



**ABERDEENSHIRE
CHILD & FAMILY PROTECTION COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT - 2015**

*Protecting Aberdeenshire's Children
It's Everyone's Business*



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1. PREFACE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP

On behalf of the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Chief Officers Group (COG), I am pleased to present the Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee (AC&FPC) Report for 2015.

The report provides an overview of the work of the Committee and sets out the Committees priorities for 2016-17.

A significant event in 2015 was the Joint Inspection of services for children and young people in the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership area. This took place between 27 April 2015 and 12 June 2015, and it covered the range of partners in Aberdeenshire that have a role in providing services for children, young people and families. The Care Inspectorate report, concluded that;

‘The impact of services on the wellbeing of children and young people growing up in Aberdeenshire was evaluated as very good. They benefitted from a positive, respectful culture amongst staff in their work individually and together. Most vulnerable children and young people were being helped to be safer, healthier and well nurtured through purposeful and timely interventions when they were at risk of immediate harm.

Children who were at risk of immediate harm, including unborn babies, were kept safe as a result of prompt assessment, planning and action taken by staff.’

The Care Inspectorate also welcomed the establishment of an Aberdeenshire Child Protection Chief Officers Group in June 2015, with representation from Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian, Police Scotland, the Health & Social Care Partnership and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service. The COG will support the work of the Committee and take appropriate action in response to unsatisfactory performance. The COG will also ensure that there is an interface with adult protection, offender management/Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), the Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and other planning for in Aberdeenshire. In order to contribute to timely support for those who experience or present risk.

This foundation will help provide the people of Aberdeenshire with an even more effective means of building on our very good performance as recognised by the Care Inspectorate.

Jim Savege

Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council

and Chair of Aberdeenshire Child Protection Chief Officers Group

1. FOREWORD FROM COMMITTEE CHAIR

I became Chair of the Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee towards the end of 2015 and I am delighted to introduce the 2015 Annual Report.

Specific details of the Committees endeavors are contained within the Report and overall I would characterise these as being focused on providing colleagues in all agencies with the right tools and the right training to help them protect children at risk of harm or abuse. Crucially this has involved providing support to help colleagues address new and emerging forms of harm – for example Child Sexual Exploitation and a myriad of developments related to information technology and social media.

Similarly Committee has become acutely aware that while its core function must remain supporting those children currently at risk of harm, we also have to contribute to the tool kit and knowledge of colleagues who are best placed to prevent a minor and temporary adversity becoming significant and chronic.

In that regard members of the Committee have made key contributions to the opportunities presented by the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) reform programme – for example in the development of the Aberdeenshire GIRFEC website and the materials therein.

Ensuring that the Committee has the capacity to deliver for children and our colleagues has nevertheless been challenging in 2014/ 2015. The combination of the effects of austerity alongside rising expectations has sometimes made it difficult for member agencies to contribute as they would have wished.

Nevertheless with the recent formation of the multi-agency Chief Officers Group we now have a new opportunity to benefit from a facility where a more strategic approach to prioritisation, streamlining and re- provisioning can take place. In that regard, and on behalf of Committee I would want to thank Aberdeenshire's Chief Executive, Jim Savage his very practical support in identifying funding for a training post for child protection.

Looking forward to 2016/2017 the Cabinet Secretary has recently announced a review of the child protection landscape in Scotland. The Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee will attempt to contribute to this review as well as responding to its outcomes. Where the review will take us is unknown, but I am confident that the positive attitudes and good intent of the Committee positions us well to rise to future challenges.

Bob Driscoll

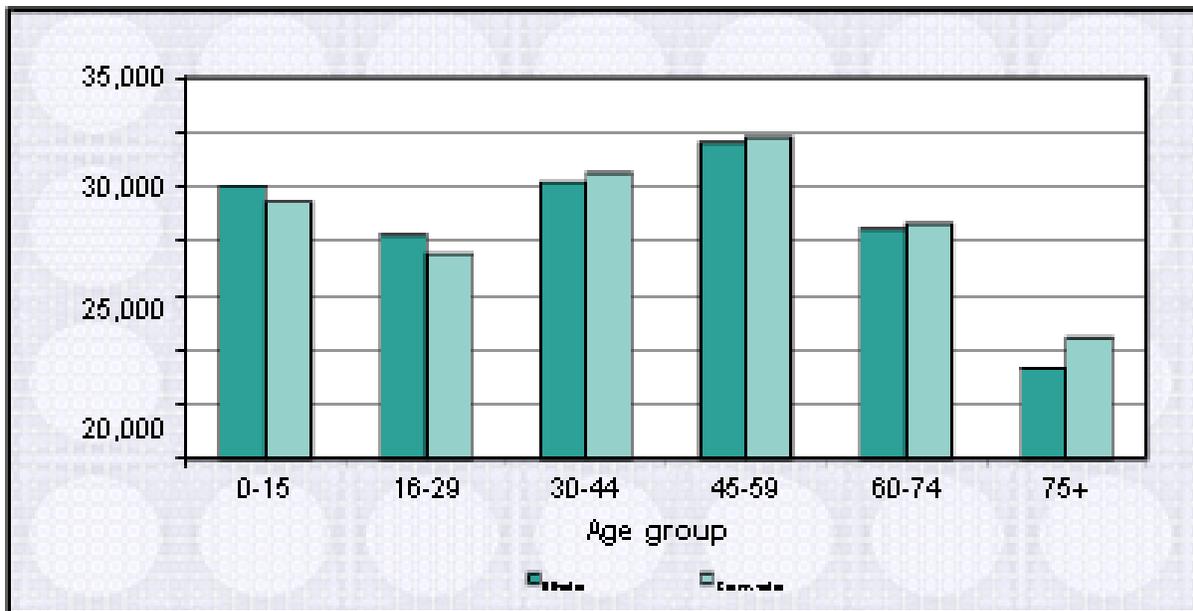
Head of Children's Social Work Service, Aberdeenshire Council
and Chair of Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee

2. DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Aberdeenshire serves a population of 260,500 across a predominantly rural area, covering 6,313 square kilometres, representing 8% of Scotland's overall land area.

Aberdeenshire remains a relatively wealthy area, with the unemployment rate of 0.7% in June 2014 against a Scottish average of 2.8%. It has been traditionally dependent on agriculture, fishing and forestry and related processing industries. Over the past 40 years, the development of the oil and gas industry and associated service sectors has broadened the economic base of the area. Despite this, there are pockets of deprivation and rural isolation. The 2012 figures from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation show that, within Aberdeenshire, there is a total of five data zones in the 15% most deprived data zones in Scotland. Most of these are located in parts of Fraserburgh and Peterhead.

The child population in Aberdeenshire is above the average for Scotland and growing steadily. In 2014, children and young people aged 0-15 years made up 18.7% of the total population in Aberdeenshire. The child population aged 0-15 years is predicted to rise by a further 13.8% over the 25 years from 2012-2037. Over the 10 years 2003-13, the total population grew by 11.5%, the highest rate of increase of any local authority area, and inward migration accounted for 9.4% of this increase, with large numbers of families moving from Eastern Europe moving to work in the fish and meat processing industries.



Estimated population of Aberdeenshire by age and sex, 30 June 2014
Dark –Male Light - Female

Further information available via:-

<http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/council-area-data-sheets/aberdeenshire-factsheet.pdf>

<http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/population-estimates/midyear-2014/14mid-year-pe-cahb-publication-correction.pdf>

3. COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

The [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#) was published in 2010 and refreshed in 2014 to ensure that it remains relevant and up to date for local agencies and practitioners working together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children.

This document provides a national framework for agencies and practitioners at local level to understand and agree processes for working together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children. It sets out expectations for the strategic planning of services to protect children and young people and highlights key responsibilities for services and organisations, both individual and shared. It also includes guidance for practitioners on specific areas of practice and key issues in child protection including Child Sexual Exploitation and Internet Safety.

The National Guidance describes the collective responsibilities for Child Protection as the “functions” of a Child protection Committee regarding our collective responsibilities in Child Protection as

- ❖ **Continuous Improvement**
- ❖ **Strategic Planning**
- ❖ **Public Information and Communication**

The next section of the report sets out the achievements of the Committee in each of these four functions.

4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Child Protection Committees have a key role to play in the continuous improvement of child protection policy and practice. A number of functions relate directly to this key role.

4.1 POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PROTOCOLS

CORE OBJECTIVES

- ✓ To have the necessary Multi-Agency Child Protection Strategies, Policies & Guidance for Aberdeenshire
- ✓ To link Aberdeenshire Guidance with National Documentation including Scottish Government & WithScotland Guidance
- ✓ To utilise The North and East of Scotland Child Protection Committee Consortium (N&ESCPCC) for Sharing Learning and Development of new initiatives and associated guidance
- ✓ To respond to identified need in Aberdeenshire
- ✓ To respond to national and local policy requirements

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- The Aberdeenshire Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Website was established in April 2015 and provides a platform for the collation and promotion of multi-agency practice in Aberdeenshire. All Aberdeenshire Multi-Agency Policies and Procedures are available on the website, allowing practitioners access to the most up to date material. The development of the Website will always be ongoing. We track visitors to the website and what they did when they got there, thus helping us to improve the content and the performance of the website, based on analytical reports on usage.
- The Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Management Group (GMG) and the Aberdeenshire Child & Family Protection Committee commissioned the development of an Aberdeenshire multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategy to ensure that all partner organisations and individuals are supported to work together to maintain the wellbeing and safety of Aberdeenshire's children and young people. Aberdeenshire's Multi-Agency Strategy *Child Sexual Exploitation - Working Together to Keep Aberdeenshire's Children & Young People Safe – 2015* can be found on the GIRFEC Website alongside practice materials, such as the CSE checklist and video-links. A CSE Working Group led by Aberdeenshire Council Children's Social Work Service continues to meet to discuss practice considerations alongside learning and development needs. This will link with the ongoing working group that is devising an Aberdeenshire Strategy on Online Safety.

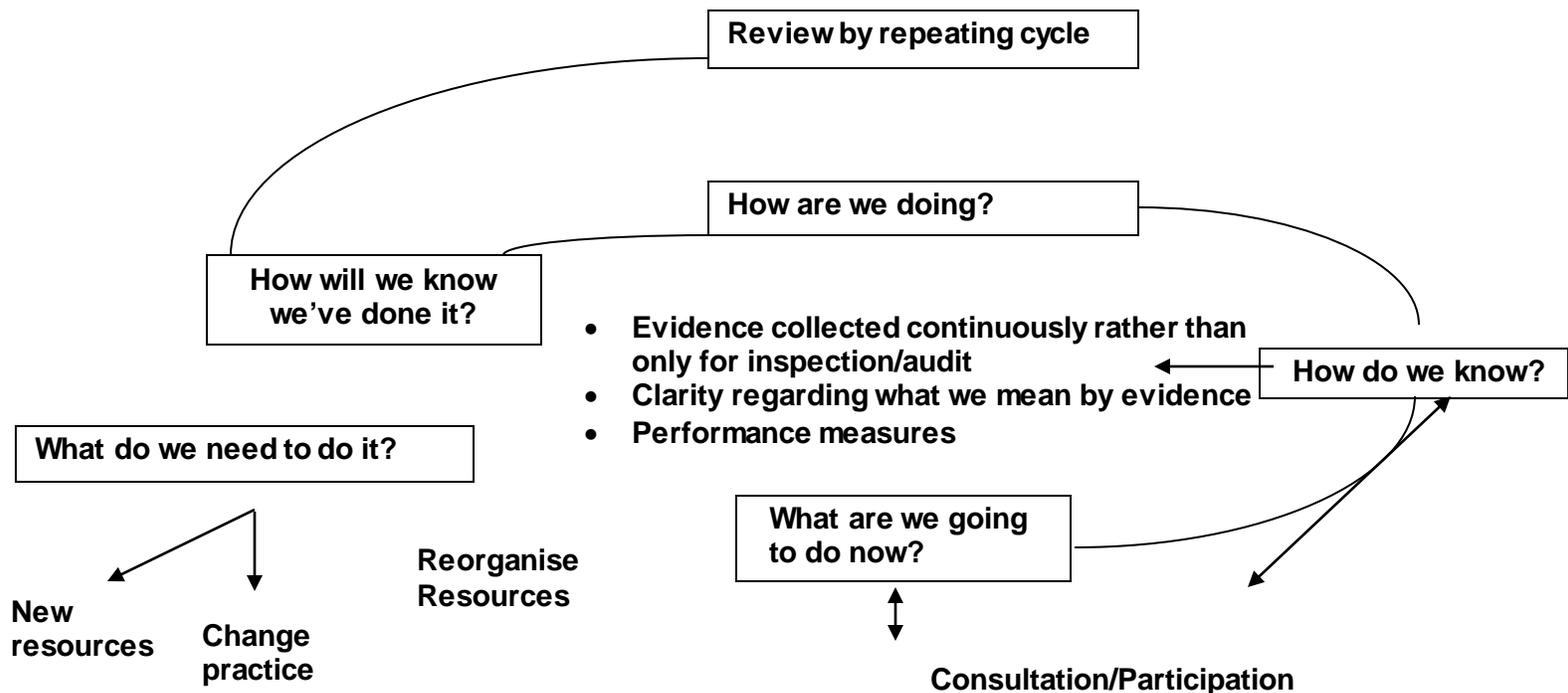
- A multi-agency group is devising Aberdeenshire Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Multi Agency Practice Guidelines.
- Aberdeenshire shared a number of North East policies and guidelines as per our North East arrangements until 1 April 2013. These guidelines have been or are in the process of being reviewed on a multi-agency basis and is as summarised below:-
 - *Child Protection & Parenting Capacity Assessments – A Framework for Reducing Harm; March 2011.* This review was led by Aberdeenshire Council Children’s Social Work Service, and Committee concluded that it should be replaced by a multi-agency Pregnancy Protocol. Children’s Social Work Service are leading a multi-agency group to take this forward.
 - *Working with Uncooperative Families; September 2008.* This review was led by the Committee Lead Officer. The Committee concluded that the guidance continues to be a helpful document for practitioners and updated the document to better reflect policy and practice since 2008. This updated guidance is available on the GIRFEC Website.
 - *Multi-Agency Guidance for Working with Young People who are Sexually Active; March 2011.* Police Scotland are leading the review of this guidance and await the publication of Police Scotland Standard Operating Procedure to ensure consistency and consider next steps.
 - *Working with Young People Displaying Sexually Problematic Behaviour; May 2012.* NHS Grampian is leading on the review of this guidance.

4.2. SELF-EVALUATION IN IMPROVING SERVICES TO PROTECT CHILDREN

Self-evaluation is about change and improvement, leading to well considered innovation in service delivery. It is based on professional reflection, challenge and support and involves informed decisions about what actions need to be taken. It is a continuous, dynamic process which establishes a baseline from which to plan and set priorities for improvement. Used effectively, continuous self- evaluation helps to monitor progress and impact.

The 2013-2016 Multi Agency Action Plan (MAAP) for Services Protecting Children and Young People in Aberdeenshire was approved by the Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee on 14 February 2014. The Plan has been developed by services working in partnership to protect children, young people and families and represents a shared commitment to continuous service improvement. As a working document it forms part of a reporting system to a range of stakeholders. This multi-agency plan is supported by single agency plans; references and links to which are made throughout.

Our activities and work streams are underpinned by the principles of our self-evaluation and improvement cycle, as detailed below



The following areas of practice were the 2015 multi-agency improvements;

- Recording and sharing information.
- Identification and management of risk.
- Planning to meet the needs of individual and the broader population of children at risk of harm or abuse.
- Quality Assurance to achieve consistent outcomes for children and young people.
- Consultation and participation of children, young people and their families.

On behalf of Committee The Operations and Practice Sub-Group have taken forward the following activities to support improvement

Promote good recording practices

Information was gathered from Police Scotland, National Health Service (NHS) Grampian, Education and Children's Social Work Service (ECS) to identify the work carried out in each agency to promote and support good recording practices. This exercise established that agencies have in place effective recording practices to meet operational requirements. Joint work has also been carried out via multi-agency audit to review Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) practice.

Address emerging issues regarding the communication of information

Survey Monkey was used to pose questions regarding aspects of practice where English is not the first language for service users. The recommendations in the resulting report are still to be cross referenced with the children's services Inspection Report and Action Plan. It has been agreed that the inclusion of the views of migrant families would enhance the existing results of this improvement priority, and this is being progressed.

Improve understanding of the concept of risk

Information was gathered from Police Scotland, NHS Grampian and ECS to illustrate the work carried out in each agency to improve understanding of the concept of risk. It was established that staff across agencies have an increased awareness and understanding of the risk. Work on a common understanding of thresholds for risk and concern in agencies will develop a more consistent understanding of triggers for early action, and work on this is ongoing.

Review and Update current protocols and guidance

Committee members have assessed the effectiveness of protocols and guidance at Committee on a number of occasions. The development of procedures and guidance will continue as an improvement priority for Committee.

Improvement to Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) Process and Recording Practice

The Aberdeenshire Record of Initial Referral Discussion process was implemented on 1 March 2014. A self-evaluation exercise was conducted on the use of the IRD process and areas for improvement are being taken forward.

Development of clearer linkages between GIRFEC and CP Policy

Sharing of data by Services: 6 geographical area multi-agency focus groups at practitioner level and one at team leader level addressed set questions based on the Care Inspectorate Quality Improvement Framework. Recommended improvements have been communicated to and agreed by task groups who will now take responsibility for progression.

Development of a priority setting methodology to support Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection

Terms of Reference have been established. Development of a calendar of self-evaluation will continue to provide opportunities for quality assurance and associated improvement priorities

Continuous Improvement of process and procedures for Joint Investigative Interviews

A Quality Assurance Programme has been implemented. A process whereby an Annual Report will be received by Committee and the Chief Officers Group has been implemented.

Identification and recording of existing consultation and opportunities for participation for families and young people to contribute to system design and delivery

Information has been gathered from Single Services, and all the Services have agreed that consultation with children and families will be an integral part of the improvement in design and delivery of every GIRFEC and Child Protection initiatives.

Alongside the improvement priority work undertaken above, a number of bespoke file audits were commissioned by Committee in response to questions raised by findings of initial case reviews, single service performance data etc.

For example, one file audit centered on pre-birth practice where risk was identified and a number of improvement priorities related to Aberdeenshire GIRFEC practice were agreed. These are being taken forward via GIRFEC implementation arrangements.

4.3. PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

The Committee is required to have robust mechanisms in place for the identification, consideration and undertaking of Significant Case Reviews on behalf of the Chief Officers. These should include a vigorous evaluation process for actions resulting from the review.

The National Guidance for Child Protection Committees for Conducting a Significant Case Review was published in March 2015. This guidance replaces the National interim guidance for undertaking SCRs published in 2007. The related Aberdeenshire Initial Case Review Operating Protocol 2016 has been devised and reflects the guidance while pertaining sufficient flexibility to suit local structures.

4.4. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Scottish Government developed the [National Framework for Child Protection Learning and Development in Scotland 2012](#) to set out a common set of skills and standards for workers to ensure the delivery of a consistently high standard of support to children and young people across the country. The main aim is to strengthen the skills and training of professionals and improve the advice and tools available to them in assessing, managing and minimising risks faced by some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

The National Guidance for Child Protection 2014 requires that individual agencies be accountable for ensuring that their staff are competent and confident in carrying out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing. Child Protection Committees are required to develop training programmes that complement and build on the work already done by individual agencies and which embrace multi-agency training needs.

The Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Sub-Group work is underpinned by an Aberdeenshire multi-agency Learning and Development Strategy which was devised in 2013 and updated in 2015. The group focuses on GIRFEC, child protection and domestic abuse learning opportunities for the multi-agency workforce and relies on intelligence from single services as to what they are doing within their own agencies.

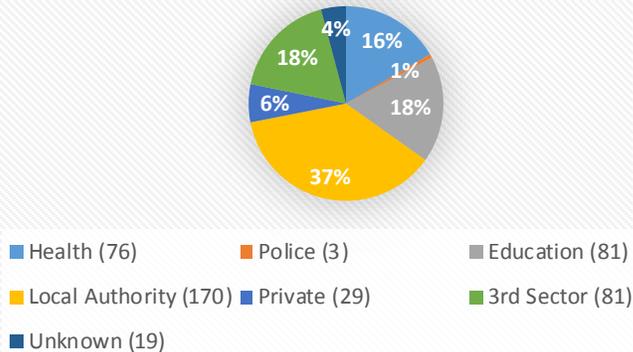
Examples of Learning and Development training and events delivered in 2015 are as follows.

Aberdeenshire Staff Attendance at Multi-Agency Child Protection Training

Multi-Agency Child Protection Training is undertaken on a North East basis. The arrangement is managed by the Child Protection Partnership, in which the three Lead Officers from Moray, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Committees work in partnership to agree course content and dates. Courses are quality assured, reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect any changes in legislation and local policies.

2015 Child Protection Partnership Training Calendar, and Attendance					
No	Course	Jan –Mar	Apr- July	Aug - Nov	Total
1.	Child Protection Basic Awareness	18	31	28	77
2.	Child Protection Basic Awareness Training for Trainers	8	16	9	33
3.	Introduction to Multi-Agency Child Protection Practice	26	29	21	76
4.	Introduction to Child Protection Case Conference	33	30	Trainer absent	66
5.	Child Protection Risk Assessments	17	21	16	54
6.	Introduction to Child Exploitation	7	11	Course changed	18
7.	Child Sexual Exploitation	Course changed	Course changed	15	15
8.	Introduction to Trafficking, Cultural Issues & Child Protection	Course changed	Course changed	11	11
9.	Introduction to Online Safety & Protection	16	24	14	54
10.	Working With Young People who are Sexually Active	25	28	5	58
OVERALL TOTALS		150	190	119	459

Attendance - Service Breakdown



TRAINING EVENTS

ONLINE SAFETY BRIEFINGS – 26 and 27 October 2015

Two briefings were held, one in Aberdeen and one in Inverurie. The briefings were focused on e-safety including the latest emerging trends and technologies, new resources, sources of support, research into online behaviours, and legal and law enforcement updates.

In total, 64 people participated – 42 from Aberdeenshire Council, 11 from the third sector, 5 from NHSG, and 6 from Police Scotland

Practitioner's Guide to Information Sharing, Confidentiality and Consent - 26 January 2015

Contributions were made by the Scottish Government, the Information Commissioners Office and NHS Grampian. Of the 270 attendees, Aberdeen City had 168 delegates, Aberdeenshire had 77 and Moray 25.

The event was positively evaluated with practitioners advising they felt informed and more confident about the guide.

CSE awareness and Resources Training - Training for Trainers course, run by Barnardos and part funded by the Scottish Government was held on 19 February 2015 in Aberdeenshire.

7 Aberdeenshire Practitioners from a range of Services including Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian attended the training and have used the training to inform their single service CSE training and awareness raising sessions in their individual services

Grampian Child Bereavement Network event November 2015 – *‘Supporting Children and Young People Following Bereavement due to Substance or Alcohol Misuse’* was a joint event between the Aberdeenshire Child and Family Protection Committee and Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP).

A Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Trainer Development Session on 18 September 2015

These sessions aimed to:

- Introduce recently developed training resources on Female Genital Mutilation
- Explore options for using the resources in different settings
- Address difficult and frequently asked questions likely to arise in training on FGM
- Increase knowledge and confidence about delivering training on FGM and to promote use of the training resources and inclusion of information on FGM within training sessions such as child protection.
- provide an opportunity to explore the complex motivations behind FGM and to develop understanding of FGM as part of the wider spectrum of gender based violence against women and girls

5. STRATEGIC PLANNING

Our strategic planning is informed by a range of drivers including the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014); external scrutiny; research; Government initiatives and self-evaluation.

When we have agreed our priorities these are tasked to our sub group structure of “Operations and Practice” and “Learning and Development” or to short life task and finish groups – all with multi agency representation.

Progress on the Committee’s strategic priorities via these arrangements is provided to Committee on a regular basis, with any stubborn issues also being addressed by Committee in a timely manner.

In light of the Government sponsored review of the child protection landscape, the 2015 Inspection of Services in Aberdeenshire; the formation of the Chief Officers group and a range of other developments it is possible that the core business areas of Committee and our business methods may change. We will report on these in the 2016/ 2017 Report but we would also want to re- assure the public and other stakeholders that our eventual strategic planning arrangements will not dilute the collective commitment to children and young people at risk of harm or abuse.

In particular we would anticipate that the forthcoming completion an Aberdeenshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) will enrich our ability to service the most vulnerable

children while making a focused contribution to the enhancement of earlier support initiatives.

Similarly that when the review of Aberdeenshire's GIRFEC Implementation arrangements is complete that Committee's connections with the GIRFEC structure will be enhanced.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

In 2015 the launch of the Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Multi-Agency Website was welcomed across Services. The website quickly became integral to our multi-agency arrangements, providing a forum for delivering information across the GIRFEC and Child Protection Landscape in Aberdeenshire.

The website promotes the ethos that "child protection is everyone's job" and provides a medium where our multi-agency Child Protection Guidance and related procedures are available and accessible to all practitioners in a one stop shop arrangement, linking to National Guidance and national materials, providing access across a large and diverse workforce.

An extensive range of information and resources, local and national, on a range of related topics is available for practitioners such as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), bullying, child trafficking to name a few.

Most importantly, the website provides information about how members of the public can report concerns about a child and gives advice and guidance on what could happen.

The Website supports GIRFEC linking in day-to-day work in education, health, policing, social work and the voluntary sector – any organisation whose staff come into direct contact with children. It makes it easier for those different organisations to communicate consistently with each other, and with parents, carer's, children and young people.



[Link to website - GIRFEC, ABERDEENSHIRE](#)

7. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION RELATING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER

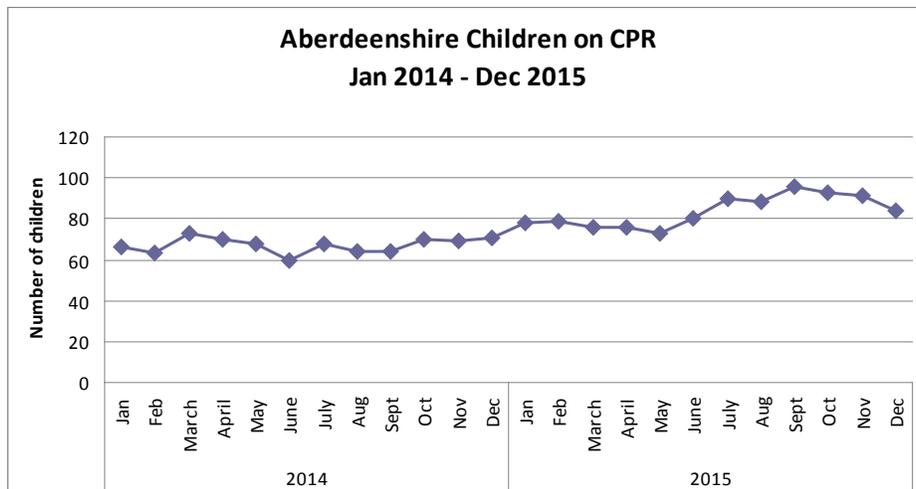
A core component of GIRFEC and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 is the Child's Plan. Within the context of child protection activity, where this plan includes action to address the risk of significant harm, it will incorporate a Child Protection Plan with any such meeting being known as a Child Protection Case Conference (CPCC).

CPCC's are a core feature of inter-agency co-operation to protect children and young people. Their primary purpose is to consider whether the child - including an unborn child - is at risk of significant harm and if so, to review an existing Child's Plan and/or consider a multi-agency action plan to reduce the risk of significant harm.

The table below records the number of Aberdeenshire Child Protection Case Conferences in the last 2 years.

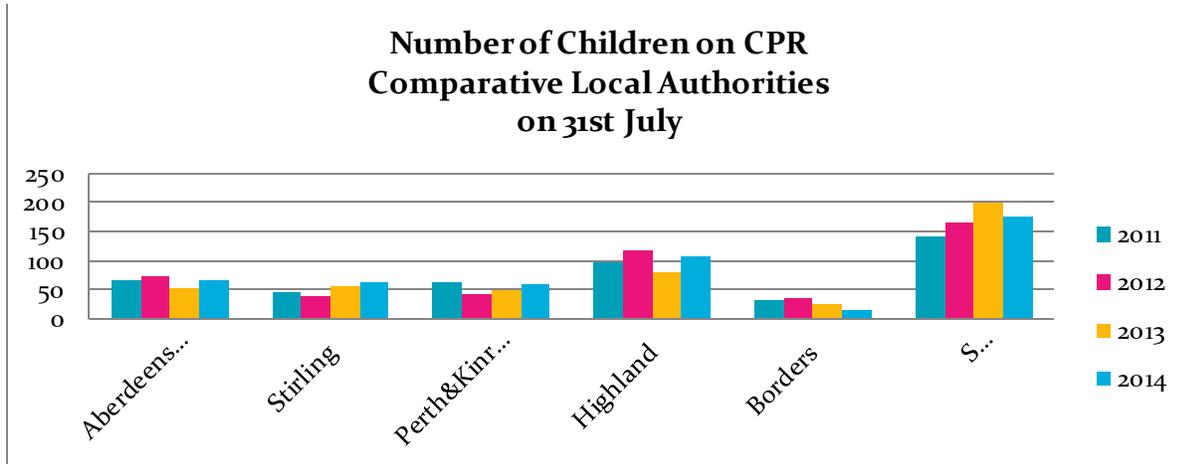
Child Protection Case Conferences in Aberdeenshire		
Year Period	2013/14	2014/15
Initial	71	84
Reviews	132	150
Total	203	234

The chart below describes the registrations in numbers of the children on the Child Protection on a monthly basis. The numbers in Aberdeenshire are generally low and variations can be linked to examples such as a one or two families with a few children being registered or deregistered.



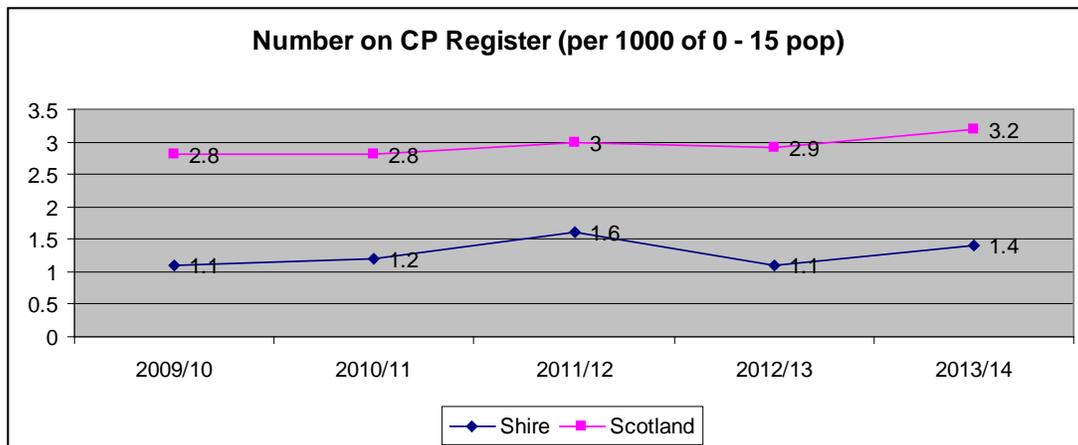
As can be seen from the 2011 to 2014 comparator chart below, there has been a consistent number of children on the Child Protection Register as at 31 July 2015. Numbers of registrations respond to identified need and there does not appear to be any

directly attributable reason for the minor fluctuations in this chart, given the relatively small numbers of children concerned and the presence of numerous possible variables and impact factors at play.



National Statistics comparison

The comparison in the chart below is taken from the Scottish Government National Statistics which were published in March 2014. The trend locally is a consistent number on the register with slight increases and decreases, this is echoed in the national numbers which also remains very constant.



COMMITTEE PRIORITIES FOR 2016/2017

- Completion of activities, commissioned and agreed by Committee pre 2016.
- Implementation of our action plan of joint audit, self-evaluation and improvement activities.
- Responding to national priorities and initiatives.
- Continue to review and establish the necessary protocols and guidance for Aberdeenshire.
- Further embed and develop the effectiveness of the GIRFEC Website with regard to child protection.
- Continue to develop child protection learning and development opportunities for the multi-agency workforce.
- Take forward improvements related to the findings of our self-evaluation activities.
- Implementing a Self-Evaluation of Committee's Performance.
- Development of an extended suite of performance data.

2016/17 CALENDAR OF JOINT AUDIT AND SELF-EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

- Enhance our risk assessment practices, particularly through informed use of the National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People 2012.
- Review our Initial Referral Discussion process and procedures.
- Enhance Child Protection Practice with regard to children with disabilities.
- Scoping and Self evaluation exercise on the incidence of and our response where domestic. Violence, mental distress or drink and drug dependency are prevalent, particularly on the service for infants.
- Undertake an evaluation based on the toxic trio* factors of risk and the interaction between children's services and those that are now governed within the Integrated Joint Board (IJB)

** The term 'toxic trio' is used to describe the issues of domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse which have been identified as common features of families where harm to children has occurred. They are viewed as indicators of increased risk of harm to children and young people.*