



Dumfries and Galloway

Child Protection

Biennial Report 2022 - 2024

Foreword from PPC Chair

I am proud to introduce this, my second biennial report, at the end of my third year as chair of Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee. This report continues to detail the innovative approach that partners have taken across Dumfries and Galloway to protect those who are at risk in our communities, whilst facing challenges from many directions.

We face and will continue to face significant challenges that have impacts on communities, staff and partner organisations that are unprecedented in nature. From the impact of wars, cost of living crisis, pandemic recovery, a divergent national agenda and the significant resourcing pressures, staff across all partners have continued to support, work with, listen to and be there for those who need them most. It is important that this commitment is recognised, and I wish to formally thank them all for their contributions.

I also wish to recognise the Chief Officers Group who continue to effectively lead the wider Public Protection Partnership, and now meet monthly to receive, review and scrutinise all the public protection activity across the partnership. It is significant that the chief officers also agreed our first three-year strategic plan strategic plan for 2024-2027, which, after a process of robust research, analysis, and consultation, identified our priorities to be:

- Lived Experience
- Self-Neglect
- Sexual Harm
- Multi Agency Chronologies and Information Sharing

The strategy sets a framework for moving forward with our Public Protection responsibilities and sits across our three core pillars of Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, and Violence against Women and Girls. I am delighted that the chief officers have committed to this approach and that each has taken personal responsibility for the delivery of these priorities.

The past two years have also seen considerable progress in the development of a Performance and Quality Assurance Framework for the Partnership. Its introduction and the development of a unique set of indicators for our Violence against Women and Girls agenda, brings closer alignment across the partnership, and provides a sound basis for the analysis of information that will assist the partnership to make important decisions moving forward.

Finally, I must record special thanks to Lillian Cringles, who retired as Chief Social Work Officer in 2023. Lillian was a key architect in implementing the public protection approach in Dumfries and Galloway, an approach that is now being replicated across Scotland. I thank her for her constant support during my time in post and wish her all the very best in her retirement.



**Hamish McGhie, Independent
Chair, Dumfries and Galloway
Public Protection Committee**



Introduction

In Dumfries and Galloway, partners have a Public Protection Partnership (PPP) and Public Protection Committee (PPC) structure. This is a multi-agency approach that assumes responsibility for the strategic development and oversight of services to those most vulnerable people who are at risk of significant harm. PPC has the responsibility to implement the strategic direction and prioritisation across all public protection activity and focuses on children and vulnerable groups at risk working to ensure effective practice and arrangements are in place, whilst managing areas of overlap.

Reporting to the Chief Officers Group: Public Protection (COG: PP) who provide governance across the partnership, the Public Protection Committee shapes the delivery and review of multi-agency child protection work through oversight of multi-agency performance, assuming responsibility for the development and delivery of relevant services. Section 46 of The Adult Support and Protection Act (Scotland) 2007 Act requires the Convenors of Adult Protection Committees to produce a biennial report analysing, reviewing, and commenting on APC functions and activities in the preceding two years. The Public Protection Committee fulfils that obligation and provides this Child Protection biennial report to be complementary to that commentary and is structured to mirror and align with the statutory requirements of that biennial report.





Executive Summary

This report contains an overview of the work of Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee (PPC) over the last two years and considers not only our progress and improvement in relation to supporting children and their families across the region, but also the challenges we have faced across our partnership because of the environmental and social pressures faced. This includes ongoing demand on all our statutory and non-statutory services amidst a backdrop of staffing and resource shortages. Despite this, we have continued to work creatively using a relationship and strengths-based practice approach to support families to become more resilient and enabled to move forward with strengthened support networks.

In Dumfries and Galloway, we have a well-established Public Protection model which supports a coordinated approach to the afore mentioned challenges, and suits the rural nature of our area, minimising duplication. As a PPC we remain focused on a programme of self-evaluation and improvement, ensuring those who work directly with children and their families in our communities are involved in this important work. The development of a three-year strategic plan, public protection data dashboard, Performance and Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF) and our self-evaluation calendar, supports us to take stock of challenges and focus resource where it is most required. The Multi-Agency Child Protection self-evaluation took place in Autumn 2022 and the improvement plan created, has driven much of our improvement work in the last two years. A further self-evaluation across child protection, pre-birth and domestic abuse will take place in Autumn 2024 where we will measure this improvement and identify areas for development.

We have continued to respond to local initiatives and embrace national change. Dumfries and Galloway has maintained prominence across the country in relation to the Child Protection Minimum Dataset, leading and supporting others in their implementation and improvements for change. Our systemic quality assurance and scrutiny practices enable in depth understanding of our child protection work, as well as identifying

correlation across other areas of protection to enable better insight and targeted action in relation to the issues affecting children and their families. We have decided to gather data together with our comparator areas in Scotland to provide further information and understanding of the issues affecting other areas of similar size and geography to our own.

There has been considerable work in relation to the local implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023). A designated implementation group was mandated by the PPC to lead and oversee this work which has seen full implementation of the key changes within the national guidance. Our self-evaluation activity focuses on central processes and ensuring we are upholding children's rights and working collaboratively with families.

We recognise the importance of learning and development and how this can be particularly challenging when resources and staffing are impacted by national and local crisis. Our PPC remains committed to supporting staff and delivering a varied learning and development calendar, including Public Protection week 2025. The latter follows on from this year's success with positive feedback from those who attended the many diverse presentations on offer. Trauma informed practice is fundamental to how we support children and their families and our staff across the Partnership. We continue to work towards trauma informed organisations within Dumfries and Galloway and ensuring staff receive training opportunities as appropriate.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, as a Public Protection Partnership we seek to reach our aspirations by working in true partnership, at both an operational and strategic level, with those who are experts by experience. To maximise self-evaluation processes, learning and development opportunities and to have effective and more meaningful communication, we acknowledge that we must elevate lived experience through partnering with families and communities to achieve further improvement to the services we provide.



Public Protection Committee

What your data tells you

Following on from Dumfries and Galloway being a formal learning partner, Version 2 of the Child Protection Minimum Dataset has followed the launch of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 and is now adopted into operational practice in Dumfries and Galloway. The data, charts, tables and scrutiny questions contained in the report allow for robust analysis of the information and identification of headline messages and potential implications which are then highlighted to the PPC and COG.

In the reporting period (August 2022 – July 2024) there were 9,234 children referred to Children and Families Social Work with 1834 (20%) of these related to children in need of protection. This shows a reduction of the number of children referred to Children and Families in 2020/22 of 13,668 however, a change in the way we record children referred has impacted on these numbers. In 2020/22 reporting period 2,126 (16%) of these referrals related to children in need of protection. The proportion of child protection referrals has increased by 4% in 2022/24.

Over this reporting period (August 2022 - July 2024) we have amended the definition of a child protection referral to mirror a change in our recording processes - from referrals that require an Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD) to the number of referrals made to the Child Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Future reporting was amended to provide additional trend data on the number of concerns coming into Child MASH and how many of those require an IRD. The purpose is to be able to evidence demand on services and allow us to monitor thresholds for decision-making alongside our IRD quality assurance data. It therefore should be noted that the child protection referral data for 2020/22 will look different from that published in our previous Biennial Report, as for comparison purposes within this report we are using the new definition for both 2020/22 & 2022/24 reporting periods.

In 2022/24, 990 children were considered at IRD. 630 children required a Child Protection Investigation (CPI), resulting in 297 Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPMs).

As of 31st July 2024, there were fifty-one children on the Child Protection Register, with the most prevalent risk factors being emotional abuse and neglect. The most prominent vulnerability factors were domestic abuse and parental mental ill-health.

Table 1: Comparison of Child Protection Activity from 2020/22 to 2022/24

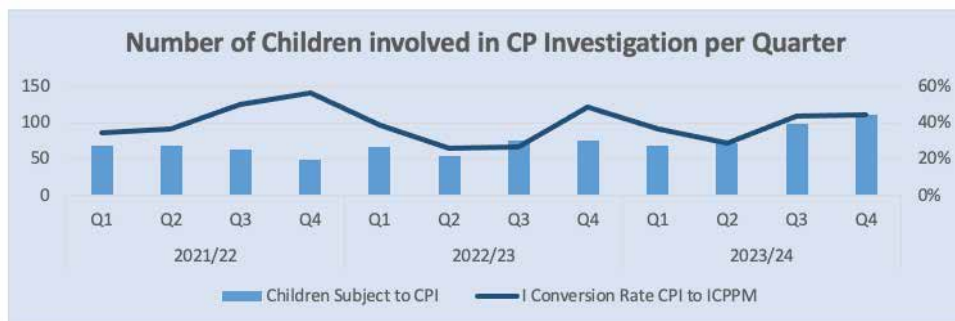
| Child Protection Activity | 2020/22 | 2022/24 | Percentage Change (2020/22 to 2022/24) |
|---|---------|---------|--|
| Children Referred to MASH | 2,126 | 1,851 | -13% |
| Children discussed at IRD | 1,022 | 990 | -3% |
| Children considered at CPI | 518 | 630 | 22% |
| Children considered at Initial CP Planning Meetings (ICPPM) | 169 | 297 | 76% |
| Children Newly Registered | 140 | 177 | 26% |

Through the reporting period the number of children who have required a CPI has risen from 518 children in 2020/22 to 630 children in 2022/24, an increase of 22%. This led to an increase in children progressing to an ICPPM and then becoming newly registered on the Dumfries and Galloway Child Protection register. As part of regular quality assurance activity, review of Child Protection Investigations did not find any concerns in relation to decision making with the most recent audit findings reporting all were assessed as good or above. Partners were assured that decisions were



found to demonstrate clear analysis of the risks, protective factors and proportionate to the concerns identified. There was evidence of detailed recording and information on risk analysis as well as the child, young person and their family's views central to support and risk planning. The change in delivery model in children and families social work in February 2024, with one child protection team, is expected to improve consistency in both quality and approach to child protection work.

Chart 2. Number of Children discussed at Child protection Investigation by Quarter: 2022-2024



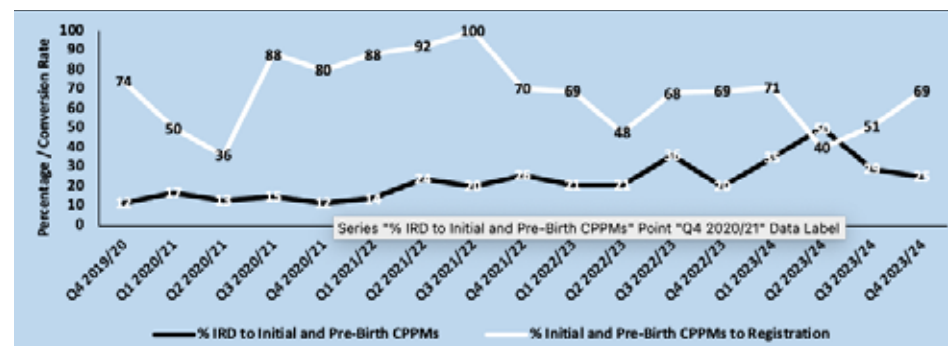
There has been a small increase in the number of young people aged 16-17 years, following changes in local processes from November 2022, reflecting implementation of the updated National Child Protection Guidance which includes children up to the age of 18 years. Previously, young children over sixteen were automatically subject to the ASP processes, however with changes within the National guidance, 16-17 year olds are considered within child protection processes alongside adult colleagues to ensure the best legislative route is used according to the young person's circumstances. The change to consideration under child protection processes is an important one as it ensures that children in the older age bracket are identified and considered as children and therefore carry the full rights of the UNCRC. As

well as changing perspectives and beliefs about children at risk of harm, this change challenges misconceptions regarding older children placing themselves at risk. Scrutiny of quarterly data shows increasing numbers of older children considered under child protection processes, which is a positive reflection of the action being taken to protect children of all ages.

Parental Drug Use has also been identified as a prevalent vulnerability factor over the reporting period. Data on Child Protection is regularly shared with Dumfries and Galloway Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) to inform scrutiny at the Children & Families (C&F) ADP Group to allow identification of any further areas of focus. Specialist Drug and Alcohol Services input to child protection planning meetings and safety planning, and adult protection case conferences.

Chart 3. Conversion of IRD to Child Protection Planning Meeting and Children subject to Child Protection Planning Meeting to Registration by Quarter: 2022-2024

Scrutiny was undertaken regarding a perceived drop in the conversion



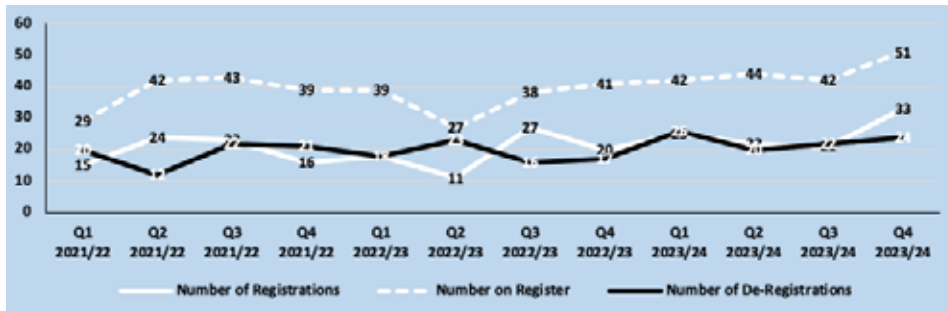
of initial and pre-birth planning meeting to registration and assurances given that decisions not to register children under child protection were appropriate. Despite this, it was agreed that annual multi-agency evaluation



of planning meetings alongside ASP case conferences would take place to enable more systemic assurance of the quality of thresholds, decision making and risk planning. This will strengthen the programme of multi-agency quality assurance in our existing self-evaluation calendar.

Chart 4: Number of Children Newly Registered, on the Child Protection Register and De-Registered by Quarter: 2022-2024

There have also been five re-registrations in 2022/24 compared to none in the previous reporting period. Cases have been reviewed by Social Work



Senior Managers who provided assurance that there are no issues regarding safety planning between registrations that would indicate legitimate reasons as to why these families have come back through child protection process. Recognition was given that this will occur occasionally and may be a positive as, in some cases, families themselves referred into social work, which is reflective of their relationship with services and confidence to seek support.

The data shows prevalence in vulnerability factors such as domestic abuse increasing from twenty-one children affected in 2020/22 to 31 children affected in 2022/24: an increase of 48%. In 2022/24, families were most

affected by domestic abuse and parental mental ill-health, impacting on the emotional and physical wellbeing of children and young people. Targeted audit and self-evaluation activity looking at children affected by domestic abuse will continue through 2024/25. Current mental health pathways can be limited where individuals are not open to mental health services and referrals into social work are not always appropriate. Further work to improve processes will continue into the next reporting period.

Over the last year the quality of Child IRDs has been in the majority (88%) good and above. Recommendations from IRD were clearly linked to identified needs and risks in 81% of those audited, with consideration where appropriate given to safety planning where concerns were identified for other children.

From May 2023, the Child IRD Review Group commenced tripartite review of decision making in child protection investigations as part of their 6-weekly systemic audit of IRDs. To date, 94% of CPIs assessed the quality of decision making as good or above. Decision making was proportionate to the harm identified with clear direction provided on next steps.

As part of the scheduled self-evaluation calendar work, a multi-agency child protection self-evaluation was undertaken in Autumn 2022 and the final report presented to PPC in August 2023. This included 5 days of extensive case file reading, followed by a series of staff and leadership focus groups and consultations. Thereafter, the multi-agency Steering Group undertook a mapping exercise to identify and consider the findings against all development and improvement work undertaken since the period reviewed and used this to identify the actions to be carried out in response to the findings. All actions identified have been directed towards existing groups, primarily PPC, its sub committees and GIRFEC Leadership Group, to ensure alignment to strategic plans and sustainable prioritisation and improvement.



The dedicated Child Protection Scrutiny Group, reports to the Performance, Quality and Improvement (PQI) sub-committee of the PPC. The group has responsibilities to scrutinise and analyse child protection performance data, provide exception reporting for consideration of PQI and to highlight areas of improvement work for consideration. This model is replicated across Adult Support and Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls, with cross-cutting data analysis undertaken across all three pillars of Public Protection. This has been pivotal to identify and analyse themes and trends in our data to support planning the refreshed Public Protection Strategic Plan 2024-27. Extensive consultation with staff across the Public Protection Partnership has been undertaken to ensure a robust and transparent process.

The Public Protection Strategy was published in April 2024 along with and aligned to an approved Performance and Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF). The Performance Framework merged with our existing Quality

Assurance Framework as both complement one another in supporting our cycle of improvement, providing an effective way to measure both our performance and quality assurance together.

Performance Indicators outlined in the PQAF will form the core data included in both the PPC Dashboard and Chief Officers Group (COG) Dashboard. This development will ensure we have the capability to review and monitor performance information on both a monthly and quarterly basis with exception reporting available for PPC and COG to consider as appropriate.

Development of multi-agency dashboards has not been without challenges as different systems and resources across agencies make automation of data into one dashboard difficult. We recognise there is work to streamline data collection with continuous improvement to business systems where new and improved data recording is made.

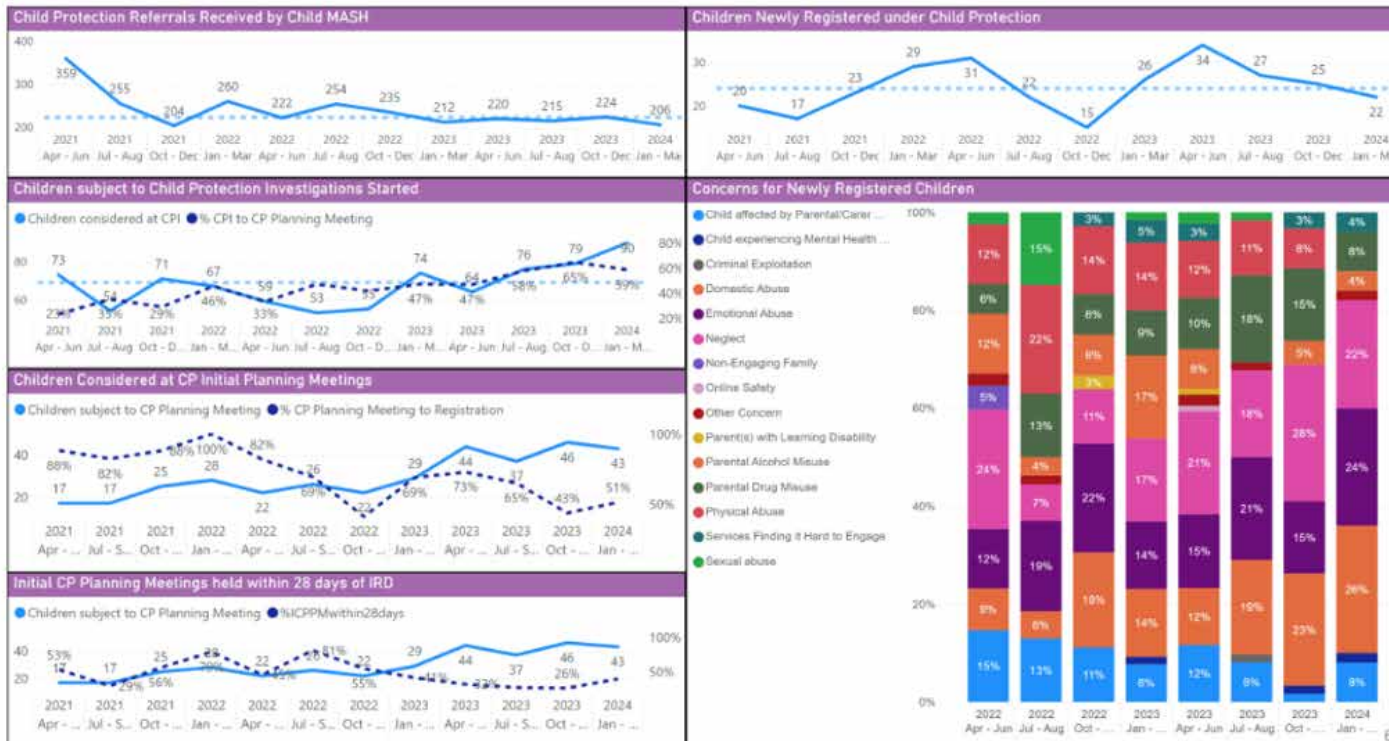




Chart 5 – Quarterly Child Protection Performance Activity Dashboard Illustration



Child Protection Activity





Outcomes, achievements, and service improvements

This section of the report reflects on how services have been improved to reduce the risk of harm to children and young people as well as some of the challenges we have faced in continuing to deliver multi-agency services whilst recovering from a global pandemic and experiencing a cost-of-living crisis. We pledged that the partnership would continue to work to prioritise our understanding and awareness to support those who faced increasing pressures and risked financial and cost of living challenges. The 2020 – 2022 Child Protection Biennial Report identified the following priority activity areas in addition to wider core activity across the public protection agenda:

- Sexual exploitation, Human trafficking,
- Domestic Abuse
- Financial harm
- Neglect, self-neglect, and hoarding.
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Dumfries and Galloway PPC has taken significant steps by identifying sexual harm as a priority for the Partnership over the next 3 years (2024-27). Work is underway to identify current good practice in Dumfries and Galloway.

We are reviewing all our policy and guidance in relation to sexual harm to ensure practitioners know the signs and how to respond to support vulnerable children and young people. An overarching Sexual Harm Strategy will be produced which will be clear about our mission and plan of action to reduce sexual harm within Dumfries and Galloway.

The PPC recognises that the online threat to children and young people is greater than ever and that many instances of cybercrime are unreported. There have been communications to increase awareness utilising communications pathways and the Public Protection website and disseminated across the partnership to emphasise the risk to children and to promote vigilance. This has included a briefing on 'Online Safety Act (2023) Harmful Sexual Behaviours Online' and raising awareness through the Child

Sexual Abuse awareness campaign 'What If You're Right?'. Our staff training and child protection guidance describes CSE and focusses on the signs and indicators to ensure that everyone is aware of behaviour that might indicate that a child is being harmed. We will aim to ensure that children who experience this abuse are given the support they need to heal.

Human Trafficking

Being a rural area with borders to Northern Ireland and England, processes have long been in place regarding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and trafficked children coming into the area. The full rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are principal to all actions taken and every child is provided with the safety and care given to any UK national. An estimated 40% of unaccompanied children in the United Kingdom have experienced trafficking and exploitation. Trafficking can feature many different types of abuse, including sexual and criminal and labour exploitation.

An age-assessment might be required when it is difficult to tell if the young person is a child or an adult. These assessments are carried out by social workers trained in completing these complex assessments. Within the age assessment process, if it is deemed possible that the young person has been trafficked, and it is reasonable to believe that they are a child under 18 years old, child protection procedures are followed. Communicating with the young person appropriately to reduce the risk of further trauma is key, as well as to ensure they understand the reason for the age assessment. Translation services are arranged and for the interpreter to be physically present. Any child suspected to have been trafficked becomes a Looked After Child of the local authority. The Policy and Procedure Sub-Committee has written Trafficking guidance to support staff to recognise the signs of trafficking.



Domestic Abuse and the Safe and Together approach

Dumfries and Galloway has adopted the Safe and Together model and continues to rollout training across practitioners. The model was introduced in Dumfries and Galloway to develop competency and confidence when working with families affected by domestic abuse. The model reflects a trauma informed, relationship-based approach. The PPC recognises that living with domestic abuse significantly impacts a child's emotional development and increases the risk of physical harm. The PPC wants to ensure that the experience of children affected by domestic abuse and coercive control is captured and that all work with perpetrators is focussed on their pattern of behaviour and holds them to account regarding their parenting choices which are impacting on their children.

The Dumfries and Galloway Multi-Agency Domestic Abuse Protocol is complete. The protocol will support staff working to achieve better outcomes for families affected by domestic abuse and outlines guiding principles in responding to domestic abuse in Dumfries and Galloway. Domestic abuse is a cross-cutting issue; it does not discriminate based on age, disability, sexual orientation, cultural background, belief, gender, class, etc. Further, each of these characteristics will impact on the effects and extent of the abuse victims will experience. All available evidence suggests that it is addressed most effectively by a joined up, partnership approach which includes statutory and voluntary organisations, all accepting a shared responsibility, whilst understanding their unique role. We are committed to a shared vision and united, sustained, and effective action across all agencies and disciplines. This commitment is evidenced by our adoption of the Safe and Together shared principles and our pursuit of common objectives.

Financial Harm

In 2022, Dumfries and Galloway published a regional Financial Harm Strategy aimed at combating financial exploitation and harm within the community. This strategy was structured around the 5 Es model, which includes Early Intervention & Prevention, Education, Engagement, Engineering and Enforcement. These pillars were designed to provide a comprehensive approach to addressing financial harm from multiple angles.

In August 2023, a revised and more streamlined Financial Harm Strategy was presented to the PPC. This Strategy was designed to be more efficient and effective in addressing the region's financial harm issues. The PPC approved this new version, marking a step forward in the region's efforts to tackle financial harm.

A multi-agency Financial Harm group has representation from the key identified partners within Dumfries and Galloway. This group continues to review the refreshed strategy and implement an action plan targeting the strategy's three priority areas:

- working to ensure that staff are aware of financial harm and confident about how to respond.
- working to ensure that the public are aware of financial harm; and
- ensuring an effective response is in place for those impacted by financial harm and those who perpetrate financial harm.



Neglect

We identified neglect as an area for development as it is a very complex area of work which requires practitioners to be aware of the multi-faceted nature of neglect and the many factors that could lead to the neglect of a child. Our Multi-Agency Child Protection Guidance has been updated to include the national definition of neglect and is clear about this being just as damaging as any other type of abuse. The Multi Agency Guidance on Neglect and the Assessment of Care toolkit and associated training ensures practitioners know how to respond where there are signs of neglect. When any professional identifies a concern relating to the care of children, they should utilise the Dumfries and Galloway Assessment of Care Toolkit to help inform an assessment of need. In all cases where children are subject to child protection registration, where neglect is an identified risk factor, there must be an assessment using the Assessment of Care toolkit completed by the first review child protection case conference.

PPP Strategic Plan 2024-27 and Performance and Quality Assurance Framework

The revised Public Protection Partnership Strategic Plan 2024-27 was agreed in March 2024 by the COG:PP and was launched in April 2024. The Strategic Plan has four priority areas of focus that sit across the core pillars of public protection activity; these are critical aspects of public protection activity for high-risk groups, which will be addressed through multi agency activity. These priorities set out what the Public Protection Partnership want to achieve in partnership with all agencies over the next three years.

In delivering the Strategic Plan, associated SMART annual workplans will be developed. The process will be dynamic in nature to ensure capture of emerging challenges and will be updated through the lifespan of the plan. The responsibility for implementing this plan sits across the partnership with Chief Officers taking lead responsibility, and bespoke steering groups will report progress back to the PPC, according to their terms of reference.

Performance will be managed through the new PQAF 2024-2027 which was launched alongside the Strategic Plan. Performance Indicators outlined in the PQAF will form the core data included in the aligned PPC Dashboards.

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021

September 2021 saw the publication of the National Guidance for Child Protection. This was then updated in 2023. Following the publication of the national guidance, a significant amount of work was completed within the dedicated Implementation group who reported to PPC. The group was a valuable mechanism for local implementation, providing direction and oversight with a clear focus on ensuring all work has a rights, strengths and relationship-based focus and is aligned with the national policy framework 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) and the national Independent Care Review which created 'The Promise'. Children across Scotland participated in this review and their lived experience was fundamental to the development of a plan to be worked towards within each local authority area.

The group ensured all local processes/guidance were updated or in the process of being updated, with single agencies also completing review of their processes, policies and procedures to ensure these met the requirements of the national guidance, including United Nations Convention of the Rights of the child (UNCRC); for example a Children's Rights working group has been formed alongside development of an Advocacy Plan for 2024-27. This will ensure that the protection of children's rights is fundamental to decision making and delivery of our services.

During the summer of 2023, a Child Protection Guidance self-evaluation, with a focus on the key process and practice changes and improvements contained within, was fully completed and submitted to the Scottish Government. This supported the planning and delivery of implementation activity locally, enabling identification of the areas where the Partnership



has implemented the National Guidance fully and the areas where this sits 'in part.' We have also reviewed all learning from the Scottish Government issued update report on national implementation. Continuing conversations across the national arena will help support local developments and self-evaluation practices.

Local Multi-agency Child Protection guidance was published, which:

- Aligns with our strengths and relationships approach, therefore has a strengthened focus on children's rights, engagement, collaboration with families, and on building on existing strengths.
- Ensuring the voice of the child/infant is heard.
- Recognises that physical and emotional safety provides a foundation for wellbeing and healthy development.
- Aligns with **GIRFEC, UNCRC**, The Promise and the **Children's Charter**.
- Considers cultural sensitivity and the need for a trauma-informed approach.

The implementation of this guidance will support greater consistency in what children and families can expect in terms of support and protection across Dumfries and Galloway.

Pre-Birth

Extensive work has taken place within our pre-birth steering group which reports to PPC PQI. Following self-evaluation of pre-birth processes in 2022, an improvement plan was developed with links to other improvement activity and planning, this continues to be overseen by the group and a further audit is planned for Autumn 2024. This will look at the impact of the changes made to the referral processes which have been aligned with all other referral processes received by social work.

Pre-birth improvement planning has been completed and pre-birth

guidance and processes for vulnerable pregnant parents and babies is in place. Referral processes have recently been aligned in accordance with all other referrals received by the Single Access Point (SAP). This ensures that each agency is utilising appropriate internal resources and pathways prior to making a referral to social work and will support consistency in thresholds.

Strengths and Relationship Based Practice

The Signs of Safety (SoS) approach is now very much embedded in practice in Dumfries and Galloway. This has encouraged and provided evidence of the development of support/ safety networks with families which has helped more children remain at home and within their own communities. Families have developed their own safety plans which means that they can call on family/ friends or neighbours in times of crisis and they understand the safety concerns people have had. The development of Family Support within Social Work, supported by The Promise and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has enabled us to provide more early support to families in flexible ways.

The emphasis going forward is on relationship and strengths-based practice and continuing to utilise SoS as a supporting tool, alongside others, thus ensuring that the most appropriate practice models are used to support children and families. The National Risk Assessment Framework to support holistic assessment and decision-making is fully incorporated within this and training is currently being updated.

Trauma-Informed Practice



Extensive work has been ongoing across the Public Protection Partnership to support those implementing across partners the creation of trauma-informed and responsive organisations, systems and workforces. A dedicated Trauma Lead has been appointed for Dumfries and Galloway Council to work with the designated Trauma Champion, with PPC supporting wherever possible. Trauma informed training is being rolled out across the region under a trauma strategy across all partners and there is a clear emphasis of ensuring trauma informed practice across all processes. This work will take time as organisational change is not straightforward, however plans are in place to meet this challenge and to gain a clear view of the road ahead in always delivering attuned services to meet people's needs.

Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM)

The Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) has been implemented in Dumfries and Galloway and is one of two models used when interviewing children. This has not been without challenge, particularly from a resourcing perspective, but our data collection and reporting provide good evidence of improvements.

The SCIM model is designed to minimise re-traumatisation and keep the needs and rights of child victims and witnesses at the centre of the process and in so doing, achieve pre-recorded evidence from the child that is of high quality. This can be used as Evidence in Chief in court for criminal and children's hearings processes. The SCIM has five connected components: strategy, planning, action, outcomes and support and evaluation. Interviewers are trained in forensic interviews of children.

We have trained several Social Workers and Police Officers to be Interviewers and continue to review and improve our approaches to children who have been abused and require forensic interviews. This has included training further Social Workers and Police Officers in 'step-wise'

interviewing to ensure that when we are not undertaking SCIM interviews, workers are still highly skilled and children continue to be interviewed through a trauma informed, responsive and skilled way. Whilst Dumfries and Galloway continue to use the two models, we are moving towards using the SCIM for all interviews with children.

Early Intervention

The Whole Family Support agenda as laid out in The Promise is also a priority within the new Dumfries and Galloway Children's Services Plan. Intensive Family Support was introduced within Dumfries and Galloway several years ago and developed further following feedback from families and the support of elected members, making early intervention a priority for us. All agencies, third sector and statutory, providing or invested in family support are involved in ensuring better knowledge and co-ordination of services and a 'no closed door' approach to support for families. In 2023, a multi-agency Sharing Practice event was held to promote and support service integration.

Interface Between Child and Adult Services

Adult and child protection overlap and interact. The Child Protection Guidance applies to children and young people up to the age of eighteen. 16 and 17yr olds who may need protection are considered through Child MASH in Dumfries and Galloway. Any complicating factors or existing involvement from adult services are factored in at the MASH discussion stage with consideration given as to who is best placed to attend the IRD or take actions forward if IRD is judged not to be required. This ensures the best support and protection is received using the most appropriate legislation.

A transitions team is in place to support young people in a planned



approach to adulthood. The team works with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children as well as care experienced young people and provides intensive support to young people as they move to independent living.

Migrant families

Dumfries and Galloway has seen an increase in migrant families welcomed into the area. Support for families requires partners to ensure safety, security, and support for as long as they need it. Within local child protection processes, support is in place using translated documents and interpreters, and the involvement of the Dumfries and Galloway Council Ukrainian Support team provides additional reassurance that Ukrainian families get the assistance they need. This increases the importance of ensuring trauma informed practices are in place across all partners.

Missing People

The Dumfries and Galloway Missing Persons Protocol and practice are currently under review. The aim of the Protocol is to capture what the Missing People Charity promotes about prevention, response, support and protection for missing children and adults. The aspiration is to build on the existing good work in preventing people from going missing in the first place and limiting the harm associated with people going missing. Whilst the Missing Persons group is reassured missing people in Dumfries and Galloway continue to be well supported during and after a missing episode, there have been challenges in addressing the disconnect between policy and practice. The 'root and branch' review is currently ensuring the tools within the Protocol, such as the missing persons flowchart and return discussion templates, remain user friendly and helpful for those who go missing as well as frontline practitioners. Notably, we have recently been successful in our application to the Missing People charity, which will provide support and guidance in our current review of local processes.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

We have invested resource in continuing to ensure our MASH operates to the best of its ability, including significant development and improvement activity. This appears to have been successful as evidenced in our recent multi-agency child protection self-evaluation where initial decision making and safety planning through Inter Agency Referral discussions was evaluated as being one of our strongest and most robust areas of practice. There are robust quality assurance mechanisms in place to continually review decision making in this area.

We have piloted and then implemented the Scottish Child Interview Model. This has not been without challenge, particularly from a resourcing perspective, but our data collection and reporting provide good evidence of improvements. We have implemented a clear multi-agency Age of Criminal Responsibility Act (ACRA) pathway and are aware that the next stage is to fully test and evaluate.

National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews

Following the publication of the National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews in 2021, and whilst the National Guidance for Adult Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews was in development, PPC agreed the development of single local guidance encompassing both children and adults; this was published in October 2023. The revised local guidance implemented best practice across adult and children reviews, and as well as having a single document set, incorporated the local practice that had previously worked well. This included having an Initial Learning Review Panel, ensuring Chief Officers maintained a formal role, and that all potential notifications were reviewed from a multi-agency perspective.



Scottish Government subsequently published a revised version of the National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews in June 2024. A review of the local guidance is underway to align with the National Guidance. The amendments include:

- Separate sections within the criteria for when a child sustained or is at risk of significant harm and when a child has died.
- An additional final step for alternative learning and minutes to be shared with the Care Inspectorate even when a Learning Review has not been carried out.

In this reporting period, two Learning Review notifications were submitted with one that went to full Learning Review and reported to Chief Officers and improvement actions agreed. Although one notification did not result in a Learning Review, improvement activity was identified and undertaken with learning shared as appropriate.

We have also undertaken a thematic review of all Learning Reviews for adults and children (and former ICR/SCR) from the period which has supported various aspects of improvement work and learning and development. For children, the leading theme is around physical abuse.





Training, learning and development

The public protection partnership has been able to deliver a varied multi-agency training calendar with a targeted balance of in person and online training. In the past year, we have managed to have a full training calendar which includes the training below, to name but a few, most of which have been delivered at least twice: -

- 5 Day Child Protection Training (In Person)
- Domestic Abuse Training (Online)
- Trafficking Training (Online)
- Neglect (Child Protection) Training (In Person)
- Introduction to Infant Mental Health (In Person)
- Trauma Training (In Person)
- Injuries to Non-Mobile Children (In Person)

In addition, we have started to evaluate training much more effectively than has been the case previously. We have begun to collect 'on the spot' qualitative feedback at the end of face-to-face training using post it notes. Furthermore, we are trialling the use of focus groups following Neglect (Child Protection) training via Microsoft Teams after 3 and 6 months and feedback effectiveness through update to the Learning & Development Sub Committee. The feedback has allowed us to enhance the neglect training further. For example, we now offer shadowing to use the assessment of care toolkit after training and ensure that multi-agency staff are given the opportunity to work together within the training environment as this provides a more enjoyable and effective training experience.

Last year saw a major goal to understand and try to address the barriers when co-ordinating multi agency training. Research over a period of 6 months was undertaken to establish the time it takes for trainers to prepare for multi-agency training. Findings included it takes up to 10 hours preparation time for established training and up to 60 hours for new multi-agency training. The Learning & Development Sub-Committee is keen

to make sure that trainers have adequate protected work time to both volunteer and prepare for training. Recently multi-agency training including Neglect (Child Protection) has had observers with the hope that they would deliver the training in the future. It will be key to have a bank of staff available for any last-minute trainer cancellations.

Furthermore, we are now analysing the reasons why staff drop out of multi-agency training after initially registering. While there are varied reasons why participants drop out of training, service pressures are a key reason. This suggests a need to explore how we can close this gap, and ensure staff receive the vital multi-agency training they require to assist with their role.

It has been key to improve the culture around multi-agency training more generally whereby staff members are expected to cancel training if they cannot attend and give the reason. This is especially important when training has a number cap as gaining entry to the training is not automatic. Since June 2024, we have made it mandatory for staff to cancel training and they can look to nominate a colleague to fill their spot. We also email managers and let them know of the importance to offer their staff members protected time to attend important multiagency training after their staff member has booked onto our training. Our overall hope is that there will be greater attendance and less dropouts at multi-agency training.

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, our key aim is to categorise multi-agency training via an updated Learning & Development Strategy, which will hopefully increase staff turnout due to reducing staff uncertainty as to whether the training is for them. The categorisations to be adopted (and based on the National Framework for Child Protection Learning and Development in Scotland 2024 report) are Wider Workforce, General Workforce, Specific Workforce, and Intensive Workforce.



Injuries to Non-Mobile Children

The revised Multi-Agency Protocol for Injuries to Non-Mobile Children was circulated in February this year. This provides practitioners with an evidenced-based strategy for the assessment, management and referral of non-mobile children who present with injuries (including bruising or marks). Following this, the first Injuries to Non-Mobile Children training took place at the beginning of March. This was in person and very well attended by multi-agency partners. The training focusses on recognising the significance of injuries to non-mobile children; to acknowledge the impact on older children with impaired or reduced mobility; understanding the appropriate processes to be followed for injuries to non-mobile children and the types of injuries that can occur. Additionally, the importance of professional curiosity to ascertain and understand what has happened is emphasised.

Recently, the process for injuries to non-mobile children was updated to include Out of Hours IRDs. This allows for multi-agency discussion during times when offices are closed to enable a plan to be put in place to safeguard the child. To ensure this process is working effectively, monitoring and evaluation will take place.

Safe and Together

Safe and Together 'Training for Trainers' has taken place. This training was delivered online over 12 weeks. Upon successful completion of the training, the trainers are eligible to earn Full Certification which enables them to begin training the CORE, Overview and one hour briefing. Full certification is contingent upon attendance at 12 monthly Mentor calls and successful Trainer Summary Report of 80% or higher on first delivered CORE training. The training online brought about challenges given the size of the group and the competency expectations around participation which was hindered due to compatibility issues and volume of participants.

A Mapping Tool workshop was held in January for all those who have been given a license. The Safe & Together Institute UK Regional Manager & Organisational Assessment Lead delivered a two-hour session to understand how to use the tool in practice, which was received very positively.

Self-Evaluation and Staff Development

All the groups taking part in the Multi-agency Child Protection Self-Evaluation felt that joint working in general is very good in Dumfries and Galloway. Staff work well together but feel working relationships and shared thresholds have been impacted by the pandemic, alongside high turnover of staff and staff pressures across the partnership. There is however a strong will to improve this and staff would welcome more opportunities for face-to-face discussions/ training. The ongoing GIRFEC 'refresh' will further clarify and communicate referral pathways, role of the Lead Professional, and improve consistency around planning for children. Further development and support for more opportunities for practitioners to come together in a safe space where they can discuss thresholds and develop relationships and shared understandings around roles and responsibilities is planned.

Within the last few months, Child Protection Self-evaluation workshops have taken place to provide overview and information of self-evaluation activity, key themes and findings from work completed, GIRFEC refresh and Multi-Agency Child Protection Guidance. The workshops provided opportunities to explore partnership working and how this can be supported as well as informing on ongoing quality assurance activity.



Public Protection Week 2024

Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Week took place in February 2024 and marked the fourth annual public protection week. The week offered eight online events and two in person, with themes across child protection, adult support and protection, and violence against women and girls. Topics included trauma and a visit to Summerhill Community Centre who play a vital role in providing grass roots community support to promoting public safety. Several virtual sessions were delivered by multi-agency partners on matters such as children and families affected by imprisonment; gambling related harm and lived experience. Children and Families Social Work held a session on 'Understanding and working with Child Neglect' in which relationship and strengths-based practice was instrumental in affecting change. Told through the experiences of the practitioners involved, this narrative displayed passion, the need for professional curiosity and the use of the Graded Care Toolkit in helping parents to understand and work towards goals. It also emphasised and reinforced the importance of partnership working. The session was very well attended and well received.

National Minimum Dataset

Dumfries and Galloway have been a pilot area for both Version 1 and 2 of the Minimum Dataset, working directly with CELCIS, and the Dataset has been fully implemented in this area for some time. These reports are developed by our multi-agency scrutiny group who have created a well-established process to allow analysis of the data and identification of key findings which are then presented to PQI and PPC. Our reports have been used as exemplars across Scotland and as a result requests have been made for guidance and support by other child protection committees across Scotland to assist in the implementation of the Dataset. Glasgow CPC recently requested an input to their Quality Assurance Subgroup on the experience of Dumfries and Galloway of implementing the Child Protection National Minimum Dataset, along with information about how this data is

used to inform PPC work. The Performance and Assurance Officer (Public Protection) attended the meeting and talked through the Dumfries and Galloway experience, the need for someone to drive this work and the culture change required to get the scrutiny and analysis process in place, as well as how the data now informs wider public protection priorities in Dumfries and Galloway. Such approaches from other areas demonstrates that Dumfries and Galloway are at the forefront of developing and informing national thinking.

National Learning

DG PPC has a partnership approach to engaging with and learning from national child protection evidence. Partners share information through attendance at National Child Protection Learning and Practice Development Meetings; use of the Knowledge Hub; CPC Scotland correspondence and national Learning Reviews, with responsibilities to feedback as appropriate. National priorities are always considered within the local context and learning, and development decisions made accordingly.



Engagement, involvement, and communication

The PPC understands that gathering the views of and including those who use our services in the development of policy and services is crucial to partnership, participation and improvement. Over the last couple of years, work has been ongoing within this area. The PPC's Communication and Engagement subcommittee continues to focus on developing effective, creative and innovative methods of communication and engagement. The PP Communication and Engagement Strategies provide a framework and principles to support partners when undertaking these activities. However, we recognised the challenges for the PPC in engaging as effectively as we would like. Further work to meaningfully engage with children and their families was progressed via a Short Life Working Group of our Communication & Engagement Sub-Committee. This group has been instrumental in creating the foundational work of the Lived and Living Experience priority steering group that will take this important work forward.

As part of the implementation of the strategic plan 2024-27, the Lived Experience steering group will provide strategic direction and oversight in ensuring that the work towards the priority is delivered through shared multi agency approaches and objectives including people with lived experience and their voices. It will also ensure principles of best practice and all learning in working with those with lived and living experience is shared throughout our region.

The steering group will do this through an agreed and co-ordinated approach to identify best practice activity requirements, assess, plan, introduce, and implement all future required activity based on best practice and local experience, aspiring to adopt best principles of coproduction. This will focus on the most important initiatives ensuring these are executed successfully and achieve the stated aims within the strategic plan 2024/27. It will also support future evaluation activity.

Improvement using Participatory Methods

Following changes in the delivery of CPPMs, to make these more inclusive and open with increased parent and child participation, interviews were undertaken with families and partners participating in meetings to gain their views and experiences, and further support our engagement activity in child protection. In October 2023, a 'We Asked, You Said, We Did, We Will' plan was created from the responses received and presented to the Communication and Engagement sub-committee.

We acknowledge that there is much to be done regarding embedding Lived and Living Experience throughout our working practices and as such, going forward, we will endeavour to include people with lived experience at the earliest stage of improvement planning and will aspire to work in true partnership. We aim to break down stigma and actively address power imbalance, thereby elevating lived experience by supporting people to share their voices and experiences. Trauma informed practices regarding gathering lived experience will be focussed upon.

Through self-evaluation we can see that practitioners are getting much better at communicating with children and their parents/carers to obtain their views and how they feel about things and involving children, young people and families in our processes; the focus on strengths and relationship-based practice, means that our staff have a variety of tools available to help them with this. We use family friendly language well and this approach is seen to encourage stronger links and attendance at meetings. Our collaborative audit told us that 82% of children had a version of their plan that was written in a child-friendly manner. There was evidence of children being involved in developing their plans and of a variety of tools being used with children to gather their views. Explanations to children regarding plans are scrutinised within the tripartite review of CPIs, we continue to consider improvements in this area. All children over 5 years old where there are child protection concerns or they are Looked After can be referred to Barnardo's Hear 4 U Advocacy Service.



'The Voice of the Infant' has been widely circulated, partners are working together to ensure the views of babies and young children are captured. The CPI Qualitative Audit Evaluation analyses the quality of engagement with children using the Care Inspectorate standards. This is scrutinised within PQI processes.

Ensuring children's rights are upheld is paramount in every consideration and action. Our regular audit practices look specifically at these areas and inform improvement activity. We recognise that planning and assessment work with families would be improved through greater prevalence and consistency of good examples of communicating with children and families and better use of single and multi-agency chronologies.

When required, we support with translation of documents and interpreters to attend meetings. Pre-meeting opportunities with the Chair are offered prior to child protection planning meetings to discuss what will happen in the meeting, ensure parents/carers have had the opportunity to be involved and read the CPI/Child Assessment and Plan as well as other agency reports.

Advocacy for parents/carers is offered at the point of the CPI being progressed and continually revisited throughout involvement. Letters are sent to parents/carers/children/young people informing they can be supported by someone of their choosing to attend and participate in the planning meeting.

The self-evaluation found good evidence of legal representation when the reason for involvement is offending behaviour or through our legal systems, and we can see more advocacy for parents during these stages, but less so out with these.

The PPC's Communication and Engagement subcommittee continues to focus on developing effective, creative and innovative methods of

communication and engagement. The PP Communication and Engagement Strategies provide a framework and principles to support partners when undertaking these activities. A regular PP Newsletter has been well received and communicates key local and national campaigns.

As part of the Service User Engagement/Communication Improvement Plan, we identified the need to change practice for CPPMs, recognising the need for these to be more inclusive and open with more child/parental participation in line with our relationship-based approach. A test of change, which captured lived experience, was carried out and a live record is now completed for all CPPMs. A survey was also sent to families who told us what they wanted in relation to CPPMs.

During the CP self-evaluation, each child/young person/parent/carer from the sample was contacted to provide feedback of their experiences of services, however, there was limited return. The findings would not constitute a representative example, therefore not included in the report. Trauma informed practices regarding gathering lived experience will be focussed upon going forward.

Public Protection Website (www.dgppp.org.uk)

We are currently reviewing our website to ensure that it is easier to navigate and therefore more accessible for all. We want to ensure that members of the public are clear about information that relates to them and where to find this. We are reviewing PP communication materials, and a suite of information leaflets and posters will be made available on our website. The website currently contains pertinent information across the three pillars of Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).



Challenges and areas for improvement

At the beginning of 2024, the Children and Families Social Work model of delivery was redesigned to ensure our staff are better placed to provide the right supports to the right families at the right time, in recognition of the challenges faced in providing such services in a demographically small but geographically wide area within the context of staff vacancies and absences. This includes a shortage of experienced social workers to undertake child protection and permanence work. This should allow a more responsive and flexible approach to families across the region with increased managerial support and oversight. This has been informed by the findings from our multiagency Child Protection Self Evaluation where we concluded that better levels of consistency for our families are needed and the good practice, we see across our child protection work is replicated in other areas of our practice.

The number of ICPPMs, Pre-Birth CPPMs and Initial Core Groups held within timescales have at times reduced. The Child Protection Scrutiny Group is aware of the impact of staff absence and vacancies on this work. Whilst there has been an impact on timescales, it must be stressed that quality of work remains high. It is hoped that with the new service delivery model within social work, a more equitable spread of work will be seen and there is an expectation that timescales will improve over the next two or three reporting periods while this change embeds. This will continue to be monitored.

Staffing issues have also impacted on reports being received by the Children's Reporter following these being requested. This continues to be scrutinised.

The availability of other agencies/services to support children and families has also impacted, for example, the housing emergency in Dumfries and Galloway. Families are living in Women's Aid refuges longer; this then impacts on those in need of support within a refuge as there is no availability.

National drivers without financial investment from Scottish Government e.g. ACRA, SCIM can have a detrimental impact when delivering services within a rural area such as Dumfries and Galloway where prevalence of specific issues can be low but might require significant travelling and specialist resource.

A current lack of foster care placements locally and nationally has at times required management of risk for children at home. This has been challenging and use of a network of support has been critical to managing and reducing risk.

In recognition of the challenges our staff across the Partnership face daily, and the complex and changing landscape within which child protection takes place, the Trauma Lead for Dumfries and Galloway Council, alongside other partner agencies, is working to ensure that vicarious trauma is recognised and addressed across all agencies. We want all our staff to feel supported regarding their own self care needs in relation to vicarious trauma and the impact this can have. The benefits of Mindfulness are widely known, and sessions are currently offered within some agencies. We plan to include Mindfulness sessions in our Public Protection Week 2025 so practitioners across the Partnership can experience this.

Regular supervision and peer support help practitioners to thrive whilst meeting the demands of their roles. We recognise that supervision and support should be available to all practitioners working in child protection and will continue to emphasise this within the Partnership. In addition, the recently completed Protocol for Professional Meetings and Multi-Agency Working Forums, details the benefits and circumstances where professionals can meet to discuss complex situations as appropriate out with planning forums. This enables multi-agency practitioners to come together and draw upon collective resources as well as providing reflection opportunities and support.



Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis continues and the impact upon our children and families immeasurable. Poverty is pervasive and with high food and energy prices, the impact on families emotionally and financially has been great. Dumfries and Galloway Child Poverty Action Plan 2022-26 continues to be progressed. Coupled with the housing shortage, the environmental challenges for families to meet their children's basic needs is harder than ever before. Sadly, there will be some people who will take advantage of opportunities to exploit children. The PPC sent out a press release to highlight the risks of the crisis for working families and children spending a lot of time on the internet and therefore at risk of increased exploitation, as well as children who are aware of the difficulties and may be exploited to receive money to help their families.

Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act (EPAA) 2019

In response to inconsistencies across the region in relation to how agencies and staff were interpreting the initial messaging around EPAA, we wanted to provide structure and clarity around the act through development of Multi-Agency EPA Guidance. This involved several partners across the agency with a view to providing appropriate guidance in relation to distinguishing between equal protection and child protection, focus on children's rights and ensuring practitioners are clear regarding reasonable chastisement no longer being defensible, meaning that all forms of physical chastisement, punishment and/or discipline of children are against the law. Multi-agency training for staff will continue whilst considering any areas where staff require further support and guidance.

The adoption and embedding of our relationship-based practice using the Signs of Safety model has encouraged the development of support/safety networks with families which has helped more children remain at home and within their own communities. Families have developed their own safety plans which means that they can call on family/friends or neighbours in

times of crisis and they understand the safety concerns people have had. The development of Family Support within Social Work, supported by The Promise and the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has enabled us to provide more early support to families in flexible ways.

We have plans forthcoming to strengthen our kinship service to provide better support to kinship arrangements to help sustain placements and prevent breakdown, but this will require further investment.

In addition, there is a focus on strengthening links with third sector providers specifically to help families access community supports when the role of social work ends. We are acutely aware the challenge of finding appropriate third sector supports in such a rural area.

Data Sharing for Improvement

In November 2023, the Child Protection Scrutiny Group discussed the benefits of a mechanism to share and access benchmark data with others to inform local scrutiny. The group proposed this to the PQI Sub Committee who agreed initial contact be made with comparator authorities to see if there was an appetite to progress prior to a paper taken to PPC. All five comparator authorities (Angus, Argyle & Bute, Highland, Moray and Scottish Borders) agreed they would be happy to support this work however formal agreement would need to be made at Committee. All agreed this would allow opportunities for further learning from other comparator authorities, as well as nationally, and COG:PP in Dumfries and Galloway formally agreed this approach.

Safe and Together

As part of our child protection self-evaluation planning in Autumn 2022, it was agreed that we needed to establish a baseline of understanding regarding domestic abuse practice in the context of our implementation of the Safe and Together approach, therefore allowing measurement of improvements.

The results of this showed that when working with families where domestic abuse has been identified as a risk factor for the child or children, there was good collaborative working at the early stages of the process within the MASH and IRDs, however this was not as often evident in assessment, planning and support provided, and the impact of domestic abuse on the child or children was not always recognised.

Development work is currently ongoing on how we should record the number of families protected and supported using the mapping tool onto the Mosaic Management Information records system. Once this is done, we will be able to produce data reports in the future. Our self-evaluation scheduled in November will inform of use of the mapping tool and identify areas for improvement.





Looking forward

As part of the work of the PQ&I Sub Committee Self Evaluation calendar, we agreed to undertake biennial self-evaluation for child protection to ensure that we can keep improving and evidence improvement work undertaken, this will also support any upcoming child protection inspection activity.

Following completion of the Multi-Agency Child Protection Self Evaluation 2022 Report, which was tabled at the Chief Officers Group in August 2023, the PPC agreed to oversee improvement planning on behalf of the Public Protection Partnership, with regular updates provided to PPC. This work and full implementation will continue as a fundamental part of ongoing improvement planning.

A further Multi-Agency Child Protection self-evaluation is scheduled to take place from November 2024. This will be targeted and help to evidence the impact of improvement planning. The focus of this self-evaluation is child protection however, we will also be looking at pre-birth processes and the impact of our Safe and Together approaches where domestic abuse has been identified. We plan to have the findings from this smaller piece of work available for initial PQ&I Sub Committee consideration and then to PPC and COG:PP by the early 2025.

Also, we are looking at options to undertake some systemic self-evaluation of our Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings and ASP Initial Case Conferences. This self-evaluation would focus on quality of decision making, risk planning, information sharing, attendance and meaningful involvement of children and families or the adult. A proposal paper has gone to PQI Sub Committee following consultation with all partners.

As detailed above, work will continue to implement our first Public Protection Partnership Strategic Plan 2024-27 This is the first strategy of its format and sets out the ambitions for the next three years.

We are aware that there will be many challenges in the process of achieving the aims of our strategic plan. The four areas of Sexual Harm; Self Neglect; Chronologies and Information Sharing, and Lived Experience are ambitious, but we will endeavour to meet these challenges with the same rigour and passion that led to the identification of these aims. We know that these are areas where we have made varying progress and therefore recognised that additional focus and momentum on a larger scale were required to ensure that we are successful in our implementation across the Partnership.

The Public Protection Strategy was published in April 2024 along with and aligned to an approved PQAF. We will undertake activity required for performance to be managed through the new PQAF 2024-2027 which will be launched alongside the Strategic Plan, providing an effective way to measure both our performance and quality assurance together, building on previous Performance Frameworks, and Quality Assurance principles.

Performance Indicators outlined in the PQAF will form the core data included in the new PPC Dashboards. These dashboards will be tailored for all members of the Partnership. This will further develop capability to review performance which will be monitored on a quarterly basis and exception reporting available for PPC and COG:PP to consider as appropriate.

We also look forward to Public Protection Week 2025 where we will feature a Chief Officers' Public Protection Conference.

Going forward we aim to review how we address the risk that children face within communities from what are known as extra-familial harms. A contextual safeguarding approach is being adopted throughout Scotland and is high on the Public Protection agenda. Contextual Safeguarding requires key services such as police, education and social work to work



alongside youth services and communities to safeguard young people and marks a shift away from traditional safeguarding practices, with a cultural shift required in response to the extra familial risk children face. A national contextual safeguarding group set up by Social Work Scotland (SWS) has now been transferred to Child Protection Committee Scotland and this group will take forward the work started by SWS. The Lead Officer Public Protection (Child Protection) is a member of this group and is well placed alongside colleagues across the Partnership to develop a plan for implementation of Contextual Safeguarding within Dumfries and Galloway.

Transitional Safeguarding is closely linked to Contextual Safeguarding as it recognises the risks young people face as they move to independent living and that support should not stop when a child reaches a certain age. As discussed, there is a transitions team in place to help support our young people and by continuing to develop our existing strong relationship with adult services we aim to ensure young people are supported appropriately as they transition from children to adult services. As such, the Social Work Children with Disabilities team has completed a Transitions Procedure which includes if a child is registered and transitioning to ASP. It is important that we monitor the next steps of support for our children within the 15-17 year age group who go through initial child protection processes only.

Again, national learning will support our transitional safeguarding work locally, in addition to consideration of the wider view of transitions as a lifelong process which is a topic within national forums currently.

We recognise the invaluable support third sector agencies provide within our communities. As such, the newly appointed Chief Executive of Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway is a member of PPC and there is representation from several third sector organisations across many of the Partnership sub committees, enabling close working partnerships across the whole public protection arena. In addition, there will always be a continuous focus on supporting and strengthening links with third sector providers specifically to help families access community supports when the role of social work ends. We are acutely aware of the challenge of finding appropriate third sector supports in such a rural area but confident in our strong and supportive relationships which enables creative solutions to be found.