

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 18 May 2023 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)	Mrs I MacKenzie
Dr C Birt	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms K MacLean
Mr D Fraser	Mr T MacLennan
Mr R Gunn	Mrs M Paterson (remote)
Mrs B Jarvie	Mrs M Reid
Ms L Johnston	Mrs T Robertson
Ms E Knox	Mrs L Saggars (remote)
Ms L Kraft	

Non-Members present (remote):

Mr M Baird	Mr A Graham
Mr J Finlayson	Mr D Millar
Mr R Gale	Mr P Oldham

Non-voting Members:

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland (remote)
Ms K Patience-Quate, Deputy Director of Nursing, NHS Highland (remote)
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance
Mr H Tedstone, Highland Hospice

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, Head of Performance and Improvement, Health and Social Care
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health, Health and Social Care
Ms M McIntyre, Head of Children and Justice Social Work, Health and Social Care
Ms D Munro, Lead Officer Child Protection, Health and Social Care
Ms J Hutchinson, Strategic Lead (Care and Support), Health and Social Care
Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Ms P Cremin, Chief Operating Officer, NHS Highland
Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland

**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 welcomed Mr Harry Tedstone (Highland Hospice) to the meeting as a new third sector representative.

**1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence
Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs P Munro.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:

Item 10 – Ms L Kraft

**3. Service Achievements
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

The Committee **NOTED** updates on the following successes:

- Monday Night Football / Youth Action Team;
- Family Fund Payment to Young Carers;
- Mental Health Officer Service; and
- National Foster Care Fortnight 15 to 28 May 2023, and celebration of Isa and Alec Taylor's 40 years fostering.

During discussion, Members praised the Monday Night Football activity and referred to several similar activities taking place across the Highlands, and the considerable benefits to the young people participating. The volunteers who organised these activities were thanked, and it was suggested that consideration be given to providing funding and support for such events, and to compiling a list of all similar activities for a future meeting. It was pointed out that the fees for the use of Council-owned halls could be prohibitive. Clarification was sought and provided on the process used to identify young carers for the family fund payments.

**4. Appointments
Cur an Dreuchd**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Ms K MacLean to replace Ms E Knox on the Highland Community Justice Partnership.

**5. Adult Social Care Assurance Report and Strategic Context
Aithisg Bharantachaidh agus Co-theacsa Ro-innleachdail Cùram Sòisealta Inbheach**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**05**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- concern was expressed at the ongoing recruitment challenges, including the burden being placed on existing staff, in the context of unemployment at 2%. The partnership's commitment to the care sector was highlighted, and the value of the Strategic Plan summarised;

- it was disappointing that delivery of some services would fall short due to lack of funding and staff. It was important to change attitudes towards the caring profession and encourage careers in this sector;
- it was challenging for smaller private care homes to break even and remain open, and it was envisaged there needed to be a move towards more care at home;
- there was a move away from discussing numbers of beds required, and rather to considering the number of care hours required to deliver services;
- clarification was sought and provided on the 227 Local Authority, and 654 private, guardianship orders that had been considered in Highland in 2022. Some of these were not only for older people who had lost capacity to handle their own affairs, but were also for adults who had never had capacity and hence could not grant a power of attorney. The importance of planning for the future in terms of writing wills and arranging power of attorney was emphasised;
- attention was drawn to the geographic challenges facing Highland, and to the increased percentage of the population who were of retirement age;
- with reference to the Highland Hospice's pilot model for the provision of palliative care, including a helpline and a palliative care response team (Sunflower Home Care, which brought home-based health and social care to rural and remote communities across the Highlands), a suitable model for the delivery of care at home was required for Highland, with an appropriate rag system and timeline. In this respect, the role of the Strategic Plan, and related locality plans, which were being developed, was outlined, noting that the delivery of the Strategic Plan would be monitored by the NHS Highland - Highland Council's Joint Monitoring Committee;
- in relation to locality plans, it was important to manage community expectations in light of the ongoing challenges and capacity issues in care homes;
- the need for flexibility and collaboration in relation to the recruitment and employment of carers was emphasised;
- attention was drawn to third sector innovation work due to start in Highland to address the recruitment challenges across the whole care sector (child and adult) and find a community-centred way to meet the specific needs of remote and rural areas. The Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) had been working with a wide range of partners, locally and nationally, within the current framework and policies to identify where change was required;
- information was sought and provided on how further care home closures would be managed;
- Members welcomed the news that the in-house programme for Mental Health Officers had received national recognition by winning the SASW MHO Practice Award 2023, which had contributed to the qualification of 4 MHOs, with another 3 trainees in post;
- it was queried whether the 1460 contacts made by the mental health team in 2022 included repeat patients and, while it was thought this was the case, the Head of Integration Adult Social Care would confirm this to Mrs A MacLean outwith the meeting;
- reference was made to 'Dying to Know' events at which professionals such as solicitors and accountants provided information on end of life issues to the public and staff, and it would be helpful if similar events continued;
- it would be beneficial if 'wellbeing' was higher up the budgetary agenda, given its importance, an example being to set up a training scheme through UHI to provide care modules or part or all of a social work degree. This might

- encourage Highland young people to study locally and attract students from outwith the area;
- an initiative run by CALA to take nursery children into care homes was praised, and consideration should be given to extending this to older pupils to give them an insight into careers in Adult Social Care. Workplace shadowing and mentoring might also encourage young people into careers in the care sector;
 - information was sought on the various handyman schemes, and it was explained that this was currently under review to provide a more consistent service across the Highlands. The key role such services could play in reducing delayed discharges from hospital was outlined; and
 - confirmation was sought that funding was available for household adjustments for part-time as well as full-time carers, and this would be clarified to Mrs B Jarvie outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. contents of the report; and
- ii. continued commitment and collaborative actions to sustain service provision, whilst responding to the ongoing operational pressures arising as a result of the ongoing covid response and pressures associated with difficulties in meeting demand arising as a result of staffing challenges.

6. Fostering and Adoption – Family Based Care Daltachd agus Uchd-mhacachd – Cùram Stèidhichte air Teaghlach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members thanked all foster carers and referred to the achievements of Mr and Mrs Taylor, who had been mentioned at item 3 having fostered and adopted children for 40 years;
- the table at paragraph 5.1 in the report referenced ‘Fostering, Adoption and Adult Placement Services’ and, in response to a query, it was clarified that these three areas were broken down in the Improvement and Action Plan appended to the report;
- information was sought and provided on the rigorous matching process undertaken for fostering and adoption;
- progress on the Improvement and Action Plan was welcomed, as were the figures showing fewer children having to leave their families;
- the services for adults affected by adoption, detailed in section 15 of the report, should be extended to those affected by fostering;
- it was important to involve children and young people in their care and support plans;
- assurance was sought on how the increase in the number of young children who were being accommodated, often with serious health and developmental needs associated with parental substance misuse, was being tackled. Reference was made to the whole family approach;
- third sector assistance with direct therapeutic work and Therapeutic Life Story Work was proposed, along with assistance in publicising the need for foster carers;

- it would be helpful if real foster carers could be featured in adverts to encourage others to foster;
- assurance was sought and provided that children with a disability who were being fostered would receive the same levels of care and support as birth children;
- young parents should be supported through pregnancy and after birth and attention was drawn to the valuable work of the Family Nurse Partnership in this regard;
- in response to a query about why the fostering and adoption process was so lengthy, attention was drawn to the importance of preparation and correct matching, to giving prospective parents and carers sufficient time to reflect on what they were going to undertake, and to ensuring safeguarding issues were fully taken into consideration; and
- information was sought and provided on why some people preferred to adopt rather than foster children.

The Committee:

- NOTED** and scrutinised the content of the report which aimed to offer transparency and accountability for Highland Council's Fostering and Adoption Service; and
- AGREED** an annual report be presented to committee from the Fostering and Adoption Service to enable continuous scrutiny and assurance of improvements to the service.

7. **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Highland** **Clann gun Neach Còmhla Riutha a' Sireadh Comaraich sa Ghàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**07**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- assurance was sought in relation to the treatment of and funding for the 16-18 age group, especially given the relatively high numbers that went missing, often to larger cities;
- the reduction in the transfer timeline for moving young people out of hotels from 10 working days to 5 days was likely to be challenging;
- the trauma faced by separated children was acknowledged, and reference was made to the importance of offering appropriate support and, where required, familiar cultural experiences, as well as education and training, and opportunities for the future. Working on this in partnership with the third sector was important, as was the need to protect vulnerable young people from getting involved with people traffickers and crime;
- information was sought on the costs likely to be involved; and
- it was clarified that unaccompanied children tended to arrive in small groups of two to five.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- the context, background and action by the formation of a strategic partnership, including the 3rd sector Alliance, in developing an urgent

- humanitarian response to support the holistic needs of separated children in Highland;
- ii. the complex and changing policy, procedural and financial arrangements directly linked to ministerial updates;
- iii. the financial pressures given funding did not cover real time costs of the full provision of services across the broad partnership; and
- iv. COSLA's key role in representation of all local authorities across Scotland.

8. Children at Risk of Harm Inspection Update and Action Plan Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgrùdadh is Plana-ghnìomha do Chloinn ann an Cunnart bho Chron

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**08**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members were urged to read the full inspection reports, not only the Committee reports, and it was requested that links be provided in future;
- in response to a suggestion that the Committee should monitor and scrutinise any improvements, it was clarified that governance would be undertaken through the Public Protection Chief Officer Group and Community Planning Partnership Board, with regular updates likely to be to every second Committee meetings, this to be finalised with the Chair; and
- the rag register, dynamic nature of the action plan, and the work towards the implementation of a trauma-informed approach were welcomed;

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. update; and
- ii. improvement plan developed by the partnership to deliver on the recommendations outlined in the inspection report.

9. Child Protection Minimum Dataset Seata Dàta as Lugha airson Dìon Chloinne

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**09**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought and provided as to whether all children who were referred to the Children's Reporter were on the Child Protection Register. The role of the Child Protection Register in keeping children safe was explained, with the Register highlighting children who were vulnerable or at risk of harm to all agencies and partners;
- assurance was sought and provided that asylum seeking children and refugees could also be included on the Child Protection Register;
- attention was drawn to an online Child Protection training module which was free and available to all;
- information was sought and provided on why around 50% of children on the Child Protection Register were under the age of five. In terms of monitoring,

- it was explained that all children on the register must be seen fortnightly, though this would change to weekly in September 2023;
- it was queried why the Children’s Reporter Annual Referrals rate per 1,000 children (chart 14 in the report) was higher in Highland than in several other Local Authority areas and whether this was due to a difference in social work practice. This anomaly had been considered by the Child Protection Committee and would be reported back at the next meeting of the Committee; and
 - the importance of early intervention, close monitoring and a whole sector approach was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. purpose and background to the development of the minimum dataset; and
- ii. range of data contained within the report.

10. Health and Social Care – Service Performance Reporting for Q4 – 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023
Slàinte agus Cùram Sòisealta – Aithris Coileanaidh Seirbheis airson C4 – 1 Faoilleach 2023 gu 31 Màrt 2023

Transparency Statement: Ms L Kraft declared a connection to section 4.3 of this item as a case worker for an MSP, and frequent user of the Service Complaints Portal but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**10**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, Members felt there had been a significant improvement in complaint handling by the Service, and across the Council, and appreciation for this should be expressed to staff. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that disability access in the Council Chamber was under review.

The Committee **NOTED** the Service’s performance information.

11. Health and Social Care Staff Vacancies and Associated Risks
Beàrnan Luchd-obrach agus Cunnartan Co-cheangailte airson Slàinte is Cùram Sòisealta

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**11**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- a further update report was requested for the next meeting of the Committee, with a suggestion that this become a standing item;
- assurance was sought that exit interviews were being undertaken, ideally not by direct line managers, and that safe spaces were provided for staff to discuss the challenges and pressures they were facing;
- suggestions included asking recently retired staff to be mentors for new staff or to return on a flexible basis, and using the positive experiences of real social care staff to publicise the sector as a fruitful career;

- given the serious and worrying nature of the report, in the longer term, a Highland-based medical or expanded health sciences campus would be useful. It was explained that conversations were taking place with UHI about a variety of issues;
- flexible contracts should be offered to staff to create a 'bank' type staffing pool;
- concern was expressed at the additional workload created by ongoing vacancies, with particular reference to social workers and mental health officers. Suggestions to actively retain staff included asking existing staff if they were interested in retraining for posts that were difficult to recruit to, ensuring a supportive flexible environment, and breaking down the tasks of challenging posts to allocate lesser skilled tasks to other members of staff. A whole-day workshop on this topic would be beneficial;
- interaction with and the support provided by the third sector and other Council services was acknowledged and welcomed;
- information was sought on where to signpost anyone interested in a post which was proving challenging to recruit to, and the possibility of a Health and Social Care employment portal was suggested;
- it was important to support people who were less academically inclined - for example, through mentoring;
- local hubs for employment and support were important, especially for people who did not drive and in areas where public transport was poor; and
- appropriate rewards and flexibility for posts which were highly stressful, such as social workers, should be considered, with attention drawn to the impact of social care staff shortages on every item on the Committee agenda.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the contents of the report;
- AGREED** to support the inclusion on the risk register of issues in relation to vacancies set out in the report; and
- AGREED** to present a further update report on the issue to the next meeting of the Committee.

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- Highland Child Protection Committee held on 3 November 2022 and 23 February 2023;
- Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 5 October 2022, 18 January 2023 and 24 February 2023; and
- Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group (HVAWPG) held on 7 November 2022.

During discussion, reference was made to section 6 of the HVAWPG Minutes of 7 November 2022, and an update was requested on the action, 'It was agreed to ask the Highland Council to consider electing a "Women's Champion" as other authorities have.' This would be investigated and reported back to Mrs A MacLean.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

The meeting ended at 3.25pm.