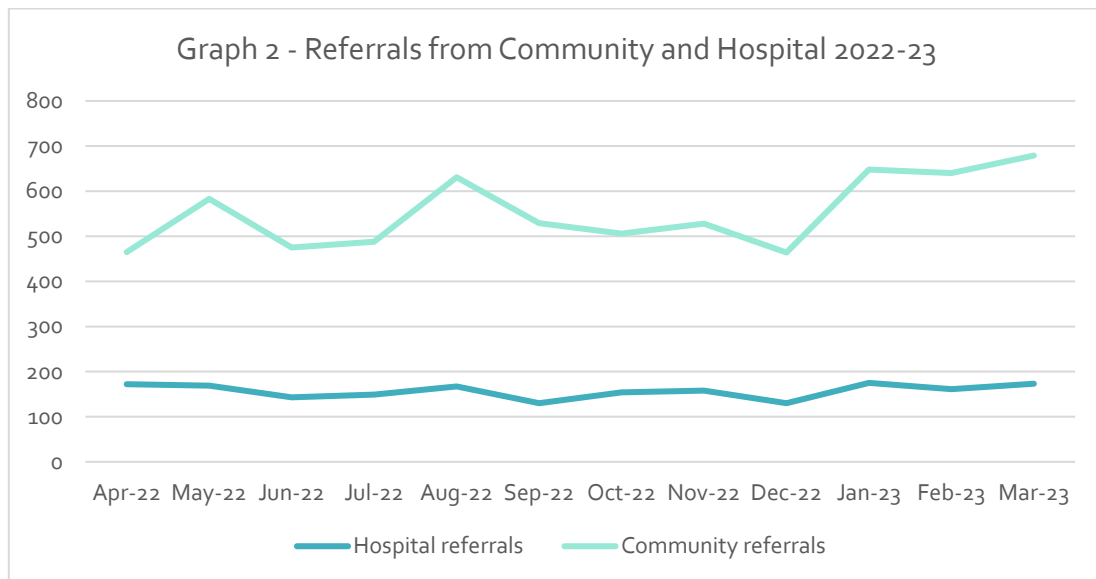
During 2022-23, just over 8,500 referrals were received to Adult Social Work. Graph 1 below shows a five-year trend for referrals. It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on referral rates for a number of the years included, with particular evidence of this during 2021/22. The significant rise (15%) witnessed in 2022-23 from the previous financial year, is in part due to the Covid-19 related dip in referrals during 2021/22. However, comparison between 2018/19 and 2022-23 shows an overall rise of 11% and is indicative of the increasing service demand, resulting from population growth in East Lothian and the growing proportion of the population with increasingly complex needs due to disability and / or older age.

The increase in referrals in part reflects the impact of population growth in East Lothian as well as the increased in people with more complex care and support needs due to disability and older age.



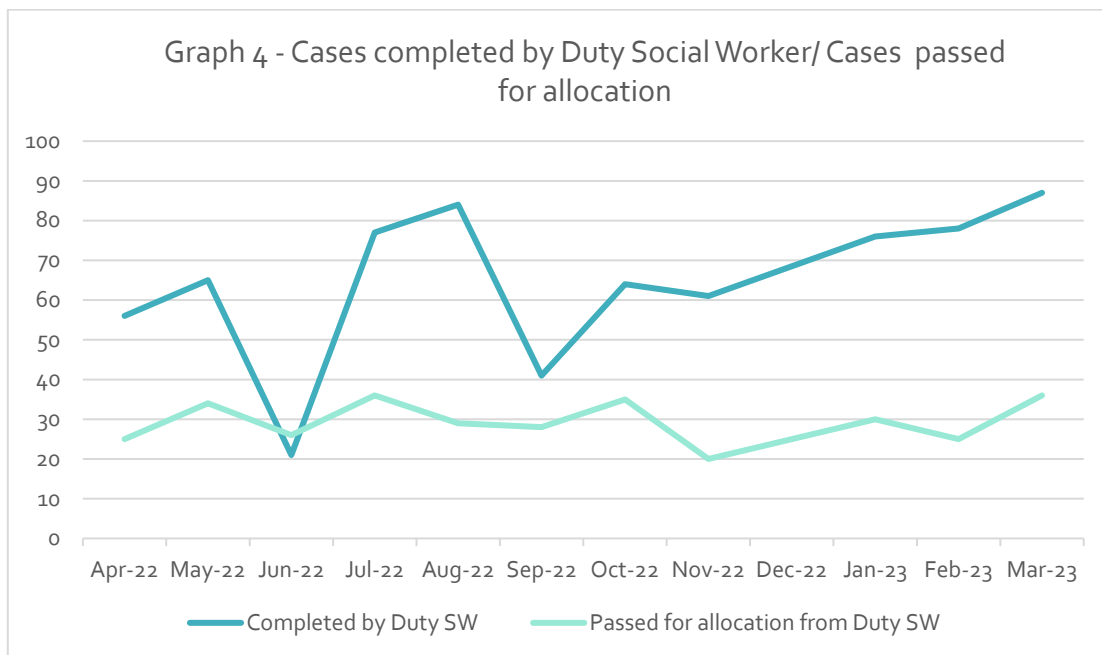
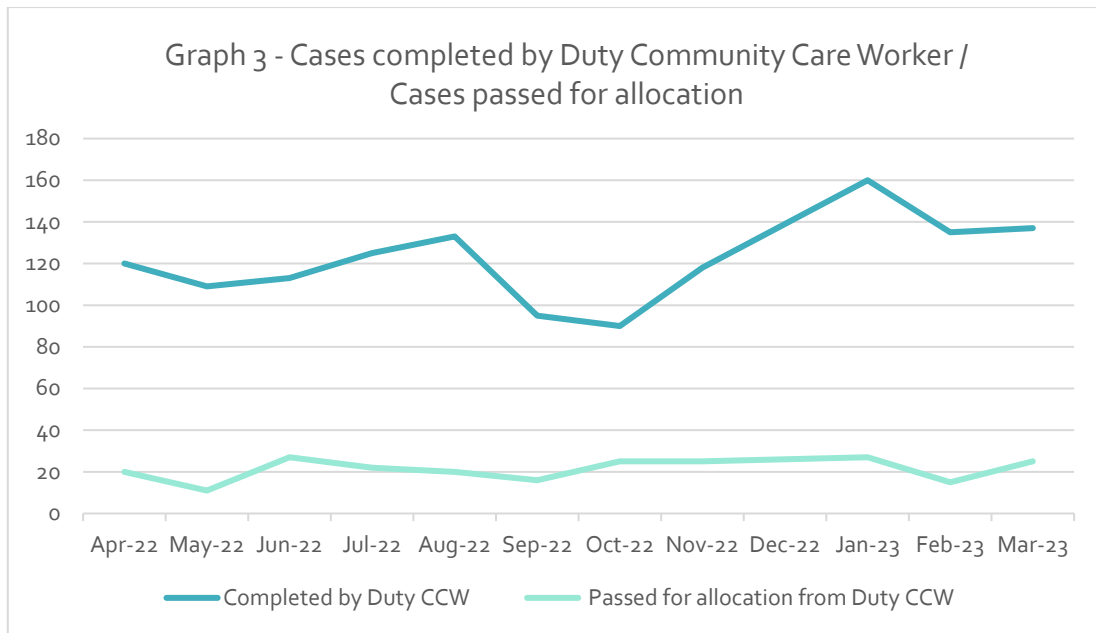
Graph 2 below shows referrals from people living in the community and in relation to those in hospital at the time of referral. In total, 1,881 referrals came from hospitals and 6,636 from within the community. Across the year, Adult Social Work received an average of 467 referrals a month for people at home in the community and 85 in

relation to people in hospital. There is an overall upward trend for community referrals and slight downward trend for those from hospital.



The Adult Social Work Service was reorganised in September 2022, merging the Duty Team and Assessment and Care Management Team. All staff now participate in a rota to cover the duty function, as well as holding a case load for assessment and care management. This means that practitioners work across all areas of professional activity from crisis intervention to long term work. This has helped to strengthen worker and service resilience. Overall, services performed well with clear evidence of improvement as a result of the developments to service design and delivery.

There has been a consistent trend of cases being concluded at the point of duty, avoiding the need to wait for assessment. This has resulted from a new focus on stronger decision making within duty. Graphs 3 and 4 show performance in relation to this throughout 2022-23, demonstrating that the majority of cases in each month were completed within duty by either a duty Social Worker or Community Care Worker.



Where a more in-depth response is needed some cases still require to be progressed to a waiting list for allocation. With the exception of a two-month period over summer 2023, when people waited 4 to 6 weeks, the service has been able to allocate cases within a two-week timeframe.

The service has worked towards allocating at the point of referral and this is now largely possible, particularly when work can be allocated to community care workers.

In some weeks there is no waiting time for assessment, so cases can be started on duty and held by the same worker, ensuring intervention at the earliest opportunity, and achieving continuity for service users. As well as improving experiences and outcomes for service users, carers, and families, this has increased service efficiency avoiding more costly crisis intervention caused by lengthy wait times.

- There are a range of internal mechanisms to monitor the quality of provision and to action any improvement activity required. Managers have made improvements in the following areas:
- Direct supervision of frontline practice by senior practitioners via an enhanced supervision policy;
- Individual reviews of care plans, packages of care and risk by case managers through a new 'self-assessment evaluation' tool;
- The introduction of a new caseload management system that highlights when caseloads have capacity or not, maximising the amount of cases that can be allocated across the team.

Focusing on Personal Outcomes

The principal aim of the of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care was to look at how adult social care could be improved in terms of the outcomes achieved by and with people using social care services.

Following on from the publication of the Independent Review's recommendations, work is underway to review assessment processes in East Lothian. There is a recognition that assessment should be simple and based on a supportive process involving good conversations with people; greater involvement of individuals in planning their own care; and with a focus on early intervention and preventative practice.

In order to do this, we are looking at the development of systems that enable greater flexibility; simplified processes; and forms that support outcomes for people around wellbeing and community connectivity. This also necessitates a shift of focus away from eligibility and crisis intervention. This will require a culture change within the HSCP to reflect the changing landscape for social care.

Local developments are also in line with Self-Directed Support (SDS) legislation which provides important legal rights for people to exercise greater choice and control over how their assessed needs are met. Work is ongoing to ensure that the core components of the SDS Framework are embedded in practice and key processes.

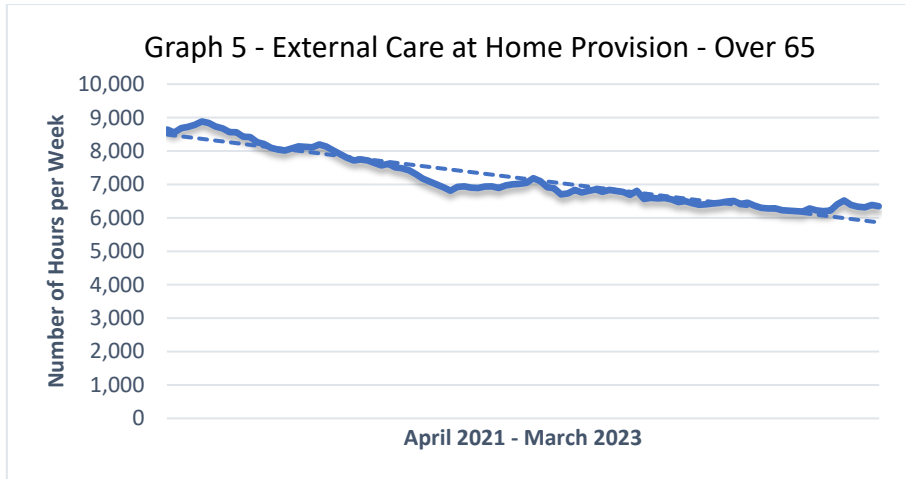
Ongoing work within the service to redevelop referral, assessment and support planning documentation will ensure that we are placing personal outcomes at the centre of social work, and joint decision making at the heart of the process. These outcomes will be person-centred and measurable so we can monitor the impact that social work interventions have on individuals. Data will support continuous improvement, resource planning and commissioning of future services. It is anticipated that testing will start in the latter part of 2023 with implementation early in 2024.

Care at Home

HSCPs across the country have faced significant challenges in recent years in relation to the delivery of Care at Home services. This has been partly due to changes in the type and complexity of care packages required, compounded by difficulties with the recruitment and retention of staff.

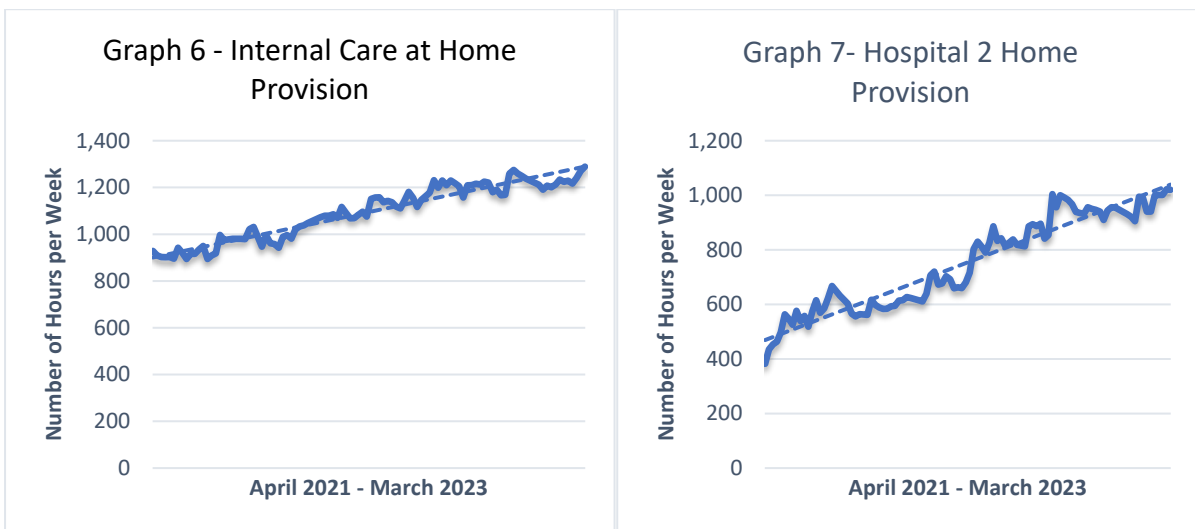
Care at Home services in East Lothian are delivered by a combination of HSCP managed services (Homecare and Hospital to Home) and services delivered by external providers.

Graph 5 below shows the impact of the Care at Home crisis in terms of the reduction in the number of care at home hours delivered for adults over 65 by external providers in East Lothian from around 8,500 in April 2021, to under 6,500 in March 2023 – a reduction of around 2,000 hours per week.



In response to the decline in external provision and the ongoing fragility of external providers, the East Lothian IJB made a strategic decision during 2021/22 to increase the capacity of HSCP managed Homecare and Hospital to Home services. Graphs 6 and 7 show the increase in care hours per week resulting from the expansion of both these services and show the following:

- An increase in the delivery of internal Care at Home from just over 900 hours a week in April 2021 to almost 1,300 in March 2023 – an increase of around 400 hours per week.
- Over the same period, an increase in delivery of the Hospital 2 Home service from around 400 hours to over a 1,000 – an increase of 600 hours.



Although significant, this additional capacity has not fully offset the loss of external hours. Whilst internal services have increased the number of hours provided by over 1,000 per week, over 2,000 external hours have been lost – leaving a shortfall of around 1,000 hours per week. A number of other measures have been introduced to help ensure that the available provision is used as effectively as possible. These include:

- Carrying out risk assessments to identify those most at risk, so they can be prioritised for service delivery.
- Establishing a dedicated team to manage and respond to situations where providers are unable to deliver contracted hours, including responding to instances when providers have to close or amalgamate.
- Expanding the Support Plan Broker team so that more staff are available to set up packages of care.
- Running a weekly or fortnightly Care at Home Huddle and quarterly Care at Home Oversight Group to monitor the Care at Home situation and respond as needed.
- Developing how referrals are managed so that people do not have to wait to be assessed for support (see Adult Social Work section above).

The most recent data available (November 2022) suggested that unmet need for Care at Home is higher in East Lothian (1.93 per 1,000) than in Scotland as a whole (1.15 people per 1,000). However, our achievements in reducing our assessment waiting list means that there is no hidden unmet need in East Lothian.

Planning the development of Care at Home services to ensure they are able to meet current and future needs is a priority for East Lothian IJB. A Care at Home Transformation Programme was launched in 2022-23, with a change board established to lead this work. Initial work undertaken has been to gather and analyse data on current and future Care at Home costs, supply, and demand across East Lothian. Findings were reported in April 2023 and will inform the future development of Care at Home service provision, including alternative models for Care at Home support that are more sustainable in the longer term.

Partnership with the Third Sector – Community First

The East Lothian Community First Service was launched in October 2022. Community First is delivered by VCEL (Volunteer Centre East Lothian) with funding from East Lothian HSCP. The new service builds on a previous service and a pilot initiative that was delivered in 2021/22.

Community First provides support to people who are struggling with their health and wellbeing, helping them to access community services. It also provides support to people leaving hospital, as well as helping to prevent hospital admission, or readmission.

The service is based on ‘what matters to you’ conversations, helping people to explore the opportunities available to them and carrying out ‘goal setting’ using a strengths-based approach.

People using the service have identified needs related to social isolation, financial hardship, food poverty, benefits issues, carer stress, housing, relationship breakdown, mental ill-health, physical ill-health, hospital appointments, and substance use.

Over 170 people benefited from the Community First service from October 2022 to March 2023. Support is provided by a combination of staff and volunteers - eighteen volunteers were involved in the first 6 months of the service, providing around 360 hours of support.

Care Homes

East Lothian Care Home Managers continued to implement Public Health guidance throughout the year in relation to infection prevention and control measures. The Care Inspectorate also integrated this fully as an ongoing area for scrutiny in their new framework to ensure this is fully embedded in current practice.

Oversight of care home quality issues continued through the weekly Care Home Huddle which was implemented during the pandemic and continued to work well. The huddle is overseen by the HSCP Chief Nurse and local intelligence data is reported to the huddle from a variety of sources including the NHS Care Home Team, clinical and education teams, Quality Improvement Officers, Care Home Assessment and Review

Team (CHART), East Lothian Care Home Assessment, Support and Education (ELCHASE) team, as well as information from ongoing contract monitoring visits. The huddle supports early identification of issues and offers opportunities for clinical, educational and audit support when required.

The number of COVID-19 outbreaks across homes and subsequent suspension of admissions reduced slightly in 2022-23 compared to the previous year. There was also a smaller number of staff and residents being reported as COVID-19 positive in homes. The partnership continued to experience pressure in relation to hospital discharge. They arranged block placements with Tantallon House and Haddington Care home over winter 2022, bringing an additional 12 interim beds to support hospital flow. Interim bed use was supported through the use of additional Scottish Government funding, although this was time limited, and the partnership began to wind down the use of these interim placements into 2023.

There were three care homes that entered into Large Scale Investigations (LSI) over the course of 2022-23, including Tyneholm Stables (Oct 2022 – April 2023), Harbour House (Feb 2023 – May 2023) and Drummohr (March 2023 – May 2023). Two of these coincided with lower inspection grades by the Care Inspectorate while the Drummohr LSI was instigated due to quality issues identified in the home.

The table on the following page shows inspections completed in 2022-23 and grades achieved:

Inspections 2022-23								
Name of Establishment	Care Type	Date of CI report	Wellbeing	Leadership	Staffing	Setting	Care & Support	Support during COVID
Nursing Homes								
Astley House	Nursing	08/08/2023	4	5	5	4	4	N/A
		15/06/2022	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4
Belhaven Nursing Home	Nursing	23/06/2022	4	4	5	5	4	
Drummohr	Nursing	13/04/2022	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
Fidra Nursing Home	Nursing	26/07/2022	4	5	N/A	N/A	5	
Haddington Care Home	Nursing	23/09/2022	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A
		12/05/2022	3	3	3	3	3	4
Harbour House	Nursing	21/03/2023	2	2	2	2	2	N/A
		03/02/2023	1	1	2	2	2	N/A
		14/09/2022	4	4	4	5	4	N/A
Lammermuir House	Nursing	03/03/2022	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5
Muirfield Nursing Home	Nursing	18/07/2022	4	5	4	5	4	
Tranent Nursing Home	Nursing	12/07/2022	4	5	4	4	5	
Tyneholm Stables	Nursing	03/02/2023	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A
		12/10/2022	2	3	3	3	3	N/A
Hilton Lodge	Nursing	25/04/2022	5	5	5	5	4	
Residential Homes								
Linkfield	Residential	06/06/2022	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4
		09/03/2022	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
The Abbey	Residential	23/05/2022	2	2	2	N/A	3	

Care Home Assessment and Review Team (CHART)

CHART is primarily responsible for undertaking social work assessments and providing a service for older adults where moving to a care home from hospital or the community has been highlighted as a potential option.

The team take a 'home first' approach for all referrals and work closely with the East Lothian Community Hospital patient flow team to minimise delays. Within its hospital discharge role, CHART supported 372 adults to move into care homes during 2022-23.

Not all adults who are referred to the team move into a care home. If a person can return home with a package of support, this is always the preferred option.

For every adult who is referred to CHART, a social worker is allocated to assess whether moving to a care home is the most suitable option for the person. They work with the person and their family as they navigate the transition into a care home as well as carrying out a review 12 weeks after their move. The team's review function extends to all adults living in care homes in East Lothian, as well as adults from East Lothian who have moved to care homes elsewhere. The team completed 207 reviews in 2022-23.

The team also respond to and investigate adult protection concerns in care homes. Close partnership between the Care Inspectorate and East Lothian HSCP has helped to identify serious adult protection concerns and allowed the partnership to respond effectively.

CHART played a key role in the three LSIs that took place in East Lothian Care homes during 2022-23. By providing key staff to provide guidance, training and support within the homes, the Care Inspectorate was reassured that imminent risks were addressed to keep residents safe from harm and prevent any further emergency measures being taken. The teams worked together to provide scrutiny throughout the period of the LSIs and were able to support the homes to make improvements, whilst continually monitoring residents' safety.

LSIs have highlighted the importance of good leadership in a care home setting, particularly the role of the manager in maintaining care standards.

During the year 2022-23, CHART responded to 856 individual incidents within care homes. This included issues such as falls, medication errors, injuries, adult protection, and financial concerns.

Within East Lothian, building and maintaining effective relationships with care home managers is key to early identification of concerns. We ensure that each home has a delegated social worker who maintains an overview of care home residents. Care home managers can seek advice and guidance from their link worker relating to residents or the care home as a whole.

Details of incidents and any other information is collated and discussed at the Care Home Huddle which involves teams across the Health and Social Care Partnership, ensures interservice involvement is maintained and supports with good lines of communication.

Supporting Carers

Work took place throughout 2022-23 to develop a new East Lothian Carer's Strategy. Once complete, this will guide activity in this area over the next three years. Engagement with carers, carer organisations and carer representatives has helped to inform the content of the strategy. It is anticipated that the new strategy will be agreed in June 2023 and that it will be accompanied by an implementation plan that will be monitored and reviewed annually.

Other developments during 2022-23 included:

- Allocation of Carers Act funding to support a wide range of carer support services, including information and advice services.
- Allocation of Carers Act funding to support Carers of East Lothian 'Time for me' fund, giving support and funding to carers enable them to arrange short breaks.
- The appointment of a Carers Strategy Officer to develop the new Carers Strategy and to take forward the carers' agenda across the HSCP.
- The short-term appointment of a Mental Health Officer to help clear the backlog of private guardianship applications.

- The appointment of a Community Care Worker to provide support to carers.
- Allocation of personal budgets to 20 carers to help meet their personal outcomes.
- The appointment of an Occupational Therapist within East Lothian Rehabilitation Service (ELRS) to support an innovative Carers Pathway (focused on health and wellbeing outcomes for carers).
- Development work to secure a number of respite beds in local Care Homes to provide planned, bookable respite (with the first bed being available from March 2023).
- HSCP staff and Carers of East Lothian forming a working group to review East Lothian's Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) and pilot a revised form with a small number of carers. Implementation of the new ACSP is due to take place during 2023-2024.
- Development of a new Carers Pathway to improve carers access to support services.
- Ongoing development of the Hardgate Short Breaks Service (see below)

Hardgate Short Breaks Service

Hardgate short breaks service offers regular flexible breaks for individuals with learning disabilities and complex health needs. It can provide emergency accommodation and support. The service has grown over the last year to offer a service to nine service users. Ongoing development will allow for new referrals to be accepted later in 2023.

The service provides parents and carers in East Lothian with frequent reliable respite from their caring duties. Service users enjoy a break in a familiar setting with staff who have the specialist skills required to provide a safe and nurturing environment throughout their stay.

The Hardgate team works in partnership with the Community Learning Disability Team (CLDT) to ensure that everyone's needs are fully assessed prior to, and completely met during their stays. Staff working in the service have completed training and attended information sessions to enable them to support a range of health and social

care needs safely and effectively. Staff training and development has meant that the service is able to offer short breaks for people with clinical intervention requirements that have previously been supported by nursing staffed respite services rather than in social care settings.

Learning Disability Services

As a local authority area, East Lothian has the fourth highest percentage of adults with a learning disability in Scotland – 7.3% per 1,000. Learning Disability Services in East Lothian currently includes the Learning Disability Social Work Team; Adult Community Resources (Shared Lives, day and respite services) and the Community Learning Disability Team.

The Learning Disability Social Work Team was established in April 2021 and works closely with Adult Social Work team and the Community Learning Disability Team.

The Social Work Team consists of a Team Manager (this role is shared between two staff), three Senior Practitioners, eight Social Workers and four Community Care Workers. The team continues to focus on all statutory work including assessment, reviews, local authority welfare guardianships and coordination of all transitions of young people to adult services.

One of the key priorities for the team was to ensure that reviews were up to date and completed on an annual basis. In response to feedback from families, we are working with partners to streamline this process to ensure that there isn't a need for multiple reviews.

In October 2022, the team assumed responsibility of managing all local authority welfare guardianships for people with a learning disability. At present there are 33 allocations within the team. We continue to work closely with the Mental Health team and seek support and guidance as required.

The coordination of transitions across the partnership is key to ensuring young people and their families/carers experience receive the right level of support at the right time. The senior lead within the Learning Disability Social Work team co-ordinates and screens all transition referrals and they are the main contact for all professionals which

includes health and education. This ensures consistency of approach and provides one point of contact. Colleagues from Children's and Adult Services meet four times a year to co-ordinate, share and update information about all young people due to transition to Adult Services, both prior to and following referrals being made.

The East Lothian Transitions Protocol has been revised to ensure best practice is applied, supporting young people's transition to adulthood by promoting their rights, highlighting clear duties, clarifying areas of responsibility, and setting timescales.

We continued to make significant progress in delivering our Community Transformation Programme during 2022-23. The Programme focuses on developing community capacity and support for older adults (65+), and adults under 65 with disabilities or mental health support needs.

Our Resource Coordinator team supports people with learning disabilities to access community-based activities where they do not require a resource centre-based service. There are currently 238 people accessing a range of community-based sessions focusing on physical activity and skills development.

The service continued to develop and grow during 2022-23, both in the existing communities and expanding to cover the Dunbar and North Berwick areas.

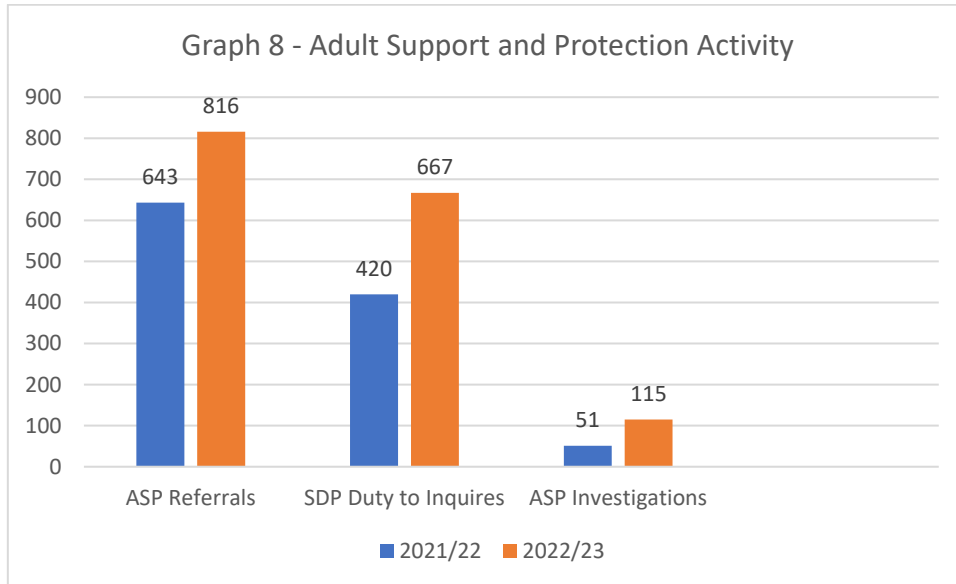
Since their introduction, resource coordinators have supported the development of a wide range of day opportunities in communities across East Lothian. The team works closely with the third sector and East Lothian Council's Connected Communities team.

Adult Support and Protection

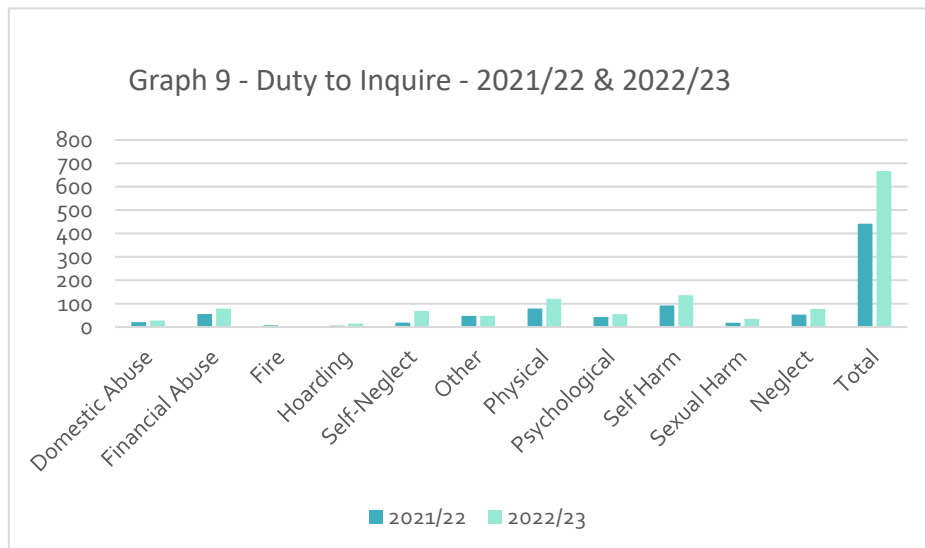
East Lothian HSCP has responsibilities and duties under the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 when it believes or suspects that an adult is at risk of harm. We all have responsibilities to ensure that adults, who may be at risk of harm, are supported to feel safe, respected, included, and are fully involved in all decision making.

Annual Activity

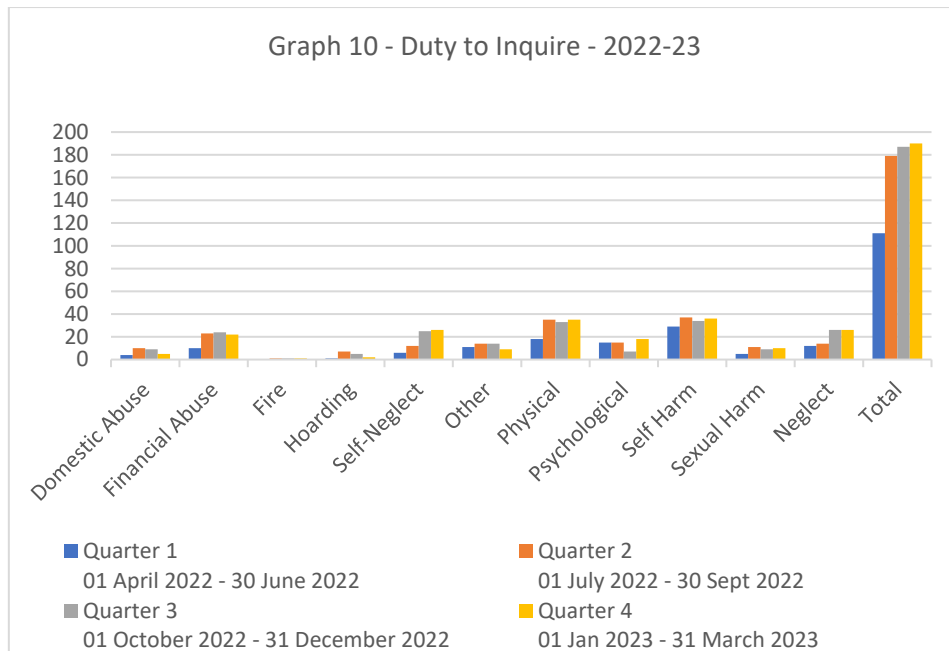
Graph 8 below shows that all Adult Support and Protection (ASP) activity had increased significantly during 2022-23 from the previous year. This may in part be due to an increased vulnerability due to service reductions during the pandemic and a wider lens for ASP concerns due to an increased focus on the impact of trauma.



Duty to Inquire (DTI)

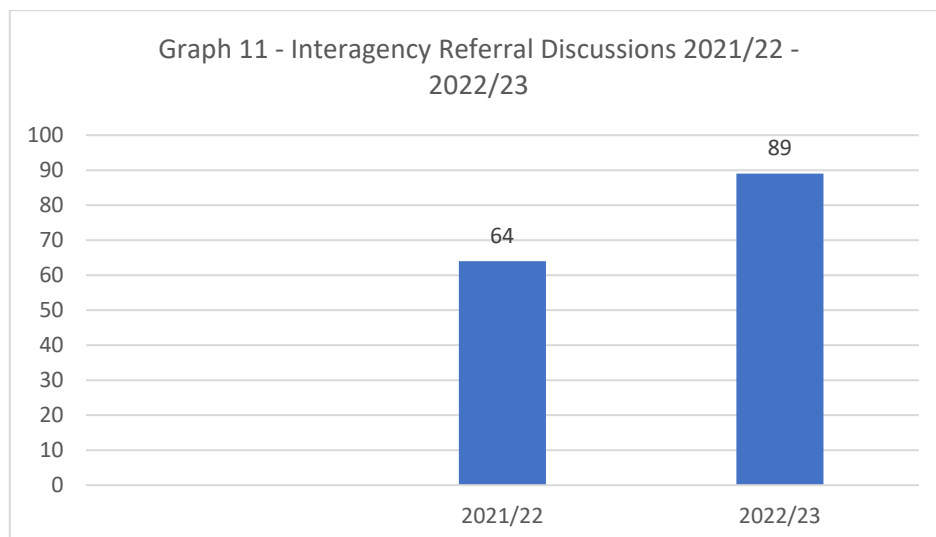


In the period 2021/22 a total of 420 Duty to Inquires (DTIs) were completed by Council Officers. This figure rose to 667 in the period 2022-23, an increase of 51% - this is shown in graph 9 above.



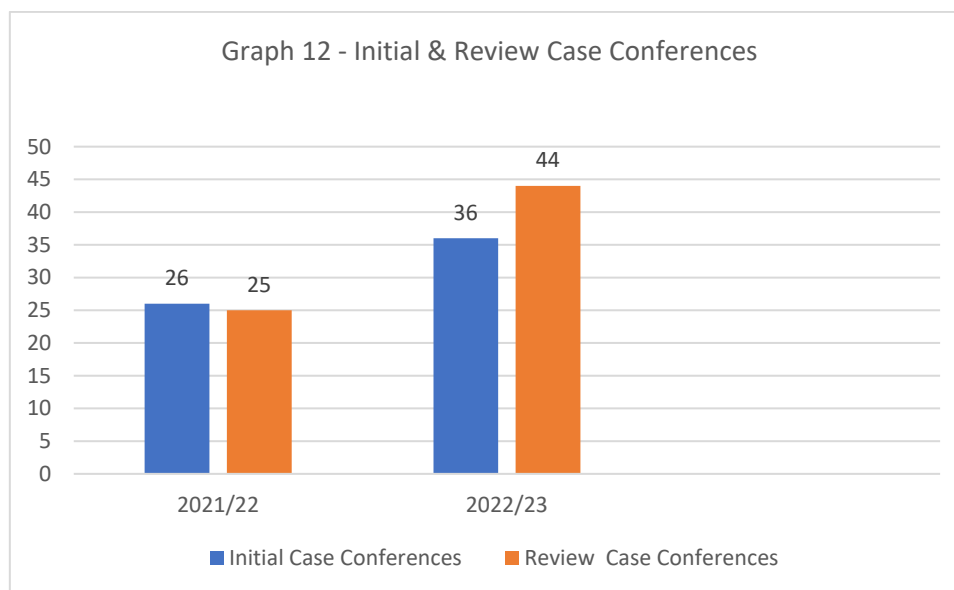
The above graph shows the breakdown of DTIs completed in each quarter by type of harm. The highest number of DTIs completed was 145 in quarter four. Quarter three saw the second highest number of DTIs with 124, quarter two had 92 with 81 being completed in quarter one.

Interagency Referral Discussions (IRDs)



Graph 11 above shows that 64 IRDs were undertaken with partners in 2021/22, whilst 89 were undertaken in 2022-23. This represents an increase of 39% from the previous year.

Initial and Review Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences



There has also been an annual increase of Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences, Initial Case Conferences have increased by 38% whilst Review Case Conferences have increased by 76%.

Enhanced Adult Support and Protection Governance and Quality Assurance

During the period 2022-23, a strengthened approach to ASP Governance and Quality Assurance was developed. This applies to all social work services across the HSCP that undertake ASP duties under the 2007 Act.

Having a scheduled quality assurance system and case file audit process in place enables us to critically reflect on both social work practice and case recording. The requirement to analyse, review and learn from our current practice is a shared responsibility across all social work staff and management. Carrying out regular audit of social work case files is one way of embedding a culture of continuous learning. Central to our learning is the focus on how individuals and their families are being supported in the right way at the right time. Through audit we focus on both the quality of practice recording and any evidence and feedback around what difference our intervention has made. This system has been designed to identify both strengths and areas that require improvement.

Quality Assurance and Governance activity throughout the year included:

- Management monthly audit of ASP activity within a specified area carried out by Adult Wellbeing Service Manager and ASP (Social Work) operational lead.
- Monthly peer audit of the ASP journey relating to one case carried out by Social Work Senior Practitioner and Council Officer.
- Monitoring the ASP Inquiry (DTI Tracker for the period) tracker timescales on a daily basis and feeding back any issues regarding barriers to timely completion. This is undertaken by the Adult Wellbeing Service Manager and ASP (Social Work) Operational Lead.
- 'Dip-Audits' of ASP activity carried out by Adult Wellbeing Service Manager and ASP (Social Work) Operational Lead.

Audit activity is recorded on the Adult Support & Protection Audit – SMART Escalation system and is fed back to the specific service areas for action. This is done directly for any immediate action or via the ASP Operational Quarterly Oversight Group for wider operational improvements.

ASP Operational Developments

The period has seen significant operational developments to enhance the Council Officer and Adult Support and Protection Case Conference Chair functions to improve protection planning and to achieve safer outcomes for adults at risk of harm.

The Duty to Inquire and ASP Investigation forms had been developed to aid a more detailed analysis of risk. The TILS (Type, Imminence, Likelihood and Severity) framework of risk assessment was embedded into the assessment tools and ASP Case Conference minute document. A SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound) Action and Protection Plan was introduced into the documents that is specifically correlated to the TILS risk assessment framework. This contributed to a strengthened assessment of risk and contributed to improved safety outcomes for adults.

Work had begun in 2022 to introduce the mandatory compiling of chronologies at the

Duty to Inquire stage. This ensured that any chronology entries made were collated and captured in the one area which can be expanded on at every stage of the adult's ASP journey. An 'analysis of the chronology' was also introduced into the assessment tools which augmented the TILS risk assessment. All ASP documentation now asks for the adult's view at every stage of the ASP Intervention.

Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection

An inspection of Adult Support and Protection arrangements in East Lothian took place from February to June 2023. The inspection was carried out jointly by the Care Inspectorate, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS). It looked at the effectiveness of Adult Support and Protection activity and arrangements across the multi-agency partners in East Lothian.

The inspection report was published in June 2023 and described a positive picture in East Lothian, highlighting 'clear strengths' in relation to arrangements to ensure that adults at risk of harm are safe, protected and supported. Inspectors described the approach in East Lothian as 'robust' and noted that it was 'evident the partnership was on a positive improvement journey' with significant progress having been made to date. The findings in relation to strengths and areas for improvement reflected the partner's own assessment and self-evaluation activity that had taken place in preparation for the inspection.

Strengths identified in the inspection report included:

- The partnership's approach to adult support and protection inquiries was robust.
- Person-centred engagement and consultation with the adult at risk of harm was evident throughout.
- Effective social work management, support and supervision was consistently recorded.
- Almost all adults at risk of harm who required a risk assessment had one completed. The quality of risk assessment had improved significantly.
- The partnership's large scale investigative process was established and

included a useful reflective element that supported improvement actions.

- The partnership’s vision was well understood.
- The public protection committee and critical services oversight group were well established.
- The partnership responded appropriately to the demands of the pandemic.

The Joint inspection also highlighted priority areas for improvement which included:

- Adult support and protection improvements were positively impacting on key areas of practice. Importantly, procedural updates had not kept pace.
- Findings from adult support and protection audits and improvement actions about risk management and chronologies should be fully implemented.
- A multi-agency approach to audit would strengthen joint improvement work.
- Relevant professionals should engage more collaboratively with critical processes. This includes attendance from police and health at case conferences and the consideration of second workers from all agencies.
- Strategic planning and improvement work should include feedback from, and engagement with adults at risk of harm with lived experience.
- Interventions with alleged perpetrators and financial harm needed significant improvement to ensure appropriate action is taken on a multi-agency basis.

Mental Health Officer Team

During 2022-23, levels of activity can be seen to have increased across all areas of Mental Health Officer (MHO) Team activity shown in the table below.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Change
Local Authority Welfare Guardianship	7	12	17	34	+17
Private Guardianship	12	18	47	63	+16
Emergency Detention	37	39	37	76	+39

Short Term Detention	81	92	89	109	+20
Supervised Private Guardianships	139-166	139-161	148-172	159 (at 31/03)	N/A
Supervised Local Authority Guardianships				55 (16 in MHO Team) – 31/03	N/A
Compulsory Treatment Order (Community – 31/03)				25	N/A
Compulsory Treatment Order (Hospital – 31/03)				18	N/A

In February 2023, the MHO Team reduced their Private Guardianship Application waiting list to zero for this first time in over ten years - previously, a waiting time of 18 months was not uncommon as shown in the table below. A commitment has been made to allocating this work within six weeks of an application being submitted to the MHO team, so no resident is left without a designated MHO with whom they can liaise with as part of the process.

	Number of people waiting assessment for Adult Guardianship Orders	% waiting 18 months or more
May 2021	34	41%
March 2023	0	n/a

In relation to hospital delayed discharges, an MHO team representative attends a weekly meeting to discuss any delays due to MHO statutory tasks so that colleagues are aware of expected timescales and any difficulties faced.

The following service development activity took place within the mental health team during 2022-23:

- Work took place to look at the 'service user journey', with a focus on the front door / referral process; understanding of waiting lists; and gathering service user feedback. This included a review of Adult with Incapacity (AWI) processes as the first phase of an AWI project. A review of mental health business support also took place to develop resilience and support business continuity. Activity also began to look at MHO referral, allocations, and screening processes.
- Following a review of the oversight and management of Guardianship Orders, the majority of local authority Guardianship Orders were transferred from MHOs to social work colleagues within the Learning Disability and CHART teams. A programme of training was delivered by an AWI project worker to support this transfer and processes involving the Chief Social Work Officer were also drawn up.
- The team carried out a number of engagement activities to help inform the approach taken to supervision of private guardians.
- The management team developed a new suite of data focusing on work undertaken to identify trends and inform improvement planning. This resulted in improvements to the collation of key information relating to Mental Health Act (MHA) and AWI work. Justice Social Work

East Lothian Justice Social Work Service's vision is to 'reduce the risk of harm caused by crime within our community' by contributing to the following outcomes:

- Promoting greater equality of opportunity, enabling our service users to lead more fulfilling lives.
- Making our communities safer places to be by addressing offending behaviour.
- Our interventions are proportionate and based on individual risk, need and responsibility.
- We reduce reoffending through fostering a sense of belonging and involvement in our community.

2022-23 saw a steady return to activity levels similar to those prior to March 2020, but with activity level in some areas of work higher as a result of continued backlogs caused by the pandemic. It is anticipated that the pandemic related backlog may continue to impact on workload in the medium term, before beginning to around 2026-2027.

The tables included below give an overview of service activity for 2022-23, notable increases in activity include:

- A 28% increase in Community Payback Orders (CPOs) issued (163 issued compared to 126 the previous year).
- A 41% increase in the number of months imposed for CPOs (an additional 605 months).
- A 21% increase in the number of unpaid work hours imposed.
- A 30% increase in the number of Caledonian Orders (from 23 orders to 30).
- A 42% increase in Community Justice Social Work Reports (CJSWRs) submitted (an additional 71 reports).
- The introduction of EM / Supervised Bail and Structured Deferred Sentences (see below).

More detailed performance information is reported in the annual Community Payback Order Report (submitted annually in October) and in the service’s own [Annual Report](#) which is published each autumn and includes a comprehensive Improvement Plan for the following year.

Service	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Change
Community Payback Order (supervision)	82	78	95	102	+7
Statutory Throughcare (community)	18	19	20	17	+3

Statutory Throughcare (custody)	46	39	35	44	+9
Voluntary Throughcare (custody, eligible)	14	16	12	24	+12
Voluntary Throughcare (community, receiving/offered)	10	8	34	18	-16
Registered Sex Offenders (in the community)	14	11	19	32	+13
Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Category 3 (violent offences)	2	2	0	0	N/A
Caledonian Orders (domestic abuse)	9	16	23	30	+7

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Change
CPOs - imposed – all requirements	141	92	126	163	+37
CPOs – total number of months for supervision	1,287	1,142	1466	2,071	+605
CPOs – number of unpaid work hours imposed	13,123	7,226	11,371	13,710	+2339
CJSWRs – number of reports submitted	218	128	170	241	+71
Drug Treatment and Testing Orders – number of Orders imposed	15	2	7	5	-2

Diversion – completed reports	35	43	34	43	+9
EM / Supervised Bail	-	-	-	8	N/A
Structured Deferred Sentences	-	-	-	1	N/A

Throughout 2022-23 there has been a natural progression within the service of delivery within five distinct themes – early intervention and prevention; community sentencing; unpaid work / other activity; the custodial setting; and post-release engagement. This has allowed the operational management team to take responsibility for specific areas of need and development, giving practitioners single points of contact for ease of access and support.

The ongoing development of the involvement of social work assistants within the service continues to make an invaluable contribution to meeting service user needs, as well as creating an environment where those subject to unpaid work have improved access to other activities.

Other key service developments during 2022-23 include:

- Identification of a dedicated member of staff to support uptake of the Caledonian System⁵ and adjustment of the screening process to encourage greater use (this approach has been adopted by neighbouring local authorities as best practice). Our success was reflected in the service being a finalist in the Scottish Social Services Awards. Overall, there has been a threefold increase in the number of Caledonian Orders since 2019-2020 and a 30% increase in 2022-23 alone.
- Building on the approach to early intervention and prevention through the development of Structured Deferred Sentences., with roll out beginning in March 2023. Structured Deferred Sentences are a way to provide social work support to

⁵ The Caledonian System is national programme described as 'an integrated approach to addressing domestic abuse. It combines a court-ordered programme for men, aimed at changing their behaviour, with support services for women and children' – more information is available [here](#).

individuals who may need a short-term intervention to address needs but who do not require the level of supervision of a Community Payback Order⁶. Where successful, Structured Deferred Sentences helps to reduce the frequency and seriousness of offending behaviour and lessen the need for intensive supervision in the community.

- The Community Payback Work Team developed new options for unpaid work for service users during 2022-23. This included securing authorisation to set up a ‘classroom’ to enable the delivery of an extended range of options, including group work, learning opportunities and modules delivered by partner organisations (e.g., the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service).
- Involvement in work at a national level to pilot a new Justice Social Work Report (JSWR) template. The new template gives the service an opportunity to provide the Court with more information about an individual prior to them being sentenced.

Resources (Children’s Services)

The CSWO annual report 2021-22 provided the context and drivers for the budget pressures that emerged in 2018-19 from the use of external residential placements, secure care, and external fostering resources. A wide range of strategic developments and operational improvements have been underway over the full time period, and the impact of these has been subject to close scrutiny. Recognition of the need to reduce demand for targeted social work interventions through preventive actions and effective early intervention in universal and community services underpins the council’s Transformation of Services to Children improvement programme.

2022/23	Budget	Actual	Variance
Children's Services	£ 000's	£ 000's	£ 000's
Total	18,660	19,368	708

⁶ [Structured Deferred Sentence - Community Justice Scotland](#)

The most significant pressures relate to our use of external residential care, secure placements, and external fostering. However, there are signs that targeted interventions are working and this has resulted in a positive impact on controlling demand for external placements supported the young with packages at a lower cost.

	21-22			22/23		
	budget £	actual £	overspend £	budget £	actual £	overspend £
Residential	3,137,070	3,947,941	810,871	3,093	4,448,000	1,355,000
Foster	535,000	783,638	248,638	528,000	862,393	334,000
Secure	300,000	448,494	148,494	296,000	279,000	-17,000
Total	3,972,070	5,180,073	1,208,003	3,917,000	5,589,000	1,689,000

The budget pressures in children’s services mostly related to the overspend in the external resource area, particularly residential and fostering, which incurred an overspend of £1,689,000 combined. This overspend was offset by increased income from the National Transfer Scheme, savings through increased number of staff vacancies, as well as low expenditure on internal fostering fees which reflects the reduction in available carers.

The overspend in external budgets is driven by a variety of factors including:

- Increase to costs for existing, long-term packages of care.
- The need to create one specific complex, individual care package which resulted in increased agency expenditure.
- Additional support needs and associated costs for some young people.
- Capacity in both foster carers and internal care homes meant that some children and young people had to move to an external resource.

Transforming Children’s Services

As detailed earlier in the report, the redesign of children’s services is aimed at improving the outcomes and experiences of those children at risk of harm and enabling more children to live safely within their own family networks. We are committed to

changing legacy practice and keeping in line with The Promise:

- In 2022, the Scottish Government launched its commitment to Whole Family Support through the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund which was aligned with our aspirations to transform our family support resources to ensure East Lothian families can access the right resources at the earliest opportunity, in their own localities. The Children's Strategic Partnership (CSP) submitted a bid for Element 2 improvement support from Scottish Government and the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and was chosen as one of only three areas to receive the support.
- Integrated approaches to tier 2 mental health supports and services are demonstrating a reduction in demand for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and reduced delays for children experiencing distress. This should help children remain included and engaged in education and reduce the risk of requiring targeted services.
- Provision of flexible outreach with the aim of reducing the number of children and young people requiring care out with their families.
- Working with the Capital City Partnership, we tested a Whole Family Support approach in Musselburgh East with the 'Our Families' initiative.
- Strengthening our approach to joint commissioning, the CSP established a commissioning sub-group in 2022. This is strengthening our approach to collaborative decision making about how we direct our resources. In the first phase of the work, the group focused on non-recurring funding streams and the development of a new Commissioning Process Model to minimise the risk of duplicating spending of non-recurring funds across a range of services and recognising opportunities for collaborative working.

Future risks

Children's services continue to face significant financial challenges which contributes to the magnitude of the financial pressures being faced by the council as a whole. The pace of progress is being impacted by the continuous rise in new referrals for children and young people within families who are struggling to cope in the post pandemic world.

Our financial pressures will continue into 2023-2024 and will primarily be driven by:

- High-cost external placements for children whose needs we cannot meet within East Lothian resources.
- The national and local fostering crisis.
- Difficulty in recruiting a sufficient workforce to meet demand.
- The impact of the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Financial Resources (Adults)

Adult Services 2022/23	Budget	Expenditure	Surplus/(deficit)
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Total	67,860	67,578	282

The £282,000 surplus was transferred as follows:

£220,000 to General Reserve and a total of £62,000 to earmarked reserves which was all attributable to carers.

Pressures and Demands

Pressures in commissioned costs continue throughout the Service. In addition:

- COVID-19 costs totaled £1,135,000 and comprised of sustainability payments of £731,000;
- £304,000 loss of income in resource centres;
- £75,000 loss of respite income in ELC care homes; and
- £25,000 additional costs for PPE equipment.

2022-23 sees an additional £7.8 million added to HSCP budget which takes the services budget to £66,294,000. This is an increase of 13% on 2021-22. New Monies are mainly targeted at Living Wage, Carers Act and Care at Home Capacity

Future Issues

The Scottish Government sustainability payment scheme ended on the 31 March 2023. However, there are ongoing financial risks for some residential providers which would create additional budget pressures if these businesses failed.

Care at home costs are expected to increase due to demand from new service users and increased need in current service users' demand as well as an increase in costs. The Scottish Government has committed to funding the Living Wage to £10.90 per hour in 2022-23, with an expectation that this will increase to £12 per hour.

Challenges remain in a lack of care at home providers and staff retention in meeting demands for this service leading to clients seeking alternative care options such as direct payments and residential care.

As the services seek to increase internal capacity in care at home, the risk of further recruitment challenges and impact on private providers will need to be monitored closely.

East Lothian Council's day care services offer needs to be reviewed to consider the best method of service delivery and sustainability.

There will be significant financial challenges for the Integrated Joint Board and this will have a substantial impact on service prioritisation going forward.

Workforce (Children's Services)

A key priority for the children's services plan is to ensure we have a sufficient, confident, skilled, and supported workforce. In 2022, findings from a staff survey highlighted that our workforce were beginning to recover from the impact of covid and they enjoy the work that they do. Our workforce told us they value their colleagues, and many are using helpful strategies to maintain resilience and promote wellbeing.

The re-design of children's services has seen the movement of staff into evolving positions and development roles, leaving a number of vacancies within the frontline

teams. In order to promote a sustainable workforce, East Lothian Council embraces a grow your own approach. This is a workforce model that focuses on attracting, developing, supporting, and retaining employees.

The service has made a strong commitment to engaging with the frontline staff around their wellbeing and supporting long term solutions to maintain a strong and passionate and trauma informed workforce. The following examples of investment in our workforce demonstrates our commitment to keeping the Promise:

- Children's services sponsored two family support workers to complete their Social Work Qualification through the Open University in 2022. After graduating, one has successfully taken up a role within Justice Social Work and the other has returned to the Children's Disability Team. Two further candidates have been sponsored and started in January 2023. We look forward to welcoming them back as Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) in 2024.
- The Service Review and Development Team is working alongside the senior managers to consider how we implement the NQSW Supported Year ahead of September 2024 to ensure new social workers are nurtured and continue to learn.
- One candidate was sponsored to attend the Child Welfare and Protection course in September 2022.
- West Learning Network offered the Link Worker course for free throughout 2022-23. This was proactively advertised through our weekly briefings and a number of staff raised interest. During 2022, nine employees undertook the link worker course increasing our numbers from two to eleven within East Lothian's children's services. This has increased our capacity to take students and has opened up opportunities in teams who historically have not taken students. Two of these link workers are now undertaking the course to become Practice Educators.
- Two practitioners completed the Practice Educator Course in January 2023. This has increased our active Practice Educators to 13 out of 16 within children's services (2 people are on internal secondments to specialist roles).
- Between Napier, Stirling, Edinburgh, and Open University, seven students have

completed their placements within East Lothian children's services in 2022. We rely heavily on this financial income to increase training opportunities and hope to continue to build on our capacity to offer placements.

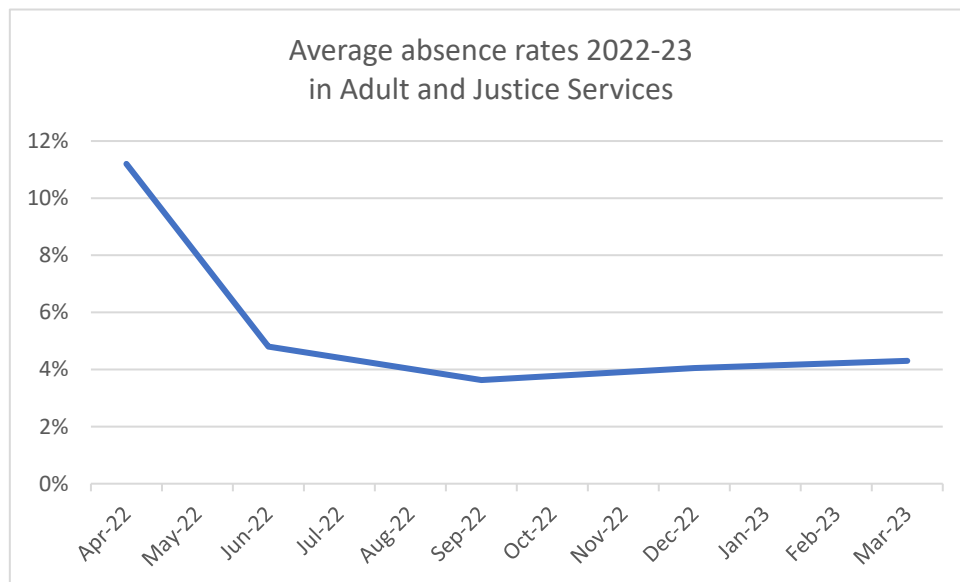
- In 2022, we joined up with Midlothian and Scottish Borders to offer a joint online student group every two months. On average six students attended the joint online group.
- East Lothian council, Midlothian and Scottish Borders Council jointly facilitate the Practice Educator and Link worker Forum three times per year. This allows those supporting students to come together for advice, share tools and activities and talk about good practice.
- We embarked on the second phase of our Signs of Safety journey in 2022. 132 staff have completed the Signs of Safety training. Health have supported one manager to attend to aid with partnership working.
- Children's Services offers monthly online protected learnings where we invite specific people or agencies to deliver a two-hour session on a variety of topics. These topics included research about working with asylum seekers, harmful sexual behaviour, a session from a Children's Reporter, among others. On average 20 people attended each session throughout 2022-23. While some sessions were more successful than others, employees were able to choose what interested them and we had representation from across the service.
- Along with Midlothian Council, we collated and delivered three Safe and Together Practitioner Forums during 2022. On average 20-25 people attended the sessions, and the feedback was positive. Dates have been agreed and added to the training calendar for 2023.
- Children's services invested in and supported employee wellbeing through team development days. We also regularly encourage staff to access information and services available through the Employee Assistance programme.

Workforce (Adult Services)

Adult Social Work Staffing Levels

Vacancies across Adult Social Work reduced further during 2022-23, with a vacancy rate of 4% at the end of the financial year (March 2023) – this was equivalent to four vacant full-time posts in the following categories:

- 1 Community Care Worker (Social Work Assistant equivalent)
- 3 Social Workers
- 1 Senior Practitioner
- No vacancies within Justice Services



The HSCP Strategic Workforce Plan covers all services across the Partnership. In addition, each individual service area, including Adult Social Work has its own Workforce Plan aligned to the overarching HSCP plan.

Activity in relation to workforce development during 2022-23 included:

- Funding to sponsor a Community Care Worker to undertake a social work qualification through the Open University has continued. There has been a good level of interest in this, with one successful candidate beginning a sponsored qualification each year.
- Adults Services continued to accept student placements from universities, however there was only one active practice educator within adult social work

which limited capacity. Offering placements helps to enhance prospective future social workers' knowledge of East Lothian, potentially leading them to apply for future vacancies.

- Interest in undertaking the post-graduate course in Practice Learning remained low even with a commitment to sponsor multiple qualifications in any given year. This can perhaps be seen to reflect the reluctance of people to commit to study alongside current caseload pressures. In three years, there has been just one eligible candidate for this qualification.
- Joint work with children's services included regular development sessions with students, practice educators and link workers along with Midlothian and Scottish Borders Social Work teams, providing a support network for both the students and practice educators / link workers.
- Staff retention remained stable, and turnover was low in all areas. However, there is a recognised need to strengthen retention by continuing to improve career pathways. Once the management team has stabilised, further agreements will be made on how to achieve this.
- Work also began during 2022-23 to establish a new HSCP induction course. This will offer induction to staff who have started with the partnership either during or since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An East Lothian HSCP 'Development and Wellbeing' Newsletter was launched in 2022-23 and is produced every two months. This includes information about development opportunities and wellbeing initiatives that are available to staff.
- All Adult and Justice Social Work staff were enrolled on online Adult With Incapacity (AWI) training to be completed at their own pace, but closely monitored by managers.
- A Training Needs Analysis was completed during 2022-23. This identified the need for structured supervisory and management training for senior practitioners and managers within East Lothian. Several qualifications from the Open University and Stirling University were also identified as having the potential to address training and skills gaps and will be rolled out across adult and justice social work when budgets allow.

Summary of key challenges

This report provides an overview of the breadth and depth of the professional social work functions and services in East Lothian, and the commitment of our workforce to improve the lives of people who use our services. Each of our workers has felt and observed the significant and often devastating impact of the pandemic on the lives of the most vulnerable people in our communities. I am grateful for their dedication, and I am proud of the impact we continue to make for the people who use our services.

No report can convey the energy, skill and passion that working in social work requires. It is a profession where the work never stops and as is evident throughout the report, the demand for social work continues to increase in East Lothian. Maintaining a well-supported and sufficient workforce is a key priority and the gaps in children's service staffing has been particularly challenging during this period.

In addition to this, the national context for social work and social care has never felt so uncertain. There has been significant policy and legislative complexities and much confusion about the development of a National Care Service.

The demands to engage with national consultations relating to hugely significant pieces of reform of systems and processes continues to have an impact to the delivery of critical services. There is simply not enough capacity within social work leadership teams to meet national demands for reform, while simultaneously delivering and improving local services.

A range of challenges have been detailed throughout the report that demonstrate the differing risks faced across the various professional and specialist areas. In summary, the most significant challenges are:

- Serious long term recruitment challenges for care at home services leading to a significant reduction in care hours being delivered in the

community.

- Insufficient resources to meet the needs of the most complex and distressed children and adults.
- Extreme financial pressure due to a rising population and complexity of need alongside demand-led services that are undeliverable within available resources.

Looking Ahead

2023 – 2024 will be another period of significant change in East Lothian. There has been a number of changes within the senior leadership team across children’s services and the HSCP. We are working hard to quickly build effective working relationships and recognise the importance of collaboration to ensure we can deliver services as efficiently as possible, whilst constantly striving for the best outcomes.

We are all acutely aware that services will need to be delivered in different, innovative ways and we will continue to creatively review how we can achieve high quality statutory services with reduced budgets where safe and possible.

Social work services will remain committed to continuous learning and development, and we will partake in a range of informal and formal learning opportunities. Our workforce is our most valuable asset, and we will continue to create a reflective and supportive environment where staff wellbeing is prioritised by the leadership teams.

Our joint vision remains to support people across all services to receive the support they require at the right time, within their homes and families whenever this is safe and possible.

In children’s services we will:

- Review our approach to attracting and retaining skilled people who wish to foster for East Lothian Council.
- Strengthen our support offer for kinship carers, acknowledging that this is the best option for children who cannot safely stay with their parent(s).

- Review and increase the capacity in our local residential childcare provision to meet the current level of demand in East Lothian.
- Introduce additional outreach services to support families at risk of breakdown and to prevent children and young people from becoming accommodated.
- Strengthen community based, universal supports to provide proactive support to families before their problems escalate.

In adult services we will:

- Continue our focus on improving early intervention and preventative approaches at our first point of contact with people.
- Further develop our focus on personal outcomes following the 'reimagining social work' sessions completed with The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS).
- Increase our use of community and universal supports to reduce the number of people who need to receive statutory social work services.
- Strengthen social work governance through the new professional lead duties attached to the general manager post.
- Embed Keeping People Safe as a new strategic priority for the IJB to allow for greater strategic oversight and scrutiny around Justice Social Work and Adult Support and Protection.

As the population continues to grow in East Lothian, and people are requiring support for increasingly complex needs, it is critical that we attract and retain a skilled workforce to deliver high quality and safe social work services across all areas. This report has outlined how we invest in staff development and wellbeing. We recognise that this is a critical component in creating high quality services and that this leads to a better experience for the people who use social work services.

The National Care Service and National Social Work Agency proposals continue to create a backdrop of uncertainty for the future of the profession. It is hoped that 2023-

2024 will bring clarification and an achievable national plan to allow leaders to support the workforce through another period of change and pressure.

Despite exceptionally challenging conditions, social work and social care services, together with partner agencies and unpaid carers remain committed to providing high quality care that supports and protects the most vulnerable people in our communities. This will continue to be our absolute priority, regardless of the continued pressures that come our way.



Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199

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