

Growth and Development National Overview

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



2002



The Report of the Chief Inspector of Social Work Services for Scotland



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Making it work together

Growth and Development National Overview

SOCIAL WORK SERVICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The Report of the Chief Inspector of Social Work Services for Scotland

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Introduction

This is the second Annual Report prepared by the Chief Social Work Inspector. Completed in 2002, it includes a national overview of social work services across Scotland and short reviews of services in each of the 32 councils.

This report contains the national overview with the short reviews contained in a separate document. You can read both documents on the Social Work Services Inspectorate website.

The Annual Report is based on analyses, carried out by a small Inspectorate team, of existing data, plans, reports and reviews. The team also visited all 32 authorities and had full discussions with senior officials. We consulted local authorities on the overall approach and the arrangements for all the visits.

Future reports will build on this year's findings and add further elements. For example, information from the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and the Scottish Social Services Council will add to how we analyse the performance of local authorities.

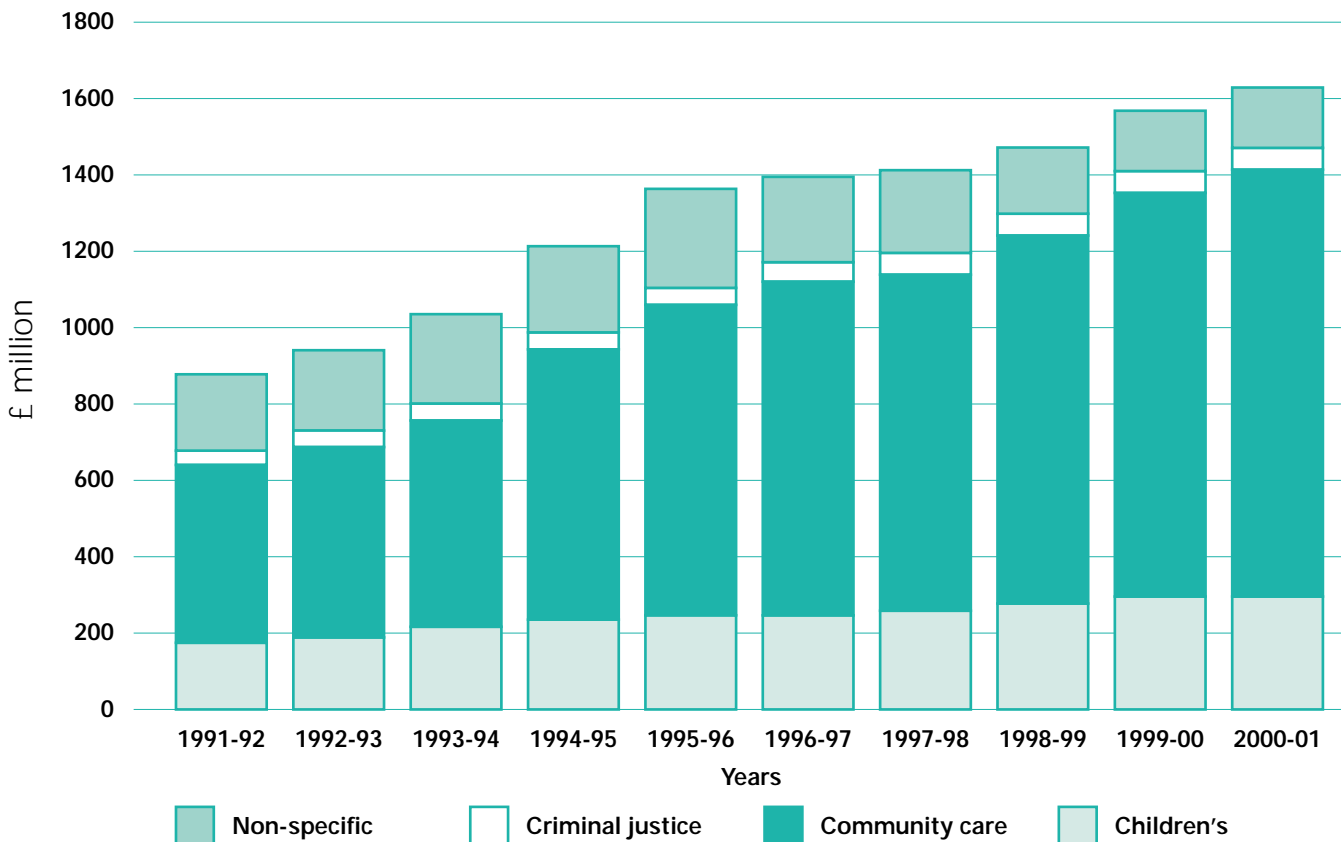
What will always matter most are the results for people who use services. It was clear from our visits, and from the many examples that local authorities and their partners in the voluntary sector provided, that:

- services generally focus clearly on the needs of people who use these services; and
- services are becoming increasingly flexible.

Social work services: Growth and Developments

There has been significant growth and many developments for social work services over the last year. This builds on 10 years of consistent growth that has seen social work service expenditure doubled in real terms. Gross expenditure, adjusted to reflect current prices, rose from £881 million in 1991-1992 to £1,633 million in 2000-2001 as Figure 1 below shows.

Figure 1: Growth in SWS Expenditure 1992-2001



With this growth came new responsibilities, heightened expectations of service performance and requirements for a more integrated approach with health, education and criminal justice agencies such as the police and prison service. Managing this growth and the new expectations has been the major challenge for social work services over the last decade.

There is clear evidence that the expenditure growth has resulted in more people receiving services and improvements in the quality of services. For instance, as Table 1 shows for the main community care services more than twice as many people received services in 2001-2002 than in 1993-1994 (the earliest year for which comparative figures are available).

Table 1: The number of people receiving a Community Care Service by main client group categories

	1993-94	2001-02
Elderly people	70,146	186,639
Elderly people with dementia	9,745	14,154
Mental health	6,463	13,820
Physical disabilities	25,808	45,953
Learning disabilities	6,803	13,499
People with HIV/AIDS	121	615
People with alcohol or drug abuse	2,065	11,397
Total:	121,151	286,077

In criminal justice, the number of community sentences (e.g. probation, community service) has risen from 5% of all sentences in 1990 to 11% of all sentences in 2000. Following successful piloting, a number of new community sentences have been rolled out nationally. The establishment of the new groupings of local authorities will allow more consistent provision of support programmes in tandem with developments to ensure effectiveness of the programmes.

Table 2: The number of convictions resulting in a community sentence 1990 and 2000

	1990	2000
Probation	4,268	7,360
Community service order	4,739	4,684
Other community service	0	2,921
Total:	10,997	14,965

Figures on the total number of children helped by social work services are not collated. For example, we do not have figures on the number of children who are helped through new community schools, family centres or holiday play schemes for children with disabilities or how many parents are helped to cease drug taking or supported as they struggle to cope with mental illness. As the number of different ways of delivering social help increases so does the contribution of social work services but in ways that are not always recognised or counted.

As more children are helped through early intervention programmes and services, there is pressure on other parts of the child care system. Children under statutory supervision orders may not always be allocated a social worker as resources become more thinly stretched over the continuum of child care needs. Social work services are committed to making the transition to achieving a greater emphasis on the prevention of harm but the period of transition, whilst the benefits have yet to be realised, is a particularly taxing one.

These increases in service across all areas of social work have required significant increases in the number of staff employed to deliver them. Tracking these increases is difficult because of the organisational changes that have occurred and because there has been considerable growth in the amount of services which local authorities contract from the voluntary and private sectors. New

approaches to staff information are required, based on the modernised focus on integrated services (e.g. for children, for older people) and work on this has started with the analysis of the labour market for children's services and the work of the Integrated Human Resources Working Group in Health and Community Care.

As the growth in services has proceeded, all sectors have begun to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient additional staff. The Scottish Executive's recruitment campaign, Care in Scotland, has therefore taken a broad approach. Qualified social workers in local authorities have continued to play the pivotal role in all services. Between 1990 and 2001 the number of main grade social workers in local authorities grew from 2,531 to 3,204. However, that growth still left 471 vacancies for social workers in 2001. There are some key areas with particular pressures. The drive to develop new services, and new ways of delivering services, for children and young people is being seriously impeded in some areas by staff vacancies, especially of qualified social workers. Fieldwork staff employed in children's services rose from 2,370 in 1999 to 3,084 in 2001 but still had 320 vacancies (9.1%). Mental health, criminal justice and services for people with sensory impairment also experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient staff with appropriate qualifications.

These staff shortages impose increasing pressures on other staff. The position overall has worsened since my last report in 2001. The impact of the current recruitment campaign will need to be carefully monitored and fully followed through on to ensure that the position is effectively turned around.

Organisational changes

The significant growth of social work services over the last 10 years has been accompanied with considerable organisational change. Since local government reorganisation in 1996, there has been an increasing diversity of organisational arrangements for social work services with a growing focus on customers (children's services, people services) as organising principles for determining arrangements. Strategic arrangements for social work services, politically and managerially, seem likely to continue to evolve.

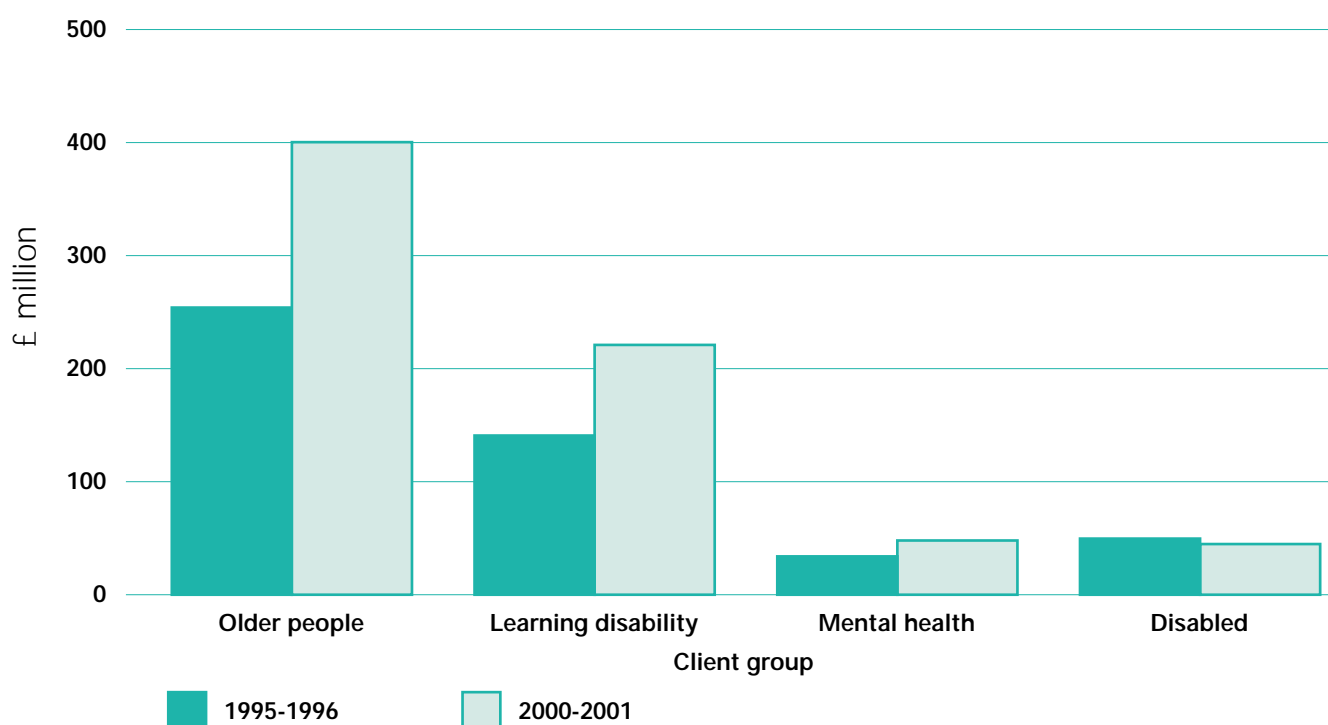
The Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 established two new bodies to ensure consistency in these and related services across Scotland no matter how they were organised and whoever provided them. First, new National Care Standards were established with a strong focus on customers' experience of services and the new Care Commission was established to inspect that all care services meet these standards consistently across Scotland. Secondly, new codes of practice for employees and employers in social services were established and these will be regulated by the new Scottish Social Services Council, which will also register staff and promote education and continuous professional development.

It is the purpose of the annual report on social work services to provide an overview of comparative local authority performance on the basis of the available quantitative and qualitative information. This year we have again provided a published report on each local authority. These remain largely descriptive, but significant variations in the circumstances of each authority and the way in which they address their responsibilities are evident. For some service areas we have introduced comparisons with other authorities by presenting some figures as quartile distribution.

Community care

Of the £1,109 million expenditure in 2000-2001, £346 million was not broken down in to client group expenditure categories. This general expenditure on community care had risen from £289 million in 1995-1996. Specifically identified expenditure on services for older people rose from £264 million in 1995-1996 to £404 million in 2000-2001 (an increase of 53%). For adults with mental health problems expenditure rose 47%, from £42 million to £62 million. For adults with learning disabilities expenditure rose by 68%, from £133 million to £224 million. For people with physical disabilities, including people with sensory impairments, expenditure **reduced** by 16% from £69 million to £58 million.

Figure 2: Changes in community care expenditure 1995-1996 to 2000-2001



There are many reasons for this variation at national level; in essence these changes are the result of several accumulated decisions and factors, particularly the association of resource transfers from health to local authorities with services for older people and for people with learning disabilities. Mental health services have also shown growth and are presently the subject of significant attention at policy and other levels.

Disabled people and people with sensory impairment have not yet benefited from the same policy development or growth in expenditure, but this is being addressed as community care develops.

There is considerable variation in the number of disabled people who receive a service from their local authority. As Table 3 overleaf shows this varies from 1.8 per thousand population in Eilean Siar to 24.6 per thousand in North Lanarkshire. The extent of variation shown by this table is not reasonably explained by variations in circumstances or need.

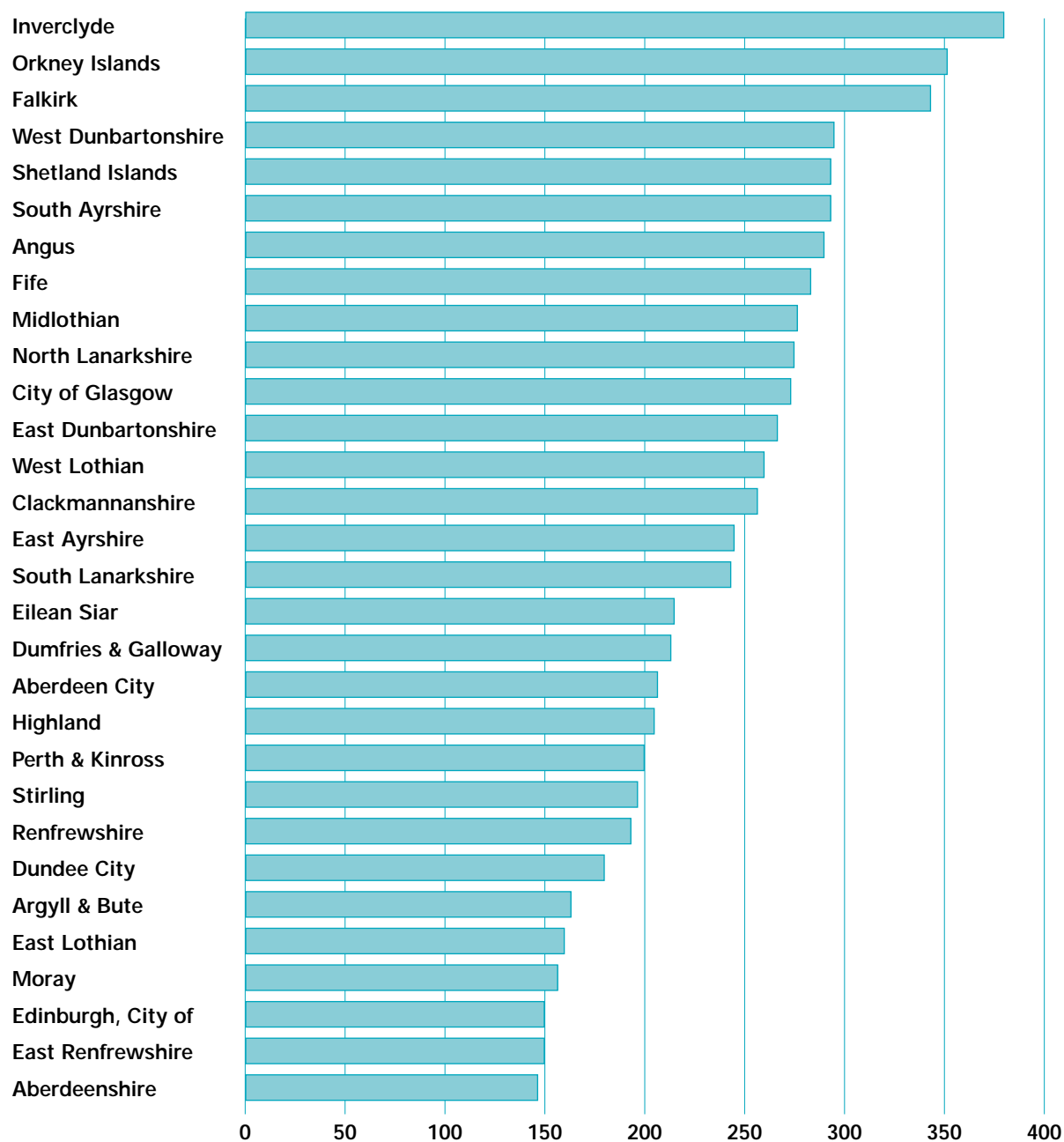
Table 3: The number of disabled people aged 18-64 receiving a service per thousand population

Authority	Number of disabled people (aged 18-64) receiving a service, per 1,000 pop
North Lanarkshire	24.6
South Ayrshire	23.5
Glasgow City	22.1
East Dunbartonshire	21.9
Inverclyde	21.2
East Ayrshire	20.5
West Dunbartonshire	20.0
Shetland Islands	19.5
Scottish Borders	19.4
Falkirk	18.4
Midlothian	16.7
Renfrewshire	14.8
Scottish average	14.3
Perth and Kinross	14.0
Clackmannanshire	13.3
South Lanarkshire	13.3
Fife	13.2
Dumfries and Galloway	12.9
Aberdeen City	11.3
East Lothian	10.8
Angus	10.7
Edinburgh, City of	10.6
West Lothian	10.5
Dundee City	9.5
Aberdeenshire	7.8
Stirling	6.8
Highland	6.4
East Renfrewshire	5.7
Argyll and Bute	4.7
Orkney Islands	4.6
North Ayrshire	4.4
Moray	3.4
Eilean Siar	1.8

Seven authorities, all of which inherited social work services from the previous Strathclyde Region, provide services to more than 19 disabled people per thousand of the population aged 18-64. Fourteen authorities provide services to less than 11 disabled people per thousand of the population aged 18-64. Rurality may well play a factor since the lowest 14 authorities include Argyll and Bute, Orkney, Eilean Siar, Moray, Angus, Highland, Aberdeenshire and Stirling with its extensive hinterland: so the question is how best to address the issues there involved, and looking to those rural authorities (Shetland, Borders, Dumfries & Galloway) whose services are reaching more people is an obvious step. Rurality does not explain the returns for the other areas in this lowest 14 (East Lothian, Edinburgh, West Lothian, Dundee and North Ayrshire) who might look to the top seven for more detailed information on their services.

Older people are also likely to find that where they live is the key to the services they receive. The number of people over 65 reported as receiving a community care service ranges from 380 per thousand people over 65 in Inverclyde to 147 per thousand over 65 in Aberdeenshire (figures for Scottish Borders and North Ayrshire were not available). The Scottish figure is 238 per thousand people over 65. The full spread is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Number of older people per 1,000 65+ receiving a service



Many factors contribute to this variation. Difficulties in providing services in remote and island areas, different levels of need arising from different health patterns in local populations, different local decisions on priorities for expenditure or intensity of service to each customer, differences in reporting methods and other factors can and do all effect the sheer output of service measured by the number of people receiving a service. Nonetheless it seems improbable that the scale of variation reported solely reflects variation in need.

More analytical effort is required, by both central and local government, on the outputs and outcomes of services to ensure that most effective use is being made of the resources allocated.

Children and young people

Social work services for children and young people are under great strain in many authorities. There are several reasons for this but the fundamental reason is that these are highly complex services that are requiring increased resources financially, professionally and managerially. All three resource factors are important.

Improving the circumstances for all children, but particularly those children who are the most vulnerable is a Scottish Executive priority. Resources for children have increased and a number of new approaches of working with children and their families have been developed. For example, Sure Start programmes which provide help and support to vulnerable families in the community, funding for parental and child drug misuse programmes and the development of new community schools. The number of skilled social work and social care professionals has increased as these new developments have come on stream.

Many of the new posts have been filled by local authority social workers and social care staff. Social work staff are also moving from the statutory sector to the voluntary sector. Many social work staff view the work in projects or organisations where the task is more clearly defined or allows professionals to work directly with children and their families as more attractive than work in local authority services where the work has increasingly focused on child protection and case management. Although local authorities are experiencing great difficulty in filling all their child care vacancies, it is clear that children's social workers remain committed to working with children and their families. They are not leaving the field but moving to different settings.

The vacancy rate varies between 0% and 24% of social work posts. Authorities that invest heavily in the provision of practice learning opportunities for trainee social workers appear to have fewer difficulties in recruitment and there is considerable competition between authorities for good social work staff.

Adoption

In 2001, there were 418 adoptions in Scotland. The length of time taken between an adoption application and outcome (adoption in 95% of cases) has reduced in the past five years. In 1997, 19.6% of cases were completed within 60 days rising to 30.7% by 2001. Similarly the number of cases taking in excess of 180 days dropped from 22.1% to 13.2% over the same period. Of the 418 cases, 101 required a freeing order to be made which is a 63% increase from the figure of 64 in 1997. This is indicative of the increasingly complex nature of adoption cases, frequently involving older children and with more entrenched family problems.

Children looked after

At 31 March 2001, 10,897 children were looked after by local authorities. Of these, 4,632 were looked after at home with the remainder being cared for in foster care, with relatives or in residential care.

Table 4: Number of children looked after as at 31 March 2001: breakdown by local authority area

Local authority area	Total	Number looked after per 1,000 population aged 0-17 years
Glasgow City	2,435	18.5
Dundee City	392	12.8
Inverclyde	238	12.3
Edinburgh, City of	1,063	12.2
North Ayrshire	376	11.8
Midlothian	213	11.6
West Dumbartonshire	262	11.6
West Lothian	404	10.8
Aberdeen City	462	10.7
Renfrewshire	428	10.6
Dumfries & Galloway	324	10.3
Eilean Siar	60	9.9
Argyll & Bute	174	9.7
East Ayrshire	255	9.3
Stirling	160	8.7
Clackmannanshire	95	8.4
Highland	389	8.1
East Lothian	158	7.8
North Lanarkshire	597	7.8
Falkirk	244	7.6
Scottish Borders	157	6.9
Moray	131	6.6
Angus	156	6.5
Aberdeenshire	343	6.4
Orkney Islands	28	6.2
Perth & Kinross	171	5.9
Fife	457	5.8
Shetland Islands	33	5.8
South Lanarkshire	401	5.7
South Ayrshire	133	5.5
East Dunbartonshire	96	4.1
East Renfrewshire	62	3.1
Scotland	10,897	9.7

The number of children looked after per 1,000 varies between 3.1 and 18.5. There is a strong association between poverty and children being looked after and this is reflected in the figures provided. The rise of the number of drug and alcohol misusing parents has placed particular pressures on local authorities, with increasing numbers of parents being unable to care for their children adequately. As well as increasing the proportion of children looked after away from home, the numbers of drug-misusing parents has increased the numbers of very young children for whom adoption is the only means through which their future will be secured.

Children who offend

According to the Scottish Crime Survey, the level of offending by young people has increased from 17% of 12-13 year olds having committed an offence in a single year in 1993 to 31% of 12-13 year olds in 2000. The majority of the offences committed are minor and most of the young people who offend will not come to the attention of the statutory agencies. Of those that do, a number will be referred to the Reporter (24,678 referrals in 2000-2001). In 2000, 10,878 young people were placed on supervision for reasons of offending, a drop of over 1,000 on the preceding year and, in part, a reflection of the reduction in the number of young people appearing before the hearings on offence grounds. It is likely that in a number of these cases, the young people involved had a range of problems, only one of which was offending.

The number of 16 year olds who have been sent to prison has reduced steadily from 1992 when 226 offenders were sent to custody to 92 offenders in 2001. This is an impressive reduction. Local authorities in partnership with the voluntary sector have developed programmes for young people who offend as alternatives to custody. These programmes are not available across all of Scotland and a concerted effort is needed to ensure this trend in the reduction in 16 year olds going to custody is maintained and no 16 year olds enter custody for want of community-based alternatives.

Criminal justice social work

Over 95% of all Social work reports to courts in Scotland are delivered by the due date. That is a pretty good performance for any public or private service. If social work reports are not submitted on time the major impacts are on those individuals effected and the various system inefficiencies involved for courts and other agencies. Encouragingly, eight authorities already achieve 100% and over half of the authorities, including several with the heaviest workloads, achieve over 98%. Most other authorities are well within reach of this and the three that fall below 90% could and should ensure that they quickly catch up with the pack.

The delivery and quality of social enquiry reports are crucial in assisting sentencers. They will judge the value of the report on its merits – its independence and objectivity and the credence of the professional assessments presented. Scottish local authorities, good – and in most cases excellent – performance in submitting reports on time has increased the credibility of the service and the advice being offered to sentencers. Social enquiry reports are also the key entry point for community criminal justice disposals. Subsequently, the efficacy of these disposals depends in large part on the speed and reliability with which they are provided, how the offenders' engagement with them is monitored and corrective action taken when needed.

Arrangements for the accreditation of programmes and sites in the criminal justice social work and youth justice fields will be established over the next few months. To be accredited, programmes of intervention for offenders will have to meet robust criteria based on the research evidence on effectiveness.

Social work services in criminal justice have benefited from significant financial increases with the aim of increasing credibility with the courts. The focus in recent years has been to extend the range of community disposals available to courts. With the establishment of an Accreditation Panel, there will be increased emphasis in the future on the quality of the programmes being delivered. By providing effective community disposals there is opportunity to reduce the use of unnecessary custody at the same time as having a positive impact on re-offending rates. There is scope for achieving really significant changes through improved collaborative work between local authorities and the Scottish Prison Service focusing particularly on better throughcare for looked after children.

Conclusion

Social work services are at a remarkable crossroads. That is evident from any overview of the individual local authority reports for 2002: each local authority is handling change in its own way but all are engaged in creating new forms of social work services to meet the challenges ahead.

The challenges are considerable; but so are the opportunities. Scotland's progress in modernising its services for children, for older people and for other adults who depend on social services – in getting a clearer priority for people who use services, in joining-up agency work so that people receive seamless services delivered more efficiently, in using new information and technology to achieve practical benefits for service users and efficiencies in organisation and delivery, and in developing new education and training provision for staff working in social work services – Scotland's progress on all these matters stands comparison with any in the world.

Over the last 25 years social work services have grown remarkably, in extent and in quality; but expectations have grown even more, and rightly so.

The first challenge is adapting the delivery and organisation of services to meet expectations and demand. There are plenty of examples of the diversity of arrangements that is emerging in Scotland; these are matters for local decisions. Both locally and nationally the principal concern must be with outcomes, not structures. Whilst the service produces considerable amounts of information, and makes many returns to the Scottish Executive and to Audit Scotland, there is a critical need for more analysis of outputs and outcomes.

The second challenge comes from the obvious points that social work services depend very heavily on people, and that the number of people to provide care and services will become increasingly fewer over the years ahead. So, the second challenge is how to engage better with people – staff, carers, volunteers and customers – and how to maximise the people effect of social work services, which means minimising the bureaucracy and using all possible opportunities from the information and communication technologies that are revolutionising modern services.

Meeting these two challenges – new engagement with people, and new information driven decisions – are one sense of social work services at a crossroads; social work services facing major change. They need to be met.

There is also another sense in which social work services are at a crossroads: they are at the crossroads of many other services and at the heart of many people's complex needs. Social work services in Scotland are moving successfully though not without difficulties from being a secondary service for perhaps only some parts of society, to being a service available to all when needed and relied on at some point by everyone; relied on with confidence and with no loss of self-respect. Social work services are at the centre of the Government's social inclusion policies and are vital to the achievement of key elements of the Scottish Executive's Programme for Government.

Information sources

Figure 1	Source: SE Finance Returns
Table 1	Source: Audit Scotland: Statutory Indicators
Table 2	Source: SE Criminal Justice Statistics
Figure 2	Source: SE Finance Return
Table 3	Source: Audit Scotland Statutory Indicators
Figure 3	Source: Audit Scotland Statutory Indicators
Table 4	Source: SE Statistics

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