

**Title/Subject:** Accounts Commission Report – Social Work in Scotland  
**Meeting:** IJB Audit Committee  
**Date:** 4 August 2017  
**Submitted By:** Chief Social Work Officer  
**Action:** For Noting

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report seeks to update the Audit Committee on the content and recommendations from the Accounts Commission report on Social Work in Scotland, published in September 2016.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Audit Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 note the content of the Accounts Commission's national report "Social Work in Scotland", attached at Appendix 1, and in particular the key messages and recommendations;
- 2.2 note that the Chief Social Work Officer has provided a detailed response, attached at Appendix 2, which addresses each of the recommendations made in the Accounts Commission.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Accounts Commission published its national report "Social Work in Scotland" on 22 September 2016, which is attached at Appendix 1. The report was prepared by Audit Scotland with a suite of 4 supplementary documents, which can be accessed at the following link <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/social-work-in-scotland>
- 3.2 The Accounts Commission report is provided to the Audit Committee for consideration in accordance with good governance practice.
- 3.3 The report highlights that Councils in Scotland now spend £3.1 billion across Social Work services, and that current approaches to providing services will not be sustainable in the longer term. The report estimates that, nationally, all Social Work services may cost up to £667 million a year more by 2020 unless new ways of delivering those services are implemented.



- 3.4 It asserts that fundamental decisions should be taken on how services are to be provided in the future. Councillors and IJB members must have knowledge and skills to deal with the complexities and risks involved, leading a wider debate with local people on the level, nature and affordability of services, and involve users in deciding how services are designed, commissioned and run.
- 3.5 The report contains 22 recommendations and sub-recommendations for Councils, 16 of which are joint recommendations to Councils and Integration Joint Boards. The recommendations cover Social Work strategy and service planning; governance and scrutiny arrangements; workforce; and service efficiency and effectiveness. The report also contains a "self-assessment checklist for Council Members", which "Elected Members may wish to consider in relation to Social Work in their own Council".
- 3.6 A detailed self assessment has been submitted to the Council Audit Committee for information, which addresses each of the recommendations, and is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.7 The suite of 4 supplementary documents referenced in paragraph 1.1, identifies:-
- how the views of users and carers were gathered as part of the review (a separate consultant's report);
  - Audit Scotland's review methodology, which included fieldwork visits to 6 Councils (Falkirk was not one of those);
  - the governance arrangements in place in selected Councils and Integration Joint Boards; and
  - a checklist of issues that Elected Members may wish to consider in relation to Social Work within their own Council.
- 3.8 The overall aim of the report is to examine how effectively Councils are planning to address the financial and demographic pressures facing Social Work services, with the objectives being to assess:-
- the scale of the financial and demand pressures facing Social Work services;
  - the strategies Councils are adopting to meet these challenges;
  - the effectiveness of governance arrangements, including how Elected Members lead and oversee Social Work services; and
  - the impact of financial and demand pressures on people who use services and on carers, and how Councils involve them in planning service provision.

## **4. CONSIDERATIONS**

### **4.1 The Accounts Commission sets out the following key messages in its report:-**

- Current approaches to delivering Social Work services are not sustainable in the long term, and reducing costs further could affect service quality. Councils and Integration Joint Boards need to work with the Scottish Government to make fundamental decisions about how to provide future services. They need to work more closely with service providers, service users and carers to commission services in a way that makes best use of locally available resources and expertise. They also need to build communities' capacity to better support vulnerable local people to live independently in their own homes and communities.
- Councils' Social Work departments face significant financial challenges from pressures caused by a real term reduction in overall Council spending, demographic change, and the cost of implementing new legislation and policies.
- Integration of health and social care has made governance arrangements more complex but, regardless of integration, Councils retain statutory responsibilities in relation to Social Work services. Elected Members have important leadership and scrutiny roles and it is essential that they assure themselves that service quality is maintained and that risks are managed effectively. They have a key role to play in a wider conversation with the public about service priorities and in managing people's expectations of future Social Work and care services that Councils can afford to provide. The Scottish Government also has an important role to play in setting the overall context of the debate.
- With integration and other changes over recent years, the key role of the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) has become more complex and challenging. Councils need to ensure that CSWOs have the status and capacity to enable them to fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively.

### **4.2 The report contains 22 recommendations and sub-recommendations for Councils and Integration Joint Boards, as follows:-**

#### **Social Work Strategy and Service Planning**

- a) Instigate a frank and wide-ranging debate with their communities about the long-term future for Social Work and social care in their area to meet statutory responsibilities, given the funding available and the future challenges.
- b) Work with the Scottish Government, their representative organisation (the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) or the Scottish Local Government Partnership (SLGP)), Social Work Scotland and other stakeholders to review how to provide Social Work services for the future and future funding arrangements.

- c) Develop long-term strategies for the services funded by Social Work
- carrying out a detailed analysis of demographic change and the contribution preventative approaches can make to reduce demand for services;
  - developing long-term financial and workforce plans;
  - working with people who use services, carers and service providers to design and provide services around the needs of individuals;
  - working more closely with local communities to build their capacity so they can better support local people who may be at risk of needing to use services;
  - consider examples of innovative practice from across Scotland and beyond; and
  - working with the NHS and Scottish Government to review how to better synchronise partners' budget setting arrangements to support these strategies.

#### **Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements**

- d) Ensure that the governance and scrutiny of Social Work services are appropriate and comprehensive across the whole of Social Work services and review these arrangements regularly as partnerships develop and services change.
- e) Improve accountability by having processes in place to
- measure the outcomes of services, for example in Criminal Justice services, and their success rates in supporting individuals' efforts to desist from offending through their social inclusion;
  - monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of services;
  - allow Elected Members to assure themselves that the quality of Social Work services is being maintained and that Councils are managing risks effectively;
  - measure people's satisfaction with those services; and
  - report the findings to Elected Members and the Integration Joint Board.

### **Service Efficiency and Effectiveness**

- f) When planning an initiative, include evaluation criteria and extend or halt initiatives depending on the success of new approaches in improving outcomes and value for money.
- g) Work with COSLA to review the eligibility framework to ensure that it is still fit for purpose in the light of recent policy and legislative changes.

4.3 The Accounts Commission also has some recommendations which apply to Councils alone, as follows:-

### **Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements**

- h) Demonstrate clear access for, and reporting to, the Council by the CSWO, in line with guidance.
- i) Ensure the CSWO has sufficient time and authority to enable them to fulfil the role effectively.
- j) Ensure that CSWO annual reports provide an annual summary of the performance of the Social Work service, highlighting achievements and weaker areas of service delivery, setting out the Council's response and plans to improve weaker areas and that these are actively scrutinised by Elected Members.

### **Workforce**

- k) Work with their representative organisation (COSLA or the SLGP), the Scottish Government and private and third sector employers to put in place a co-ordinated approach to resolve workforce issues in social care,
- l) As part of their contract monitoring arrangements, ensure that providers who use zero hours contracts allow staff to accept or turn down work without being penalised.

### **Service Efficiency and Effectiveness**

- m) Benchmark their services against those provided by other Councils and providers within the UK and overseas to encourage innovation and improve services.

4.4 Committee will see, from the detail in Appendix 2, that there are mechanisms in place for both the Council and the IJB to meet the recommendations from the Accounts Commission report. This should provide the required assurance for Committee.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

5.1 To date, no consultation has taken place regarding this, although the implications from the recommendations will be discussed at:-

- the Social Work Practice Governance Group;
- the Integration Joint Board Audit Committee; and
- the Children's Commission

following discussion at the Council's Audit Committee.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 The recommendations attached at Appendix 2 flow from the Accounts Commission report.

As previously stated, the report has 22 recommendations and sub-recommendations. Actions are already in hand to ensure that the Council and IJB can meet these.

### **Resource Implications**

None.

### **Impact on IJB Outcomes and Priorities**

None.

### **Legal & Risk Implications**

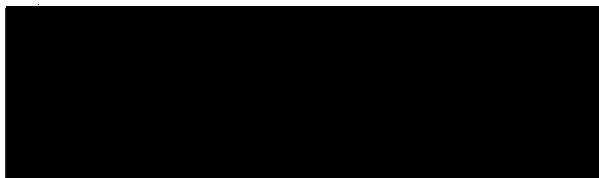
None.

### **Consultation**

None.

### **Equalities Assessment**

None..



Approved for submission by: Kathy McCarroll, Chief Social Work Officer

**Author – i.e.** Kathy McCarroll, Chief Social Work Officer

**Date:** 16 June 2017

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 Accounts Commission report "Social Work in Scotland"

Appendix 2 Recommendations in Audit Scotland National Report

**List of Background Papers: The papers that may be referred to within the report or previous papers on the same or related subjects.**