



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 20 JANUARY 2021

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SPSO REPORTS AND IMPROVEMENT OUTCOMES

BY: CHIEF OFFICER HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE MORAY

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Council of completed action plan for the report and subsequent feedback from the SPSO dated 11 December 2020. Also to note the continuing work being undertaken for the Report.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III D (14) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising all the functions of the Council as a Social Work Authority within terms of relevant legislation with regard to research; assessment of need re: community care services, provision of information to carers and assessment of ability to provide care; and to determine the Council's policies in regard thereto.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **To note that the SPSO has confirmed that the work submitted to meet the recommendations, including those relating to management and supervision, has met their expectations and, as far as the SPSO is concerned, this is now closed.**
- 2.2 **To note that the work continues on the action plan for the SPSO report on transitions to adult services and that meeting the extended timeframe for doing so remains challenging.**
- 2.3 **To note that to provide the council with additional assurance beyond the expectations of the SPSO, improvement work has been commissioned independent of the council with the Care Inspectorate to address any core cultural and social work issues that need to change to meet the needs of the children of Moray and the recently published ambitions of the Independent Care Review Report, The Promise.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) published two reports relating to transition to adulthood (201811019) in May 2020 and case

management and decision making (201707281) in August 2020 with a number of recommendations requiring to be undertaken.

- 3.2 These reports were presented to council on 7 October 2020.
- 3.3 The action plan developed in response to 201707281 has been completed and the evidence provided to demonstrate how the recommendations have been completed was submitted to the SPSO on 2 December 2020.
- 3.4 The Chief Executive received a letter from the Ombudsman confirming that the evidence provided addressed all of the recommendations for the case and they had been marked complete on their system.
- 3.5 Work continues on report 201811019 and extension for submission of evidence having been requested and granted until 31 March 2021. This was reported to Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee on 18 November 2020.
- 3.6 The recommendations reached have required the Transitions to Adult Services Policy and The Community Care Policy to be reviewed and re-written. The time and scale of the work required to complete this was underestimated and meeting the deadline will remain challenging.
- 3.7 The Council, on 7 October, requested a further report be provided agreeing “that in recognising the highlighted weakness in the management and supervision demonstrated by the two (SPSO) reports, a report is brought back to Council on 20 January 2021 with an amended or separate action plan that addresses the issue and establishes performance indicators and targets.
- 3.8 To support the improvement activity required over and above the significant work undertaken to meet the SPSO recommendations of the reports and other areas identified in two of the reviews the Care Inspectorate have been approached and have agreed to work with the Council Social Work Services.
- 3.9 The purpose of this is to work with the officer to produce a report and plan with the aim of providing accurate map for shifting practice from a transactional and risk based model to one that is based on engagement, partnership, upholding rights and forming relationships with children and their families.
- 3.10 The principal objective are to:
 - address the core cultural and social work practice values that need to change to meet the needs of children and their families in Moray;
 - be rooted in social work values;
 - support the CSWO and Head of Service realise the vision for a relational approach to practice over the longer term;
 - draw together important themes from the range of different plans external bodies and legislation have required Moray to produce which will assist staff to see clearly how the vision will be realised, and their roles;

- provide assurance to members, staff and the public that a robust programme is in place to improve practice and thereby, outcomes for children through this independent validation of the Care Inspectorate.

3.11 The output for this work will be a plan which will outline actions and measures of success of the short, medium and longer term, and will address areas such as:

- Reviewing management arrangements to support practice change;
- Benchmarking with other areas;
- Consideration of approaches to support practice change, such as, family group decision making, contextual safeguarding or licenced models, such as Signs of Safety and Safe and Together.
- Training;
- Review of scaffolding arrangements, such as report templates, processes and data;
- Including children and young people in influencing practice change.

4. LOCAL CONTEXTUAL ISSUES

- 4.1 Children's Services in which Social Work is an element has experienced a high level of scrutiny and significant changes in its leaderships over the past few years. The Report published by the Care Inspectorate on their Joint Inspection in February 2017 identified an urgent need to strengthen strategic leadership of services for children in Moray. A follow up inspection identified improvements in governance but noted it too early to validate substantial improvements to operational practice to ensure that children and families experience more effective support and intervention.
- 4.2 Planning and improvement work continues across the partnership with the 2020-23 Children's Services Plan being prepared, signed off and published, with four priority areas and a set of underpinning approaches emphasising relational and strength bases worked with families.
- 4.3 Within Social Work there has been significant changes, since August 2018, in leadership and management at Head of Service, Service Manager and Team Manager level, including staffing reduction to budget requirements. To lead and support professional practice assurance and development the post of Consultant Social Work Practitioner has been created with 2.6fte appointed.
- 4.4 Furthermore, the CSWO has established a social work leaders forum to increase the professional confidence and identity and to co-ordinate social work initiatives in an integrated environment.
- 4.5 Work continues on the delegation of the child and families and justice social work services to the Integrated Joint Board, as reported to Council on 18 December 2020. Until this is agreed or otherwise the line management arrangements are for the Head of Service to report to the Chief Officer for Health and Social Care Moray.

5. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 5.1 The Independent Care Review, by publishing The Promise, requires all partnerships to transform the way care and support is provided to children and young people, rooted in the values of relationships, love, respect and upholding the rights of children and young people. Of significant importance for social work is the recommendation of The Promise to shift the primary purpose of the “Care System” from protecting against harm to protecting all safe, loving, respectful relationships. This will present particular challenges in Moray where the level of external scrutiny has reinforced a culture of process oriented practice around protection from harm. Nevertheless, The Promise must be regarded as a significant opportunity and enabler.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Work has continued at pace to meet the requirements of the council following the two reports published by the SPSO in 2020. One has been completed and one remains outstanding.
- 6.2 The Care Inspectorate continue to work with the council to support the improvement of social work practice, culture and processes to meet the ambitions of The Promise.
- 6.3 As a Service, significant changes in leadership and management have taken place since 2018, and this continues. In spite of this improvements in practice confidence and direction continues.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Children’s Services plan 2020/23 identifies improving outcomes for looked after children as a key priority the Children and Families and Justice Social Work Service improvement plan identifies actions to be taken to support these improvements the Corporate Plan (2020 update) identifies the following priorities:

Work with families as partners to give their children the kind of lives they want them to lead so that children grow up to be strong and resilient. Improve the life chances and outcomes for care experienced children and young people. Improvement in children and young people’s health and well-being.

(b) Policy and Legal

Policies are being reviewed in light of the outcome of the investigation and required actions. The revision will reflect what are anticipated are likely to be the changes currently progressing through the various stages of legislation: the Transition Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

(c) Financial implications

Changing practice culture within social work will require investment in additional system wide learning and development, to include relational approaches similar to family group decision making, and functional family therapy.

(d) Risk Implications

The report and associated action plan to meet the recommendations outlines significant changes in practice that need to occur, without which the reputation of the council could be at risk.

Furthermore, any intervention by social work should improve outcomes for children and young people and without these changes to practice being implemented, there is a risk that this does not happen

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff will need to be supported with additional learning and development programmes.

(f) Property

None

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Not required

(h) Consultations

Chief Executive, Moray Council; Chief Officer, Health & Social Care Moray; Chief Social Work Officer; Head of Service, Children & Families & Criminal Justice Services; Morag Smith, Senior Solicitor, John Black, Complaints Officer; Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility.

Author of Report: Joyce Johnston, Acting Head of Children and Families and Justice Services.

Background Papers:

Ref: