
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER 2020/21

Report by Director Social Work & Practice

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

23 September 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) annual report on the work undertaken on behalf of the Council by the CSWO in this statutory role for 2020/21.**
- 1.2 It provides the Council with an account of the decisions taken by the CSWO in the statutory areas of:
- Fostering and Adoption,
 - Child Protection,
 - Secure Orders,
 - Adult Protection,
 - Adults with Incapacity,
 - Mental Health
 - Justice.
- 1.3 The report also gives an overview of regulation and inspection, workforce issues and social policy themes over the year April 2020 to March 2021, and highlights some of the key challenges for that year.
- 1.4 As was the case in last year's annual report, given the workload implications caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Scottish Government recommended the continued use of a condensed reporting template to enable CSWOs to present shortened reports for local governance structures. This recommended template has been used.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Council approves the report of the Chief Social Work Officer attached as *Appendix A*.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In compliance with their statutory functions under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, all Local Authorities must have a CSWO. This requirement was reinforced by the recommendations contained in the Changing Lives Report published by the 21st Century Social Work Review Group to strengthen the governance and leadership roles of the CSWO.
- 3.2 A specific role of the CSWO in Scottish Borders, is to lead professional Social Work across the Council and to ensure that the Council's statutory Social Work legislative requirements are met. The CSWO role reports directly to the Chief Executive of Scottish Borders Council.

4 OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION

- 4.1 In 2017 the governance arrangements for Social Work in Scottish Borders Council were revised with the CSWO reporting directly to the Chief Executive. In 2018 the CSWO role absorbed the operational responsibility for Public Protection services on behalf of the Council, creating the role of Chief Social Work & Public Protection Officer. For the purposes of this report, the role and function will be referred to as Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO).
- 4.2 In regard to the ongoing integration agenda of the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP), as CSWO, I attend the Integration Joint Board (IJB) as a non-voting member to provide professional advice and guidance in matters pertaining to Social Work.
- 4.3 Key Social Work performance data is contained in the report in *Appendix B*. Please note that this element of the report is again limited because of the ongoing demands of reporting to Scottish Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.4 A number of the challenges faced by Social Work in 2020/21 are identified in the report including ongoing financial constraints. As a service we continue to strive to identify and implement new ways of working and engaging with those who use our services – and to do so in a cost effective way, whilst always aiming to deliver improved outcomes for our service users.
- 4.5 We continue to experience challenges in the recruitment and retention of staff. We have progressed with our planning regarding trainee program to create opportunities for some of our existing 'unqualified' staff to progress onto professional Social Work qualification. Given that the challenges of recruitment and retention in this area of practice is being experienced nationally and further impacted by the pandemic, this is to be broadly welcomed as a way of attracting people into the profession.
- 4.6 The work on reviewing and developing our Public Protection services led to the launch of our combined Public Protection Committee in January 2020, with the successful realignment of governance, enhanced co-location arrangements and improved working practices being at the centre of the changes. Due to the pandemic, not all actions have been realized and because of the challenges of social distancing and the need to ensure safe working environments for our staff, the Safer Communities element of the Public Protection services was not able to be co-located as had been planned.

- 4.7 Despite the challenges, the Council continues to be well placed to deliver high quality services and improve outcomes for all of the people who access Social Work services.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report but managing service change and efficiencies in the light of increasing demographic demand whilst maintaining service quality remains a significant challenge.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

There are no specific concerns that need to be addressed in respect of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.3 Equalities

Social Justice and Equality are key values in Social Work and there are no adverse equality implications arising from the work contained in this report

5.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no anticipated economic, social or environmental effects.

5.5 Carbon Management

There is no impact on the Council's carbon emissions.

5.6 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Stuart C. Easingwood, Director Social Work & Practice

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: None

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Nicola Tait can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Social Work, Scottish Borders Council, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, 01835 825080.