



# Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee Annual Report

1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

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

<http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/>

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## Introduction from CPC Chair

I am delighted to present my first annual report for Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee. I took up the post of Independent Chair of the CPC in April 2020 just as the country was beginning to grapple with the onset of Covid 19 and a national lockdown. At that point we really had no understanding of what lay ahead of us or how long it would take to get to grips with the pandemic and its impact. Short term challenges involved getting to grips with the technology and learning how to connect with colleagues over the airwaves. In the medium term we had to consider how we supported colleagues who were exhausted, felt isolated after many months of working at home or were trying to manage home working alongside meeting the demands of home schooling. As we look to the long term, we are just beginning to understand the impact of the pandemic on our most vulnerable in terms of mental health, exploitation, and poverty amongst many other challenges.

Throughout 2020/21 Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee increased the number of meetings in order to ensure a rapid and robust response to the emerging challenges. I am very grateful to all members for their commitment to the work of the committee and their determination to keep Aberdeenshire's children safe throughout the year. As a result of their hard work and the support of the subgroups the CPC delivered on a number of key objectives as described throughout this report. I am also very grateful to our Lead Officer, Emma Toner, for her support and resilience throughout the year.

Without doubt this has been a very difficult year for us all. The pandemic added to the complexity of our work but also offered opportunities that would not have been realised under normal working conditions. Looking to the future the longer-term impact of the pandemic will continue to be challenging and will require us to be even better collaborators and partners despite the individual pressures facing each organisation.

Susan Maclaren  
Independent Chair  
Aberdeenshire CPC

## Message from Chief Officers

The Executive Group for Public Protection (EGPP) are pleased to support and welcome you to the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) Annual Report 2020/21 which covers the work of the CPC during the period 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014 requires that each CPC be governed by a Chief Officer Group – in Aberdeenshire, the Executive Group for Public Protection (EGPP). The Chief Officers of the public sector organisations in Aberdeenshire, Grampian NHS Board, the Command Team of Police Scotland’s Grampian Division, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action and Aberdeenshire Council are responsible for the leadership, direction and scrutiny of the local child protection services and they have strategic responsibility for the Aberdeenshire CPC.

The EGPP continually strives for excellence in Aberdeenshire’s children's services and whilst there have been significant changes in our CPC leader arrangements, the EGPP has continued to provide strong and robust collective leadership; direction; governance; scrutiny; challenge and support to the work of the CPC ensuring commitment to the protection of children and young people in Aberdeenshire remains paramount.

The Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee has a key role to play in the continuous improvement of child protection policy and practice as a locally based, multi-agency strategic partnership responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of child protection policy and practice across Aberdeenshire. The CPC is also responsible for the quality assurance of multi-agency practice and ensuring that the performance measures put in place ultimately lead to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Strong leadership and a competent and confident workforce play a critical role in child protection. Two key issues are the importance of leadership in local child protection, particularly with regard to the way in which services are steered by senior managers, and the professional development of those working in child protection. The EGPP would like to recognise and thank the wider child protection community and all staff working in the public, private, third and independent sectors across Aberdeenshire; whose commitment, dedication and hard work continues to provide better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people at risk of harm, abuse and exploitation.



Jim Savege  
Chief Executive  
Aberdeenshire Council



George Macdonald  
Chief Superintendent  
Police Scotland



Caroline Hiscox  
Chief Executive  
NHS Grampian

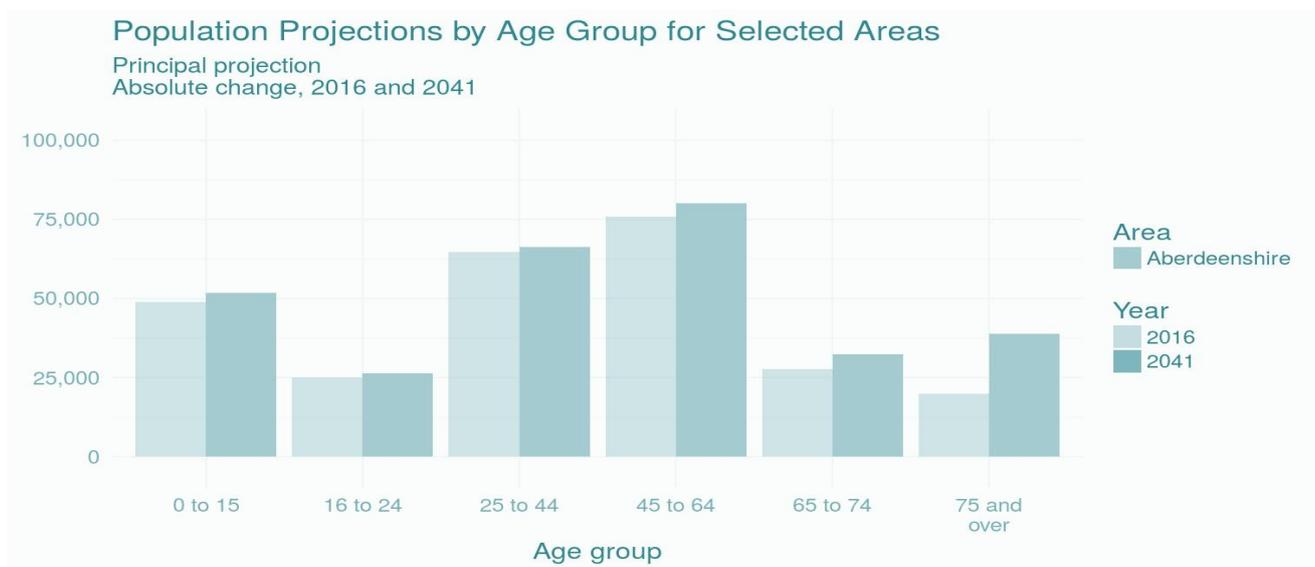
# Aberdeenshire Demographics



Aberdeenshire is a predominantly rural area in North East Scotland covering a wide geographical area of 6,313 square kilometres (approximately 8% of Scotland’s territory).

The Office of National Statistics [1] estimates the Aberdeenshire population in June 2018 as being 261,470 residents. This places Aberdeenshire as having the 6th largest population of the 32 Scottish Council Areas. This represents a small fall of 330 people since 2017 and is the second consecutive year that Aberdeenshire’s population has fallen.

Aberdeenshire’s child population (aged 0-15 years old), is above the Scottish average and growing steadily, with a predicted further 13.8% rise over the next 25 years.



1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

## National Context

The protection of children and young people in Scotland is set within the wider policy and practice context of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). Fundamentally child protection sits within, and is an integral part of, the wider GIRFEC approach. Both are inextricably linked and prerequisites in improving outcomes for children and young people, keeping them safe and protecting them from harm, abuse and exploitation.

This national approach has been further reviewed and strengthened by the [Scottish Government's Child Protection Improvement Programme \(CPIP\)](#) underpinned by the Catherine Dyer Child Protection Systems Review [Protecting Scotland's Children and Young People: It is Still Everyone's Job 2017](#) and [Child Protection Improvement Programme Report 2017](#). A number of national workstreams are ongoing and regular programme updates can be found at the [CPIP blog](#).

One of the Child Protection Improvement Programme actions was that the National Guidance for Child Protection should be revised "to ensure it is consistent with the legislative and policy framework and current practice developments."

This revision has involved consultation and collaboration with a wide range of partners to consider and reflect the range of legislative, policy and practice developments. It incorporates our understanding of best practice from various sources, including practitioner and stakeholder experience, inspections, research, and learning from Significant Case Reviews (SCRs). [The Joint Strategic Inspection of Services for Children and Young People: Review of Findings from the Inspection Programme 2012-2017](#) has also provided evidence about areas of progress and areas for improvement.

The revised National Guidance for Child Protection is integral to the rights based Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach; and the GIRFEC National Practice Model is integrated within the revised National Guidance. The safety and wellbeing of children are inseparably connected. This guidance will replace the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2014](#) which describes the functions of Child Protection Committees as continuous improvement; strategic planning and public information and communication. This has been supplemented in 2019 by the advice and guidance document [Protecting children and young people: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer responsibilities](#).

It is anticipated that taking forward the updates and ambitions of the new National Guidance will be a significant and challenging role for the CPC Services in the coming year.

## Our Vision for Children, Young People & Families in Aberdeenshire

'Our commitment to Aberdeenshire's children and young people, is to provide them with the right support, in the right place, at the right time. In helping them reach their individual potential and goals, we will work together to make Aberdeenshire the best place in Scotland to grow up'

This vision reflects a shared commitment to GIRFEC at the highest level across the Community Planning Partnership. Our determined approach to children's services planning, supports continued provision of high quality, inclusive services which promote resilience and wellbeing, and mitigate against the impact of inequality, poverty and disadvantage.

### Service Delivery

Within our The Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan 2023 we will demonstrate our commitment to

1. Early Intervention & Primary Prevention - Any action needed is taken at the earliest opportunity, and in many cases prevents need arising
2. Integration - Action is coordinated from the point of view and experiences of children and their families
3. Best Value - Services ensure best use of available resources through jointly assessing need
4. Wellbeing - Related Services, such as those supporting parents, carry out their work in a manner which also safeguards, supports and promotes child wellbeing

Our strategic Children's Services arrangements in Aberdeenshire are described in the diagram below



## Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee arrangements

The National Guidance describes the collective responsibilities for Child Protection as the “functions” of a Child protection Committee, and identifies these as:

- Continuous Improvement
- Strategic Planning
- Public Information and Communication

The work of the CPC and partner agencies is fundamental to ensuring better outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people who are in need of protection from harm, abuse and exploitation. The improvement work of the CPC is conveyed in the [CPC Improvement Plan](#) which is aligned with and supports the [Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan 2020-2023](#).

In March 2020 the UK ‘locked down’ in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Agencies involved in protecting children had to work quickly to develop new ways of working together to support the most vulnerable children when schools were closed and face to face contact was extremely limited.

Ordinarily there are four Committees annually, however in response to the restrictions to practice related to the pandemic, there were 7 CPCs. An Independent Chair provides the leadership of the CPC, to effectively fulfil its functions such that a demonstrable continuous improvement of the inter-agency child protection arrangement is achieved. An Independent CPC Lead Officer coordinates and supports the work and is accountable to the CPC.

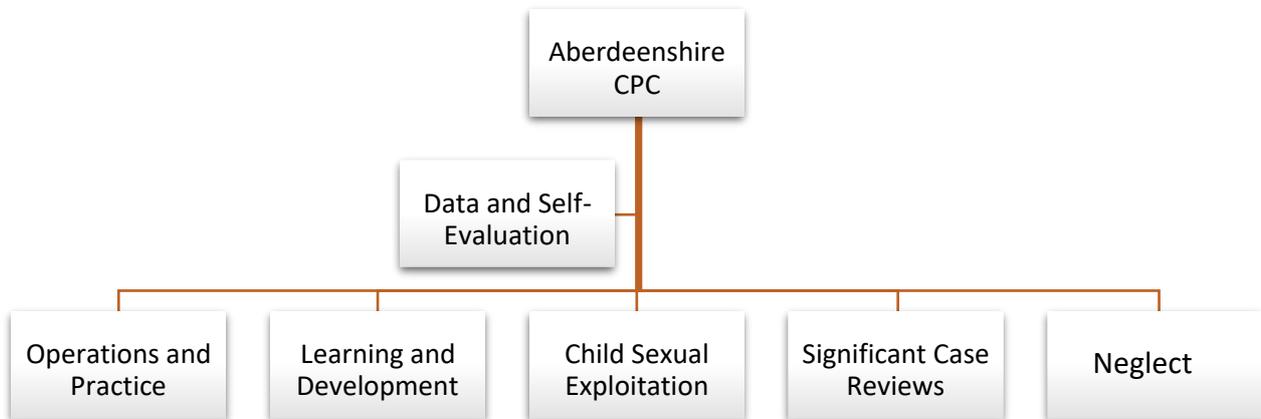
This year the Child Protection Committee held a number of development sessions. This gives the CPC members a chance to reflect on particular aspects of the work of the CPC, as well as our annual review of how effective our evaluation and scrutiny work is in helping us understand the child protection landscape in Aberdeenshire. We undertake an annual anonymous survey to CPC Members related to the effectiveness of our CPC structure, roles and functions. This gave us the opportunity to reflect on and refine our arrangements, sub-structure and how the subgroups report and connect with the CPC. Leading on from this year’s survey we have agreed some new measures, such as sessions twice yearly support sessions for the CPC Subgroup Chairs.

The membership of the Child Protection Committee comprises of staff of sufficient seniority to commit their agency to the decisions of the CPC in accordance with the National Guidance. Agencies currently represented on Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee include:

- Children's Services Social Work
- Education Service
- Health Board
- Health and Social Care Partnership
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
- Children's Hearings Scotland
- The Third Sector

## CPC Sub-Structure

The CPC fulfils its business using a subgroup structure, which is fluid and changes related to need and the associated workplan of the CPC. Each Subgroup has multi-agency membership and the CPC agrees a chair from one of the agencies. The present substructure of the CPC is explained by the diagram below –



The Data and Self-Evaluation Subgroup focuses on sharing child protection data to inform our understanding of how well services are working in partnership to protect children, young people and their families. The group provides multi-agency scrutiny to child protection data and drives self-evaluation and improvement activity as part of the CPC workplan.

The group also has responsibility for developing a calendar of self-evaluation arrangements and for Aberdeenshire Multi-Agency Child Protection Practice.

The Operations and Practice Subgroup Workplan takes forward multi-agency improvements that have been identified through our self-evaluation activities with a focus on multi-agency practice. The group also oversees the development of any new guidance which has been identified, and the updating of Aberdeenshire guidance.

The Significant Case Review (SCR) Subgroup progresses any SCRs locally and ensures that the learning from SCRs nationally is discussed and taken forward by services across Aberdeenshire. An amended approach, Learning Reviews will come into place in September 2021, with our local operating protocol requiring to be updated accordingly.

The Learning & Development Subgroup identifies multi-agency child protection learning and development needs and has oversight of the multiagency child protection training calendar.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Subgroup provides a learning community to share and exchange knowledge, skills, experiences, lessons learned and good practice in the recognition of and response to Child Sexual Exploitation in Aberdeenshire, underpinned by the Child Sexual Exploitation - Core Components Checklist for Child Protection Committees (Interim). Developed by The National CSE Group, April 2019.

The North East of Scotland Joint Investigative Interview Training (JIIT) Group coordinates the JIIT training and evaluation of JIIT on a North East of Scotland basis. A national JII Model is being introduced and a working group has been established to take forward the planning for introducing and embedding this approach in Aberdeenshire. There are particular challenges for Aberdeenshire related to the large geographical area we cover.

The work of the CPC is described in our CPC Improvement Plan, recorded using six key aspects of child protection practice as described within the Care Inspectorate Quality Indicators Framework –

1. Recognition and Response to Initial Concerns
2. Assessing Risk and Need
3. Care Planning, Managing Risk and Effective Intervention
4. Impact on Children & Young People, and Their Families
5. Policy, Procedures and Legal Measures
6. Workforce Development and Support

## Data and Self-Evaluation

The Minimum Dataset for Child Protection Committees in Scotland was established and piloted in 2019. This was developed by Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS) in partnership with Scotland’s Child Protection Committees, Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate, and Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration.

The Minimum Dataset for Child Protection Committees is a package of data collation, presentation, analysis, scrutiny questions and reporting. With an ambition to:

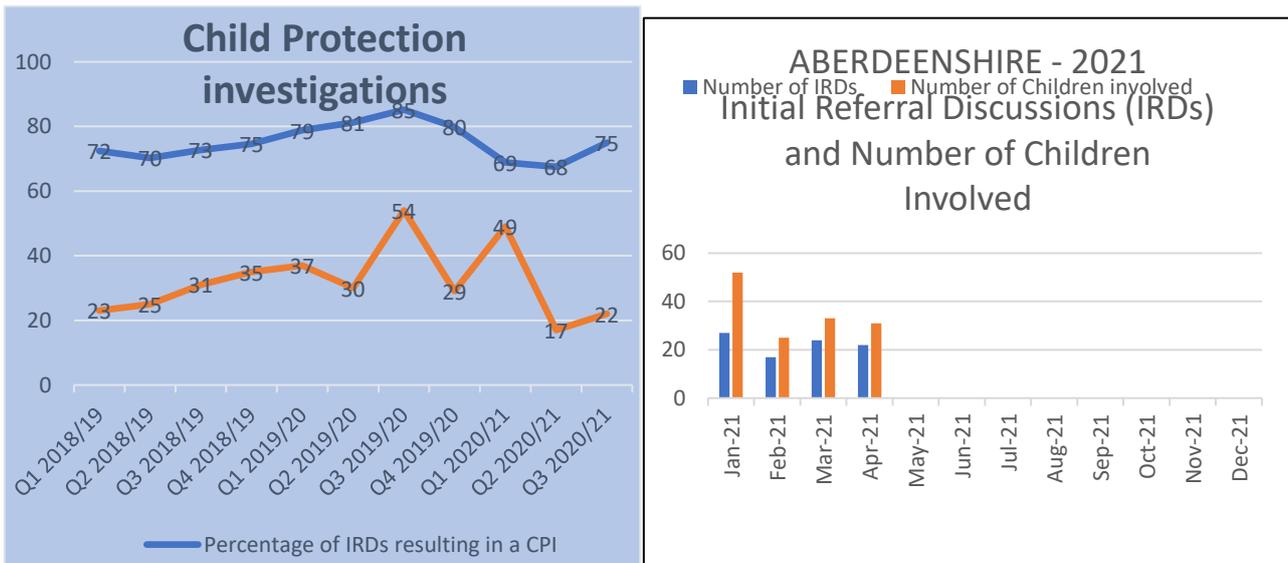
- Deliver robust datasets to support child protection improvement
- Develop a national resource for advice on using child protection data for local planning and service development
- Expand analytical capacity

This year, the Committee has embedded the National Minimum Dataset as the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee Dataset. Once fully established nationally, this new framework supports benchmarking between local authority areas and ensures there is consistency of data gathered across the country.

Quarterly reporting using this dataset, supplemented by additional local evaluation and performance information, is considered by the Data and Self-Evaluation Subgroup. This includes analysis and identification of trends, supported by the “prompt questions”.

### Aberdeenshire Data

Child Protection Investigations refer to the gathering and sharing of information to determine if the child is at risk of significant harm and to identify other wellbeing needs as defined in the National Guidance (2014). This can include undertaking a Joint Investigative Interview and medical examination where required.

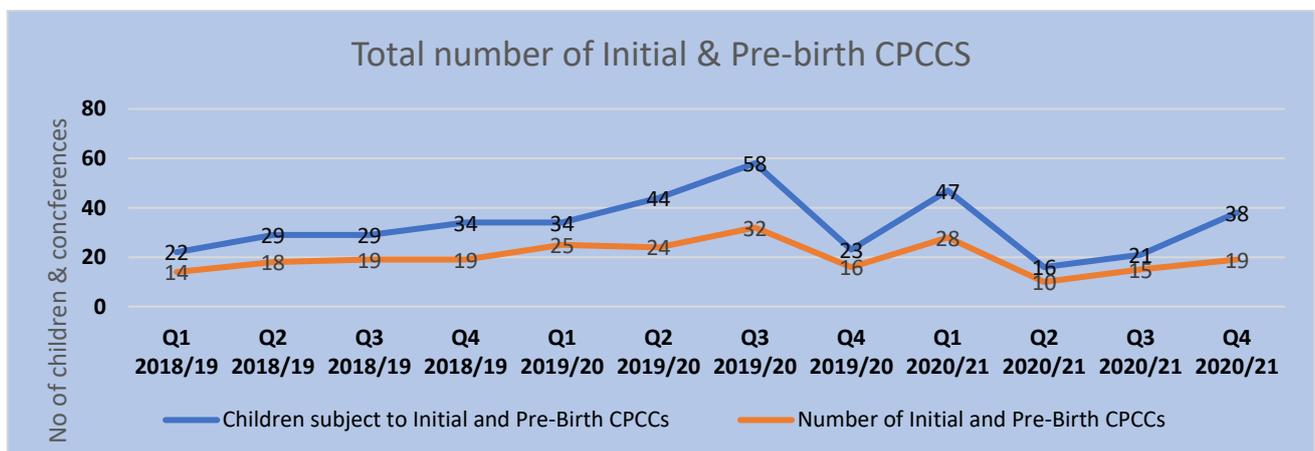


The number of IRDs has been fairly consistent over the past 3 years with slight dips over the summer holidays. We know that the majority of referrals come from police and education colleagues and

school holidays therefore impact referrals. There is the clear drop in the number of IRD’s in April 20 (Q1 2020/21) at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic however referrals increased directly from parents/carers in line with a local and national campaign to encourage the community to be alert and report concerns. The spike in Q4 2017/28 and Q3 2019/20 reflects an increase in number of children requiring a ICPC (which includes larger sibling groups).

On average, 74% of IRDs result in a CPI which has been consistent over a 3-year period which means around 25% result in a recommendation that a CPI is not required. Of the 25% who are not subject to an CPI a single service response was evident from the sample audited. The IRD audit also monitors repeat cases to ensure that practitioners are considering historical information to inform the assessment and recommendations for the child/family. Over the past 3 years, an average of 30% of CPIs have led to a CPCC.

Data pertaining to the number of **initial and pre-birth Child Protection Case Conferences**, the number of children subject to such proceedings and the conversation rate from being subject to an ICPC to registration help us to understand how we perform as a partnership at assessing need and risk.



Between Q1 2018/19 and Q3 2019/20 (fig 2.1), we have seen a rising number of children and case conferences convened. There is a Clear drop in Q4 2019/20 during start of Covid-19 pandemic with a rise again in Q1. This seems to correlate with the drop in referrals from education during the lockdown and then the start-up of the Hubs for vulnerable children alongside an increase in referrals from the general public which as previously noted, coincided with national child protection campaigns.

In Q2 2019/20, we introduced Quality Improvement Officers to the IRD discussions during school holidays which enabled more information to be shared in holiday periods.

Conversion rates (fig 2.2) remain very high from Case Conference to Registration of the child rarely dipping below 80%.

## Improvement Activity

Quality Assurance and self-evaluation are central to continuous improvement and provide ongoing reflective processes to measure performance, improvement and outcomes. Whilst individual agencies have responsibility for the quality assurance of their own service, the Committee has responsibility for the development and implementation of inter-agency quality assurance mechanisms.

The Aberdeenshire shared [CPC Improvement Plan](#) is underpinned by our own multi-agency quality assurance activity and takes cognisance of existing and emerging Scottish Government child protection policy developments. This includes implementing improvement work related to the Scottish Government's Child Protection Improvement Programme (CPIP) as previously detailed.

Arrangements are in place to reflect on our culture, ethos and practice through reviewing the lessons learned from National and Local Initial Case Reviews (ICRs) and Significant Case Reviews (SCRs) employing an Aberdeenshire lens methodology.

To support our commitment to improving practice and outcomes for vulnerable children and families, the CPC has developed a shared [Quality Assurance Strategy](#) and a [Quality Assurance Activity Plan](#) which sits alongside the CPC Improvement Plan. The CPC are committed to using a variety of methods to learn about our Child Protection practice. Information is collated in a systematic regular manner, alongside the undertaking of themed quality assurance activity where we require further knowledge and reassurance.

Our shared ambition is to continue to improve the involvement and participation of children, young people and their families in key child protection processes and the wider work of the CPC. The GIRFEC Children's Rights and Participation Group has been established to lead a review of the strategic direction and focus for upholding Children's Rights and promoting youth participation and decision-making across Aberdeenshire. The group will make recommendations to the GIRFEC Strategic Group outlining identified areas for improvement and/or development to inform an action plan.

## Improvement Activity

The report now focuses on our Child Protection Committee Improvement Plan from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Over the past year, improvement activity has focused on:

- Responding to neglect - Development of a practitioner's toolkit
- Ensuring Robust and consistent Child Protection Initial Referral Discussions (IRD's) are undertaken which results in actions to protect children & young people
- Quality Assurance and feedback to ensure that our practitioners undertake effective Child-centred child protection joint investigative interviews
- Ensure our pre-birth practice is consistent, particularly regarding vulnerable pregnancies

- Evaluation of our Child Protection Case Conference processes
- Raising awareness with regard to Child Sexual Exploitation
- Develop a Missing Children Protocol
- Updating and developing multi-agency guidance on Child Protection Initial Referral Discussions, Vulnerable Pregnancy Protocol, Equal Protection from Assault, considering disability needs in child protection investigations
- Evaluation and Review of our Workforce Child Protection Development and Support
- Evaluation of our child protection reregistration's

### **Responding to neglect - Development of a practitioner's toolkit**

The impact of Neglect is often cumulative and progresses covertly and gradually. There is therefore a risk that agencies do not intervene early enough to prevent harm. It is essential that all agencies; Health, Education /schools, Police, Early Years professionals, Housing, Voluntary and Community-Based services identify emerging problems and possible unmet needs in collaboration and seek to address them before they become more severe. It is equally important that practitioners remain vigilant to the negative impact of drift and delays and 'start again' syndrome.

Subsequent Improvement Activity

A Neglect Subgroup was established to develop a neglect toolkit, consisting of:

- 1 Welcome Page & reference to Framework: Working with Child Neglect in Scotland
- 2 Description and Indicators of Neglect
- 4 Service's 7-minute neglect briefing
- 5 Voices of Children
- 6 GIRFEC Response
- 7 Child Protection Response
- 8 Home Conditions Assessment Tool
- 9 Medical Assessment Pathway
- 10 Understanding Resistance
- 11 Be Professionally Curious
- 12 Escalation and Resolution
- 13 Courageous Conversations
- 14 Case Studies

Next Steps

- The Neglect Toolkit will be launched in October 2021
- Champions will disseminate the Neglect Toolkit/Neglect Training
- A managers brief, and communication strategy will support the rollout
- Evaluation of the Toolkit will take place in April and October 2022
- Multi-agency neglect e-learning to support the toolkit to launch in December 2021

### **Child Protection Initial Referral Discussions (IRD)**

Initial Referral Discussion is the notification of a child protection concern and up to the point where a decision is made whether or not to proceed with a Child Protection Investigation. Multi agency evaluation of our IRD processes initially consisted of a multi-agency case audit of child protection investigations.

The Aberdeenshire IRD process was updated and launched with the ambition of providing a reliable and consistent child protection response. New timescales were introduced as part of the process.

Education health, police and social work are fully involved in the discussions. Police Scotland and Social Work ensure completion of the IRD Report.

**Subsequent Improvement Activity:**

- The process continues to be subject to regular quality assurance and scrutiny (5 IRDS per month) by the CPC IRD Working Group, consisting of colleagues from Police Scotland, Children’s Services Social Work, Education and Health. Learning from this scrutiny work is communicated directly to individual times to promote practice improvement and with the services as a whole.
- Summary reports on a quarterly and annual basis
- Multi-agency IRD training course - Initial Referral Discussions – Understanding Your Role in Child Protection Enquiries
- Out of Hours IRD guidance has been developed for Police & Social Work

**Key Strengths**

- Strong collaborative commitment to quality assurance activity from partners to improve practice.
- Strong commitment from Services to actively participate in the IRD process with the right information within agreed timescales
- Process of providing feedback to practitioners on an ongoing basis across all services
- Ability to continue to update and adapt the process related to ongoing learning

**Next Steps**

- Ongoing monthly audit activity to continue with a summary report being prepared on a quarterly and annual basis
- The new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 IRD Guidance considerations to be taken forward via the IRD Working Group
- Development of online course which has been delayed, awaiting the impact that the new National CP Guidance will have on the IRD process in Aberdeenshire.

**Effective Child-centred child protection joint investigative interviews**

As part of a Child Protection Investigation, the joint investigative interview is a formal, planned interview with a child, carried out by staff trained and competent to conduct it, for the purposes of eliciting the child’s account of events (if any) which require investigation.

**Subsequent Improvement Activity:**

The Joint investigative Interview Group are continually considering best practice to ensure we have the enough trained staff, that we are undertaking effective interviews via a quality assurance process.

**Key Strengths**

- Well established systems in place
- Training for staff in place
- Monitoring of our effectiveness

**Next Steps**

- Taking forward the new Joint Investigative Interview Model in Aberdeenshire.
- Ongoing Quality Assurance

### **Pre-birth practice is consistent, particularly regarding vulnerable pregnancies**

The Vulnerable pregnancy protocol was introduced within Aberdeenshire in November 2016. With an overarching aim of providing a document that would support practitioners in the identification of factors which would indicate that an unborn baby may become a 'child in need' of support, as defined by the Children (Scotland) Act, 1995.

#### Subsequent Improvement Activity

A Social work Team Manager and two health professionals formed a Multiagency working group in order to review/ update the existing vulnerable pregnancies protocol. Plus, design and deliver training to support the consistent use of the protocol within Aberdeenshire.

Initially the plan had been to focus on the request for assistance form when a vulnerable pregnancy had been identified, however, there were planned changes due to be made to the Multi Agency Request form, midwives were moving to Badger net (electronic recording system) and there were practice issues in relation to single service assessments and the use of the NHS Grampian's Support & Management (SAM) process, therefore the opportunity was taken to focus on single agency training and gauge staff confidence from single agency prior to progressing to multiagency practice.

A questionnaire was developed with the assistance of the Quality Improvement and Assurance Team at NHS Grampian. The questionnaire was handed out to Community Midwifery staff prior to their attendance at training between September 2019 and February 2020.

Four sessions took place within the various location teams (North, south, central). Questionnaires were completed by all participants.

The questionnaire focused on confidence levels of staff in relation to single agency assessments (internal health processes), use of the Aberdeenshire vulnerable pregnancy protocol, and confidence levels in relation to chairing of a multiagency meeting (Maapm).

#### Key Strengths

The self-evaluation activity has helped us understand that the vulnerable pregnancy has not been fully embedded in practice. Midwifery staff have received targeted training to ensure they are aware of the guidance and the associated practice requirements.

#### Next Steps

The vulnerable pregnancy protocol should be reviewed by the working group and any updates should be proposed in consultation with Midwifery managers.

Consideration should be given to the chairing of a Mappm meeting, would this be better suited to an independent person from within the midwifery service as opposed to the named midwife.

Multi-agency Workshop events to increase confidence in relation to referral to another service to be completed as per the original plan

Questionnaire to be undertaken again to measure any changes to practice/ practitioner confidence.

### **Child Protection Case Conference processes**

The Child Protection Conference is designed to look at all the relevant information and circumstances to determine how best to protect the child and promote their welfare.

#### Subsequent Improvement Activity:

Our second case conference audit reflects improvements in our current processes evidencing that we respond efficiently to child protection concerns. Improvements were noted in our local and national performance measures.

### Key Strengths

Our continuous improvement approach to planning reflects the findings in RCPC plans being 'SMARTer' and providing clarity for families and the team that support them. The audit group acknowledged this remains a work in progress with the testing of new record of meeting and child plan templates underway. From this audit, there were 3 key issues identified.

- Workforce Learning and Development – Work is underway in developing online training on case conferences and will be informed by learning from this audit. Supported by Review Managers, this supports clarity in the process of the conference to ensure active participation by all. SMART planning, engagement of children and parents/carers are key to improving outcomes and the training should therefore ensure that all partners are clear on their responsibilities in this regard.
- Lack of recognition and awareness around domestic abuse in view of which, we would recommend that domestic abuse and child protection training is considered as a priority workforce development need.
- Lived Experience of families beyond case conference – Work has also begun in understanding the child and family's lived experience of child protection and wellbeing processes. This includes focusing on the child's journey from any multi-agency forums, to case conferences, deregistration and back into GIRFEC processes. Work is also being explored on advocacy for children.
- Team around the family – The engagement of all the team is crucial in the protection of children. This audit particularly highlighted the need for adult services to actively engage and contribute to the CPCC process, including providing meaningful progress reports. This would help to explore underlying reasons for parental non engagement with services, particularly around domestic abuse and mental ill-health. Work is underway to develop a reporting template to Child Protection Case Conferences for the Criminal Justice service as other services have existing templates.

### Improvement Planning and Evaluation

#### Next Steps

- Audit of quality of child health reports submitted to CPCC's, including professional curiosity
- Initiate discussions with NHS partners around learning and development relating to CPCC processes – including potential reporting template for Adult Health Services
- Development of online training on case conferences and domestic abuse.
- Devise new template for Criminal Justice to report to CPCC's.
- Trial of new Record of Meeting and Child's Plan templates
- Quality Improvement Manager (Early Years) to raise awareness across service on expected participation in CPCC's
- Deregistration – outcomes for children and their family
- Meaningful engagement of children and clear service expectations
- Complete the audit in 18 months to review actions undertaken and impact on the conference process

## Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse in which a person(s), of any age takes advantage of a power imbalance to force or entice a child into engaging in sexual activity in return for something received by the child and/or those perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the presence of perceived consent does not undermine the abusive nature of the act.

### Subsequent Improvement Activity

- The multi-agency CSE Working group workplan is underpinned by the "Child Sexual Exploitation: Core Components checklist for Child Protection Committees" (2017).

### Key Strengths

- A communications plan has been implemented which, whilst requiring formalisation, has facilitated the sharing of relevant national and localised messaging both within services and to an external audience.

- Sharing of Police data within the meeting allows agencies to identify main areas of harm and to focus combined efforts in these areas.
- Staff within all agencies have become more confident in the identification of the signs of CSE and the relevant actions to be taken following awareness raising activities generated and co-ordinated through the group.
- Awareness has been raised across the agencies and communities in Aberdeenshire regarding the most common forms of CSE and the signs of abuse as well as pathways for safeguarding.
- Analysis carried out by Police Scotland provides that since March 2020, the average 'reach' of CSE social media posts circulated within North-East Division has risen from 12,000 to 25,000.

#### Next Steps

The scope of the group is to be expanded to include not only Child Sexual Exploitation but also the Criminal Exploitation of Children in all its' forms. Initial scoping of the enhanced view has identified county lines drug dealing as an area which locally is an area of focus with established structures which could contribute to the work of this group and also benefit from the collaboration of group members.

### **Disability**

A multiagency working group established to enhance Child Protection Practice with regard to children with disabilities.

#### Subsequent Improvement Activity

- Wide range of practitioner resources created for use by all statutory and partner services
- Joint Investigative Interview Training (JIIT) for Child Protection Investigations – disability awareness incorporated within the training.

#### Key Strengths

- CPC having an awareness of the comparatively low number of child protection investigations involving children with a disability, are committed to ensuring the voices of these children are clearly heard and tools developed to maximise communication and participation.

#### Next Steps

- Use of the practitioner resource continues to be monitored by Services and via our monthly IRD Audit activity.

### **Develop and effective Missing/Unseen Children Protocol**

Every year in Scotland there are over 30,000 episodes of people going missing reported to Police Scotland. Going missing exposes people to unnecessary risks, it impacts negatively on their health and wellbeing; and, in a small number of cases, can lead to death. Almost one in two of all missing people reported have gone missing on one or more previous occasions.

#### Subsequent Improvement Activity

The Aberdeenshire Multi-Agency Missing Persons Protocol has been agreed underpinned by a number of supporting guidance:

- Children and Young People Missing from Home and Care – Joint Protocol for Police Scotland and Children's Social Work Services
- Children Missing from Education Flowchart
- NHS Grampian Missing Persons Guidance
- SCRA Missing Children Policy
- Police and HSCP Joint Protocol – Vulnerable Adults who go Missing

#### Key Strengths

- Ensure that the use of the national definition of a missing person is consistent across partner agencies.
- Provide a consistent approach for the relevant agencies when a person is missing.
- Mitigate the risk to the people who go missing.

#### Next Steps

Following the development of the protocol, Aberdeenshire, along with Aberdeen have been successful in being one of the 4 areas in Scotland to secure the National Missing Persons Framework Project partnership project assistance for the development and implementation of The National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland, in support of existing good practice in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The project will work with local partners to develop current policies and protocols around return discussions; review and improve information sharing; deliver free, tailored training sessions to local professionals working in this field; share best practice and learning around the implementation of The National Framework and build awareness of relevant support services.

#### **Evaluation of our child protection reregistration's**

At the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee on 20 February 2020 there were discussions regarding the Child Protection Register Quarterly Report - 1 October to 31 December 2019. This included a discussion on the numbers of re-registrations, and although this was lower than the national rate, CPC members were keen to have a deeper knowledge and understanding on this aspect of our practice alongside reassurances regarding re-registration in Aberdeenshire.

#### Key Strengths

The snapshot review has provided a fuller information regarding reregistration practice in Aberdeenshire. It would suggest we are making de-registering decisions related to improvements for children. The review has not provided any depth of knowledge as to what we are doing between registrations, but there is certainly evidence of ongoing planning meetings for children, with concerns being escalated back into the child protection realm where GIRFEC multi agency support is no longer effective.

#### Next Steps

A further review is planned for later this year, including a deeper dive into the period between reregistration's.

## Supporting our Workforce

### Learning and Development

The Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Learning and Development Strategy sets out the key priorities for the development of the multi-agency workforce in Aberdeenshire during 2021-2023.

This strategy supports the ambition and priorities of:

[Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan 2020 to 2023](#)

[Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee Priorities for 2020-2023](#) [Aberdeenshire Local](#)

[Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2017-27](#)

The strategy seeks to support the development of a competent, confident workforce which will promote services within Aberdeenshire to deliver positive outcomes for children, young people and families through prevention, early intervention and effective protective measures when necessary. Our ambition is to consolidate reflective, evidence-based practice which will underpin the processes used to maximise children's well-being.

The Covid 19 Pandemic restrictions had meant that face to face training was not allowed to take place. We were already beginning to develop training resources in a range of platforms. The previous model of offering a training calendar of 8 courses being held 3 times a year has limitations and we have moved to offer learning opportunities that are more flexible and available to staff members, and when required.

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership is committed to ensuring consistently high standards of practice are embedded across the workforce. This is achieved through the GIRFEC Strategic Group having responsibility and oversight of the arrangements in Aberdeenshire. It does this through promoting a shared understanding of the practice, principles and values underpinning Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), embedding use of the National Practice Model, and a commitment to Children's Rights.

An agreed Framework provides a practical reference document to provide consistency and support services in meeting the multi-agency GIRFEC training needs of its wide and diverse workforce.

The GIRFEC Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group partners services / agencies identify their single service / agency child protection learning and development pathways for all staff, particularly those members of staff working with children, young people and families.

The Group also identifies and maps out the inter-agency child protection learning and development opportunities, which aims to support and complement, but not replace single service/agency GIRFEC (including child protection) learning and development pathways.

Within the Aberdeenshire Council ALDO System, where council staff learning opportunities are available, a new GIRFEC multi-agency PORTAL resource where a number of learning resources are contained and available in once place, to be accessed as required by the multi-agency workforce.

Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Multi-Agency Learning and Development Resources	
1	GIRFEC National Practice
2	Children’s Rights, Engagement and Participation Module
3	Information-Sharing Module
4	Named Person, Lead Professional, and the Team Around the Child Module
5	Assessment and Chronologies Module
6	Multi- Agency Meetings and The Child’s Plan
7	Child Protection Basic Awareness Module
8	Initial Referral Discussions – Understanding Your Role in Child Protection Enquiries
9	National Disability Toolkit E-Learn
10	Child Sexual Exploitation – Awareness Raising
11	Human Trafficking – Awareness Raising
12	Effective Home Visits with pandemic restrictions e.g. masks etc
13	Introduction to the National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People
14	Tackling Child Neglect – in development
15	Domestic Abuse & the Protection of Children – in development
16	Preparing for Child Protection Case Conferences – in development
17	Multi-agency Aberdeenshire bespoke Workshops as required (Services for Children)
18	Multi-agency Awareness Raising Events across the North East of Scotland – Child Protection Partnership
19	Joint Investigative Interview Training & Refreshers for Police Officers and Social Workers via the JII Working Group

## Practitioner Guidance

In addition to providing learning and development opportunities, we continue to provide our workforce with a wide range of Guidance materials. Our guidance documents are detailed below. With the imminent publication of the new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, we have arranged a systematic system of reviewing and updating our guidance in line with the requirements of the national guidance.

ABERDEENSHIRE Multi-agency Guidance Documents	Date
Aberdeenshire Reporting of CP Concerns - Initial Referral Discussion	Jan 2020
Complex Child Abuse Investigations Guidance for Services in Aberdeenshire	Apr 2017
A Practitioners Guide to Information-Sharing Confidentiality and Consent	Mar 2019
Child Protection Concern Information and Advice Leaflet	Jan 2018
Child Protection Information for Families Leaflet	Jan 2018
Initial Child Protection Case Conference–Information for Parents and Carers	Sep 2019

Aberdeenshire Practitioners Guidance–Attending Child Protection Case Conferences	Sep 2019
Aberdeenshire CPCC Decision Making PRACTICE NOTE	Nov 2019
Aberdeenshire Practitioners Guidance–What is Child-Sexual Exploitation - Domestic Abuse and the Protection of Children MA Guidance - Jul 18	Sep 2019
Working with uncooperative families	Jul 2018
Multi-agency guidance for working with Young People who are sexually active	Under Review
Vulnerable pregnancy protocol	Aug 2019
-Working with Children and Young People Displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviour	Under Review
-Aberdeenshire Whole Systems Approach Guidance – -Care and Risk Management (CARM) Planning for Children and Young People who present a risk of Serious Harm	Jan 2019
Aberdeenshire Home Conditions Assessment Tool •Aberdeenshire Home Conditions Assessment Tool – Guidance •Aberdeenshire Home Conditions Assessment Tool (editable / printable) •Home Conditions Assessment Tool – Comparing Progress (editable / printable)	Apr 2017
Core Group Guidance	Sep 2019
Operational Guidance – Equal Protection from Assault	Dec 2020
	Feb 2021

## Aberdeenshire CPC Priorities for 2020-2023 – Key Child Protection Practice Activities

Aberdeenshire CPC is committed to continuous improvement through quality assurance and self-evaluation and continually strives for excellence which will directly improve the experience, support and outcomes for children and families across Aberdeenshire. Our priorities going forward are:

<p>Child Protection Case Conference Improvement Planning</p> <p>Promotion of and effective use of an Aberdeenshire Neglect Toolkit</p> <p>Engagement with children and their families</p> <p>Developing an action plan on our responses to child exploitation and online safety</p> <p>Missing Children -exploring our return home interviews and practice</p> <p>Evaluation of our Workforce Child Protection Training and Support</p> <p>Implementation of the updated National Child Protection Minimum dataset</p> <p>Implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021</p> <p>Implementation of the new Scottish Child Interview Model</p> <p>Implementation of the new National Learning Review Guidance</p>
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## Child Protection is everyone’s responsibility.

### WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD?

Protecting children is the responsibility of every member of the community, not just child protection services.

Remember – if you suspect abuse, do not rely on someone else to notice.

If you would like to speak to someone, seek help or pass on information or concerns:

Agency	Contact Details	
Social Work	Monday to Friday during office hours	phone 01467-537111 or contact your <a href="#">Children &amp; Families local Social Work Office</a>
	Evenings & Weekends	call the <a href="#">Out of Hours Service</a> on 03456 08 12 06
Police	Emergency 999 Non-Emergency 101	

### Useful contact numbers

<p>NHS Grampian</p>	<p>Designated Doctor/Nurse Consultant in Child Protection Tel: 01224 551706 during office hours Out of hours or urgent referrals: Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital &amp; Dr Gray’s Hospital, Tel: 0845 456 6000</p>
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Do not worry about being wrong: you may only know one part of the story. Other people may know more, and your action could be the key to ending a child’s suffering.

Signs of abuse can range from poor personal hygiene and hunger to unexplained injuries or self-harm.

If a young person tells you they are being abused:

- stay calm and listen to them
- never promise to keep it a secret – tell them you must let someone else know
- remind them that they are not to blame and are doing the right thing
- report it, but leave any investigation to child protection agencies

Protecting Aberdeenshire’s children is everyone’s business.