SOCIAL WORK & HOUSING COMMITTEE – 12 SEPTEMBER 2013

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

1 Recommendations

The Social Work & Housing Committee is recommended to:

1.1 Discuss and consider the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) Annual Report 2012/13.

1.2 Acknowledge the commitment of Aberdeenshire’s Social Work employees in discharging the Council’s statutory social work duties.

1.3 Acknowledge the need for continued investment and modernisation of the Social Work Service in order to meet emerging national and local challenges.

1.4 Agree to receive specific reports on emerging challenges in due course.

1.5 Agree to refer the report to Aberdeenshire Council to raise awareness of the role of the CSWO and the importance of the Annual Report.

2 Background/Discussion

2.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the CSWO Report for the period, March 2012 – July 2013.

2.2 The report covers a 15 month rather than 12 month period as there a number of significant issues about which Committee’s information should be as current as possible.

2.3 The CSWO Report is attached (Appendix 1).

2.4 The production of the CSWO annual report is recommended in Scottish Government Guidance.

2.5 Committee receives reports throughout the year on the performance of the Social Work Service as measured against a range of local and statutory indicators and on particular initiatives and issues.

2.6 In order to add value to this, it is important that the CSWO Report focuses on key areas or themes that are not addressed through other reports.

2.7 The CSWO report is not an account of all service activity, rather it is concerned with key areas of decision-making which require CSWO input; complex areas of service delivery, and risk to the proper discharge of social work functions.
3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required. All of the projects and initiatives contained within the Appendix form their own equalities impact arrangements.

3.2 There are no staffing and financial implications arising directly from this report.

3.3 The Head of Finance, the Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development have been consulted in the preparation of this report and support the recommendations.

4 Conclusion

4.1 The CSWO describes a Service that is performing well in most of the key areas upon which the Report is focused.

4.2 Currently there are no specific areas that require additional scrutiny and planning beyond the routine Service and Council processes.

4.3 The fact that the Service is able to recognise and acknowledge risks in a public manner is a sign of its maturity, confidence and self awareness and helps position us well for external scrutiny.

4.4 Nevertheless there are a range of demographic trends, financial pressures and national initiatives that will pose significant challenges to our human, intellectual and financial infrastructure. The service will continue to pro-actively manage these emerging issues and bring forward additional Reports as necessary.

Ritchie Johnson
Director of Housing and Social Work

Report prepared by Bob Driscoll, Head of Child Care, CSWO
30 August 2013 final
APPENDIX 1

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER
ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13
CSWO Annual Report 2012/13

Introduction

There is a statutory requirement for all Local authorities to appoint a professionally qualified Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) who is registered with the Scottish Social Service Council (SSSC). The overall role of the CSWO is focused on the provision of effective professional advice and guidance to local authorities, elected members and officers in the provision of social work services whether directly provided or commissioned. The CSWO also has a responsibility for overall performance improvement and the identification and management of corporate risk in so far as these relate to social work services. Further information is available on the Role and Function of the CSWO and is located on the Scottish Government website.

This Report therefore focuses on those aspects of social work decision making where the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) has a specific role, and with areas in which there may be risk to the proper discharge of the social work function.

In other words the CSWO Report is not an account of Service performance in all areas of Social Work, – a standard of performance that is commendable and which is regularly reported via performance information to Social Work and Housing Committee, and through the Service Plan.
1. Summary of activity in Service Areas requiring CSWO Involvement

1.1 Secure Care

Admission to Secure Care is a major development in a young person’s life. It strikes a different balance between autonomy and restriction on personal liberty to that enjoyed by other young people. Recent Guidance has described entry to Secure Care as amounting to the deprivation of liberty, and an impingement on freedom of association and family life.

The implementation of new legislation in June 2013 has the intention of ensuring that the process around the placement of a child in secure accommodation is fair and transparent, and is used only when absolutely necessary to protect the child and/or to protect others. Pre – June 2013 the CSWO and the person in charge of the secure unit were required to agree to the decision of a Children’s Panel to access secure accommodation. Since June 2013 CSWO is also required to consult with a range of stakeholders; to assess the appropriateness of the decision to place the child in secure accommodation; to record the reasons for his/her decision and to review the ongoing need for the placement at specified intervals.

In Aberdeenshire the Service has welcomed these developments as strengthening our substantial multi agency scrutiny of all external placements and the pre – June 2013 responsibilities of the CSWO.

Last year’s CSWO Report intimated that at any one time there were approximately four young people from Aberdeenshire in Secure Care – a relatively low number given that Aberdeenshire is the sixth largest Local Authority in Scotland. On 1st April 2012 we had three children in secure care; by the end of September one child, and no secure placements between January and mid July 2013. While this is a welcome development it is not possible to predict that this situation will endure.
As indicated in last year’s Report the national contract for secure care is not leading to a reduction in the cost of secure placements.

Last year’s Report also noted a significant variation in the quality of health care, particularly mental health care, experienced by our young people in secure care. This was particularly so where the young person had a dual or multiple diagnoses and where he or she is on the cusp of becoming an adult. The Significant Case Review that is being undertaken by an external lead about the experiences of one young person in particular is due to conclude in autumn and it is probable that there will be important systemic recommendations for integrated working. In the first instance the outcome report will be submitted to Aberdeenshire’s Child and Family Protection Committee and an update provided to Social Work and Housing Committee.

1.2 Adoption

Adoption is the process whereby parental rights and responsibilities are transferred from Birth parents to adopters.

Although Courts ultimately determine whether an adoption is granted, the CSWO is the ultimate Council decision maker on matters appertaining to adoption.

The arrangement detailed in last year’s report whereby a child care Service Manager has been Agency Decision Maker on the recommendations received from our Adoption and Permanence Panel decisions, with the CSWO being ultimate arbiter, has continued to work well.

From March 2012 to April 2013, nine adoption plans for individual children were approved by the Agency Decision Maker (16 in 11/12), nine (13) children were matched with prospective adopters and two (3) are awaiting matching.

The number of prospective adopters in Aberdeenshire continues to outweigh the number of children for whom we are seeking adoption. Many prospective
adopters only wish to be considered for very young and singleton children where there are minimal health and legal issues. The Aberdeenshire need is for adopters who can manage the uncertainty of complex legal issues, who will offer life long care to older children, sibling groups, and those with special needs.

There are no identifiable or immediate risks in Aberdeenshire to the provision of adoption services for children who require these and indeed the advent of the Adoption Register may see Aberdeenshire being a net provider of adoption resources to children from other areas.

1.3 Welfare and Financial Guardianship

If an adult is unable to make key decisions or take necessary actions to safeguard his or her own welfare, a court can appoint a “welfare guardian” to do so. A welfare guardian might be a friend, relative or carer, but the Court can also appoint the CSWO.

Financial Guardianship arises where there is impairment to the adult’s capacity to safeguard his or her property or financial affairs. The Court is involved and the local authority has a duty to do so where this appears necessary and nobody else is doing so.

Aberdeenshire Council is welfare guardian for 64 (66 in 2011/12) people and currently supervises 467 (422) private guardians. The use of Welfare Guardianship in Aberdeenshire remains in line with the national average rate per 100,000 of population.

Thus far, all applications for Guardianship have been processed in under 6 months. Future challenges include a rising number of guardianship and intervention order applications and an increase in the number of private guardians.
2. Summary of Other Complex Service Delivery Areas

2.1 Criminal Justice

The 2011/12 CSWO Report noted that the Scottish Government intended to consult on the future delivery of Community Justice Services following the publication of the report from the Commission on Women Offenders. Three models were subject to consultation - a National Model; an Enhanced Community Justice Authority; and a Local Authority Model.

Aberdeenshire supported the development of the Local Authority Model, citing risks to the quality of service delivery, lower morale and increased costs arising from the other options. Moreover, in Aberdeenshire’s view the Local Authority Model provides enhanced opportunities for integrated working to address the complexity of need that is often characteristic of offending behaviour - poor housing; substance misuse; mental ill health and so on.

The Scottish Government will announce the way forward in late 2013 and, subject to parliamentary approval, their intention to implement the new arrangements from 2016.

Details of the implications will be reported to various council Committees in due course.

The 2011/12 Report noted the risk to reputation of the increasing expectations around “unpaid work” through Community Payback Orders. This challenge has remained in 2012/13 – a period that has also seen an increase in the number of Orders imposed and a period of recruitment difficulties.

The service is now however fully staffed and there has been a steady increase in the number of work placements. Additional financial resources have also been redirected from other areas of the Criminal Justice budget
and, in autumn, further improvement activities including a strategy of procuring placements form the third sector will be launched.

2.2 Adult Support and Protection

Adult Support and Protection (ASP) arrangements apply to a person who is over 16 years of age when all three of the following criteria are met:

- The person is unable to safeguard his/ her own well being, property, rights or other interests;
- is at risk of harm;
- and because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults who are not so affected.

Between March 2012 – April 2013 Aberdeenshire Council received 359 (543 in 11/2) referrals relating to 452 (307) individuals. Following enquiries into all referrals 44 (54) adults were assessed to be “at risk of harm”.

Further analysis of the reasons behind this trend is being undertaken by the ASP Committee.

The Pan – Grampian awareness raising intention that was signalled in last year’s report has been adversely affected by the capacity issues of a partner agency. Aberdeenshire is now planning to have our own rolling publicity campaign. In addition the model/arrangements through which ASP ambitions are delivered are being reviewed in order to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
### 2.3 Child Protection

Until April 2013 multi agency child protection arrangements in the North East were led by the North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee (NESCPC). On 31st March the NESCPC disaggregated, with the three local authority areas taking the lead role for child protection, apart from aspects of training, Guidance and conducting Significant Case Reviews and maintaining the Child Protection Register which are continuing on a North East basis.

Social work now discharge its contribution to the protection of children at risk of harm or abuse through the overall governance of the recently formed multi agency Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Housing and Social Work and has senior representation from public and third sector services.

It is noteworthy that as a result of the substantial overlap between domestic violence and children at risk of harm or abuse, Aberdeenshire has adopted the innovative position of combining governance of both issues under a single Committee.

Nationally and locally the child protection and domestic violence landscape continues to be dynamic e.g the emergence of child trafficking, and is one characterised by complexity and uncertainty. The domestic violence aspect is less mature than child protection but new resources are being deployed to narrow this gap.

Management information on child protection, including that on the number of Child Protection Investigations, the number of children placed on the Register and the main areas of concern are regularly compiled and placed on the pan Grampian website at [www.nescpc.org.uk](http://www.nescpc.org.uk). This information is regularly considered by Aberdeenshire’s Child and Family Protection Committee.

Learning from national and local Significant Case Reviews (SCR) (which take place following the death or serious injury to a child) continues to be
implemented on a service and/or multi agency basis and is incorporated into local Guidance. On behalf of the Scottish Government Aberdeenshire is participating in the piloting of new model of undertaking SCR’s.

In the past year we have reported the death of two Looked After Children to the Care Inspectorate. Neither of these children was subject to child protection measures. One child died as the result of a road traffic accident and one had limited life expectancy because of medical issues. Another child in whom the service had an interest also died in the past year. The Child and Family Protection Committee will consider the need for any additional action now that the Crown Office has decide to take no further action on the death of this young child who died at home.

Overall and thus far, potential risks to effective working practices arising from the disaggregation of the NESCPC and the absorption of Grampian Police into the Police Service of Scotland have not emerged.

2.4 Integration of Health and Social care

The publication of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Bill in June 2013 sets out the principles for integration of adult health and social care by April 2015. While the Council and NHS Grampian have made good, early progress in the change programme, services will have to remain vigilant in ensuring that there are no adverse effects on service users and staff during the transition to an integrated system of providing health and care. Robust communication plans, analysis of time and resource requirements, operating with shadow arrangements and with parallel delivery systems are some of the control measures upon which work is underway.

It is anticipated that various Council Committees will receive more detailed updates on practice, resource and infrastructure implications of integration in the coming year. This will include implications for the role of the CSWO arising from the integration agenda.
Integration may also offer additional joint opportunities on a local and national basis to address the financial and service model tensions and dilemmas arising from increased life expectancy; from the ambition to further reduce discharge times (zero delays over 2 weeks from April 2015) and the potential displacement of responsibility for early discharge of patients onto the local authority.

Committee may wish to note that we have been informed that the Care Commission and Health Improvement Scotland will be undertaking an inspection of services or older people in autumn 2013. How well services work together to support older people will be its primary focus. In due course the Inspection report will be published and the Service will also report to Social Work and Housing Committee at the appropriate juncture.

2.5 Self Directed Support.

In Aberdeenshire there has been significant progress in preparing for the implementation of the Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act. Guiding principles include placing the individual at the heart of the process of assessment and care planning and enhancing their choice. Paradoxically, as increasing numbers of, for example, adults with disabilities and older people exercise their rights to greater choice and control of their personal care budget, traditional care and support services may become obsolete or unviable.

This risk is in addition to national and local concerns about the quality and availability of independent care providers, perhaps particularly with the care home and care at home sectors.

Officers continue to work with stakeholders to minimise the potential for service disruption to service users and further detailed information will be provided to a range of Council Committees in the coming year.
3. Additional Service Wide Issues

3.1 Workforce Planning and Development

3.1.1 SSSC Registrations

The Scottish Social Work Services Council (SSSC) is moving towards requiring all members of the social care workforce to be registered. Failure to achieve appropriate qualifications and thus registration via this staged process presents significant risk to the employment of members of staff and thus potentially to service delivery.

Aberdeenshire continues to be on target to meet qualification and registration requirements. A small number of staff who may be at risk of non–compliance are supported to undertake the training required to achieve registration. A particular benefit from 2014 onwards will be the in – house delivery of SVQ Level 4 training in Health and Social Care that is currently being purchased form external providers.

3.1.2 Towards a Competent and Confident Workforce

Obtaining the level of qualification required to obtain Registration is only one aspect of staff development. The 21st Century Review of Social Work emphasised the importance of relationship based practice and recognised the risk to service users and to organisations where the workforce was not competent and confident.

In spite of challenging economic circumstances, the Service has maintained a comprehensive training plan, the components of which can be accessed as appropriate by staff. Currently the Service is in dialogue with the Robert
Gordon University to also help ensure that new graduates are as “workplace ready” as possible.

The Service continues to recognise that the skills of staff will only provide maximum benefit for service users if applied in the context of modern day and residential facilities. Although there has been significant success in re-provisioning for all service user groups, challenges remain around care homes for older people and gaining ready acceptance of the need for residential facilities for children in the communities of which they are part. The Service is in the process of revising our care and accommodation strategy in respect of seven of our eight older peoples care homes, and is working with colleagues and stakeholders on modernising residential support for those of our children who require these local facilities. The Service will report on progress to various Council Committees in late autumn 2013.

3.1.3 Mental Health Officer Recruitment

Mental Health Officers (MHO’s) are experienced social workers who have undergone additional training in mental health and mental health legislation. MHO’s are empowered to undertake specific duties that cannot be undertaken by social workers who have not successfully completed MHO training.

One significant aspect of MHO activity concerns people who may have to be detained in hospital on a compulsory basis, while more recent legislation has given MHO’s important roles with regard to Welfare Guardianship and Financial Guardianship.

The 2011/12 CSWO Report highlighted the risk to service users and Council reputation through recruitment and retention difficulties in respect of MHO’s. The Director of Housing and Social Work has been reporting on a six monthly basis to the Service Committee on progress in this area. In March 3013, the Director reported an increase in investment of £135k in staffing arrangements to help ensure that we continue to fulfil our statutory MHO obligations. The impact of this is being monitored by the Service.
On the specific matter of the shortfall of MHO availability at weekends that was reported on in the 2011/12 CSWO Report there has been a significant improvement over the 12 months and it now only rarely that we do not have a MHO available

3.3 Information Security

The 2011/12 CSWO Report noted that several local authorities had been fined for failing to protect confidential information through personal information being sent to unauthorised recipients (email and post) and loss of paper and ICT records. It also noted that social work is a major custodian of personal information and that the level of risk to reputation and public confidence had inadvertently been raised through the roll out of more flexible /home working as e.g. case files are increasingly in transit. Moreover the increasing use of social media sites had also opened up new opportunities for indiscretion.

As with MHO services the Director has been reporting to Housing and Social Work Committee on a 6 monthly basis. In May 2103 the Director was able to report that social work participation in mandatory information security training is high; that newsletters and team briefs continue to re-enforce key security messages, that encryption has been implanted on all social work mobile devices and that detailed guidance on the transport and storage of paper files is being developed. In time, it is also anticipated that Carefirst 6 will reduce the need for paper files to be retained and transported.

4. Policy and Legislative Challenges

The Service will bring forward individual reports on a range of major national and local initiatives in the coming year.

As highlighted in last year's CSWO Report, individually and cumulatively these initiatives represent transformational change, and challenge our experiences
and assumptions about the respective responsibilities of public bodies, communities and individuals for personal and collective wellbeing.

In Aberdeenshire we benefit from a history of embracing change and improving the service experience of people with a range of adversities. Indeed in many key areas we already have much of the foundation required to both realise the ambition of national initiatives while respecting the unique characteristics of Aberdeenshire.

Nevertheless significant investment will be required to ensure that vulnerable people continue to be protected and supported and to ensure that Aberdeenshire remains at the forefront of the provision of the delivery of quality services. It is also probable that the impact of Welfare Reform on the wellbeing of significant numbers of the citizens of Aberdeenshire will only fully emerge in 2013/2014 and the Service and Council will report on this in due course.