



Dumfries and Galloway

Child Protection

Biennial Report 2018 - 2020

1 August 2018 to 31 July 2020

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Introduction from Convenor and Chief Officers Group

I am pleased to present Dumfries & Galloway's child protection biennial report. This report provides an overview of the child protection work of the Public Protection Committee for the period 31st July 2018 to 1st August 2020 and sets out the progress secured during that period.

It would not be appropriate to commence this report without paying tribute to Freda McShane who was the Chair of the Child Protection Committee in Dumfries and Galloway from June 2017 and latterly of the Public Protection Committee. Freda passed away in March 2020, after a short illness and her loss is felt keenly by all involved in the public protection arena both locally and nationally. Freda provided extraordinary leadership during her period as Chair and was the driving force behind a number of key developments as detailed within the report. In particular, Freda was instrumental in leading the complex process of amalgamating the three work strands of child protection, adult support and protection and violence against women and girls, into the current Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection structure.

Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee is a multi-agency partnership responsible for the strategic development and delivery of services to the most vulnerable adults and children who are at risk of, or experiencing, significant harm. The Committee is represented by senior managers across NHS, Police Scotland, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Local Authority and Voluntary and Independent Sectors. The Committee operates within the context of a Constitution and Governance Framework.

Important changes have taken place during this reporting period particularly in relation to the public protection structure. In June 2018, the first meeting of the newly formed Public Protection Committee took place, replacing the previous Child Protection Committee, and this period of change has been challenging for all those involved. Thanks should also be extended to all members of committee and support staff for their commitment and drive during this process in implementation and establishment of the Public Protection Partnership.

Notwithstanding structural changes, work has continued on a number of improvements to deliver effective child protection services. Our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) became fully operational delivering fast, effective information sharing and decision making, and we maintained a focus on neglect, ensuring staff had the skills and tools to respond to these complex circumstances. We reviewed and updated our responses to child sexual exploitation and delivered a wide-ranging year-long awareness raising campaign. By working closely with the Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS) as one of their pilot sites for the development of the minimum dataset,

which is an agreed set of indicators to analyse and report on data in a consistent and meaningful manner, we have successfully introduced the use of the minimum dataset to streamline our approach to performance data and scrutiny. In recognition of the fact that there were some entrenched issues in our overall identification and management of risk, Public Protection Committee took the decision to commit to reforming child protection practice by taking forward a whole systems change and adopting a Signs of Safety approach. Significant resources and commitment have been given to ensuring the successful implementation of Signs of Safety and already there is evidence to suggest that this approach is delivering the intended outcomes for children and families, and our workforce.

We have successfully reviewed and updated a number of policies and procedures and have continued to embed improvements in our quality assurance systems. We have looked for better ways to engage children, young people and their families in both individual planning and strategic development and this work will continue as a priority moving forward. The direction of committee has also been influenced by the Child Protection Improvement Programme (CPIP) and we will continue to ensure recommendations from this review are implemented at a local level.

In the coming year we will endeavour to work more closely with other partnerships to secure coherence in the delivery of overlapping services within the arena of public protection. In particular, we seek to enhance our links with the Alcohol and Drug Partnership in recognition of the need to support families holistically where parental substance misuse is deemed problematic and harmful, and to ensure families, and children and young people, receive the appropriate supports to keep them safe.

Chief Superintendent Linda Jones

Chair Chief Officer Group: Public Protection



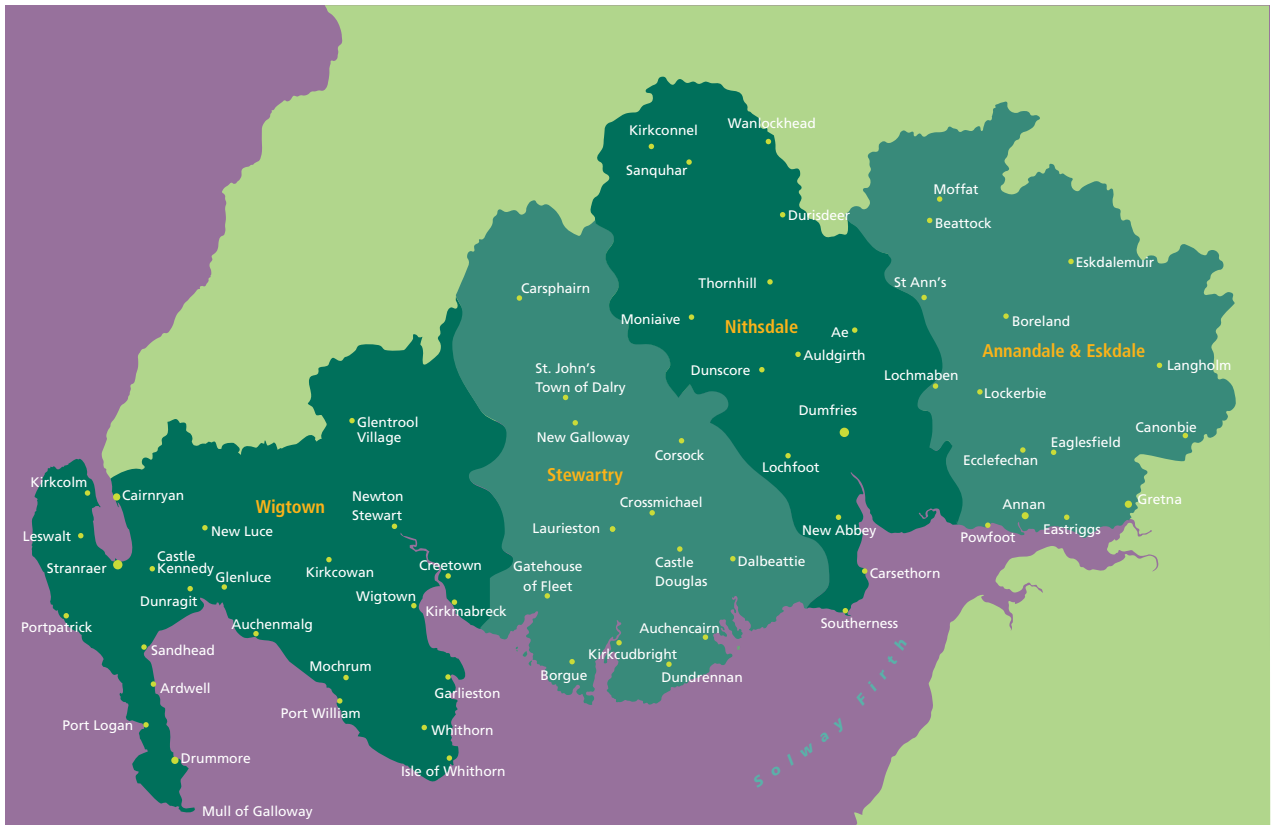
Kate Thomson

Interim Independent Chair –
Dumfries and Galloway Public
Protection Committee





Demographics of Dumfries and Galloway



Map of Dumfries and Galloway by Localities

The current population of Dumfries and Galloway is approximately 149,670, with the largest town being Dumfries (population 38,900), followed by Stranraer (10,600) and then Annan (8,000). The remaining population is characterised by small settlements of 4000 people or less spread across the region, with this rurality bringing challenges in terms of accessibility to services.

While the population aged 45 – 64 makes up the largest population (45,063), age 0 – 24 is the second largest grouping with 37,178. This can be broken down further with age 0-15 representing 23,487 and age 16-24 making up 13,691.

Our Primary School Roll (Sept 2019 Census) is 10,304 and Secondary School Roll (Sept 2019 Census) is 8,441. There are also 122 home educated children. Of our school roll 6,158 have an additional support needs.

Of these children and young people, as at the 31st July 2020, 365 were 'looked-after' either at home or away from home and there were 26 children on Dumfries and Galloway Child Protection Register.

Child Protection in Dumfries and Galloway

The Public Protection Committee (PPC), under the Independent Chair, formally replaced the Child Protection Committee in June 2018 and continues to meet every two months. The underlying structure was agreed but this has been reviewed over the two year period in response to changing needs (see below). In 2019, for example, a formal sub-committee to provide oversight of multi-agency Case Reviews was agreed and established. The establishment of a dedicated Initial Case Review/ Significant Case Review (ICR/SCR) sub-committee came from a recognition of the need to continuously review our public protection structure, to ensure that it is effective and appropriate for those who work in the Public Protection environment at all levels.

The Chief Officers Group: Public Protection (COG) leads the partnership and has a responsibility for and oversight of Public Protection and the appropriate implementation of previously agreed structures. COG will ensure there is multi-agency commitment to collaborative working in Public Protection in Dumfries and Galloway through active senior officer commitment and engagement from all relevant agencies.

Ongoing Review and Development

The Public Protection Committee requires ongoing evaluation of this structure to assure COG and within the reporting period undertook several developments and learning sessions for members, reporting regularly to chief officers. This was to ensure both continuous improvement of this innovative approach and of the strategic development and delivery of services to our most vulnerable population, who are at risk of, or experiencing, significant harm.

After consultation members and partners highlighted benefits of the Public Protection Committee approach including greater information sharing and networking, reduced duplication and streamlining of approaches and that Public Protection Committee is a strong foundation for future public protection activity and progression of the integrated joint agenda. Notwithstanding these, we are fully aware of the challenges presented by significant change and continue to provide scrutiny and review on a continuous basis. Changes instituted in this period included a revised and reduced membership of Public Protection Committee, review of frequency of meetings and core attendance and the merging of Practice Improvement and Performance and Quality Sub Committees. The impact of the changes will continue to be monitored by Public Protection Committee to ensure the revised model delivers effectively.

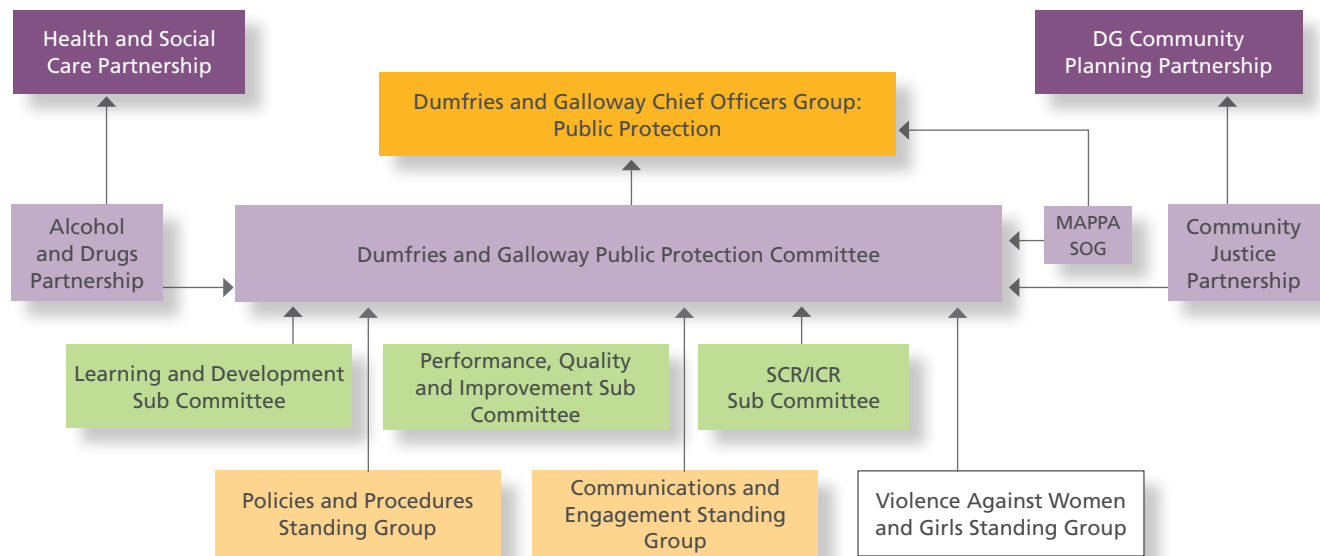


Figure 1: Public Protection Partnership Structure – December 2019

It is fully acknowledged that the Public Protection Committee cannot deliver on this agenda on its own and will continue to build stronger links between Public Protection Committee and the South West Scotland Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs), Alcohol and Drug Partnership and the Community Justice Partnership.

Child Protection context

Over the last two years we have continued to build on a number of improvement areas to better support our practice in keeping children, young people and their families safe. This has included finalising the work on the Minimum Dataset for Child Protection Committees across Scotland, working in partnership with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) and the Scottish Government. Our new method of analysing data with the use of scrutiny questions has proved advantageous, allowing us to identify trends and patterns in child protection and highlight areas we need to investigate further, whether for future improvement activity or to identify best practice. Encouragingly, Dumfries and Galloway’s reports were used as an exemplar of good practice by CELCIS and Scottish Government.

We have continued to embed a Signs of Safety approach for all of our child protection cases in Dumfries and Galloway. Signs of Safety uses a strengths-based approach, ensuring risk is weighted with both strengths and safety aspects of parenting. This approach ensures a balanced risk assessment is evident and safety plans are individually tailored around the child and family’s needs, with clear timeframes. The implementation of Signs of Safety is already having an impact as evidenced by a decrease in Dumfries and Galloway’s Child Protection Register figures. This trend

was expected given the change in process and the new approach to risk assessment and risk management. For many years, Dumfries and Galloway have been above the national average and comparator authorities across Scotland for numbers of children on the child protection register. This change process is being closely monitored with a number of quality assurance measures having been put in place. This includes both reactive and systemic audits which take place for each stage of the child protection process, together with a full multi-agency case file audit undertaken in January 2020.

From 1st Aug 2018 until 31st July 2020, there were 14,289 children referred to Children and Families Social Work, and of those 1,359 (9%) were deemed as needing an initial child protection response (subject to Initial Referral Discussion). Dumfries and Galloway have a locality model of service delivery. There are four localities and it is possible to break down data into localities to ensure better local responses to need.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and measures after lockdown a number of emergency steps were put in place locally. All children and young people involved with social work were reviewed using an emergency template, which included assessing any additional risks associated with the restrictions of Covid-19. These templates were graded Red, Amber or Green and standards for contact for each grade agreed and implemented. Regular reviewing and reporting on the status of all children and young people is undertaken on a weekly basis to Locality Managers and Senior Managers. In addition, emergency procedures were drawn up for Case Conferences, Looked After Child Reviews and Core Groups. Whilst continuing to maintain visits to those families assessed as being most at risk, staff also engaged with families using a range of technology and digital platforms.



Outcomes, Strengths and Challenges

Our Child Protection Business Plan 2018-2020 identified a number of improvement areas and priorities. Good progress was evidenced across the majority of these areas as detailed below. This report also highlights additional improvement activity which arose due to local and national initiatives, and in response to learning from self-evaluation activity.

Domestic Abuse

Data tells us that domestic abuse remains consistently one of the top three risk factors when children's names are placed on the child protection register. The inclusion of the Violence Against Women and Girls Partnership within the Public Protection Committee structure has allowed for greater strategic alignment with the child protection agenda. Focus has remained during this period on the effective identification and response to risks of domestic abuse. A key work strand has been to raise awareness within the community.

In this two year period 792 young people have received an input on either coercive control or gender-based violence. These inputs were delivered in several secondary school settings and the University of the West of Scotland. The inputs were delivered as part of the wellbeing weeks/days or as part of the 16 Days of Action Campaign. Four of our secondary schools also took part in 'Big World', a multi-agency event, where S3 and S4 students received an input on coercive control.

In March 2019 the first joint conference between Community Justice Partnership and the Violence Against Women and Girls Group was held in Dumfries. Entitled "From Hurt to Hope: moving from blame and shame to understanding" the conference had a range of keynote speakers and workshops. With over 225 delegates from across the community, topics covered included sexual exploitation, trauma, women in the justice system, domestic abuse and commercial sexual exploitation and violence against women. As a result of this conference new partnerships and links have been made and these will be further developed in the next business plan.

"I feel I knew a little about abuse but after today I have a better insight about abuse and how to help people if they are suffering. The talk informed me of important information that I didn't know before."

"I feel that it has been very useful in helping us understand that domestic abuse is more dominant than we think."

"I thought the scenarios were helpful and I learnt about the variety of different types of abuse."

"I now understand how discrete abuse can be."

Feedback from families

What was different about IFSS support compared to the other social work involvement

“they were practical, honest and fair”

“they worked with rather than against the family”

Other comments

“Life changing”

“Should be offered to more families”

“Absolutely invaluable support to our family”

“A helpful, friendly service, we benefitted from the practical support”

“the support from IFSS was fantastic and empowering”

Trauma

There has been an increasing recognition of the role of trauma in children and young people’s lives, and in the lives of their parents. In Dumfries and Galloway our focus has been on ensuring that staff have increased awareness and understanding of the impact of trauma and how this effects responses. Awareness raising training has been delivered across the partnership with targeted training delivered to a number of key staff including foster carers and social work front line practitioners. Trauma informed practice will remain a focus for child protection planning.

Neglect

In May 2017, the previous Child Protection Committee set a standard around the use of the Neglect toolkit whereby every child on the Child Protection Register for whom neglect was a concern, would have a Comprehensive Assessment completed using the toolkit, in preparation for the Review Child Protection Case Conference. Following review, the standard around neglect has continued to be an area of focus and improvement. This has included a change of name for the toolkit following consultation with families to an ‘Assessment of Care’. The training programme was also reviewed and amended to ensure that it was congruent with the strengths-based Signs of Safety approach.

Using Council targeted Poverty Funding an Intensive Family Support Service was piloted from March 2018 to August 2019 in both the East and West of the Region. This service had a specific focus on supporting those families at an early stage where poverty-related neglect had been identified. Support was provided to families on a regular and sometimes intensive basis including evenings and weekends if needed. Feedback from families was very positive and evidence suggested positive outcomes in supporting families and avoiding child protection measures or statutory involvement. Building on the pilot and the positive findings and lessons a new Family Support Service is being developed which will tackle neglect, alongside other issues. Support will be at the earliest possible stage to minimise the immediate impact on children and reduce the long term physical and emotional effects that neglect can have.



Chronologies

In December 2019 Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Multi-Agency Chronologies Guidance launched following consultation across the partnership. Its purpose is to help practitioners identify significant events in children's lives, explore the impact for the child, and provide a consistent framework and language through which partner agencies can share and analyse information, thus helping to predict and reduce the risk of harm.

The guidance provides an overview of the purpose and value of chronologies, and best practice standards aimed at embedding the application of chronologies in all areas of single and multi-agency public protection practice.

Initial priorities for implementation in Social Work Services have focussed on Child Protection and Adult Domestic Abuse referrals, as well as providing integrated chronologies for all people with an Adult Support and Protection safety plan or a Child Protection plan. For NHS Dumfries and Galloway the initial priority areas for implementation were: Women & Children's Directorate; Alcohol and Drug Services; Public Protection Team; Adult Mental Health Services; Acute Nursing Services; Community Health Nursing- (including General Practice); and the Emergency Department.

Implementation has included ensuring IT functionality across agencies and communication and training for staff. Briefings were provided to all partners in December 2019 and initial single agency training was provided to Social Work Services and NHS staff. Council and NHS e-learning and multi-agency advanced training is currently being developed as part of the Public Protection Training calendar. Self-evaluation work to review the impact of the guidance will be progressed over the next reporting period.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was established in February 2017 and was reviewed after 18 months of operation. The full report was submitted to Public Protection Committee in February 2019, whereby it detailed the success of MASH in meeting its role and remit, and that it is now fully operational. The overall operational responsibility for MASH now lies with the respective operational managers within Police, Health and Social Work, who continue to monitor the effectiveness on a monthly basis.

Feedback from MASH staff

"Co-location has led to improved understanding of respective agency roles and responsibilities."

"Working closely with others within this area also allows for a more effective and efficient working arrangement."

"I believe partnership working has improved. The availability of staff for discussion and advice/reflection is helpful. The accessibility of staff is excellent. The face-to-face discussion is of benefit as is the structure and process."

MASH continues to deliver fast effective multi-agency decision making. The target remains that all IRD decisions are made within 24 hours of receipt of referral. Since 1st August 2018 to 31st July 2020, 88% of all IRDs have had decisions taken within 24 hours. 2040 children and young people have been referred to MASH in this timeframe, and of those, 1,359 were subsequently discussed at IRD with all agencies sharing information.

The Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) Review Group continues to meet monthly and its findings, along with the performance report are fed back to the operational managers. Any exceptions or issues will be picked up through the quarterly reporting by Performance Quality & Improvement Sub-Committee and explored as required.

MASH has continued to operate efficiently throughout Covid-19 restrictions. MASH Operational Managers meet on a weekly basis to oversee any practice issues, monitor volume and nature of referrals and identify any actions needed to address these including links to Public Protection Committee in relation to Policy and Procedure and Learning and Development. The IRD protocol is currently being reviewed based on these weekly reviews to ensure IRD practice is constantly improving. Furthermore, IRD paperwork is currently being reviewed and developed to reflect Signs of Safety language and analysis tools. Going forward quarterly reports will be made available.



Signs of Safety

In March 2018 the Public Protection Committee agreed to consider the adoption of the Signs of Safety approach for child protection in Dumfries and Galloway. An extensive review of the Signs of Safety literature was undertaken and engagement with other local authorities who were currently practicing this approach also took place. As a consequence of the findings from this research the Public Protection Committee agreed to adopt Signs of Safety within Dumfries and Galloway.

Using the ethos and principles of this approach will help support us to deliver high quality practice, and through working together in partnership with families, we will be able to achieve strong and sustainable outcomes for children, young people and their families, and empower our families and our practitioners.

Signs of Safety is an innovative, solution-focused, strengths-based approach to working with children, young people and families. It provides a clear framework for how to do the work within children's services; how to build relationships with families and work effectively with them to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. It includes:

- principles for practice which underpin the work;
- ways of working – what to do, how and when;
- a range of tools to support engagement with families, strong assessments and plans, and for capturing the voice of the child or young person (i.e. words and pictures, three houses, genogram);
- ways to support learning, reflection and development, such as supervision and audit of practice that is aligned with the approach

In order to build effective relationships and work inclusively and respectfully with families, Signs of Safety focuses on both the family's strengths and the safety of the child or young person. This recognises that, despite current concerns and difficulties, all families have strengths, and this gives the basis for understanding how we can increase safety and address the areas of concern. Signs of Safety practice makes a clear and rigorous distinction between:

- Past harm (what we know has happened), future danger (what we are worried could happen given the past harm) and complicating factors (the circumstances that cannot be changed such as mental health issues, previously looked-after child).
- Strengths (positives about the family) and protection (actual behaviours that demonstrate capacity to protect the children, such as removing dangerous adults from the household, or occasions when the parents felt as if they could but did not harm the child/ young person). This supports strong assessments and evidence-based judgements.

Signs of Safety values both professional and family knowledge. Work with families within Signs of Safety fully involves families in assessing risks and developing solutions. The child/young person's experience is central to this, and children, young people, and their families are fully involved in developing and delivering their plans.

Public Protection Committee understand Signs of Safety is a way of working, an approach that underpins practice; it is not just about training or using specific tools. To fully implement Signs of Safety we have begun a cultural shift in how we practice and how we think about practice supported by an implementation plan. Part of our implementation includes ensuring we have the right structures, support and tools in place to support best quality practice. Fully aligning our organisation to embedding Signs of Safety as a culture of practice will be a journey we will continue, with full implementation likely to take up to five years.

This is supported by our implementation plan which sets out the actions and covers the following four areas. We are currently two years into our implementation plan however Covid-19 has inevitably impacted on progress:

- **Learning:** this included training our workforce to use Signs of Safety, including two-day basic training and five-day advanced training, included senior leaders; and a two-year development programme for Practice Leads. It will also include introducing ways to learn from and reflect on practice; such as practice learning reviews; and individual and group supervision aligned to Signs of Safety.
- **Leadership:** this included making a full organisational commitment to Signs of Safety, with senior leaders being actively engaged with practice; modelling the approach in management and leadership; creating conditions for social work to thrive; and building shared leadership at all levels of the organisation.
- **Organisational Alignment:** ensuring practitioners are effectively supported to achieve the best possible outcomes for children through having the right policies, procedures, structures, support and tools in place to support best quality Signs of Safety practice. Ensuring that practitioners drive developments to services so that the tools and support in place reflects what works for practitioners.
- **Meaningful Measures:** We will align our audit and quality assurance process with the Signs of Safety approach to ensure that what we measure is what really matters to children, young people and families, and drives improvements to practice. We will adopt an inclusive model of auditing practice where audits are completed with practitioners, recognising their strengths, and supporting them to reflect on the quality of their work and identify areas they can learn from and improve on in future work.



Case Study

This work involved a mum who was pregnant and who had already had a number of older children removed from her care due to domestic violence and neglect and a dad who had no children but for whom there were concerns in relation to drug misuse. Both had a very negative view of social work who they didn't trust and mum felt they had never given her the support she needed to keep her children in her care. Both were very angry and hostile in any meetings with social work because of this. This was one of the first families we worked with using the Signs of Safety approach and one where the safety network (wider family members) played a critical role, especially when Covid-19 restrictions were put in place. Through Signs of Safety (focusing on family strengths, different language used, use of the tools) we were able to identify a plan where the baby could stay in parents' care. Baby is currently thriving, and statutory measures have recently been terminated.

What did the family say?

What do you feel was the biggest difference using Signs of Safety than your previous involvement?

Having a good social worker is one of them I'd say and actually being listened to instead of being judged. This way of working helped me to understand how the process worked and what was being expected of us. We knew really clearly and it was clear on what the issues were and what we could fix to what we couldn't (mental health etc) split into different bits was easier to understand than just all the issues on one

What did you like most about Signs of Safety?

With it being the way it was it was easy to understand and recognise what we needed to do.

Helps to look back and see how far you've come and look at what you've used to be like and it keeps you focused that you know things need to change to put things right

Was there anything you felt could have been done differently or anything you struggled with?

Everything was clearly explained, and I think this does help if things are explained well. It's not just myself who needed to understand it was everyone supporting me. Social work themselves and everyone else need to realise they need to help people understand rather than using big fancy words because not everyone understands them. It was more simple and easier for me this time.

The whole support network are behind us in saying social work don't need to change you have been amazing workers and really listened to us and if only we had you in the past with my other kids things would be different now. All I want now is to give my other children the life I couldn't give them when I lived somewhere else. It might be too late for this, but I want to do everything I can to put things right for my kids.

What advice would you give to a new family about to embark on their Signs of Safety journey?

I would advise them to try and get a worker that they can have a connection with because I believe if you have a good connection with a social worker you can get through it much better. You have a choice if you are at risk of losing your children it's best to work with them.

All my life I've had nothing but crap experiences and it's only been working with yourselves that I've been able to get somewhere in my life and change and realise what I need help with rather than just blocking it out.

I am 100% confident that we won't need social workers in the future, the only way a social worker will chap on my door now is if I call you for help, and I will if I am struggling. I feel the work from you has helped me to get to become the mum I want to be. I always thought you don't need support and you have to do it on your own and this is wrong, everyone needs support.

What was it like having network involved?

It was a lot easier for me they would sit afterwards and explain it to me and if I struggled, they would help me.

What was it like hearing what the network thought in safety network meetings?

It's made my confidence a lot better because everything that's happened with the kids before my confidence about my parenting has been knocked down. When I lost my other kids, I believed I shouldn't be a mum and you and my network have helped me realise I can be a mum, but I need a little support. Everyone needs it, it doesn't matter who you are.





Pre-Birth

In response to ICRs/SCRs the Pre-birth Strategic Group have overseen a number of improvements in our identification and response to vulnerable pregnant women over the reporting period. The work has included a review of the screening arrangements to ensure information sharing is proportionate, appropriate and timely. Informed by robust quality assurance, improvements were made to the assessment processes including development of detailed guidance, staff briefings and information sessions.

As part of the Government Best Start implementation and Continuity of Carers a WINGS (Women Individually Nurtured Grow Strength) Team has been developed. Following multi-agency consultation this team of midwifery practitioners will provide additional support and monitoring to pregnant women who have been identified as having additional complex needs such as mental health issues, homelessness or substance addiction. This team was developed as a crucial element to develop trusting and enduring relationships with vulnerable women.

The Team was initially piloted with one midwife in July 2019 and has now grown to provide region wide coverage. This has resulted in equitable service across Dumfries and Galloway and is already producing improved outcomes for mums and babies on the receipt of qualitative and quantitative data gathered. Care pathways continue to be reviewed and revised amongst the team to ensure care is targeted to those who need it most. The ethos of the team is to deliver a non – judgemental individualised approach to midwifery care for women who present with complex needs. The team can also be flexible in their approach to appointments and have more capacity to spend longer time with women. Lower workload capacity also allows for increased multi agency collaboration and communication. Midwives in the team act as the coordinator to support seamless and multi-agency care around the women which is supported by good evidence (Best Start 2017)

Over this period the focus was on using specialist knowledge of pre-birth assessment and planning to improve our responses and support provided. Going forward the plan would be to use the restructuring of social work staffing to upskill staff across the region to deliver this approach.

Child Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is an area of child abuse that can be 'hidden in plain sight' and in recognition of this national priority, there has been a considerable amount of work undertaken by the Child Exploitation Standing Group, supported by Public Protection Committee. The work included development of a practice tool, an awareness raising campaign and refreshed training for practitioners.

In November 2018, the Group revised our local CSE practice guidance which was disseminated through various communication methods. This was accompanied with details for staff on how to assess risk using Barnardo's SERAF (Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework) to support analysis.

In light of the guidance being updated, CSE training was reviewed with necessary amendments made which included more localised information to help make it more relevant for Dumfries and Galloway staff. Furthermore, we invested in training additional staff to become competent trainers in this area to assist with capacity going forward.

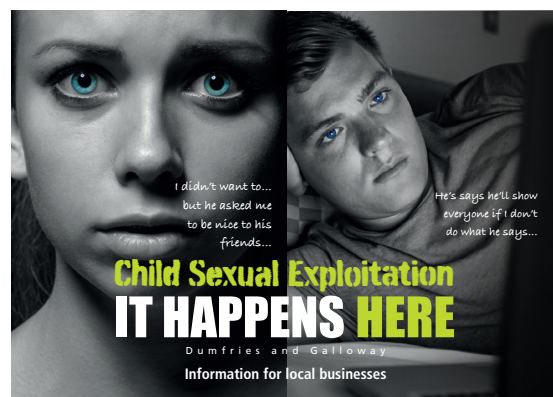


With the support from Public Protection Committee and in collaboration with National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), a year long awareness raising campaign was successfully launched in March 2019. Entitled 'It Happens Here' the campaign used numerous platforms including distribution of leaflets and posters, the use of social media across the Council, NHS and Police websites, bus-liners and radio adverts, and CSE workshops. The campaign's reach included

secondary schools, publicans, hoteliers, food retailers, parents/carers, youth groups and professionals across statutory and third sector agencies. The campaign will be reviewed, with data gathered and analysed to help inform what worked well and what improvements we need to make in relation to ensuring this message is continually being received to safeguard our children and young people.

Moving forward, Dumfries and Galloway continue to assist Barnardo's with the development of an evidenced-based risk assessment tool, along with two other Local Authorities in Scotland. This will replace the SERAF and will look more widely at child exploitation.

Priorities in the future will include a focus on trafficking, incorporating a joint approach across both adult and children's services, and the need to consider child exploitation as a whole. In recognition that one of the indicators and risks of being exploited is people/ children going missing, we will need to consider how we implement the National Missing Person's Framework for Scotland (2017).





Policies and Procedures

The Public Protection Committee has a key role to play in ensuring there are clear and robust multi-agency policies, procedures and guidance in place to support staff within and across the public protection partnership. Whilst it is recognised these documents alone do not protect our vulnerable children and adults, they support practice by ensuring standards are clear, responsibilities are transparent, and practice is consistent across the region.

In order to carry-out this important function the Policy and Procedure Standing Group was established, with a role and remit of strategic oversight of updating and review of existing multi-agency policies, procedures and guidance under Public Protection Committee, and to direct the development of new policies, procedures and guidance where gaps have been identified. In order to support this task, the Group developed a register of all multi-agency policies, procedures and guidance to assist with tracking review dates, determining priority status and the responsible leads. In addition, the Group also developed a Policy and Procedure Framework for all multi-agency documents under the public protection partnership which provides a standardised approach moving forward and ensures there is a detailed implementation plan outlining communication and training needs.

Over this reporting period, there has been a lot of activity around the reviewing, updating and creation of documents as a result of changes in practice, findings from audit activity and Initial Case Review (ICR)/ Significant Case Review (SCR) findings, and feedback from staff. Reviews have included:

- Pre-Birth Procedure for Vulnerable Pregnant Women and Babies;
- ASP Multi Agency procedures;
- PPC Communication Strategy;
- Multi-agency Chronologies Guidance;
- CP Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) Interagency Procedure
- Underage Sexual Activity Multi-Agency Guidance;
- Guidance on use of Assessment of Care toolkit (previously Neglect toolkit)
- Financial Harm Strategy

In response to the recent pandemic, Child Protection and Adult Support Protection processes have been reviewed and revised appropriately considering emergency measures under Covid-19. Once these emergency measures can be relaxed, the Group will gather the learning and maintain some of the new positives from the current revised working which will be reflected within the necessary documents supporting practice.

Learning and Development

It would not be possible to deliver high quality services and supports to families to keep children safe without staff who have the necessary skills, competence and confidence. Support for staff is delivered through a range of mechanisms including regular individual supervision sessions, team meetings and access to a variety of quality learning and development opportunities. In response to findings from a Significant Case Review, supervision arrangements in both NHS and Social Work were reviewed in 2018 and new processes put in place to better support staff in their individual practice.

A range of multi-agency learning and development opportunities were delivered during this period, these are planned, developed and delivered on a multi-agency basis recognising that to keep children and young people safe all agencies have to work together. Across 2018 to 2020, 12 courses were delivered to 487 staff across agencies.

Courses covered a range of topics:

- Attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences
- Child Protection Training
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Domestic Abuse Awareness and Response
- Domestic Abuse Awareness – Trauma, Risk and Safety Planning
- Injuries to Non-Mobile Children
- Introduction to Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Introduction to Mental Health and Attachment in Looked After Children
- Listening and Responding to Children affected by Parental Substance Misuse
- Rape and Sexual Assault Awareness Raising
- Risk, Risk Assessment and National Risk Framework
- Neglect and Intro to Neglect Toolkit
- Working with Resistance – Developed in 2018.

Trauma training sessions were delivered across the region by a Psychological Therapist and NHS Dumfries and Galloway Psychological Therapies Training Coordinator. Work has taken place focussing on multi agency trauma informed practice training, with over 200 people attending training from every area of social work, third sector, health, Scottish Prison Service and Police. Evaluation has been extremely positive with a marked difference in the way people understood trauma and the principles of trauma informed practice.



As previously discussed, during this period a significant investment was also made in the implementation of the Signs of Safety approach and this involved a full training programme including

- 6 x 2-day basic introduction training – involving 162 staff
- 3 x 5-day advanced training sessions – involving 108 staff
- Bespoke training sessions for the NHS, MASH staff, Chairs of Case Conferences, Children’s Panel Members and Fostering and Adoption Team
- Specific training inputs on Core Groups and working with Children with Disabilities
- 3 x Practice Lead Sessions

All learning and development is regularly evaluated, reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and meets the needs of staff. Self-evaluation activity allows some evaluation of impact on practice.

Staff Comments

“I am excited about the future and helping families to stay together”

“I feel it gets very well with the principles of GIRFEC and solution focused meeting and can add a constructive framework for assessment and planning to meet the needs of the young people”

“It honours families, removes threats and really empowers, rather than creating helplessness/dependency”

Quality Assurance

Public Protection Committee recognise the importance of being able to measure the quality of what we do to keep children and young people safe. Led by the Performance and Quality Sub Committee this is done through a quality assurance framework which has a number of strands including the analysis of performance information, asking children, young people and families about their experiences and the scrutiny of case records and processes. Over the two year period we have further developed our quality assurance processes with both regular review of records and processes, such as the review of Initial Referral Discussions and the cases which have been de-registered or re-registered within 6 months, and larger planned activities.

In August 2019 we repeated an audit undertaken in March 2018 of Pre-Birth Assessments. The findings of these audits informed the review of Pre-Birth Processes as detailed above. In January 2020, a full child protection and looked after child case file audit was undertaken supported by the Care Inspectorate. This draft report has been delayed in publication due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The findings from all self-evaluation activity, including Initial Case Reviews and Significant Case Reviews, are used to improve practice by developing new learning and development, revising processes, introducing new evidence based tools and for prioritisation of improvement activity.

Communication and Engagement

In recognition of the importance of listening to the views and experiences of children and families involved in child protection processes the Public Protection Committee established a multi-agency Communication and Engagement standing group. The group developed the Public Protection Committee Communication Strategy, one product of which was the establishment of the [Public Protection Partnership Website](#). This is a public facing resource which is used to provide information and to raise awareness of the importance of identifying risk and how to report this. New initiatives and campaigns are launched through this platform. The website continues to be developed to improve functionality.



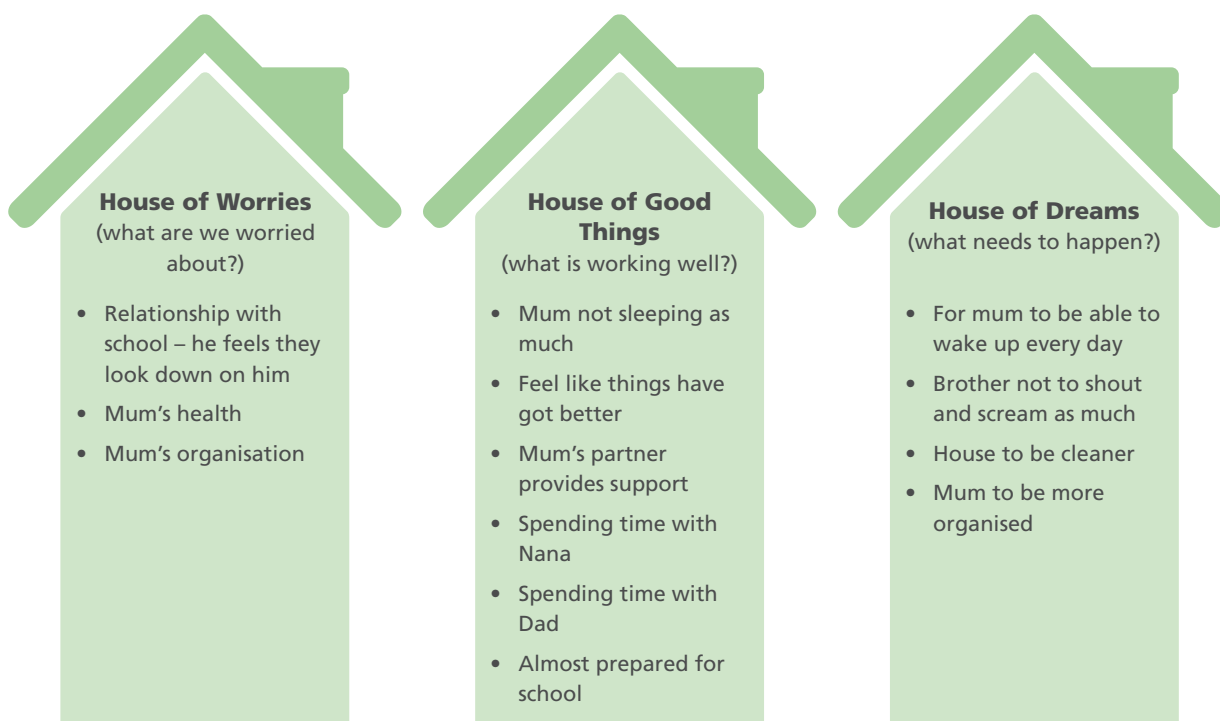
Work is ongoing to develop an engagement strategy although this remains an area of challenge for Public Protection Committee. An initial pilot to gain the views of those involved in case conferences provided limited feedback due to a number of issues. Learning from this pilot will inform further work to meaningfully engage with children and families. Signs of Safety has provided us with a number of creative ways to engage individually with families including tools such as 'words and pictures', 'three houses' and 'appreciative inquiries'. Our intention would be to build on these individual methods to support active participation and deliver a co-productive approach to the redesign of support and services.



Practitioners, through Signs of Safety are getting much better at communicating with children and parents about their views and how they feel about things and have a variety of tools for doing so. They are able to use skilled questions to get a more in-depth understanding of how people feel and what day to day life is like for them. We now develop 'safety rules' with children and parents and children should have their own versions of whatever plans we make. We help parents develop 'words and pictures' explanations which is a way of them explaining to their children – using words and pictures- about the concerns that have led social work to become involved. This also helps parents see things from their children's perspective which can be very powerful. Social work staff are also becoming very skilled in adapting tools or creating their own to meet individual children or parent's needs – so they will create their own version of 3 Houses or develop something very new – an example was in the case study where the mum really enjoyed doing word searches so the Social Worker developed a word search for her using words to describe all the things a newborn baby needed to be safe and healthy.

Meetings are conducted differently now with parents and children speaking more than professionals and we now limit the number of professionals in meetings, understanding that too many professionals can make children and parents feel 'outnumbered' and overwhelmed – they now get to say who should be in their meetings and when they bring along members of their support or safety network this can help redress the balance for them. We are in the process of developing Signs of Safety leaflets with parents and once these are finalised, we will do the same with the Child Protection leaflets – to make sure that we're including what children and parents need to know, rather than what we think they need to know.

'Three Houses' Child Protection Risk Assessment Tool

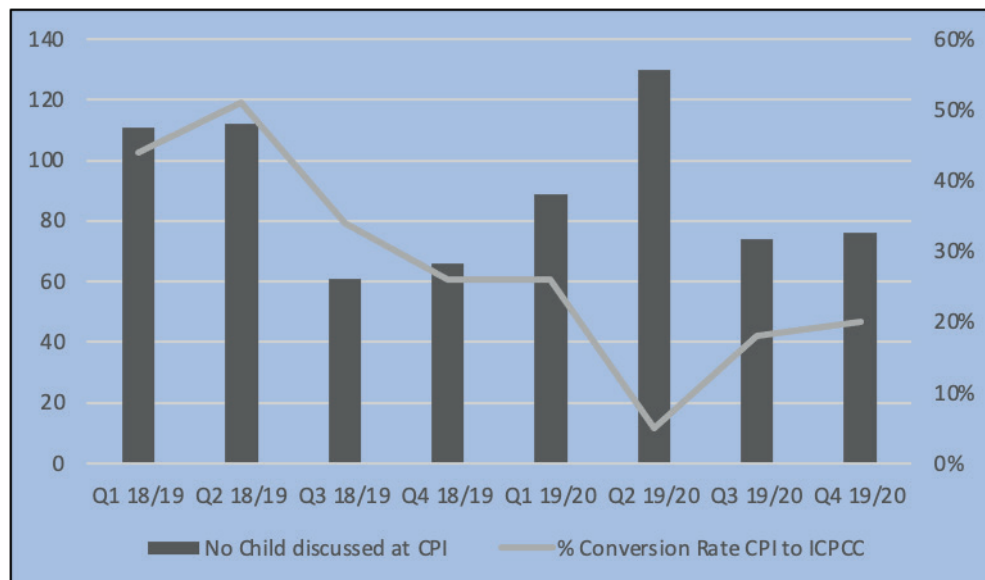


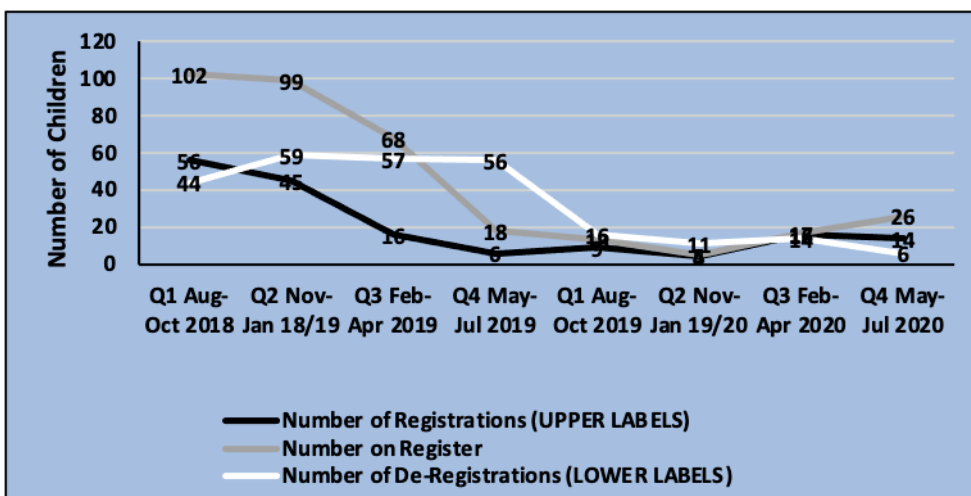
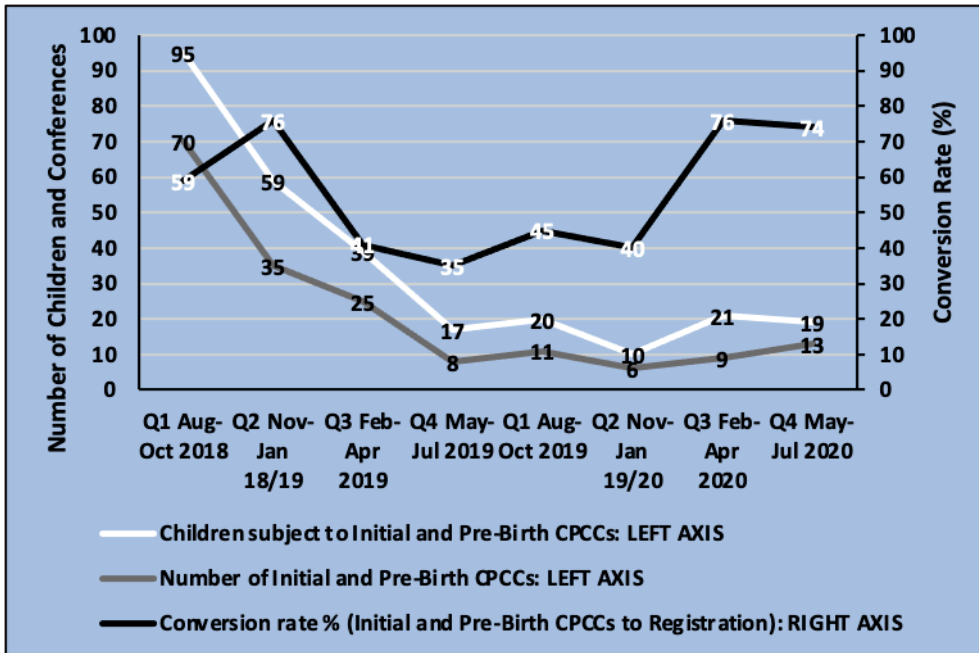
Data and Performance Information - 2018/2020

Over this reporting period the picture of child protection activity has changed considerably. From a starting point of high child protection activity across all areas including registrations, child protection investigations, case conferences, de-registrations, whereby Dumfries and Galloway were consistently higher than our comparators and the national average. Over the two years there has been a changing picture with reducing case conferences, registrations and de-registrations. In these areas we are now below comparators and national average. There are currently 26 children on the Child Protection Register.

There has been a great deal of focus over a number of years on improving our performance data and quality assurance to better understand child protection practices in Dumfries and Galloway. In this reporting period this has included gaining a better understanding of what constitutes risk and how we respond to risk. Taking part in the National Child Protection Minimum Dataset pilot provided clarity and focus not only on what performance information we use to report, but also how we report it and more importantly the analysis and key messages emerging from the data. Furthermore, the impetus to implement Signs of Safety was based on an acceptance of the need to recalibrate our response to risk.

This changing picture is demonstrated by the following graphs/tables below.





Looking Forward/ Next Steps

The Covid-19 pandemic has required us to refine and rethink Public Protection Committee priorities and will continue to influence our collective approach to protect vulnerable individuals in our communities.

The Public Protection strategy for 2020-2023 sets out key priorities and associated activity for this period, and how these will be achieved. This is the first joint Public Protection strategy, building on the previous separate business plans for Child Protection, Adult Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls for 2018/2020. The strategy is designed to strengthen partnership working and our collective commitment to protect vulnerable people across Dumfries and Galloway.

As a partnership, our aim for the next 3 years is to: -

- Identify all those at risk of harm in our community, through effective public, community and staff engagement and awareness
- Respond efficiently and effectively to protect those experiencing or at risk of harm by maintaining, reviewing, and continue to develop practice and processes
- Continuously improve services by fully utilising multi agency collaborations, opportunities, and resources to learn from practice
- Identify, develop, and achieve priorities and shared outcomes by working with local partnerships across the public protection agenda
- Continue to develop distinct and robust assurance pathways and processes across the Public Protection Partnership.

The Chief Officer Group – Public Protection (COG) remain committed to meeting regularly to ensure that they are sighted on both existing and emerging risks and the actions being taken to reduce the impact of those risks to individuals and communities across the region.

The Public Protection Committee will continue to manage a phased return to normal business following the initial peak of the Covid-19 pandemic and will work to manage the identified risks and ensure that we harness the many opportunities this challenging situation has offered.

‘Normal’ in this context does not mean simply returning to the way things were before the pandemic, but reaching a ‘new normal’ which captures the opportunities and lessons learnt from this challenging period, capitalising on those interim working practices that have been effective and using them more fully to deliver better, more efficient public services. This includes understanding more clearly, the impact that working differently has had on service users and will ensure their involvement in enhancing our approaches.



In moving forward, the Public Protection Committee will focus on:

- Enhancing engagement arrangements with service users
- Revised focus of public information and communications
- Strengthening collaboration
- Prevention and early intervention
- Refining our performance data to allow enhance our collective response to current and emerging risks

Key areas of existing policy and practice development work, highlighted in the previous sections of this report, will continue and be subject of ongoing implementation, evaluation, and refinement. This includes:

- Further embed the Signs of Safety approach including updating our systems (MOSAIC), developing group supervision, audit activity and appreciative enquiries
- Using the mapping exercise to identify areas of good practice and implement more effective, more robust engagement with children, young people and families, on both an individual and strategic basis
- Extend our focus from Child Sexual Exploitation to include our identification, responses and supports for trafficking, wider exploitation and missing persons
- Continue to use the Minimum Dataset to enhance our understanding and responses to domestic abuse, its impact on children and working with perpetrators
- Working alongside Alcohol and Drug Protection (ADP) to better support children and young people who are affected by substance misuse using the findings from the ADP's needs assessment.

Continue quality assurance activity, using audit and self-evaluation, to highlight areas of good practice and identify areas for improvement and communicate learning effectively to staff.

