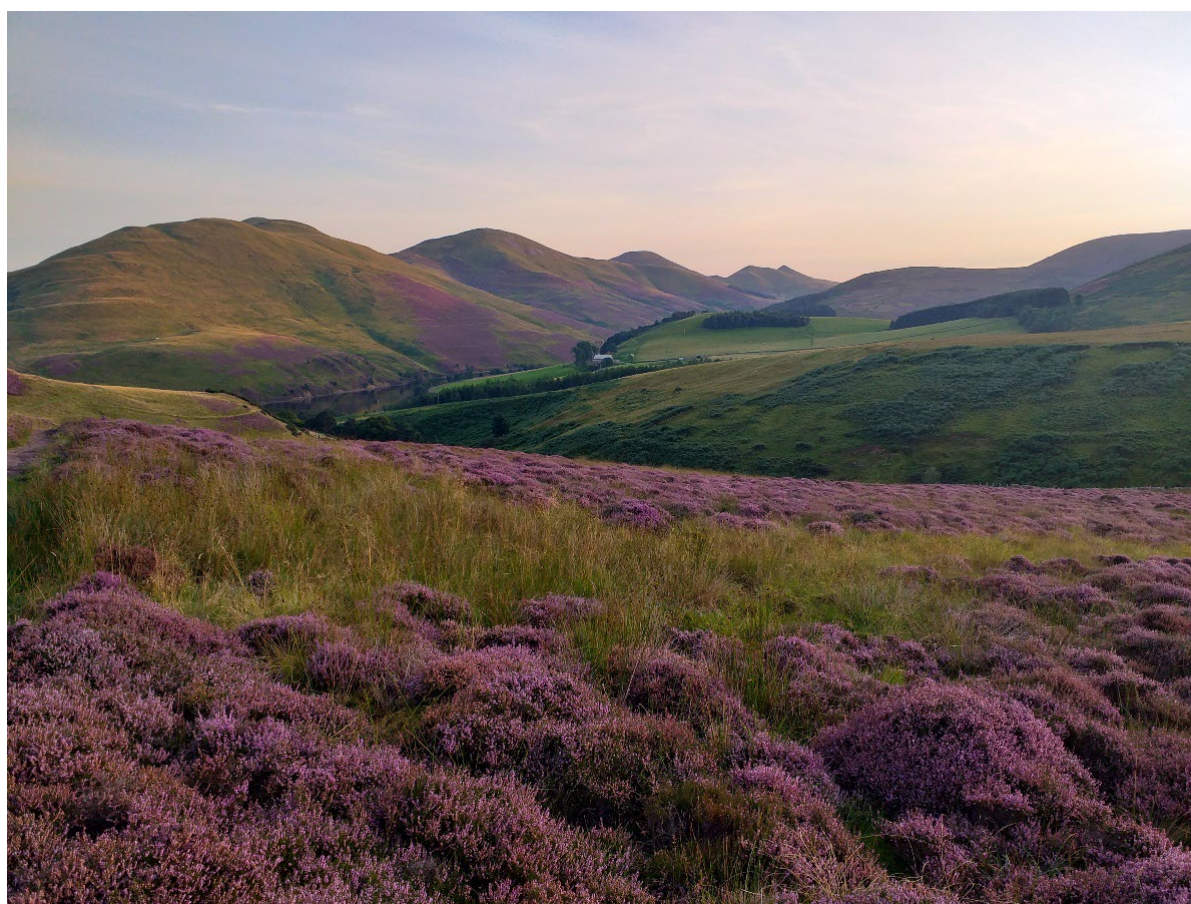




Midlothian Chief Social Work Officer

Annual Report

2022/23



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Introduction/Reflections 2022-23

I am pleased to present my third Chief Social Work Officer's annual report for 2022/23. This year the report is written based on a new template agreed with the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser, for relevant Committees and Council. The report will focus on local governance arrangements, service delivery, resources and workforce.

This report along with the 31 other Chief Social Work Officer's reports shall form part of a national summary report which shall evidence some of the changing trends and outcomes across the country as well as highlighting significant achievements and the very many challenges faced by all.

The national context for social work and social care in 2022-23 was characterised by significant policy and legislative turmoil with continued uncertainty regarding the proposals in the development of a National Care Service, with ongoing consultation and engagement sessions, significant pieces of legislation and reform of key national systems and processes impacting the delivery of social work and social care.

Despite the very busy landscape within Midlothian we have maintained a focus on delivery of services and improvement. Within Children's Services there was an inspection of our children's residential houses, with evaluations of 'Very Good', a great achievement and acknowledgement for the hard work the staff have undertaken but also reassurance that our care experienced young people living in these houses are safe, loved and well cared for.

Another significant factor over the past reporting year has been the Ukrainian war and the work undertaken to ensure that those fleeing from Ukraine who came to live in Scotland were supported and had appropriate accommodation. This has been a significant piece of work across the country but also for Midlothian as a local authority. A small team was established where the initial work was to ensure that the hosts the Ukrainian people were going to reside with, were able to provide safe and suitable accommodation. A welcome hub was established in May 2022 for those arriving from Ukraine which offered support to both children and their parents, advising them of different opportunities and activities across the county. With our partner agencies and our 3rd sector colleagues we supported families with their wellbeing, helped find them suitable employment, and identify which schools their children could attend at the start of the new term in August 2022, we were also able to help identify GP's and other local amenities. This work is ongoing at the time of writing this report.

A success story within our Justice services was the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) annual award ceremony held in November 2022. Midlothian Community Justice were nominated and were subsequent winners of the 'Excellence in Justice Services SSSC award'.

I wish at this point to acknowledge the incredible work that has been undertaken in the last year by all staff. Despite Covid-19 being seen as something that no longer

impacts on our services, I am aware that for some services certain restrictions have continued within this reporting period.

I am hopeful that this report will evidence the progress achieved over the past year in all the areas of work and wish to offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to all staff for their commitment and dedication.

Joan Tranent

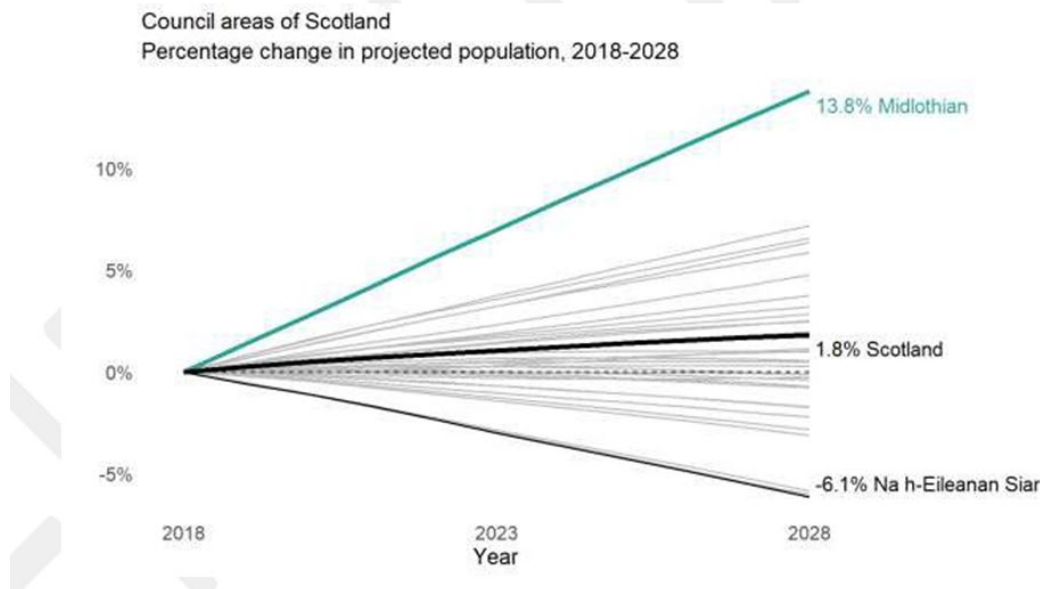
Chief Social Worker Officer



Midlothian Profile

As the fastest growing local authority in Scotland, Midlothian will see a growth rate of 13.8% until 2028 compared to the Scottish average of 1.8%

Fig 1: NRS 2018-28 % Change in Projected Population



Our demographic profile shows growth in all age groups but particularly acute in the 0-15 years and over 75 age groups and therefore there will be significant demand for early years, schools and older people's services.

There is a gap in outcomes for people in different parts of Midlothian. Some areas have poorer levels of employment; lower wage rates; lower average life expectancy, greater concentrations of people who are elderly or disabled; poorer access to physical amenities such as shops, health care, public spaces and play facilities; lower than average qualifications and higher levels of crime.

In Midlothian there are 3 communities in the top 20% of most deprived areas in Scotland. These are Central Dalkeith/Woodburn; Mayfield/Easthouses and Gorebridge. People living in Danderhall, Bilston, Loanhead and the rural areas have to travel more to access a number of services.

The Third Sector plays a vital role in fostering a sense of identity and belonging within communities. They provide essential resources, services and opportunities that enable individuals to actively participate and drive positive change within their communities.

Governance, Accountability and Statutory Functions:

The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) role ensures the provision of appropriate professional advice in the discharge of a local authority's statutory functions as set out in Section 3 Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The role also has a place set out in integrated arrangements brought in through The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. The CSWO's responsibilities in relation to local authority social work functions continue to apply to functions which are being delivered by other bodies under integration arrangements. The appointment of a CSWO is a statutory requirement of the local authority.

The strategic direction for the role and contribution of social work and social care services in protecting and improving the wellbeing and outcomes of Midlothian residents sits within the context of community planning and the integration of health and social care. The Midlothian Community Planning Partnership deliver the Single Midlothian Plan 22-23 which has 3 outcomes:

- . Individuals and communities have improved health and learning outcomes
- . No child or household living in poverty
- . Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

Social work services in Midlothian are well established and are delivered between Midlothian Council and the Integrated Joint Board (IJB). Adult social work and social care services, including health visiting and school nursing services and justice social work are delegated to the IJB and delivered and managed within the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership. Children's social work services are managed within the council structure as part of the People and Partnership Directorate which includes Education and Community Lifelong Learning and Employability.

The role of the Chief Social Work Officer sits with the Chief Officer of Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities. The CSWO attends the IJB to ensure an overview of adult social work and social care as well as delegated children's services which include health visiting and school nursing. Having a children's services CSWO attend the IJB offers a different perspective to what is generally an adult and health-based agenda. Midlothian IJB is well established and evidences good governance and accountability. This arena allows for robust discussions around the pressures within both council and health services and for solutions to be agreed at a strategic level. The anomaly of having health visiting and school nursing out with children's services requires good engagement and communication between the services at all levels which is evident in the development and planning for the next iteration of the Integrated Children's Services Plan.

Within Midlothian we have a joint public protection committee across Midlothian and East Lothian. The Chief Social Work Officer attends the East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) as well as being a member of the Chief Scrutiny Oversight Group (CSOG) along with other Chief Officers and both Chief Executives.

This partnership allows for sharing of practice and learning across the public protection arena which includes adult support and protection, child protection, violence against women and girls and MAPPA. The inception of a joint public protection committee in 2014 means it is well established and has over the years evidenced robust challenge and scrutiny. An evaluation is due in 2023/24 to consider what works well and what we need to consider changing going forward. Given it is a public protection committee it is a large agenda and this is often an area of discussion for its members ensuring we give due diligence to all areas of work. The evaluation shall give us the opportunity to reflect on this and consider if there are different ways of doing business.

As COVID-19 pressures are beginning to ease within social care settings in particular, more care inspectorate activity has commenced. Within Midlothian this has resulted in several large scale investigations (LSIs) within care homes which have featured workforce as a significant issue, not unique to just Midlothian but Scotland as a whole. The need for agency staff which does not allow for a consistent staff team has and continues to be an area of concern.

The ongoing issue around VISOR within justice services remains, the information system that records information about registered sex offenders and the most violent offenders, has taken up a significant amount of time and resource and is a major area of concern. The Home Office wish to bring in a new system across Britain called MAPPS that may require all users to be vetted to a level that is way above what would normally be required within the local authority. There are significant concerns that many workers may refuse to be vetted to this level as it is very intrusive into their extended family life, also some workers may not pass the vetting process leading to a two tier workforce. Good and secure information sharing has always been and remains an area of ongoing debate, which without an agreement around how we do this in a safe and legal way does mean a potential risk to the local authority and wider public services if agreement cannot be reached.

The social work landscape is probably the busiest it has ever been with so many strategic drivers in all our service areas. It is difficult at times to fully grasp the impact of all the new developments, policies and agendas that come across the desk of a CSWO. This said it is vitally important that as leaders we are able to engage in strategic discussions so that we can influence policy and share any concerns we may have. As CSWO I attend fortnightly CSWO meetings where all 32 CSWO's from across Scotland discuss a very full agenda and offer our views around new initiatives, changes to legislation and any other relevant business. The Head of Adult Services who deputises as CSWO also attends and chairs groups at a national level that involve adult mental health and drug and alcohol groups. As CSWO I also chair the Social Work Scotland Children and Family standing committee which is a national group of not just social workers, but others involved in children and families work. In addition, many service managers across the three areas are involved in national arenas thereby sharing their own experiences and gaining knowledge and information from others which may be helpful in improving their own areas of work.

Within Midlothian I think as a senior social work group we have a good overview of national drivers and policies that impact on our service area. I think there is scope for improvement within our governance of social work services and at the time of writing we are considering developing a social work assurance group (SWAG), which would have an overview of policies and inspection work across social work. Another area to consider would be to hold an annual or biennial social work conference for all Midlothian social work and social care staff.

Duty of Candour

All social work and social care services in Scotland have a duty of candour. This is a legal requirement which means that when unintended, or unexpected events happen that result in death or harm as defined in Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016, the people affected understand what has happened, receive an apology and the organisations learn from the experience and put in place improvements.

An important part of this duty is the requirement for organisations to provide an annual statement detailing how the duty of candour is implemented across services. Between 1st April 2022 and 31 March 2023, there were no incidents in Midlothian where the duty of candour applied.

RESOURCES:

Financial pressures continue for local authorities and health services throughout the year with demands ever increasing. As the fastest growing local authority in Scotland the increase in families and older people residing within our communities is growing at a rate that far outweighs the resources we have to accommodate all the needs of those living within our communities.

Within children's services the shortage of foster carers across both the local authority and Scotland as a whole coupled with the ever-increasing demand upon us being mandated to receive unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) based on a rota basis is placing undue pressure on our local resources, with some local authorities having to pay external placements for their UASC at a significant cost to the local authority.

As a local authority our budget was agreed in February 2023 and whilst children's services were protected with no reduction in their funding allocation, the health and social care partnership did have a £1.3m reduction from their allocation offered by the local authority to the Integrated Joint Board. The impact of which will be borne out over the coming year.

The risks of any budget cuts are always an area for challenge and given the national picture where all local authorities are struggling to make ends meet it is difficult to envisage what services will look like in the future.

Going forward a concern around short-term funding pots which are being offered that align with key drivers such as the Promise do not allow for sustainable and long term change nor does it promote preventative work.

As CSWO I attend budget setting meetings in both the Council and the IJB and would assess that there are sufficient processes in place that allow me to share or voice any concerns around potential budget cuts that would impact or increase the risk to those we work with. I have monthly meetings with my Chief Executive and regular meetings with the Director of Health & Social Care which offers me the opportunity to raise any such concerns.

Within adult social care there are significant budget pressures one of which is attributable to demographic pressures within the learning disability population. These pressures arise from a combination of an increasing number of young people with complex needs transitioning to adult services and increased life expectancy as people with a learning disability live longer as a result of better healthcare. Whilst steps are being taken to manage this budget pressure, looking forward there may be a need to review eligibility criteria of the provision of services.

WORKFORCE:

Maintaining a consistent and skilled workforce has been another significant challenge particularly in the social care sector however social work has also been impacted. Within Midlothian we are fortunate to have a dedicated practice learning and development team which consists of a range of highly skilled and experienced

trainers, practitioners, assessors and administrative staff. The team skills are diverse and cover a range of training areas and development opportunities. Although the team sits under the Head of Adult Social Care, it also reports into other directorates including Children and Families services and Education due to the range of training delivered to staff in these other service areas.

As well as continually striving to deliver all the mandatory training to the social care staff across many services, additional training is offered and delivered to meet desirable and post qualifying training. Delivering some of the mandatory training to the social care teams has been particularly challenging due to high turnover of staff, availability of staff to attend the planned training and competing demands from different services. The learning and development team members are committed to delivering the mandatory training to attract maximum attendance so they have delivered bespoke sessions within service resources to reduce travel time for staff and fit in with rotas to be flexible and adaptable to the challenges each service has.

Despite these challenges there is a growing demand and take up of various learning opportunities. There are currently 88 people undertaking SVQ programmes from SCQF level 5 (SVQ 2) up to SCQF 10 (SVQ 4). This includes the Foundation Apprenticeships across Health and Social Care and Children and Families services, as well as the Modern Apprenticeships for staff in key roles such as Care Team Supervisors and Senior Practitioner posts. We have a range of Assistant Managers undertaking their SVQ 4 in Management and the success rate of those who stay on the programme is 100%. The SVQ Assessment Centre has recently developed in partnership with the Justice team an SVQ programme to enable people on the unpaid work programmes to engage on an SVQ programme to gain a qualification while completing their unpaid work placement.

Midlothian Council/HSCP provides up to 15 social work student placements per year across all the social work services and we have increased enthusiasm to undertake the Practice Educator training this year as well as the link supervisor training. We have received highly positive feedback from recent social work students stating they have felt supported, welcomed and motivated while on placement in Midlothian. The team have been working closely with Occupational Therapy (OT) services to support OT student placements by purchasing equipment to enable the OT students to be on placement and have digital access. There are 16 staff members across all social work services who are on a journey working towards a degree in social work. This ranges from commencing at stage 1 and undertaking modules with the Open University through to the final stages of the sponsorship which is over two years with two individual placements. This is the highest number ever achieved. The retention levels of staff who complete their social work degree through this route are far higher than those of social workers recruited externally into our services.

There are 8 staff signed up to undertake post graduate training through Stirling University covering Child Welfare and Protection, Leadership and Management, Practice Education and Mental Health Officer Training with Edinburgh University. This again is across a range of services.

There is now an established training resource at Hardengreen Business centre. This includes two dedicated training rooms – one of which is a moving and handling room but can also be used as a training room for small groups. The second training room can be adapted to either deliver training in a classroom style, world café style and/or an open space for training such as Team Teach or as our staff wellbeing sessions. The rooms have been carefully planned to maximise use and versatility with high tech smart screens, printer, and refreshment facilities. The third room is a smaller room which can be used for hot desks – 4 desks with docking stations. We have just received 3 iPads to launch our staff training support hub to encourage staff who are less confident with accessing LearnPro to come along and have support from a member of the learning and development team to complete their mandatory eLearning modules. We will commence a pilot with foster carers and care at home staff.

The recruitment of care staff in Adult Social Care remains challenging and is impacting service delivery both in directly provided and commissioned services. The impact of this is most evident in the time it takes to establish new packages of care and there can at time be a significant delay between people being assessed for a package of care and the support starting. Initiatives around recruitment and retention of staff are being progressed by most care providers.

Adult Mental Health Social Work Team:

The adult mental health social work team comprises of 4 full-time Mental Health Officers (MHO), 2 trainees, and 1 part-time social worker. The Older Adult Mental Health Social Worker Team comprises 4 full-time social workers and two community care assistants.

Throughout the financial year of 2022/23, both teams confronted numerous challenges, encompassing workforce exigencies and recruitment complications. In response, we have endeavoured to bolster staff development, training, and retention, augmenting the number of social workers within each respective team.

Over the past year there has been substantial advancements made in diminishing waiting lists:

- Welfare Guardianship Waiting List: Reduced from 60 to 16.
- Social Work Waiting List: Dementia Team waiting list reduced from 60 to 28, with the longest wait being 13 weeks.

With the impending return of MHO trainees and the enlistment of an additional social worker, our objective remains to maintain reduced waiting lists and provide a proactive and responsive service.

Quality and Performance Indicators

In order to ensure that we can offer assurance around our quality and performance indicators we have implemented the following measures:

- Weekly audits of waiting list data
- Mosaic (recording system) alerts for meticulous caseload management
- Regular outcome-focused supervision and case audits
- Monitoring feedback from service users to ensure satisfaction and efficacy.

This has resulted in a reduction in waiting lists. In addition we have offered additional training and investment in MHO personnel. We have strived to ensure we are working in a collaborative way through enhanced communication and clarity around our designated roles.

There remain challenges around IT systems limitations and workforce retention along with the scarcity of care packages following discharge from hospital back into the community as well as trying to avoid hospital admissions. The strain imposed on carers due to resource limitations as well as low numbers of care home placements and respite options across the local authority are ongoing.

Our aspirations for the forthcoming year are to further reduce waiting lists by providing a proactive response. Fostering collaboration with key stakeholders to address complex needs, such as housing.

- Emphasizing prevention and timely reviews of cases
- A focus on timely reviews of cases

- Developing services, encompassing training for carers and family members
- Participating in national groups and contributing to ground-breaking developments in the discipline

By adapting and refining our services, we aim to provide superlative support for individuals experiencing mental health challenges and their families, thereby improving overall well-being and societal outcomes.

The Learning Disability Team:

During the reporting period Midlothian reported no adults with a learning disability and complex care need either delayed in hospital or inappropriately placed out of area. This significant achievement is as a result of investment in specialised housing stock, having a Positive Behavioural Support Lead along with a training programme, coupled with working in partnership with third sector organisations. This meets our aspiration for people with complex needs to live locally with the right kind of specialist support close to their family and community.

This was celebrated at an event in June at the National Mining Museum. The event brought together providers and users of services for people with a learning disability across Midlothian to reflect on some of the challenges during COVID, to share some of the successes from that time, to look forward, and to think about the next stages of developing community capacity for people with the most complex needs.

Human Threads, a large scale, multi-sensory exhibition, at the Tramway contemporary arts venue in Glasgow, ran from May to September 2022. This represented the culmination of years of pioneering research and mutual learning by the Cherry Road Learning Centre in Bonnyrigg in partnership with Artlink Edinburgh and people with profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD), their families and support staff. Each artwork was developed with, and informed by, individuals with PMLD developing a shared language, a process of learning together, and breaking down barriers to involvement and inclusion.

The integrated Learning Disability Team has been a great success with closer collaborative working between Health and Social Care professionals increasing the shared knowledge about people and what is important to them. This has led to improved and individualised outcomes and more community based and creative solutions to support. A series of expert panels on Human Rights, Health, Housing, and Complex Care fed into our joint planning work ensuring that people with lived experience are central to the Strategic Planning process. A good example of this approach is a video created in collaboration with People First Midlothian. The film raises awareness of Quality of Life issues in learning disability care settings. In the film, People First members discuss what they value in relation to quality of care and how care might be improved. The film is used as part of an induction for new staff and ongoing professional development for existing staff to highlight quality of life issues in learning disability services.

Self-Directed Support

Development of social work practice in relation to Self-Directed Support continues to be an important area of work. The appointment of an SDS planning officer has helped take forward the implementation of SDS standards within Midlothian. An SDS planning group identified a number of priority areas for development that includes resource allocation systems and a system of accountability. Detailed work plans are being progressed in relation to the priority areas.

Carers

Work has been undertaken in partnership with VOCAL, a local carers support organisation, to increase the support for unpaid carers. VOCAL have been commissioned to undertake Adult Carer Support Plans meaning that unpaid carers can choose to have a plan completed by the HSCP or by VOCAL. Having VOCAL undertaking these plans helps ensure that carers can access the full range of support the HSCP commission VOCAL to provide.

Drug and Alcohol Related Deaths

Drug Misuse Deaths (DMD) and Alcohol Specific Deaths was recently published by the National Records of Scotland and both reports provide a detailed analysis of the Drug and Alcohol deaths at national, health board and local authority level.

In 2022 there was a significant reduction from 23 in 2021 to 4 in 2022, two male and two female a reduction of 19 on the previous year's figures. This total is the lowest for Midlothian since 2011. However, while welcome this is only a single year's figure with a three-year and five-year average being 16.

The Midlothian Substance Use Service [MLSUS], Mid and East Lothian Drugs [MELD] and Health In Mind Peer Support as part of MELDAP services are meeting the Medication Assisted Treatment [MAT] Standards 1 to 5 as required by the Scottish Government by March 2023. The services continue to progress these standards along with Standards 6 to 10 focused on the delivery of psychological support, advocacy and provision of treatment in Primary Care settings.

Alcohol Specific Deaths reported for Midlothian 2022 reported a slight reduction in the numbers of those who passed away 18 in 2021 to 17 in 2022. Though Midlothian welcome this slight reduction, the average reporting for Midlothian over a three-year and five-year average being 16.

The Midlothian Substance Use Service [MLSUS] and Mid and East Lothian Drugs [MELD] provide direct access to treatment and support for those affected by their or others alcohol use. Alongside working collaboratively and in partnership with other partners to improve access, and to support individuals into treatment and recovery.

Midlothian Services continues to deliver substantial harm reduction work to reduce the harm associated with substance uses as it continues to be a national priority,

incorporating the implementation and delivery of the 10 Medicated Treatment Standards (MAT). The financial investment into the services that has been received to support the delivery of the MAT standards in 2023 has improved access, reduced barriers and improved the effectiveness of the services delivered across the partnerships for the individuals, carers and families.

East and Midlothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership (MELDAP) continue to commission a wide range of services across Midlothian incorporating third sector; Peer and voluntary services in partnership and collaboration with the statutory Substance Use Service. The wide range of services in Midlothian are designed to be tailored for the individuals to best meet their needs and enable them to remain in treatment for as long as they wish to, this is through 1:1, assertive outreach, peer and psychosocial support to empower the individual to reach their person-centred goals and to safely manage their substance use and promote their recovery. Services continue to engage and support families and carers to address and support their needs.

Community Justice:

The Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 places a legal duty on a range of statutory partners to plan and decide on how services are delivered within Midlothian to support prevention and a reduction in the number of people reoffending following a previous conviction. This approach aims to address the underlying causes of offending behaviour and partners working with a range of individuals and organisations that have a role to play in community justice.

The current community justice outcome and improvement plan (CJOIP 2020-23) has now concluded and out of the 40 actions 38 have been completed with the remaining two carried forward to the new plan:

- increase awareness of the impact of childhood adversity in adults involved in the justice system
- increase engagement with education establishments including further education.

The new CJOIP (2023-28) is due to commence June 2023 and will include a range of actions based on need identified from the following sources: Strategic Needs & Strength Assessment; Public Consultations; Horizon Scanning exercise; lived experience focus groups; multi-agency partnership working. The plan has been developed with our range of partners, giving consideration to all elements of Community Justice and tackling issues that often hold significant societal stigmatisation which limits the core foundations of prevention and desistance within our communities. The plan outlines new and alternative approaches in supporting people affected by crime or that are involved with the Scottish Justice System through actively involving lived and living experiences; utilising specialist knowledge base; providing a contribution to knowledge; working with our young people.

In November 2022 the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) held their annual award ceremony in recognition of innovative people and work across the sector. Midlothian Community Justice were nominated and were subsequent winners of the 'Excellence in Justice Services SSSC award'. The award recognised the work to make justice services more focussed on survivors of crime. They consulted with a range of people currently living in the justice system and partnered with survivor organisations, such as Thriving Survivors, to ensure survivors of sexual harm are provided support to aid recovery. This work has been significantly influenced by survivor testimony and the team identified the importance of choice for people to tell professionals what they need; service driven need is often at odds with the needs of people in the justice system.

Restorative Justice (RJ)

They have co-facilitated two cases over this reporting period, the first restorative cases to take place in Midlothian.

Community Justice 2020-23 – Key Achievements

- Scottish Social Services Council Award winner for 'Excellence in Justice Services'
- Published 'The voices of those who have harmed' (2022) – A ground-breaking consultation exploring motivational factors of engaging in Restorative Justice for individuals that are in custody for a sexual offence(s)

- Community Justice project with Edinburgh College Media students in developing community awareness films on pertinent subjects including VAWG, Community Payback Orders; Restorative Justice
- Collaborative working with the VAWG Public Protection team to actively support 16 days of activism campaign and event

Justice Service

The national recruitment issues have impacted on the Justice Service and we have struggled to recruit to temporary posts. Despite this we have continued to provide a high level of service provision to ensure that residents of Midlothian can access a range of services at the earliest opportunity. This includes a range of support services and interventions that can be accessed prior to being placed on a court order/sentence.

Arrest Referral

This service is provided in partnership with 3rd sector partners Change Grow Live (CGL). CGL continued to provide arrest referral support via St Leonards police station and receive referrals from Police staff and nurses based in the custody suite.

Your Chance to Change

This service was formally known as Midlothian Families First and delivers the Caledonian Men's domestic abuse perpetrator programme on a non-court-mandated basis. The service was rebranded and relaunched in February 2023 and is now known as Your Chance to Change (YCTC). The relaunch of the service aims to place responsibility for the abusive behaviour upon the man, whilst providing hope that change is possible.

Women's Group Work Service – Midlothian Spring Service

The multi-disciplinary team have continued to develop the service work to enable us to continue to meet the needs of service users recognising the barriers to women accessing services. 32 women have been involved with or referred into the service over the last reporting year with lots of positive feedback about the impact the service has had on their lives. Spring continues to be delivered in partnership with NHS, Health in Mind, Shine and Women's Aid in addition to third sector organisations.

Community Payback Orders

Over the reporting year there were 169 Community Payback Orders (CPO) imposed. One outcome of a CPO is to consider a supervision requirement where the primary focus is to reduce and/or manage the risk of re-offending and of harm through providing the individual with opportunities to engage in a process of change; with the aim of increasing their ability to desist from offending in the future. A range of supports will be offered to support the service user to consider the triggers to their offending behaviour.

Another alternative is unpaid work. During the reporting year the team completed 278 projects benefitting 221 beneficiaries.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES:

Early Intervention & Prevention

Taking cognisance of the rapid growth within our local authority and the cost of living increase, it not surprising that over the past year we have seen a 9% increase in referral rates from 8287 to 9000. The largest increase in referral reason was for financial assistance (2140 to 2380 representing an 11% increase) followed by domestic abuse (1098 to 1206 representing a 10% increase).

In order to manage this rise we have reconfigured this part of the service and are also in the process of further scrutinising our referral data to consider how we can streamline the referral pathway into our service and build in pre-referral screening mechanisms in order to ensure that children and families are continuing to receive the right support at the right time.

We now have one dedicated Early Intervention and Prevention Development Officer who has continued to work closely with our secondary schools and with other partners, offering support to high schools as well as developing our whole systems approach to children and young people in conflict with the law. Locally we have seen a continued reduction in referrals being made to Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) on offence grounds since pre COVID from 42 (2019/20) to 24 (2022/23). Our nationally recognised partnership approach has supported us to creatively divert young people away from further re-offending.

Examples of this are our No Knives, Better Lives campaign delivered to over 1000 young people in all but one secondary schools across Midlothian. Partners from Police Scotland, Community Life-long learning and Education, Community Safety and Justice and 3rd sector Y2K project all supported this campaign.

Poverty

Referrals for financial assistance accounted for 26% of all referrals over the past year. Future work will consider how we with our partners better support families who are going to be most impacted by poverty. Within the service we employ income maximisation workers, who have worked with families whose children are either on the Child Protection register or who are Looked after at Home, this work has contributed to families receiving their correct benefits equating to a financial gain of over £360k over the past two years.

Child Protection and Looked After

Despite the rise in overall referrals into children's services and an associated rise in child protection referrals (719 – 784, representing a 9% increase) we continued to maintain our average number of children on the child protection register in line with the Scottish average. This continues to indicate that our models of early intervention are working.

We are in the process of implementing the National Child Protection Guidance (2021) into practice and are revising our Child Protection Procedures accordingly.

We continue to embed the Safe and Together model into practice to keep people, primarily women and children, safe from domestic abuse and we are working collaboratively with the Domestic Abuse Improvement Service with a focus on evaluating outcomes in order to inform improvement planning over the coming year.

We have also continued to embed the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) into practice despite the lack of funding to backfill social workers who undertake extensive training in order to take on this role. Feedback is evidencing that the model is supporting better outcomes for children involved in child protection investigative processes. We plan on training a further worker to undertake SCIM interviews in order to ensure that all joint investigative interviews of children are undertaken using a trauma informed approach.

We have been a key partner to developing a Neglect toolkit for practitioners and have been working with the NSPCC to roll out the framework for harmful sexual behaviour. Both of these will be supported into practice over the course of 23/24.

Our looked after population of children and young people seen a 7% decrease over the 2022/23 year reporting period. This data needs to take cognisance that it is taken as a snapshot on a certain day, mindful that the number can change on a daily basis. However, underlying this is the proportionate and considered approach staff are taking before accommodating any child or young person. These figures do not fully evidence the significant amount of work that happens prior to families reaching this threshold of intervention. However, our culture and ethos supports the Promise principles of scaffolding families and offering support when and where they require this.

Our Reviewing Officers offer quality assurance over all children's plans who are looked after away from home and those on a compulsory supervision orders at home.

Hawthorn Family Learning Centre (HFLC)

Over the past year our new structure at HFLC has continued to embed into practice. This new structure has increased our staffing numbers to enable the service to support more families in a flexible and responsive manner. Despite there being a great deal of change in staffing the service has continued to develop and meet the needs of the children and families who attend. The centre has operated at full capacity with 78 children registered to attend, in addition outreach support has also continued.

Group support and learning continues to be offered daily to both families attending at the centre and to the wider community. We have continued to run our community group, PEEP and PEEP pathways throughout the year and held a pop-up vaccination centre with 72% of eligible children receiving their flu vaccination. We also ran a Kic dance programme where 24 children attended.

The centre has also been able to continue to offer support to children services with specific interventions including pre-birth support, family time, parenting capacity assessments and building parental resilience. Staff development sessions are held

monthly with other training opportunities and development sessions held at other times.

Children with additional support needs

The significant increase in numbers of children requiring additional support is concerning. Whilst the impact of this does not sit with children's services alone, staffing issues, lack of experience in this area of work and the dearth of resources within our communities available for children and their families are worrying. Self-Directed support is available if families meet the criteria, however demand for services far outstrips availability. Going forward we need to future plan for children and young people presenting with additional supports within our communities.

Post covid-19 it appears that children and young people experiencing poor mental health has increased resulting in significant numbers of young people not attending school and, in some instances, remaining in their bedroom due to anxiety. We continue to build relationships with colleagues in education and partner agencies to offer a flexible response to each individual's needs. We are also ensuring that staff feel supported and have committed to all staff having training and awareness on trauma informed practice.

We have continued to develop our Corporate Parenting Strategy, engaging with children and young people and partners across the local authority and beyond to really make a difference to children's lives. An example of this is our commitment as a local authority to ensure that care experienced young people who are ready to leave their care placement are supported to undertake training working towards securing their own permanent tenancy. Following a 3-year pilot undertaken by the National Housing Project we are as a local authority continuing this approach due to the unprecedented success of the last 3 years.

Family Wellbeing Service

This is a new service which recruited 12 practitioners who shall offer holistic support to families at the earliest point of contact. The service commenced in January 2023 so is at the very early stages of identifying where it fits with the wider services. The funding for this team has come from Scottish Government through the Promise work. Our education colleagues have also helped fund this team so that we can support children and young people back into full time education, in particular offering additional support to those who are suffering from anxiety or other mental health concerns.

Family Centered Care

In line with the Promise language group we changed the name of the Family Placement team to Family Centered Care. This team focuses on the recruitment and supporting foster carers, kinship carers and the recruitment of adopters. The recruitment of foster carers has and continues to be a local and national challenge. At the time of writing this report we are still awaiting on an agreed national allowance from Scottish Government that all foster and kinship carers would receive across

Scotland. In November 2022 we began recording whether or not we were able to place siblings together knowing that the Promise team via Scottish Government were going to request this data from August 2023. It is important to state that social workers would not choose to separate siblings but often this is resource driven and also restrictions placed upon us by the Care Inspectorate. Over the reporting year there has been significant staffing issues within the fostering and adoption team.

Additional pressures on our foster carers and residential houses has come from the increase in numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) we have been mandated to take by the home office. If the numbers continue to rise, we shall very shortly be unable to accommodate any more children within Midlothian and shall have to consider purchasing external placements. Once again this is a national issue impacting on most local authorities.

Residential Services

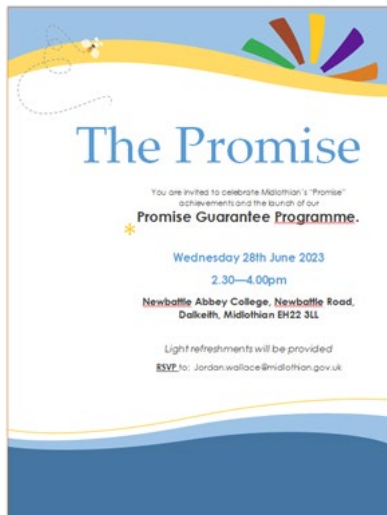
We have two children's houses within Midlothian. They support up to 9 young people aged from 9-18 who reside there. Many of the older young people move onto the Midlothian Housing Project to work towards their own permanent tenancy. In November 2022, the Care Inspectorate visited both houses in Gorebridge and Woodburn and rated the homes overall as '**very good**', a significant and well deserved achievement for the staff team.

Young Carers

We have worked alongside our Communities and Lifelong Learning colleagues to support 183+ young carers from the local community. A residential stay was offered as well as many group activities over the year. We have two dedicated workers in place to support young carers through an ongoing programme of work. We continue to identify and offer support all young carers.

The Promise

In February 2023 we created a new Promise Lead post to support the work of the Promise. Since taking up post our Promise Lead has made significant headway in terms of reaching out across the council and wider agencies. They have prioritised attending the Community of Interest meetings which offer opportunities to keep informed of the national picture and feed this back into our local planning. Within Midlothian we have launched 'keeping the promise in Midlothian' and the Promise guarantee which cemented all the progress and planning together. The action plan sits alongside this as our promise to our young people. The Promise Delivery group is well established and meets every 8 weeks, this allows a clear focus on our action plans aims and objectives ensuring that all partners are committed and contributing.



Our amazing young people created an animation of what the Promise means to them - https://youtu.be/jhr_q1P4WoQ

Mental Health

The Midlothian Children & Young People's Mental Health Strategic Planning Group oversees the allocation of funding and the delivery of early action and prevention services through its administration of the Community Support & Services Framework (Mental Health & Wellbeing) – a funding tranche distributed to local authorities from Scottish Government on an annual basis.

Between April 2022 and March 2023 the Framework funded over 240 children and young people and 50 family members/carers to access supports and services. Beneficiaries have reported improvements to mental health and wellbeing, in confidence and resilience, and to school attendance and learning engagement following their participation in a range of activities including art and supported play therapy, family counselling and therapeutic support, and highly personalised creative development placements. Further Scottish Government funding is provided for the ongoing delivery of a commissioned School Counselling Service which provided support to more than 400 children and young people during the same period, through one-to-one sessions, drop-ins and small group work.

Strategic Structure for East & Midlothian Public Protection - EMPPC

Through the **Critical Services Oversight Group (CSOG)**, the Chief Officers of our core partners provide strategic leadership, scrutiny, governance and direction to EMPPC. CSOG is co-chaired by Monica Patterson, Chief Executive of East Lothian Council and Grace Vickers, Chief Executive of Midlothian Council.

The **East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC)** is the local strategic partnership responsible for the overview of policy and practice in relation to Adult Support & Protection, Child Protection, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Violence Against Women and Girls. The primary aim of the Committee is to provide leadership and strategic oversight of Public Protection activity and performance across East Lothian and Midlothian. It discharges its functions through four sub-groups. Since the inception of EMPPC in 2014 the Chair was Anne Neilson, Director of Public Protection, NHS Lothian, until she stepped down from the role in early 2023. An Independent Chair was recruited in the early part of 2023, with Keith Mackay taking up the appointment from April 2023.

The **Learning and Practice Development Sub-group (L&PD Sub-group)** oversees the development and delivery of the Learning and Development strategy, and our multi-agency training programme. Our Chair for the year was Fiona Stratton, Chief Nurse, Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership.

The **East Lothian and Midlothian MAPPA Group (EMMG)** ensures that the statutory responsibilities placed on local partner agencies for the assessment and management of risk posed by offenders subject to MAPPA are discharged effectively. The Chair was Judith Tait, Chief Social Work Officer/Chief Operating Officer, Children's Services, East Lothian Council, until she departed from her post in March 2023. The Chair for the coming year will be Lindsey Byrne, Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Children's Services, East Lothian Council.

The **Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group (P&QI Sub-group)** is responsible for the oversight and governance of the performance framework and improvement plan. The Chair is Joan Tranent, Chief Social Work Officer/Chief Operating Officer Children's Services, Communities and Partnerships, Midlothian Council.

The **Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group (VAWG Delivery Group)** works to support the delivery of Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls in line with the local context and priorities. The Chair was Keith Mackay, Detective Chief Inspector, J Division, Police Scotland, until his departure from his role in March 2023. Steve Wood, (Temporary) Detective Chief Inspector, J Division, Police Scotland has taken over as Chair.

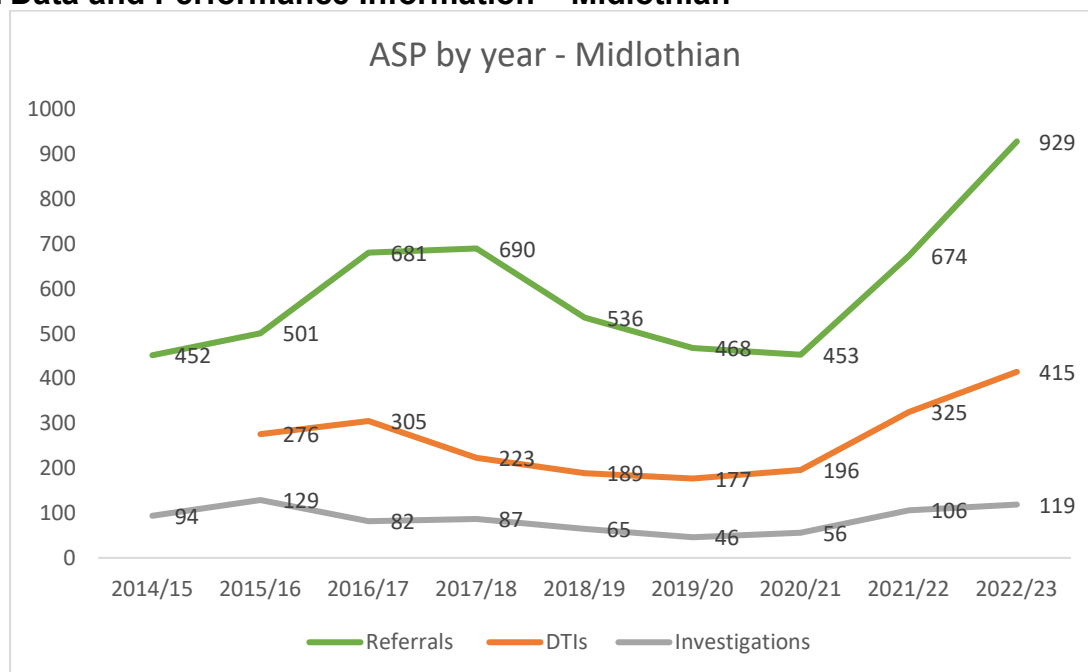
EMPPC Priorities

The EMPPC business plan was presented to EMPPC in June 2022, with 38 actions under the following five priorities/high level aims:

1. We will continue to strengthen our leadership arrangements in Public Protection
2. We will provide and support the implementation of multi-agency procedures and guidance for staff working in Public Protection
3. We will continue to develop our performance framework and approach to quality improvement
4. We will promote a learning culture by providing staff with multi-agency learning and development opportunities in Public Protection
5. We will raise awareness of Public Protection through communications and engagement with staff and communities.

Adult Support and Protection

1.1 Data and Performance Information – Midlothian



Adult services saw an increase of 225 referrals in the year, which is a 37.8% increase from the previous year. In the two years since the beginning of the pandemic lockdown, this is a referral increase of over 100%. There was an increase of 90 (27.7%) DTIs. This had implications for resource management and the need to strengthen the Council Officer duty rota arrangements out with the dedicated ASP team. We will progress plans to increase the support/training and learning opportunities for all Council Officers and their line managers in the coming year to support ASP work.

Child Protection

The table below illustrates the number and rate per 1,000 children on the Child Protection Register on 31st July 2022. We have seen a substantial decrease in Midlothian in the past ten years, and a further reduction in the year prior to 31st July 2022. The greatest decrease of children on the Child Protection Register was Midlothian and Clackmannanshire.

Number and rate per 1,000 children on the Child Protection Register at 31st July 2022

2012 number	2012 rate	2021 number	2021 rate	2022 number	2022 rate
East Lothian	62 3.3	29 1.5		41 2.1	
Midlothian	117 7.5	38 2.1		24 1.3	
Scotland	2,698 2.9	2,119 2.3		2,031 2.2	

In both Midlothian and East Lothian, the most common reasons over the year were parental drug misuse, domestic abuse, emotional abuse and parental mental health problems. Within Midlothian, the most common reasons were domestic abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and parental mental health problems. This corresponds with the national picture where the most common concerns identified at Case Conferences of children registered during the year were: domestic abuse, neglect, parental substance misuse and parental mental health problems.

Violence Against Women & Girls

There was a slight decline in the number of incidents of domestic abuse reported by police over the year in comparison to the previous year to around 1127 incidents. Common assault is the most common type of crime recorded as a result of a domestic incident. The number of offences recorded under Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in both East and Midlothian combined more than doubles over the past year suggesting increased awareness in its provisions.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

MAPPA brings together professionals from the Police, Social Work, Housing, Health and the Scottish Prison Service in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Scottish Borders. These agencies are known as the 'responsible authorities'. While the arrangements are co-ordinated by a central unit based in Edinburgh, the practical management of offenders remains the responsibility of these agencies at a local level.

Within Midlothian, the total number of sex offenders subject to MAPPA over the reporting period ranged from 52 to 55 in the year.

The oversight and governance of the effectiveness of multi-agency working arrangements within Midlothian continues to be reviewed on a quarterly basis through random selection of cases managed by Police and Justice Social Work. A programme of audit is in place, supported by the MAPPA Co-ordinator for Lothians and the Scottish Borders.

Looking Forward to 2023-24

Social work and social care services in Midlothian remain committed to striving to achieve a supportive learning culture which promotes the importance of reflective conversations and relationships in delivering change for individuals, teams, and services.

Work is underway to look at a redesign of adult social work, bringing together the many small teams and developing a more holistic and flexible approach to those that require support from adult services.

Within Children's Services there will be a strong focus on developing the family wellbeing service and working towards improving outcomes for children and their families at the earliest point of contact.

Working with our colleagues in adult services we shall continue to develop and improve our transition policy to ensure that young people transition between children's services, education and adult services will do so in a seamless manner ensuring the right support at the right time. In addition we shall be developing and monitoring our improvement plan for any inspections held over the coming year.

In terms of the wider context, we will track progress in respect of the development of the proposal for a National Care Service noting that further consideration of the Bill by Parliament is now due in early 2024 following the publication of evidence reviews relating to the reform of children and justice services. This will be in addition to the many other national drivers that we are required to take forward within each of our areas of work.

Conclusion


This report offers a high-level summary of some key developments, improvements and challenges across social work and social care services in Midlothian during 2022-23.

The operating environment for social work and social care remains both complex and fluid with a high degree of uncertainty regarding the future arrangements for service delivery and governance as well as a busy legislative and policy development landscape, challenges in relation to workforce capacity and availability, constrained resource availability and increased demand.

The report highlights clear challenges in relation to unmet need and a requirement to continue to improve timely access to services within our communities. Maintaining a balance of focus and prioritisation of the provision of support for people in the community, alongside facilitation of prompt discharge from inpatient care, will be of critical importance in the coming year.

Despite the challenges social work and social care services face across Midlothian, in conjunction with our third sector providers we continue to evidence a high level of commitment in providing good quality care that empowers, supports and protects people.

Appendix

 EMPPC Annual Report 2022-23

EMPPC Annual Report