

## Introduction

This is the second in a series of briefings from Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) to provide information for our workforce on how we are implementing the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, published on 6 October 2021, with two years for implementation.

This briefing will inform you about changes to our child protection processes over the coming months as part of the implementation programme of the National Guidance. This briefing will focus on:

1. Key changes in terms of terminology and process for Child Protection Interagency Referral Discussions
2. The Introduction of the Scottish Child Interview Model
3. Changes regarding Child Protection Registration.

## 1. Key changes in terms of terminology and process for Child Protection Interagency Referral Discussions - November 2022

A new North East IRD model has been agreed so that IRD's will be recorded in the same format across Aberdeenshire, Moray and Aberdeen City. This was piloted in Moray and is now in place in Aberdeenshire. The key changes –

- IRDs will be a part of a process rather than a 'one-off' meeting, which may involve a reconvened IRD to consider the outcome of a child protection investigation. The new template now includes a section for a reconvened IRD.
- The need for a Child Protection Planning meeting will now be a multi-agency decision made during the IRD process.
- The introduction of an escalation process to senior management when no consensus can be reached at IRD.
- Whilst an IRD may consider numerous children, each child should have an individualised record of the IRD minute
- Interim Safety Planning must now be fully considered and recorded during all IRDs.
- Should an immediate safety response be required before an IRD meeting can take place, all actions and decisions must be clearly recorded on the IRD template retrospectively.
- Referral to the Children's Rights Service to be considered at IRD.

### What does this mean for staff?

The IRD template and guidance has been shared across police, social work, health and education. Core agencies have informed their staff of the key changes. There will be no change to the information that you are expected to prepare for the meeting, or your role in the meeting itself.

Where possible, you will email the information that you share at IRD with the chair following the meeting. The chairs will support you during the meeting and if you have any questions or would like to discuss what happens at an IRD prior to the meeting you can contact the local social work team or the police IRD desk who will talk with you about what is expected at the meeting.

You may be asked to attend a reconvened IRD meeting which is the coming back together as agencies to review and further analyse information that has been gathered since the original IRD. An IRD should be reconvened when information that was not previously known or considered has potential impact on the assessed risks to the child/ren and could lead to reconsideration of the required multi agency response.

An IRD may be reconvened in the same meeting format as the original IRD, or via email if a reasonable decision can be recommended and agreed by partner agencies. Regardless of the method, a reconvened IRD will always be named as such and added as a record on the original IRD template. A reconvened IRD drop down has also been added to the social work recording system (Care First).

An IRD process is closed when a reasoned and evidenced inter-agency decision has been made and recorded about joint or single-agency assessment action up until the point of either:

- Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM)
- decision made that a CPPM is not required

Closure may also follow a reasoned interagency decision to take no further immediate action.

## 2. Introducing the 'Scottish Child Interview Model' (SCIM)

A new national approach as to how we interview child victims and witnesses is being developed and rolled out across Scotland. The implementation of the trauma informed joint interview process known as the 'Scottish Child Interview Model' (SCIM) is being led by Social Work Scotland and Police Scotland.

The aims of the new approach are to improve the quality of experience of child victims and witnesses, minimise re-traumatisation and improve the quality of evidence gathered during joint investigative interviews. Research of the techniques used in the model strongly indicates that the engagement of children and young people is improved, and crucially, the gathering of evidence can be obtained in a manner that reduces stress during the joint interview. The longer-term aim of the model is to work towards the interview being a trauma informed experience.

Aberdeenshire, Moray and Aberdeen have agreed a centralised hub for broad co-ordination, debrief, data collection, training and quality assurance but with practitioners based within their own local authority areas, aligned with local management and support structures. With "soft boundaries" across the 3 local authority areas, sufficient flexibility is retained to ensure a flexible and responsive specialist service.

The SCIM Team was established in November 2022 and consists of 14 SCIM Practitioners. 7 are Police Officers who were PPU or operational CPT Officers. 7 are social workers, the majority of whom have current JII training and experience.

At this time, due to the volume of interviews, Joint Investigative Interviews (JII) will continue to be undertaken in some instances. The aim of the Scottish Government is that all Joint Investigative Interviews will be carried out using the Scottish Child Interview Model by 2024.

The main criteria for the SCIM approach to be used primarily depends upon the individual support needs of a child/young person. However, cases may typically involve sexual abuse/exploitation, serious physical assault, and progression to the High Court. When a case is allocated to the team, a police and social work interviewer are identified and assigned the interview. They will then work collaboratively to plan, prepare, and carry out relevant interviews. The preparation for interview includes consultation with all professionals who know the child / young person and with the parents, when appropriate.

It is hoped that the improved quality of evidence gathered during Joint Investigative Interviews will prevent the need for these children to have to give evidence in person as part of court or children's hearing processes."

Alongside this work, we are considering how best to take forward the Bairns Hoose model in Aberdeenshire. This is a model which brings together services in a 'four rooms' approach with child protection, health, justice and recovery services all made available in one setting.

## 3. Changes regarding Child Protection Registration (CPR)

In Scotland the child protection register is a confidential list of all children in the local area who have been identified as being at risk of significant harm. It allows authorised individuals to check if a child they are working with is known to be at risk.

If a child is added to the CPR they must also have a child protection plan, which sets out what action needs to be taken by whom and when, in order to safeguard the child and promote their welfare.

### Terminology and timescale changes from January 2023:

- Child Protection Case Conferences (CPC) will become Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPM).
- If a child protection investigation has been progressed a CPPM will follow within 28 calendar days unless there is an IRD decision that this is not required.
- Pre-birth IRD's – CPPM will be held within 28 days from initial IRD's as agreed IRD process, or 28 days from the child's planning meeting where decision is taken to convene a CPPM.
- When a CPPM is inquorate, it must be reconvened within 10 working days
- Review CPPMs should be held within six months of the CPPM. The exception to this will be pre-birth CPPMs, which will be convened within 3 months of the initial CPPM.