

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness** on 9 February 2023 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)
Dr C Birt
Mrs M Cockburn
Mr D Fraser
Mr R Gunn
Mrs B Jarvie
Ms L Johnston
Mr S Kennedy
Ms L Kraft

Mrs I Mackenzie
Mrs A MacLean
Ms K MacLean
Mr T MacLennan
Mrs M Paterson
Ms M Reid
Mrs T Robertson
Mrs L Saggars

Non Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)
Mr B Boyd (remote)
Ms S Fanet (remote)
Ms J McEwan (remote)

Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mr K Rosie (remote)

Also in Attendance (non-voting members):

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland
Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing, NHS Highland
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance

Participating Officials:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer
Ms F Malcolm, Head of Integration Adult Social Care, Health and Social Care
Mr I Kyle, Lead for Improvement and Performance, Health and Social Care
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child's Health
Ms M McIntyre, Head of Social Work
Ms J Hutchinson, Strategic Lead (Care and Support), Health and Social Care
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council.
All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

Mr D Fraser in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chair offered condolences on behalf of the Committee to the husband, family and friends of Jane Davey, Principal Solicitor, who had recently passed away following a road accident.

Louise Bussell was welcomed to her first meeting of the Committee in her new role as Nurse Director, NHS Highland.

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

**2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no Declarations of Interest and the Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:

Item 8 – Mr T MacLennan

**3. Service Achievements
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

The Committee **NOTED** the following achievements:

- Butler Trust Awards – Jim Elder, Child Placement Officer
- Whole Family Welfare Fund – Kinship Carers Grant
- Home to Highland Care Experience Education Team - Boat Building Project
- Preceptorship Programme for School Nurses and Health Visitors

**4. Adult Social Care, Mental Health Officer Service and Criminal Justice Service
Cùram Sòisealta Inbheach, Seirbheis Oifigear Slàinte Intinn agus Seirbheis Ceartas Eucorach**

A pre-recorded presentation was given by Gavin Sell, Head of Programmes (Adult Social Care) on Adult Social Care and Care Homes. Following this, a further presentation and verbal update was provided by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care on Adult Social Care, the Mental Health Officer Service, and the Criminal Justice Service.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the challenges of an ageing population had been forecast for decades and information was sought on plans to tackle the problems and rising costs. It was suggested efforts should be made to ensure the Scottish Government invested further in this age group, with particular emphasis on community based services. A summary was provided of the role of officers tasked with trying to increase community care for elderly and others, and this would be a key feature in the Strategic Plan;
- staff in the care sector were underpaid and under-valued, and should be given more training and career opportunities;
- consideration should be given to the creation of ‘age-friendly’ communities, and to improved cross-service and partnership working, including with the independent and third sector. This tied in with the importance of respite and day care, and the need to build infrastructure and facilities along with housing;
- local public transport was another key issue in keeping families close, although it was appreciated this was not an issue for this Committee;
- it was important the Council and NHS Highland were timely when paying independent care home invoices to ensure they did not exacerbate any cashflow issues during challenging financial times;

- for residents' wellbeing, it was important care homes were homely and interesting. The role of the Care Inspectorate in maintaining the required standards in care homes was summarised;
- it was noted that the average length of stay in a care home was 708 days which suggested residents were not recovering, however this might be due to people who remained in relatively good health being able to stay in their own homes for longer;
- workforce shortage for care at home was also a challenge;
- assurance was sought and provided that the third sector had a significant involvement in the work of the Highland Council – NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee;
- it was understood that a care home required around 40 beds to make it cost effective, which was challenging in remote and rural areas, especially for private care homes which were aiming to be profitable;
- reference was made to the Safe as Houses scheme which helped elderly and vulnerable people; and
- the joint work being undertaken to tackle the issues raised was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and updates.

5. Appointment to Adult Protection Committee Cur an Dreuchd gu Comataidh Dìon Inbheach

- * The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr B Boyd to serve on the Adult Protection Committee.

6. Service and Partnership Reviews and Evaluations Ath-sgrùdaidhean agus Luachaidhean Seirbheis is Com-pàirteachais

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**01**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was disappointing that the Care Inspectorate report on Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm in Highland gave an overall outcome of Adequate, and it was felt this required improvement, for which regular updates would be sought;
- information was sought and provided on a variety of issues in the report, including the following:
 - several reviews had taken place over the previous two years, including on Residential Childcare, after which a presentation had been given and assurance given to Members that a further opportunity to ask questions would be provided, but this had not yet happened;
 - other reviews included, in 2021, a review of Children's Services, and in 2022, a review of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm. The importance of Member scrutiny and criticism following such reviews was emphasised;
 - reference was made to the variety of partners who played a key role in assisting with the delivery of services to communities and it was occasionally challenging to understand where responsibilities for specific issues lay;

- attention was drawn to the list of recommendations that were included in the review reports and it was queried how these were being monitored and reported, with particular reference to police reporting of young people missing from care settings;
- it was queried whether reference in the report to ‘information sharing and collaborative decision making being effective at keeping children and young people safe when concerns were first raised’ related to the Community Planning Partnership or the third sector;
- it was suggested that some of the areas for improvement identified in the report were vague and required information on quality and implementation;
- the precise nature of collaboration between the Council and the third sector was questioned;
- it was queried how many people from each organisation were involved with the reported partnership group, which included partners from the Highland Council, NHS Highland, the third sector, Police Scotland and the Highland Child Protection Committee;
- it was queried which organisations were involved in children and young people’s views being considered for service planning, for which there was currently no overarching participation framework to ensure this was consistent. This work was being progressed through the Integrated Children’s Services Planning Board (ICSPB), led by a representative from the third sector;
- more detail on the improvement work was sought;
- Members welcomed the issues raised in the Care Inspectorate report being a standing item for the Committee, given the improvements required, and Members voiced support for the improvement journey. A summary was provided of the improvement plan, which was being developed;
- concern was expressed at the numbers of young people in care going missing on a regular basis;
- it was queried whether the reduction in respite care for vulnerable children reflected a general reduction in respite care;
- Members expressed disappointment at the quality of the Care Inspectorate report, and felt that it contained anecdotal and unmeasured data;
- the positive role of the third sector was welcomed, as was the robust engagement strategy. The link to a new e-module training on child protection would be circulated to the Committee;
- in relation to child protection, attention was drawn to the national whistleblowing officer petition that was being considered by the Scottish Parliament;
- attention was drawn to reference in the report to concern as to the extent to which children and young people's safety and wellbeing might have on occasion been compromised by a failure to identify and respond to some concerns;
- information was sought on improvement activity planned to address Highland reportedly having better responses to younger children than older. This would be detailed in the plan which was being finalised; and
- the Executive Chief Officer explained that the next report to the Committee would help to demonstrate how to move forward and make the necessary changes.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the key findings and recommendations of the evaluations undertaken;
- ii. **NOTED** the decisions and actions taken to improve outcomes for children, young people and families outlined within the report; and

- iii. **AGREED** to circulate information to the committee on the national whistleblowing officer petition that was being considered by the Scottish Parliament.

7. Families 1st Strategy Ro-innleachd Teaghlaichean an Toiseach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members welcomed the report and acknowledged that change was essential, though challenging;
- the multiagency approach was important, in particular to ensure awareness of emerging new concerns, such as recent reports of malnutrition elsewhere in Scotland;
- support to keep families together and in their communities wherever possible was vital;
- information was sought and provided on how outcomes would be measured, especially those being worked on in partnership, and how work on this was being undertaken with the third sector and other partners. Some organisations were already undertaking work in this area, so communication with them, and with other services within the Council, was essential;
- further information was sought and provided on how the £1m of funding from the Health and Prosperity Strategy would be utilised;
- attention was drawn to the important cross-over with other committees such as Education;
- in response to queries about how to ensure issues raised were listened to, and outcomes measured and reported back to the Committee, the partnership approach and the role of the Community Planning Board and the third sector were summarised. Senior leaders would have a clear vision and support for the workforce, taking into account the underlying links to poverty and the need to progress a trauma-informed approach;
- in response to a query about shortages of foster carers in Highland, it was explained this was a national challenge. The Council had a statutory duty to provide immediate foster care when required and if there was no capacity in Highland, this would be purchased elsewhere, which was costly. Reference was made to the aspiration in The Promise to make certain types of foster care obsolete, and to the need to have sufficient staff in place able to undertake foster care assessments before embarking on a recruitment campaign. It was suggested foster care payments should be increased;
- reference was made to the risks detailed in the report of not approving the Families 1st Strategy;
- in addition to the aim of keeping children and young people in a family environment wherever possible, activities such as youth clubs could provide a valuable temporary safe space, with such activities often being undertaken by the third sector and charities. It was disappointing that the increasing cost of hiring halls was forcing some clubs etc to close;
- attention was drawn to the importance of kinship care and the need to ensure processes to facilitate this were not unduly delayed;
- it was hoped the funding would be recurrent; and

- the value of early intervention was emphasised, as was the importance of linking with Education through, for example, school nurses.

The Committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the Families 1st Strategy to enable to achieve improved outcomes for children and their families.

8. Revenue Budget and Performance Monitoring - Quarter 3 Monitoring for 2022/23

Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus Coileanaidh – Sgrùdadh Cairteil 3 airson 2022/23

Transparency Statement: Mr T MacLennan declared a connection to this item as a Board member of Lochaber Care and Repair but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the value to society of Care and Repair, and other similar schemes, was highlighted, and a summary provided of the types of projects undertaken, many of which could be instrumental in helping to keep elderly people in their own homes for longer, for example grab rails, dementia clocks and other adaptations, which were more cost effective than admitting someone into a care home. It was confirmed that a review was being undertaken, which included handyman schemes and telecare, with NHS Highland as the lead agency along with housing associations;
- the need to ensure maintenance and refurbishment budgets were fully committed before the financial year-end was highlighted and a summary was provided of the types of work being undertaken;
- it was queried whether the staff vacancies in the Families Team was a risk to service delivery, and attention was drawn to the national challenges recruiting social workers, which was a risk, and the efforts being made to address the situation;
- the report did not give information on the number of organisations affected by the third sector contracts review of priorities and delivery and reduction in payment;
- it was often more meaningful to show actual numbers of people affected by issues rather than percentages in reports; and
- the importance of the work undertaken by the Violence Against Women partnership and by Women's Aid was highlighted, and this would be further discussed at Item 10.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. forecast revenue position as at Quarter 3 of the 2022/23 financial year and the narrative in relation to the underspend in Children's Services;
- ii. progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iii. detail provided in relation to performance indicators.

9. Health and Social Care Workforce Plan 2022-2025

Plana Feachd-obrach Slàinte is Cùraim Shòisealta 2022-2025

There had been circulated Report No HCW/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought and provided on work being undertaken locally to recruit social workers, including giving consideration to addressing accommodation challenges in the Highlands;
- with a significant number of people taking early retirement, consideration should be given to measures to encourage people to stay in work for longer, such as flexible working hours and undertaking exit interviews to source information and commonalities. Only 13% of the Health and Social Care workforce was male so efforts should be made to actively promote the sector to males;
- the overlap between various sectors such as Health & Social Care and Education was highlighted, with reference to the previous amalgamation of Care and Learning; and
- issues to consider to help alleviate recruitment challenges included offering flexible or tailored working hours, giving people time off to study, or retraining people who had retired but were interested in returning to work, and being consistent and fair in those approaches.

The Committee **NOTED** the Health and Social Care Service Workforce Plan 2022 – 2025.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes were **NOTED**:-

i. Highland Child Protection Committee held on 18 August 2023;

In relation to Item 10i, and with reference to the 'Adequate' grading in the Care Inspectorate report on children at risk of harm, as detailed at Item 6 on this agenda, concern was expressed at the number of apologies for the meeting and assurance was provided that the meeting had been quorate and were usually well attended by all stakeholders.

ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 9 August 2022.

In relation to item 10ii, reference was made to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Steering Group report and the high risks detailed. Information was sought on progress with the partnership work, attendance at these meetings by Council representatives, and progress with outstanding actions, including the need for administrative resources. The governance process for MARAC was summarised and the Committee **AGREED** to provide Mrs A MacLean with information on progress with outstanding actions from the MARAC Steering Group, as detailed in the minutes.

Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked Members for the quality of debate and officers and partners for their work. He reminded the meeting that it was Children's Mental Health Week.

The meeting ended at 2.50pm