



Dumfries and Galloway

Public Protection

Annual Report 2024 - 2025



Foreword

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I am pleased to introduce, as chair of Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee, the first annual public protection report in this format. This report moves on from previous biennial reporting across the pillars of our Public Protection approach in Dumfries and Galloway. This reporting will continue to detail the innovative approaches that partners continue to take across Dumfries and Galloway to protect those who are at risk in our communities. I am aware that each year we detail that communities, staff and partners face increasing and concerning challenges, and this year unfortunately again this is the case, with further unprecedented significant challenges and much uncertainty from many directions.

However, I am proud that this report can detail much positive work undertaken across the region, whether from individual staff, wider organisations, joint partnership approaches, or by those with lived experience of our services. It is important that once more this commitment is recognised, and I wish to formally thank them all for their contributions, and to be there for those who need them most.

The Chief Officers Group (COG:PP) continue to lead the wider Public Protection Partnership by example, with a commitment and hands on scrutiny of our work, by meeting every month and scrutinising, demanding assurance and challenging the work that partners and I commit to. By requesting to formally lead on our strategic priorities on an individual basis, this has ensured those areas of priority progress at pace.

Nationally I have continued to push and extol the virtues of a single Public Protection approach and proud to report that establishment of a National Public Protection Leadership group mirrors our approach.

This report provides details of the work that PPC has committed to and achieved in the reporting period and as independent chair I will ensure that PPC continues to fully commit to its core business of protecting those who cannot protect themselves, and that agencies work in unison, staff share a single approach, and service users benefit from the commitment of our staff to protect them.



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



Introduction

Introduction

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

This report contains an overview of the work and progress of Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee (PPC), as it pertains to its core functions under the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023) and the work of Violence Against Women Partnerships outlined in Equally Safe (2023). This report structure mirrors the most recent guidance on format to produce and publish an ASP Biennial report. Further information is available on www.dgppp.org.uk





What our data tells us

Early-stage activity

In 2024/2025, there were 3470 referrals into the Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Team, a 33% decrease compared to last year. The number of ASP referrals this year was closer to pre-adult care restructure figures in 2022/23 following the review of triaging processes. Resourcing challenges remained over the most recent reporting year which saw a fall in the proportion of inquiries allocated and commenced within 2 working days, from 37% last year to 30% this year. Steps were put in place to mitigate risk and fill vacant posts towards the end of the financial year. It is expected this will see continued improvement into 2025-26.

In the current year, there were 1050 referrals into the Child Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), a 21% increase compared to last year. This year also saw a 28% increase in children subject to an Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD) compared to last year.

Specialist Services experienced a 26% increase in referrals, rising from 1,349 last year to 1,706 this year. This trend aligns with an 18% increase in Domestic Abuse Police Incidents (1,741 incidents), of which 1,377 were established as crimes. The detection rate for these incidents was 73%, a substantial increase of 59.2 percentage points compared to last year, a trend mirrored in national data.

Chart 1 – Early-Stage Public Protection Activity from 2022/23 to 2024/25

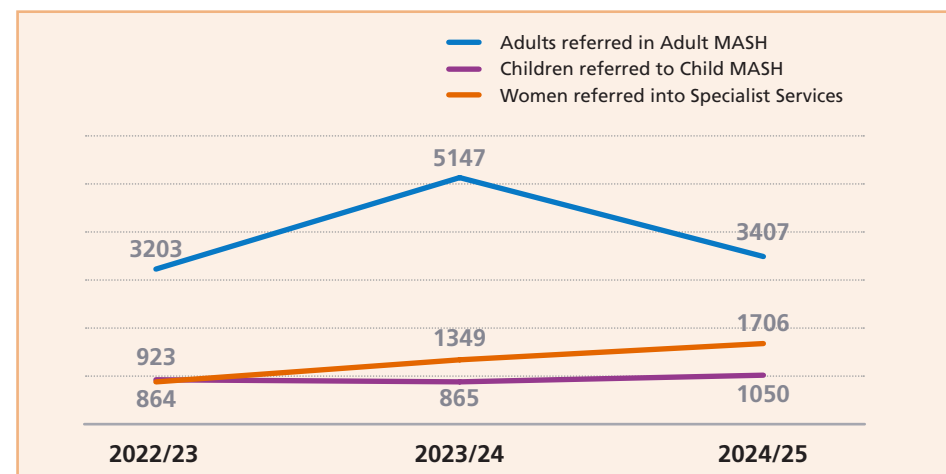
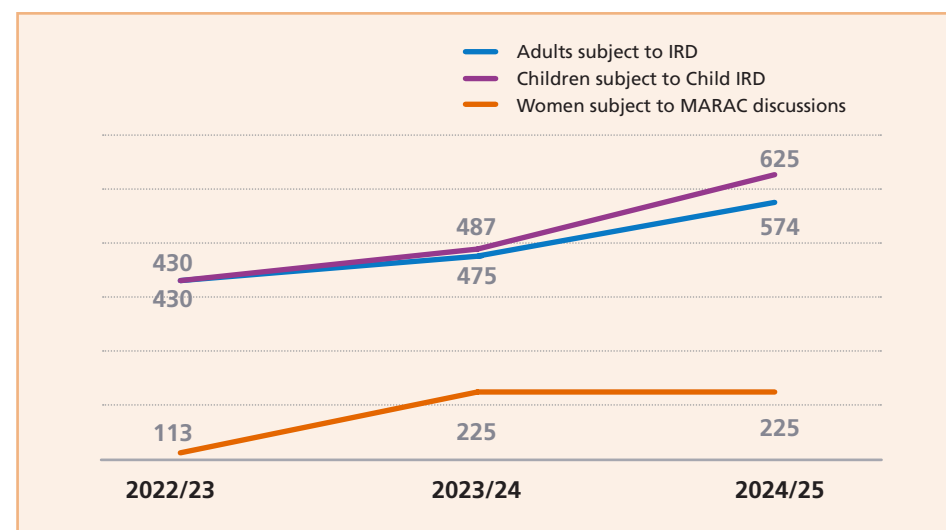


Chart 2 – Early-Stage Public Protection Activity from 2022/23 to 2024/25





The quality of IRDs improved, with 88-98% of Child and Adult IRDs reviewed being graded as good or above. Reviews highlighted the use of positive language, robust analysis, and detailed planning. Information sharing was deemed appropriate and proportionate, with good consideration of capacity and the use of least restrictive options for adults. Audits also evidenced the use of joint IRDs between Adults and with Children & Families Social Work, supporting a whole-family approach. A robust self-evaluation framework ensures that areas for improvement are fed back to frontline staff, and a continuous improvement cycle is in place to monitor impact and evidence improved quality of practice.

Protection Planning

Despite a decrease in the number of ASP referrals this year, there was a rise in the number of ASP Duty to Inquires (+5%) and ASP Initial Case Conferences (+7%) compared to last year. Similarly, there was a 22% increase in the number of children subject to CP Investigation and a fall in those subject to Initial CP Planning Meeting (-8%) compared to last year. Staff resources were also a challenge under child protection this year, impacting on the length of time for completion of a CPI from 74% within 10 working days of the IRD last year to 51% this year. Social Work undertook a review of CPI processes with a pilot of new CPI timescales (from 5 days to complete a CPI to 10 days from CPI starting) commenced in February 2025. This change aims to support improved timescales and a more succinct report prior to planning meeting. The Social Work Audit of CPIs continued to evidence good overall quality of practice, with 90% graded as good and above at the end of this year compared to 78% for the same period last year.

The number of MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) cases discussed was stable compared to last year and remains above 2022/23 levels. Dumfries & Galloway has been selected as one of two local authority areas to participate in the Safe and Together and MARAC Pilot from August 2025. This pilot aims to integrate Safe and Together principles into the MARAC process, strengthening responses to victims and informing practice at local, national, and international levels.

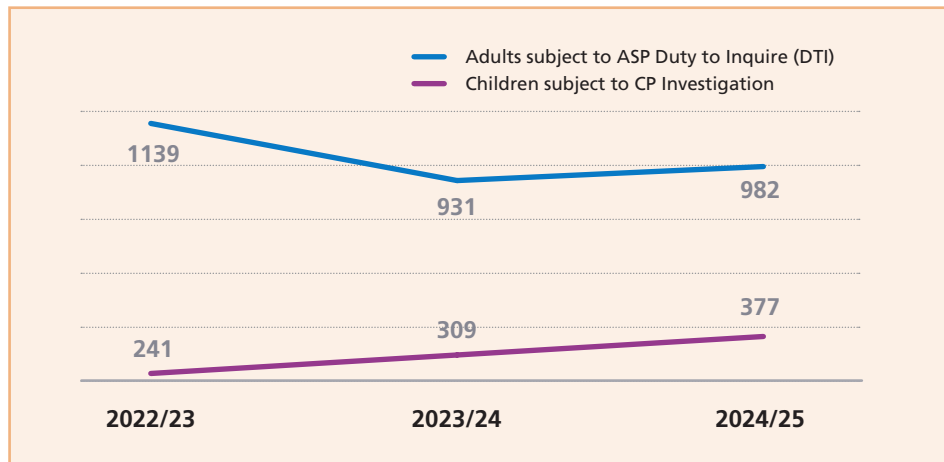
MARAC Case Study

MARACs (Multiagency Risk Assessment Conferences) are multiagency professional meetings where the highest risk victims are discussed with the aim of improving their safety. They very often bring together complex elements from the three pillars of public protection.

Mrs X and her four children relocated to Dumfries & Galloway after experiencing domestic abuse from her ex-partner, who had a history of abusing previous partners. The abuse included sexualised language towards her daughter, personal sexual assault, threats to post images online, stalking, and controlling behaviour. The victim's mental health was severely affected, worsened by pregnancy and ongoing stalking via technology. The case was flagged through a MARAC-to-MARAC referral from another area and immediately prioritised for multi-agency discussion. Some of the agreed actions undertaken as a result included placing safety markers on phone numbers to enhance response times, offer refuge accommodation, assist with housing applications, engage with GP and alerts within education services.



Chart 3 – Public Protection Planning Risk Assessment Activity from 2022/23 to 2024/25.



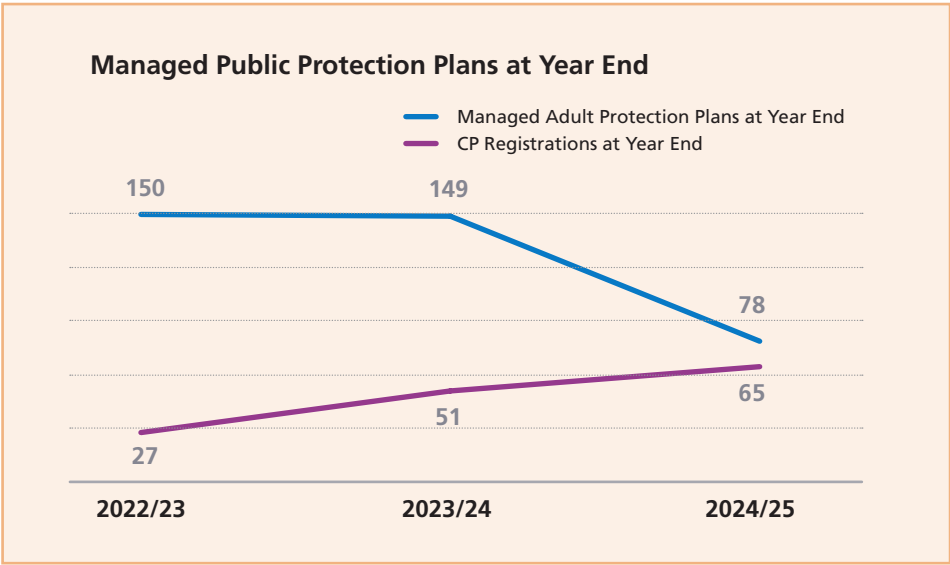
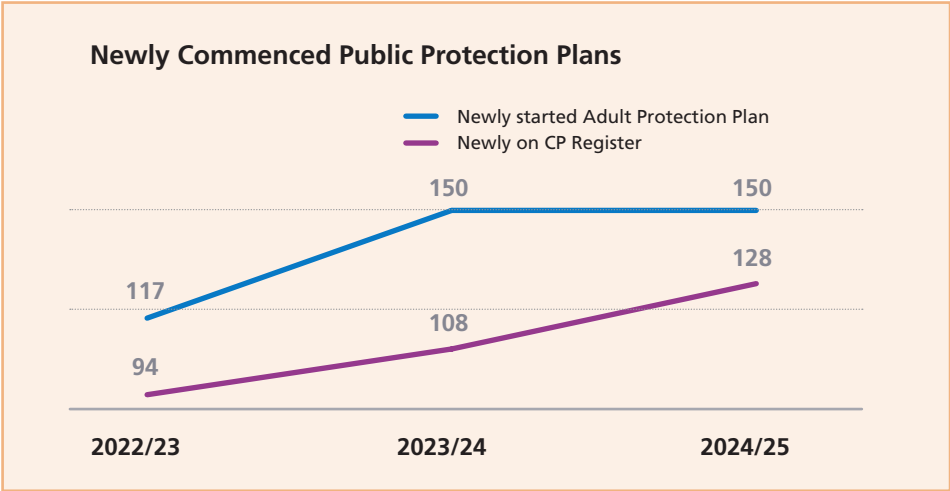
There was a total of 150 adults with a newly started protection plan in 2024/25, the same number as those with a new plan last year. The number of adults with a managed plan on 31st March 2025 fell by 48% from 149 adults last year to 78 adults this year. A decrease was attributed to considerable work by Social Work to progress protection cases, improving management oversight and allocation of new and existing cases to ensure timely support and protection.

Dumfries & Galloway's approach allows for protection plans to be started at any point in the ASP process, rather than only after an initial case conference, as is common elsewhere in Scotland. This proactive model aligns with the latest ASP Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), which advocates for prompt preparation of protection plans for adults at risk of harm. Reporting above the Scottish average in this area is seen as a positive, supporting earlier intervention.





Chart 4 – Public Protection Plans from 2022/23 to 2024/25.





An increase earlier in the Child Protection process saw a 19% increase in children newly registered under Child Protection this year compared to last year. The number of children on the Child Protection Register on 31st March 2025 also increased by 27% from 51 children in 2024 to 65 children in 2025.

Timescales

Timeliness of key processes remains a challenge. The proportion of Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings (ICPPMs) held within 28 days of the IRD dropped from 25% last year to 15% this year. Delays were attributed to staff capacity issues, as well as meetings being rescheduled to accommodate families' needs. The increasing complexity of risk, coupled with reduced funding and resources, has placed significant pressure on staff, particularly in social work roles under ASP and CP. Additional resources have been allocated to support workload coordination and monitoring, with regular reporting to managers. However, recruitment and retention of staff remain ongoing challenges.

Despite these pressures, quality assurance processes indicate that staff continue to provide a high standard of support to those most at risk. Collaborative working across services is evident, and people are listened to and involved in decision-making. Nevertheless, there is a recognised risk that if any one service cannot maintain current support levels, this could have significant repercussions across the partnership.

Risk factors

Self-Neglect / Neglect

With a prevalence of self-neglect, we saw increased attendance from Scottish Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) at Initial Case Conference from 80% in 2023/24 to 92% in 2024/25. The SFRS have a dedicated Community Action Team who support them to achieve improved attendance with their ambition set out in their Operating Plan as 100% attendance.

Due to continued prevalence of self-neglect, affecting 20% of adults under an ASP Inquiry this year, it was agreed this would be an area of focus for the next ASP multi-agency self-evaluation in 2026.

A total of 54 children (47%) newly registered under child protection were impacted by neglect, compared to 47 children (49%) last year. Multi-agency neglect training is in place, with Social Work looking to ensure the new social work assessment template will facilitate improved recording of tools, including the Assessment of Care Practice toolkit. Updated multi-agency guidance on neglect is expected by September 2025.



Financial Harm

A total of 84 adults (17%) subject to an inquiry were affected by financial harm this year (16% last year). Delays in receiving timely Section 10 requests from financial institutions, especially those headquartered outside Scotland, continue to hinder ASP investigations. This issue has been raised nationally, and efforts are underway to build relationships with centralised financial institutions.

Parental Mental Ill-Health / Psychological Harm

There was an increase in the number of children newly registered under child protection affected by parental mental ill-health from 20 children (21%) last year to 39 children (34%) this year. At the same time, psychological harm remains one of the top 3 harm types experienced by adults under adult support and protection.

Domestic Abuse

Despite a decrease in the proportion of children affected by domestic abuse registered under child protection from 51% last year to 39% this year, this reflected 4 less children. The number of children in the household for whom a homeless application was made due to a violent/non-violent dispute within the household fell from 155 children (60% of applications) last year to 111 children (46% of applications) this year.

Progress has been made in delivering Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based abuse Risk Identification Checklist (DASH RIC) training, which will become a regular feature of the Public Protection Learning and Development Calendar. Updates and evaluations of this training will be reported to the Learning and Development subcommittee, PPC, and COG.





Outcomes, achievements, and service improvements

Public Protection Strategic Plan 2024-2027

The Public Protection Strategic Plan 2024-2027 was published in April 2024, setting out four priority areas:

- Lived and Living Experience
- Self-Neglect
- Sexual Harm
- Multiagency Chronologies and Information Sharing.

These priorities span the core pillars of public protection activity and are designed to address critical issues for high-risk groups through multi-agency collaboration. Implementation responsibility is shared across the partnership, with dedicated steering groups, and wider agencies reporting progress to the COG: PP.

As detailed previously, this is the first strategy of its format, developed through robust consultation, self-assessment, and analysis of local and national data. Significant work is progressing across each priority, from development and implementation of a revised sexual harm strategy, mapping across lived experience and standards of engagement, self-neglect objectives including Improved recognition, referral, and response to self-neglect, Enhanced risk assessment and case planning and Strengthening support for adults with complex needs awaiting care. Within chronologies, innovative approaches to the use of technology to assist in development of multi-agency chronologies continues.

National Minimum Datasets

Dumfries & Galloway continues to play a leading role in developing national minimum datasets for ASP and Child Protection, as one of five learning partners for ASP. IRISS rolled out phase two of the national ASP Minimum Dataset to all 32 local authorities from April 2024. Local and national data have supported service development, with D&G providing the first full year's data to PPC for benchmarking against comparator authorities.

The region also continues to report and present the Child Protection Minimum Dataset as part of established scrutiny processes. Benchmarking of Vulnerable Children and Families Monitoring data has enhanced understanding of local trends and comparisons with other Scottish areas. Formal agreements are in place to facilitate data sharing with comparator authorities, supporting enhanced benchmarking and scrutiny.

In 2024, D&G produced Scotland's first formal VAWG Minimum Dataset, developed in collaboration with partners and highlighted by the NPPLG as best practice. This dataset has added significant local value, evidencing demand and cross-cutting themes to inform service planning and decision-making. Feedback from partners, such as Wigtownshire Women's Aid, has been very positive, with data now influences decision-makers at the highest level.

"I just wanted to say I've found this so helpful since we started the data scrutiny group. I think now...it's having real impact on decision makers at the highest level. You know, [VAW specialist services] have never been asked to go to COG... never been asked to present at COG and actually the data now is there for making changes. So it's had a massive impact and hopefully going forward it will have a big impact certainly on my service. I'm so chuffed that we've got there and it just keeps getting better and better... It's just becoming more positive and growing all the time."

Chief Executive Officer, Wigtownshire Women's Aid



Requests for guidance and support have been received from other areas, and D&G is assisting the NPPLG in implementing a National Public Protection Dataset. This demonstrates the region's leadership in shaping national thinking.

The single approach to a Performance and Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF), allows COG to receive and review performance, quality assurance and management information reports from the PPC consistently. This allows robust scrutiny and assures us that work is continuing to deliver effective services and to address any areas for improvement identified through these and where appropriate inspection, audit, self-evaluation or learning review activity.

Multi-Agency Self Evaluation

The development of the Public Protection three-year strategic plan, data dashboard, PQAF and the self-evaluation calendar, supports us to take stock of challenges and focus resource where it is most required. From 2025/26 this will include regular self-evaluation for VAWG, moving our approach to self-evaluation to a three-year cycle. This allows for more thorough embedding and review of improvement actions, whilst allowing us to involve staff across each pillar and maximise the sharing of learning.

Child Protection

In November 2024, a multi-agency self-evaluation took place across child protection; with a focus on pre-birth, to determine the impact of referral processes which had previously been changed and aligned in accordance with all other referrals received by the Single Access Point (SAP); and domestic abuse, to measure improvement and identify areas for development.



This evaluation of our domestic abuse practice, focussed on the use of the Safe and Together model which has been implemented locally. The model was introduced to develop competency and confidence when working with families affected by domestic abuse. The model reflects a trauma informed, relationship-based approach and aims to ensure that the experience of children affected by domestic abuse and coercive control is captured and that all work with perpetrators is focussed on their pattern of behaviour and holds them to account regarding their parenting choices which are impacting on their children. Partnering with the victim of domestic abuse is crucial in recognising the efforts they have made to keep their children safe. It is these elements that were concentrated upon to ascertain how well we are supporting children and families and ultimately achieving better outcomes for those who are experiencing domestic abuse.

The methodology for the self-evaluation was informed by the 'Care Inspectorate Quality Framework for Children and Young People in Need of Care and Protection 2022'. This work was undertaken supported by the Care Inspectorate, and findings will be presented to PPC in April 2025 and to Chief Officers to agree improvement activity.



Adult Support and Protection

As indicated in the previous reporting period 2023-2024 the ASP multi agency self-evaluation commenced autumn 2023. The results and themes of this piece of work were reported to PPC in June 2024 and COG in August 2024. Findings were largely reassuring and evidenced continued effective ASP arrangements in Dumfries and Galloway. Areas of strength remain in our screening and triaging processes, including our MASH and AIRD arrangements. The self-evaluation recognised the need for ongoing improvements in some areas along national themes, for example the development of multi-agency chronologies. This has informed our Strategic Plan and the narrowing down to our four priorities for 2024-2027.

Only one indicator graded as Adequate, in relation to 'carrying out competent, prompt, multi-agency, in-depth investigations into adult protection concerns that correctly identify the way forward. These are timeously and fully recorded'. While we were assured that quality of these Investigations was good and above, we could not give this an overall grade of Good/Very Good due to the issues identified in terms of meeting timescales. We know that the Adult Social Work restructure had impacted on timescales and that this reflects the pressures on our ASP Team at the time.

We have developed an improvement plan with seven key actions to address these identified areas for improvement:

- Further developing feedback to referrer processes for referrals that do not meet ASP thresholds
- Improving ASP engagement with GP's

- Enhanced training for second workers.
- Improving recording for adults whom we struggle to engage
- Ensuring peer audits include qualitative comments for development of ASP staff
- Recording MA quality assurance in adults' files
- Further raising awareness of ASP policies and procedures with MA staff

This sits with the Performance, Quality and Improvement subcommittee on behalf of the PPC, to ensure clear governance and ownership by the partnership. Good progress has been made with sign off improvement expected by the end of the year.

Joint work with Scottish Ambulance Service

In July 2024, SAS led the third joint self-evaluation of adult protection referrals progressing to ASP inquiry. This annual audit, part of the wider Public Protection Self-Evaluation Calendar, reviewed cases from March to May 2024 and cross-referenced them with SAS contact. The audit tool, developed and launched in 2024, is now embedded across SAS and evaluates referral quality against ten parameters.

Staff roadshows and targeted awareness sessions have contributed to a 4.5% increase in referral rates by staff in 2024 compared to 2023. The partnership with SAS Head of Public Protection remains strong, and the forthcoming National SAS Public Protection data dashboard will provide comparative data on training compliance, referral rates, and referral quality audits. These findings support the celebration of good practice and identification of areas for improvement.



Learning Reviews

During the reporting period, there were no new Learning Reviews commenced, but six Initial Learning Review (LR) Notifications (all adult protection) were received. In line with our local LR Guidance, these all progressed through our Initial Learning Review Panel, and to our Learning Review Group and ultimately Chief Officers. There was agreement on already identified improvements and actions that could be taken, and development of improvement plans where necessary. These will continue to be overseen by the dedicated subcommittee and reported to PPC.

Missing People

Over the last 12 months, the Dumfries and Galloway Missing Persons Protocol and practice have been reviewed by a dedicated steering group. This review has been focussed on addressing the gap between policy and practice to ensure that all staff are aware of and using the Protocol to ensure that people who go missing are responded to appropriately, offered support following a missing episode and given the help and protection they need to limit harm and prevent them becoming missing in the future.

We were successful in our application to the Missing People charity for support in our review and they have provided guidance in this regard. They have also supported single agencies in their guidance development to ensure dovetailing with the multi-agency Protocol. This review has enabled us to streamline our Protocol to make it more user friendly, provide clarity on process through an updated flowchart, and given us the opportunity to address the barriers being experienced across the Partnership to establish a multi-agency localised response to missing people.



Violence Against Women and Girls agenda progression

In recognition that there have been significant changes in the area of Violence Against Women and Girls, a dedicated development session was held on 20th March 2025 to reflect on the VAWG subcommittee's current impact, envision future goals and challenges and strengthen collaboration to drive sustainable success. The development session was facilitated by the Improvement Service and was well attended by partners. It was agreed that partners would focus on the strengths and develop an action plan to focus on future improvements.

The strengths of the subcommittee identified included shared outcomes, good awareness raising and a commitment to this area of work. Challenges identified were resource challenges, bureaucracy and lack of understanding by staff out-with the Subcommittee. An action plan was developed and will be progressed in the year ahead.



Workforce Development

Public Protection Training Charter

In early 2025, PPC and COG agreed a dedicated Multi-agency Learning and Development strategy alongside a training charter. The charter specifically serves as a formal commitment by all single partner agencies within the partnership to prioritise and facilitate staff training and professional growth. It outlines the obligations of the partnership, member agencies and staff, with clear expectations for managerial accountability and protocols to maximise all learning opportunities. The overarching aim is to have all staff trained and developed to support and protect those most at risk in our communities. PPC will continue to review and monitor training need, uptake and commitment through our Learning and Development Subcommittee.

Public Protection Training Calendar

Over the last 12 months multi-agency colleagues have benefited from the public protection partnership being able to deliver a varied multi-agency training calendar having a good balance of in person and online training. Most of the training offered over the past year has been in person. Since April 2024 we have managed to have a full and varied training calendar in line with our agreed strategy priorities. This multi-agency training cuts across the pillars of public protection, including: -

- Trafficking Training
- Neglect (Child Protection) Training
- Introduction to Infant Mental Health
- Tailored Child Protection and ASP training
- Transforming Connections Trauma Training
- Missing Person Awareness
- Safe and Together Overview and 4-day core Training

The most recent Self-Neglect training had the following positive feedback.

“Overall, a very good day of input and I enjoyed all elements”

“Good mixture of presentations and discussion/ability to ask questions etc”

“Good to see a range of people from different organisations present, nice opportunity to network”

The committee also promotes training not directly coordinated by the Public Protection Partnership, such as NHS-led sessions on psychological trauma.

Multi-Agency ASP Guidance Launch

The multi-Agency ASP guidance was launched on 30th January 2025 following extensive work by members of public protection team, the ASP social work team and other key multiagency colleagues from health, police and other partners.

Safe and Together

Funding for Safe and Together was extended into 2024/25. This allowed there to be additional training for staff from Social Work and other agencies. In this year there were Overview Sessions and Core Training (lasting for 4 days and delivered by local trainers from SW). The aim of the training is to support staff to be more domestic abuse informed and work with victims of domestic abuse in a supportive way, recognising the work that they do to keep their children safe.



Public Protection Week 2025

D&G Public Protection week 2025 marked the fifth annual Public Protection week and was an opportunity for partner organisations to connect with the community and share best practice and knowledge. The theme for this year's Public Protection week was 'Compassionate Communities'. This was due to our goal of highlighting the importance of collaboration in society and empowering individuals to play an active role in keeping their communities safe. The week offered 6 online events and 2 in person, with themes across public protection. We had a range of presenters each day including from Missing People Charity; Commercial Sexual Exploitation session; Recovery Communities; Social Work Out of Hours Service; Community Reuse Shop/Pink Frog Project; Home-Start (Wigtownshire); Safe and Together; and a session for staff on Compassion Fatigue. The end of each online event featured a short mindfulness session that was optional to attend and highlighted the importance of staff wellbeing.

Most events were rated 5/5 from the survey and general feedback about the week included:

"Excellent week of training"

"Overall, the sessions I attended were very interesting and I learned a lot from them"

All presenters felt it was positive being part of Public Protection Week. One presenter highlighted it was a *"A very well organised, planned and put together event"*.

The week included a social media campaign in the lead up and during the week itself. On national ASP Day on the 20th of February, we focused on financial harm and awareness raising and the launch of the local ASP App.

The **Chief Officer's Group (COG) Conference - Working Together, Shaping the future of Public Protection Conference** took place during our local Public Protection Week.

The event brought together professionals from across the Public Protection Partnership, including the Council, NHS, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue, and Third Sector organisations. The day focused on how agencies can collaborate more effectively to shape the future of public protection in Dumfries and Galloway.

Chair of the Chief Officers Group opened the conference and there were local and national speakers where topics included:

- the national vision from the Scottish Government and National Public Protection Leadership Group.
- the Care Inspectorate's evolving approach to improvement.
- the Resilience Learning Partnership (RLP), who gave a powerful talk on the need to work with people who have lived experience of trauma to build truly trauma-informed systems.

Further presentations highlighted the critical work of Wigtownshire Women's Aid and Dumfries and Galloway Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Support Centre, addressing the real challenges of service delivery in a tough financial climate. One of the most impactful moments came from a survivor of domestic abuse, who shared her personal journey of leaving a harmful relationship and finding support through Dumfriesshire and Stewartry Women's Aid.



Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, including:

"A better understanding of lived experience and how it influences policies and practice"

"Learned so much—especially from Women's Aid, Rape Crisis and RLP"

"The insights on care inspections and trauma-informed practice were invaluable"

16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2024

There was a full programme of events during 16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women that included inputs from SW staff and included:

- A VAWG Conference where there was the launch on a local strangulation campaign that outlined the harms caused by strangulation in relationships; an exploration of the harms domestic abuse causes children (supported by pupils from Moffat Academy) and Equally Safe in Schools.
- A webinar on Domestic Homicide Reviews
- The launch of the local Commercial Sexual Exploitation Position Statement with awareness of the extent and impact of CSE.
- An input on Artificial intelligence and intimate Image Reviews (from then National Revenge Porn Helpline)
- An exploration of the challenges and intersectionality between services involved in supporting people experiencing violence against women, involved in substance use and/or justice services.
- A Conference hosted by Wigtownshire Women's Aid that included inputs from partners including information on White Ribbon.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Dumfries and Galloway
25 November - 10 December

Training

Events

Activism

16 Days of Action

Find out more at: www.dgppp.org.uk/16days

The events were also supported by social media messages to raise public awareness. Feedback on the events was positive.



Engagement, involvement, and communication

Communication and Engagement Subcommittee This dedicated subcommittee has focused on delivering a consistent approach to communications delivered on behalf of the Public Protection Partnership for both our staff and wider public, by ensuring clear messaging and collaborative practice across all members. This includes the oversight of the PPP website, promotion of policy and procedures and learning and development and public facing social media campaigns that support prevalent local public protection issues. Looking forward to 2025 –2026 the subcommittee will be reviewing our Communication and Engagement Strategies, working closely with partner and those who have Lived Experience. Finally, the focus will be on the building of our social media toolkit that will continue to ensure we have bespoke resources to raise awareness and address public protection themes we see in our data and practice. This involved close links with the other subcommittees.

Lived Experience

A multi-agency steering group was established to oversee Priority 1 of our Public Protection Strategic Plan: Lived and Living Experience. The group hopes to create, develop, change and evaluate services to ensure that those with lived experience are at the heart of what we do. It is recognised that this is a highly important task, and significant groundwork has taken place and continues to take place to create the conditions and culture in Dumfries and Galloway whereby we value and partner with national and local experts by experience. The group has begun a mapping process of local and national resources and learning and are in the process of creating local guidance and eventually supporting a structure that will allow us to move to a position of equal partnership with those with Lived Experience.



Lived experience of trauma workshop

As detailed previously, the Resilience Learning Partnership (RLP), gave a keynote speech at our Chief officers Conference. Prior to this we were delighted to host a development session on the importance of trauma informed systems for people with lived experience of trauma. This was targeted at multi-agency staff working to progress Lived Experience as a key priority within the partnership and proved a very worthwhile workshop and session for all involved.



Challenges and areas for improvement

Resourcing and Staffing:

Ongoing difficulties with recruitment and retention of staff have impacted capacity, timeliness of key processes and prioritisation of high-risk cases. Staff sickness and annual leave further exacerbated these pressures.

The introduction of an AI-powered tool (Magic notes), designed to support social workers in write up of visits and assessments and enhance the experience for the individual during face-to-face meetings, was piloted by the ASP Team in October 2024. This tool enabled staff to record visits and phone calls, creating a transcript of the meeting to support their assessment. Frontline managers have also used this software to support staff supervision, enabling increased engagement. This has seen a reduction of staff administrative time, giving staff more time to support adults more timeously. Initial feedback has been positive and will be available to all social work staff by early Summer 2025.

Increasing Demand and Complexity:

A rise in referrals in child protection and specialist services, including domestic abuse incidents, led to greater demand on already stretched resources.

We have also seen an increased complexity of risk factors affecting children and adults, many with multiple intersecting issues, such as domestic abuse combined with mental health problems, substance misuse, financial harm, and self-neglect. This complexity requires multi-agency collaboration and tailored interventions. Delivery of a range of multi-agency public protection training, underpinned by our Training Charter, continues to be available to support staff to recognise and respond to risk. Despite increased demand on services, the percentage of training uptake shows an improvement in

attendance rates year-on-year with less unable to attend due to service pressures albeit remaining one of the main reasons for non-attendance.

Funding and Commissioning:

There has been significant uncertainty over direct funding from national and local authorities for third sector specialist services. These services face significant funding uncertainties, which impact their capacity to meet increasing demand and affects their ability to maintain staff wellbeing. This uncertainty has been formally raised with the local authority's commissioning service, and reassurance has been given that formal processes are being followed, but the situation remains a focus of concern. The partnership recognises a risk that if any one service cannot maintain current levels of support due to these challenges, it could have significant negative impacts across the entire public protection system.

The Public Protection Partnership continue to escalate and monitor funding issues to ensure service continuity and will work to ensure a critical national priority must be around the significant challenges around VAWG agenda and resourcing, and that national commitment starts to match national rhetoric on this agenda.

In January, PPC received a detailed input and report on behalf of the specialist services on our VAWG agenda detailing Service Provider challenges, notably the increased demand for services and challenges to secure funding for the Specialist Services and the uncertainty surrounding it. In addition, COG also received formal updates and inputs, on challenges ensuring the long-term sustainability of the sector in the context of the independent strategic review of funding and commissioning of VAWG services in Scotland. Partners committed to review local commissioning strategies and about how best to lobby government around the challenges within Specialist Services, Procurement, Housing, Legal Aid, etc, and about how Dumfries and Galloway can be more proactive in this regard.



Looking forward

Over the next year, PPC are committed to continue work detailed above, and:

Dumfries and Galloway Good Practice Guidance: Adult Support and Protection for Care Homes

During 2024-2025 we developed bespoke ASP guidance with our care home providers promoting increased understanding of ASP, reporting and early intervention. This will be launched in 2025-26 and the impact monitored through our performance and scrutiny processes.

Safe and Together training will continue to be offered to staff. This will include sessions to support staff to use the Perpetrator Pattern Tool when working with families where there is domestic abuse. There is also training for Supervisors planned along with Core Training.

We have recently piloted multi-agency (intensive workforce) child protection training with a view to full implementation in late 2025. Child protection training for the specific workforce (one day) is scheduled to take place soon.

The COG provided funding for 20 staff to undertake training for trainers for the Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification Checklist (DASH RIC), recognising that if staff have had training on this, they will have increased understanding of the risk being faced by victims of domestic abuse and have a shared understanding across agencies. The training will be rolled out from July 2025 to staff and will support the response to domestic abuse.

Performance and Quality Assurance

The 2024-25 **National ASP Minimum Dataset** is expected to be published in Autumn 2025, the first publicly available report since inception of the national dataset. Dumfries and Galloway continue to support national development of reporting templates and guidance to enable scrutiny and use of the dataset by local areas.

Dumfries and Galloway has been formally selected as one of five self-evaluation partners across Scotland to undertake a programme of **Joint Supported Self-Evaluation of Adult Support and Protection**. The focus will be on quality illustration 5.7 of the Adult Support and Protection Quality Assurance Framework (2024) and those cases where it is difficult to determine the three-point criteria. Self-evaluation will be co-designed alongside the Care Inspectorate, with emphasis on support, early intervention, prevention and trauma informed practice. Work is expected to be completed by Autumn 2025.

Local **multi-agency self-evaluation of ASP Initial Case Conferences and Initial CP Planning Meetings** has been agreed to understand cross-cutting themes involvement of adults, children and their families and professionals in supporting risk planning. Joint development of the methodology, tools including one record reading template, will allow for a single self-evaluation report and action plan. Work is expected to be finalised by Autumn 2025.

This work links to the national direction of **ASP Directed Self-Evaluation Programme of Improvement** developed through a co-design approach, working in collaboration with local partnerships, scrutiny bodies and evaluation providers. The programme will draw on existing evidence and self-evaluation learning and build on work already underway to inform methodology, design and focus for directed self-evaluation. This includes findings from workstream 4, review of joint inspection programme reports and, support to local partnership to use local data and review of national



data. It will focus on national issues/areas which are relevant to public protection, and which resonate at local level and the work will specify self-evaluation topics or themes at national level, informed by existing data and evidence.

Dumfries and Galloway have been chosen to be one of two areas in Scotland to be a **pilot for the integration of the Safe and Together approach into MARAC**. The Pilot will start in August and end after six months. This is an exciting opportunity to include Safe and Together tools, particularly the Perpetrator Mapping Tool into the MARAC process and it is hoped it will help to protect the highest risk victims of domestic abuse and their children, Evaluation is built into the pilot, and the findings and learning will be reported in 2026.

As part of the Performance Quality and Improvement Self-Evaluation Calendar for 2025, we will be undertaking the first multi-agency **VAWG Self Evaluation** in Dumfries & Galloway. This activity will be driven by the relevant representation from all the partner agencies/services across the partnership. This will be a groundbreaking piece of work as we have not previously undertaken self-evaluation that included adult and children's statutory services but also our Third Sector Specialist Services. This activity will be developed in a collaborative way to ensure that the findings can provide reassurance to the Public Protection Committee and Chief Officers that we are keeping those adults and children safe because of the way we work together. The approach used to undertake this work may be slightly different to that use for previous ASP or CP self-evaluation activity, but it will be designed to fit with our Public Protection Performance Quality and Assurance Framework. We are working towards a timescale of file reading in Oct/Nov 2025 with final reporting to PPC and COG in early 2026.

In early 2025, the Scottish Government and COSLA announced that work would commence to develop a **VAWG Needs Assessment Tool**. The tool will be an important aide in bringing together partners from across different services and policy areas to raise awareness of everyone's role in tackling VAWG, help identify opportunities to drive forward improvements and maximise the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people. Dumfries and Galloway will express an interest to test the tool as part of our local self-evaluation of VAWG.

During **16 Days of Activism 2025** there will be a series of events including domestic abuse conference that will bring together some of the emerging research and the innovative work being undertaken locally. This will include an input on the Homicide Timeline; information on the MARAC/Safe and Together Pilot; information the use of the DASH Risk Identification Checklist and inputs on the Caledonian System for perpetrators.

