

Dumfries and Galloway

Public Protection

Annual Report 2025 - 2026

Foreword

Foreword

I am pleased to present, as chair of Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee, our second annual public protection report. This report builds on our development of a single reporting schedule across public protection, strengthening our joint approach and moving on from previous biennial reporting. This report will detail the innovative approaches that our partnership and partners continue to take across Dumfries and Galloway to protect those who are at risk in our communities.



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

Over the past year, we have continued to face significant challenges across our communities and services. Demand remains high, needs are becoming increasingly complex, and our partner organisations and staff continue to work within a climate of uncertainty and ongoing pressure. While these challenges are unlikely to disappear any time soon, what continues to stand out is the determination, resilience and commitment shown by everyone involved in public protection.

There is much within this report to be proud of. It highlights the positive work taking place across the region every day and reflects the dedication of our frontline staff. These are the people who, often in the most challenging circumstances, continue to support, safeguard and advocate for some of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities. Their professionalism, compassion and ability to build trust with those who need support most is at the heart of everything we achieve. The work they undertake is not always visible, but it is invaluable.

The report also demonstrates the impact of effective partnership working, with organisations, communities and excitingly, people with lived experience, all playing an increasing role in shaping and improving services. Together, these contributions help us deliver better outcomes and ensure that people receive the support and protection they need. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone involved, but particularly to our frontline workforce, whose commitment and perseverance continue to make a real difference every day.

The Chief Officers Group (COG:PP) has continued to provide strong leadership and oversight of public protection activity across the region. Through regular engagement, scrutiny and constructive challenge, Chief Officers remain actively involved in ensuring that our priorities are being progressed and that partners are delivering on their commitments. Their continued ownership of key strategic areas has helped maintain momentum and drive improvement across the partnership.

Over the past year, it has been encouraging to see increasing recognition nationally of the benefits of a single Public Protection approach. The development of national leadership arrangements continues to reflect many of the principles that we have championed locally for some time, reinforcing the value of bringing agencies together around a shared purpose and common goals. The National Public Protection Leadership Group (NPPLG) recognised Dumfries & Galloway's integrated public protection model, performance framework and governance arrangements as examples of developing practice. D&G was also highlighted within NPPLG Workstream 5 (Data, Improvement and Assurance) as an area with advanced integrated governance, mature performance reporting and strong use of data to support Chief Officer decision-making. We will continue to support the work of NPPLG as we move forward.

This report outlines the progress made during the reporting period and demonstrates the strength of collaborative working across Dumfries and Galloway. While there is always more to do, the achievements of the past year provide confidence that we are moving in the right direction. As Independent Chair, I remain committed to ensuring that the Public Protection Committee stays focused on what matters most: protecting vulnerable people, supporting those who work tirelessly on the front line, strengthening partnership working, and continually supporting our important staff, and improving the services we provide to our communities.

Introduction

In Dumfries and Galloway, partners have a well-established 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 on behalf of Chief Officers Group: Public Protection. PPC continues to provide oversight of multi-agency performance relating to children and vulnerable groups at risk, ensuring effective practice, governance arrangements and safeguarding measures are in place while managing areas of overlap and shared responsibility

This report provides an overview of the work and progress of the Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Committee (PPC) in delivering its core functions under the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023), and the priorities of Violence Against Women Partnerships as set out in Equally Safe (2023).

The structure of this report fulfils the requirement to publish an Adult Support and Protection Biennial Report and reflects the most recent national guidance for this while also highlighting the Committee's wider public protection responsibilities and achievements across all areas of its remit.

Further information about the work of the Public Protection Committee can be found at **www.dgppp.org.uk**.



What our data tells us

Early-stage activity

There was a reduction in referrals this year compared to last year: Adult Support and Protection (ASP) saw a 5% decrease, Child Protection a 15% decrease, and Specialist Services a 2% decrease.

Despite the overall drop in referrals into Specialist Services, Domestic Abuse Police Incidents increased by 24%, reaching a total of 1,869 incidents. Of these, 961 were established as crimes. The detection rate rose to 77%, up from 73% the previous year.

The decline in Child Protection referrals was reflected in a 13% reduction in the number of children subject to an Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD). However, there was a 4% increase in the number of adults subject to IRD, consistent with a 5% rise in ASP Duty to Inquires this year.

Over the last year the quality of Child IRDs has been in the majority (93%) good and above, compared to 86% the previous year. There was clear evidence of child-centred practice, giving importance to the child's voice, lived experience and wellbeing. There was strong analysis and risk assessment with consideration of escalating concerns and patterns of harm. IRDs demonstrated a family-focused and holistic assessment, with consideration and an understanding of complex family situations whilst maintaining a focus on the child's safety. Recommendation on the use of tools such as the Assessment of Care Toolkit and seeking specialist advice to support decision making was evident within multi-agency discussions.

Chart 1 – Early-Stage Public Protection Activity from 2023/24 to 2025/26

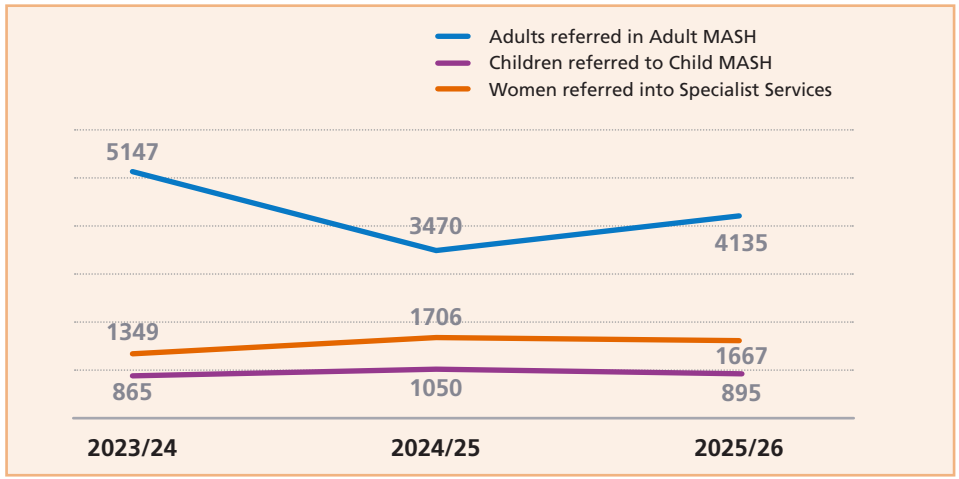
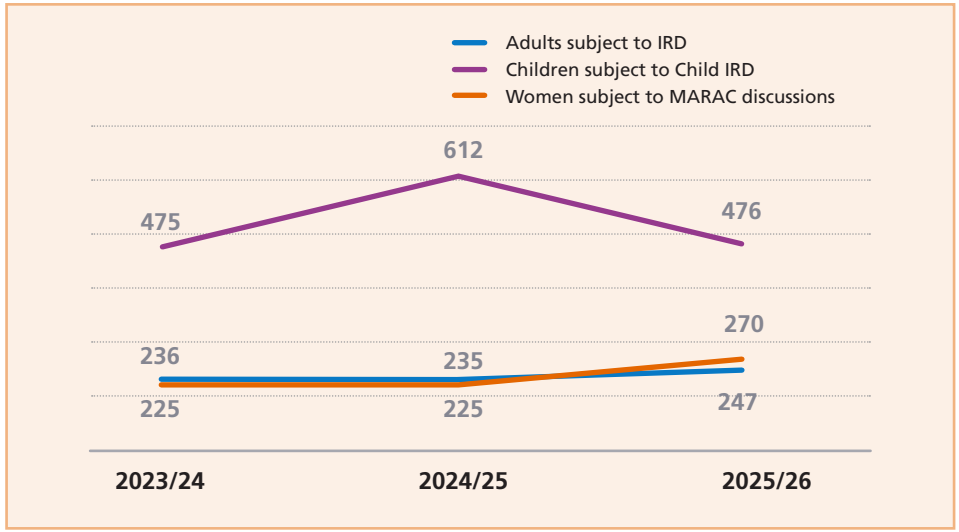


Chart 2 – Early-Stage Public Protection Activity from 2023/24 to 2025/26



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.

Similarly, the quality of Adult IRDs saw most (98%) good or above, the same as last year. There was evidence of strong analysis and risk assessment with good use of professional curiosity and exploration of unknown factors. There was effective multi-agency working, sharing of information and evidence of coordinated planning and joint working with Children and Families Social Work and other services to support engagement and reduce risk. Consideration of the use of relevant processes and tools such as MARAC, DSDAS and self-neglect and hoarding protocols demonstrated robust protection and risk management planning.

The tripartite review of decision making at Child Protection Investigations (CPI) found 100% of CPIs assessed the quality of decision making as adequate or above, with 77% graded as good or above. Decision making was proportionate to the harm identified with clear direction provided on the next steps. Audit findings continue to form part of the feedback to the Child MASH staff group as well as individual staff via MASH Staff Operational Managers.

There were 270 women supported through a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) this year, representing a 17% increase compared to the previous year, in line with a rise in Domestic Abuse Police Incidents. Of these, 64 women (24%) had been discussed at MARAC within the last 12 months.

While the total number of women supported at MARAC increased, the proportion with a repeat MARAC within 12 months decreased from 32% in the previous year to 24% this year.

Protection Planning

There was a 5% increase in ASP Duty to Inquiries (DTIs) commenced this year compared to the previous year. This increase in demand impacted timeliness, with the proportion of DTIs initiated within two working days decreasing from 30% to 18%.

The ASP Team continued to face staffing challenges throughout the year. A vacancy at Senior Social Worker level affected the team's capacity to screen referrals within required timescales, while wider social worker vacancies also limited the ability to allocate cases effectively. Work to review capacity against demand is ongoing, with an updated report due to be presented to the Health and Social Care Leadership Group and Chief Officers Group in early 2026/27.

Despite these pressures, Senior Social Workers have maintained regular case reviews and ensured management oversight. In November 2025, the ASP Team undertook a focused exercise to address ASP Investigations that were out with timescales. This initiative was successful, resulting in a 62% reduction in adults with open ASP Investigations compared to the previous month. Ongoing monitoring has since been embedded into routine screening and oversight practices.

There was a 42% reduction in the number of children subject to Child Protection Investigations (CPI), reflecting a decrease in CP referrals. This was accompanied by a 31% decrease in the number of children progressing to an Initial CP Planning Meeting compared to the previous year.

Like in ASP, Children and Families Social Work also experienced significant resource pressures, including 5 Social Worker vacancies across the region and staff sickness. This impacted on local timescales.



Despite ongoing staffing challenges, Social Work's review of CPI timescales—extending the completion period from 5 to 10 days from the start of a CPI—and the introduction of a new process in February 2025 to improve participation in Child Protection Planning Meetings had a positive impact on performance.

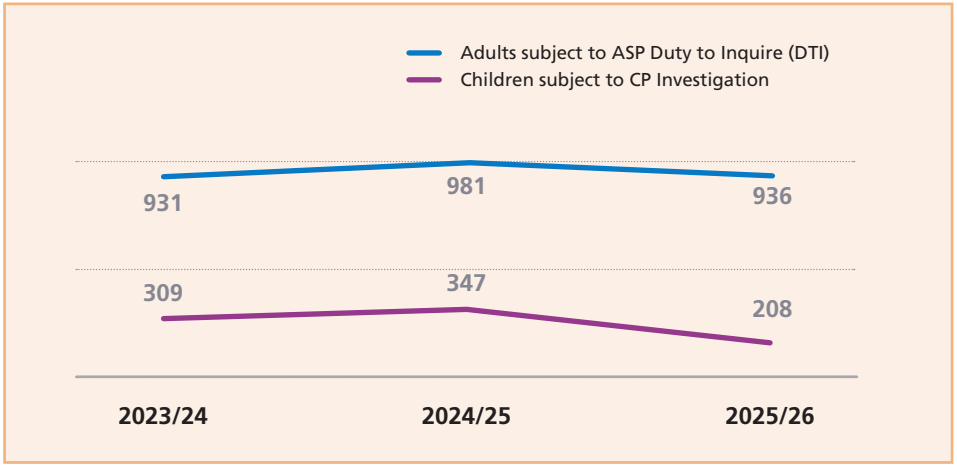
The percentage of Child Protection Planning Meetings held within 28 days of an IRD increased from 20% at the end of March 2025 to 45% at the end of March 2026. This change also contributed to improved professional attendance at meetings.

The Social Work Audit of CPIs continued to evidence good overall quality of practice, with 93% graded as good and above at the end of this year compared to 90% for the same period last year.

There was 48 ASP Initial Case Conferences held this year, an increase of 9% compared to last year. An increase also saw a 30% rise in the number of Review Case Conferences.

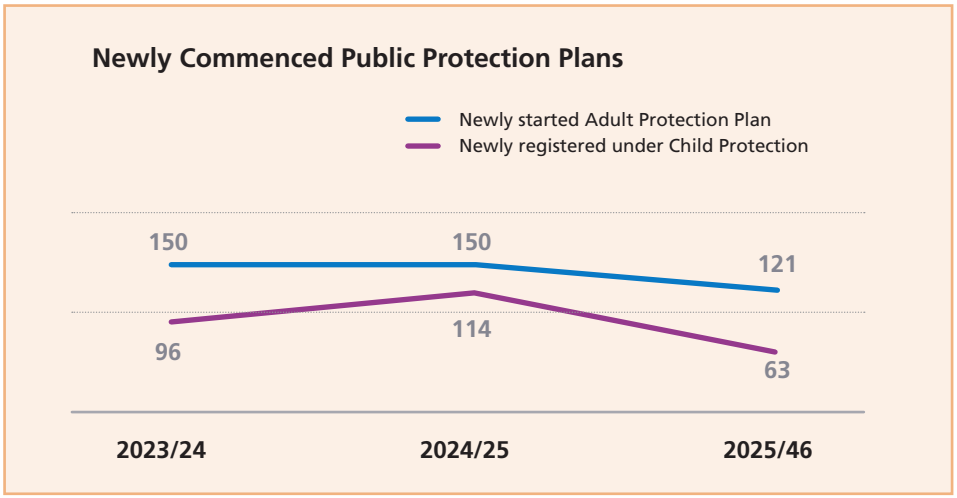
The most prevalent risk factors identified as part of the adult's protection plan were psychological harm, self-neglect and physical harm. We conducted 209 Adult Protection Investigations resulting in 48 Initial Adult Protection Case Conferences and 78 Adult Protection Case Conference Reviews.

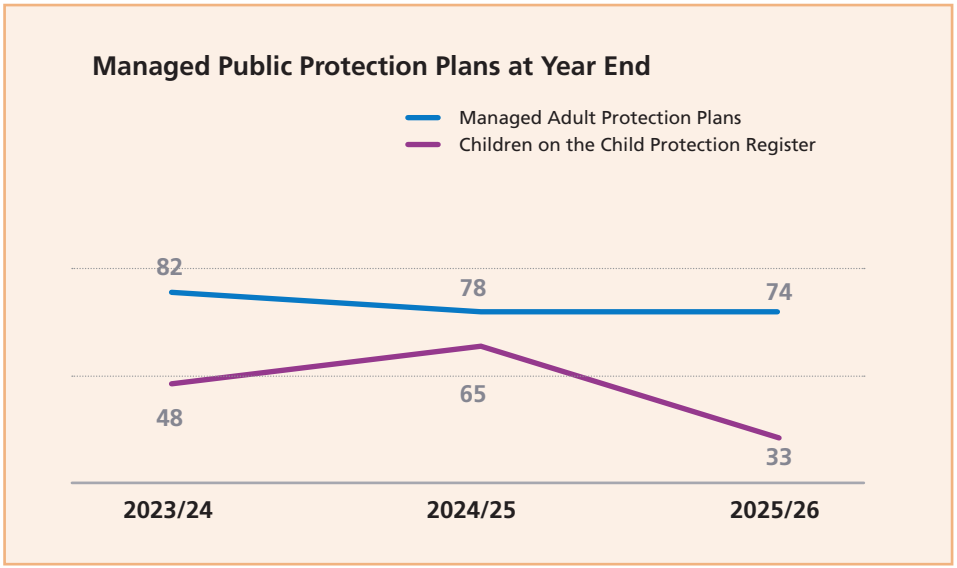
Chart 3 – Public Protection Planning Risk Assessment Activity



There was a total of 121 adults with a newly started protection plan in 2025/26, a 19% decrease compared to last year. The number of adults with a managed plan on 31st March 2026 fell by 5% from 78 adults last year to 74 adults this year. A decrease was in line with less adults supported through ASP processes this year.

Chart 4 – Public Protection Plans from 2023/24 to 2025/26.





A decrease earlier in the Child Protection process saw a 44% drop in children newly registered under Child Protection, from 112 children last year to 63 children this year. Social Work Managers reviewed cases where the child was not registered under child protection and confirmed there was a child's plan in place under child in need processes for all children. Referrals were made into universal services and to the Children's Reporter where required. Appropriate decisions and actions were made at the CP Planning Meeting (CPPM) to best support the children and their families.

The number of children on the Child Protection Register on 31st March 2026 also decreased by 49% from 65 children in 2025 to 33 children in 2026. Higher numbers of children on the CP register in 2024-25 compared to other years was due to several factors, including registration of larger families and some children supported under child protection processes for longer due to the complexity of issues families experienced. The number of children on the child protection register at the end of March 2026 returned to similar numbers of children on the CP register when compared to 2023-24.

Timescales

Timeliness of key processes remains a challenge. The proportion of Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings (ICPPMs) held within 28 days of the IRD increased slightly from 25% last year to 26% this year. Delays were attributed to significant resource issues, with vacancies impacting on staff capacity to meet national timescales especially over holiday periods.

Despite a commitment to prioritise attendance across all partners; meetings were often delayed or rescheduled to ensure key professionals were able to attend and to accommodate families' needs. Attendance at Initial and Pre-Birth Planning Meetings remained very good.

The increasing complexity of risk, coupled with reduced funding and resources, has placed significant pressure on staff across statutory, third sector and independent services. There was full agreement to provide additional resource to support workload coordination and monitoring within the social work role under ASP. However, recruitment and retention of staff remain ongoing challenges.

Whilst services continue to face significant pressures, quality assurance activity shows that high-quality support is being maintained for those most at risk. Effective collaboration across partner agencies remains strong, and people are engaged in decision-making. However, it is recognised this position remains fragile, with the potential for significant impacts across the partnership if any service is unable to sustain current levels of support.

There was an improvement in percentage of SCRA decisions within timescales from 63.5% at year-end 2024/25 to 87.7% year-end 2025-26. This was above the national target of 78%. SCRA have had an improvement project in place since 2023, with a renewed focus on Reporters being proactive and seeking information. SCRA recognise the pressure on services therefore have encouraged Reporters to be more flexible in their approach to gather information. SCRA expect improvements to continue, working to see decisions for children made below the current national timescale of 50 working days.

Risk factors

Self-Neglect / Neglect

Due to the continued prevalence of self-neglect, which affected 18% of adults subject to an ASP Inquiry this year compared with 15% last year, it reinforced the decision that self-neglect would be the focus of the next multi-agency ASP self-evaluation in summer 2026. This increase represented an additional reported 50 adults experiencing self-neglect compared to the previous year.

A total of 40 children (63%) newly registered under child protection were impacted by neglect, compared to 54 children (47%) last year. Despite an

increase in the proportion of children impacted by neglect this year, this reflected 14 less children. This is consistent with an overall decrease in the number of newly registered children compared to last year. Multi-agency neglect training continued to be available to staff and an updated multi-agency guidance on neglect is expected by October 2026.

Parental Mental Ill-Health / Psychological Harm

There was a decrease in the number of children newly registered under child protection affected by parental mental ill-health from 39 children (34%) last year to 23 children (37%) this year.

Psychological harm remains one of the top 3 harm types experienced by adults under adult support and protection, accounting for 19% of all inquiries this year. This was 2% less compared to last year, reflecting 11 less adults.

Domestic Abuse

Of the 33 children on the CP register on 31st March 2026, 23 children (70%) of children were affected by domestic abuse compared to 21 children (32%) last year.

Despite an increase in the proportion of children newly registered affected by domestic abuse from 44 children (39%) last year to 33 children (52%) this year, this reflected 11 less children. This was consistent with a fall in the number of adults who experienced domestic abuse supported under adult support and protection processes from 136 adults (14%) last year to 132 adults (14%).

The number of children in the household for whom a homeless application was made due to a violent/non-violent dispute within the household also fell from 189 children (21% of applications) last year to 133 children (18% of applications) this year.

Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based abuse Risk Identification Checklist (DASH RIC) training was delivered from August 2025 and is part of the multi-agency Public Protection Learning and Development Calendar. Updates and evaluations of this training continue to be reported to the Learning and Development subcommittee, PPC, and COG.



Outcomes, achievements, and service improvements

Public Protection Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Self-Neglect

Significant progress has been made in delivering both the strategic and operational improvement plans, including the development of a Self-Neglect Assessment Tool, which was launched in August 2025. In September 2025, a dedicated Decision-Making Tool was also introduced to support practitioners in navigating the complex area of capacity, while streamlining requests for capacity assessments, a key consideration in cases involving self-neglect and hoarding. Both tools have informed the review of the current Self-Neglect Protocol.

Lived and Living Experience

The Lived & Living Experience Steering Group is well established with its membership continuing to grow as more partners become aware of the work and more good practice is identified across Dumfries & Galloway. There are a broad range of members including statutory services, specialist services, youth services, mental health, poverty, education and other partnerships such as ADP. Whilst the breadth of the group is positive and welcome this has also resulted in some challenges in terms of securing a focus on the objectives of the priority. This has now been overcome with an agreement reached that the scope of the group is to commit to the inclusion and participation of those with L&LE in development and design of future services.

A robust mapping exercise has been undertaken across local and national networks to ensure the group are aware of what is already available, to identify examples of good practice and to prevent duplication of effort.

Early work has seen the Group develop two self-assessment tools. The first allows a partner/organisation to quickly identify where they are in the journey of embedding L&LE within their processes. The second is much more expansive and allows a partner organisation to conduct a robust self-assessment of their existing L&LE arrangements.

Good progress has also been made in the design of the Public Protection Website. This has been identified as the best medium to share what the Group is developing and to host the best practice resources.

Sexual Harm

To reduce and prevent sexual harm and provide an early response to support victims and survivors and protect them from further violence, harm and related trauma, partners worked to address and challenge societal attitudes, values and structures that underpin sexual harm. A sexual harm priority group was established with members from across agencies within the Partnership and together they have been working towards a Sexual Harm Strategy that will ensure a collective approach alongside all areas of our communities. This will work to support survivors of sexual abuse; raise awareness; and prevent sexual harm, through education, enforcement of perpetrators of sexual harm, and support those working with perpetrators to reduce harm.

Chronologies and Multi-Agency Information Sharing

During 2025/26, significant progress was made in establishing and embedding multi-agency chronology processes across Public Protection services. The Chief Officers Group formally approved arrangements requiring multi-agency chronologies to commence at the point of referral through MASH, starting with the Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) and developing as live documents throughout investigations and core group processes. Implementation has focused primarily on new cases and uptake has steadily improved. The work aligns with national public protection improvement priorities around information sharing and multi-agency

oversight, with positive feedback being received from the Care Inspectorate regarding local chronology arrangements. Formal sign-off was also achieved for both adult and children's single-agency chronology processes.

Progress towards full implementation has been impacted by staffing pressures within Adult Support and Protection (ASP) and Children and Families Social Work services, alongside challenges in securing timely and consistent chronology information from partner agencies. Compliance with the agreed process is therefore not yet fully achieved, although work is ongoing to assess rollout across adult and children's services and strengthen operational arrangements. Future development will focus on improving chronology functionality within the MOSAIC system, while delayed support from BEAM (Magic Notes) for multi-agency chronology development is now expected to recommence from April 2026. Enhanced staffing arrangements within adult protection services are also being progressed to support improved compliance and sustainability.

National Minimum Datasets

Staff across the Public Protection Partnership continue to be fully involved in the development of the national minimum dataset for adult support and protection as our region is one of five learning partners.

Iriss shared the second annual report of the National Adult Support and Protection Minimum Dataset for 2024/25 and a further midyear report in 2025/26 for management information purposes only. Social Work continues to support the development of this work, with input and testing of a Reporting Template and Assumptions Charter. This will support a consistent approach to scrutiny of local and national data and an understanding what this tells us in a wider context and shared learning.

Dumfries and Galloway continue to report and present the child protection minimum dataset to PQI and PPC, as part of a well-established scrutiny process. Following the roll-out of the collection of disability data by all the



SCIM/JII Partnerships from August 2025, it has now been agreed that we will include the collection of this disability data for newly registered children, as part of the National CP Minimum Dataset, from August 2026.

Within Dumfries and Galloway discussions are taking place within C&F Social Work to extend recording across the whole CFSW process. The group welcome local and national development on disability data and will await any relevant information that will support scrutiny of child protection in the future.

This VAWG Minimum Dataset continued to add significant local value, evidencing demand and cross-cutting themes to inform service planning and decision-making. Following D&G's input at the NPPLG Learning Event in May 2025, Particular interest was expressed in D&G's VAWG Minimum Dataset, including its approach to collecting and analysing data. The work was highlighted as an example of good practice nationally, with the Improvement Service (IS) keen to learn more about the dataset's development and methodology to help inform and shape the emerging national measurement framework.

The IS observed local scrutiny of VAWG data in October 2025 and highlighted the successful integration of data and intelligence across Dumfries and Galloway, noting the strong engagement of partner agencies, the quality of discussion, and the number of constructive follow-up questions generated. Recognition was given to the ongoing work to develop consistent, reflective data and intelligence processes, with this described as both impressive and impactful. The approach was identified as an example of good practice with potential relevance to national developments, and there was a strong interest in maintaining engagement with the scrutiny process to support wider learning and the sharing of local best practice.

Requests continue for guidance and support from other areas with the NPPLG requesting local representatives from D&G to assist in the implementation of a National Public Protection Dataset, under Workstream 5 of their national workplan. Such approaches from other areas demonstrates that Dumfries and Galloway are at the forefront of developing and informing national thinking. Work to consider wider public protection data beyond adult support and protection, child protection and violence against women and girls will be taken to the Public Protection Chief Officer Group in early 2026/27. This work will build on existing integrated public protection datasets, further strengthening the links from and into other strategic partnerships such as Alcohol and Drugs, Suicide Prevention, MAPPA and Children's Services.

The single approach to a Performance and Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF), continued to allow 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.

SCIM JII Disability Data Pilot

The D&G SCIM/JII Performance and Quality Group volunteered to pilot a different collection for disability data, working with the JII National Partnership and Dr Alex McTier from CELCIS. This was due to concerns nationally that we may be under-recording disability and this pilot would look to evidence if this was the case. Seven local partnerships agreed to participate with an agreement to test a set of indicators. Over the last two academic years, interviewers have collected disability data on the revised data capture forms, and this has been incorporated into our performance reporting and sent to CELCIS for collation.

In May 2025, staff from Dumfries & Galloway SCIM/JII Partnership along with staff from North Lanarkshire were asked to present their data, experience of collection of this and the impact of this information on the quality of SCIM JIIs to a National Disabled Children's Statistical Workshop. This event allowed a wider audience to consider and discuss how this data collection could be rolled out further. CELCIS have also been discussing this work and sharing findings from this pilot with other organisations. As a result, Public Health Scotland has agreed to adopt this disability reporting within Health Visiting Services. This will mean that this information will be collected in the future for all children following birth, which is a very positive step.

Multi-Agency Self-Evaluation Activity

Multi-Agency Review of the Initial ASP Case Conferences and Initial CP Planning Meetings 2024-2025

Multi-agency self-evaluation of child protection planning meetings alongside adult support and protection case conferences took place in July 2025 to provide further understanding on how social work and partners work with adults, children, and their families to support them to feel safe. This was the first joint self-evaluation tool developed and implemented for adult and child protection and will be undertaken on an annual basis moving forward under the Public Protection Performance, Quality, and Improvement Subcommittee (PP PQ&I SC) Self Evaluation Calendar.

ASP Workstream 4 Supported Self-Evaluation

We have also been involved in the Supported Self-Evaluation of Quality Indicator 5.7 from the ASP Quality Indicator Framework "Effective support and early intervention for adults with escalating risks for whom a straightforward application of the three-point criteria is difficult to apply". This work was undertaken in partnership with the Care Inspectorate. Our partnership participated as full learning partners in this activity, undertaking all aspects of the self-evaluation activity, from consideration of supporting evidence, staff survey, record reading, staff focus group and gathering lived experience. The 10 QI Illustrations were fully considered, and we achieved two gradings of Good, five of Very Good and three of Excellent, which was very positive and highlighted some excellent practice. We did identify areas for improvement, and a plan has been developed and is being progressed to address these.

Multi-Agency VAWG Self-Evaluation Report 2026

As part of the Performance Quality and Improvement Self-Evaluation Calendar for 2025, we undertook the first multi-agency VAWG Self Evaluation in Dumfries & Galloway. This is the first self-evaluation undertaken with a focus on domestic abuse in Scotland. This activity was overseen by the VAWG Steering Group and driven by the relevant representation from all the partner agencies/services in that sub-committee. This work began in summer 2025 and activity has included file reading, public and staff surveys, staff focus groups, leadership focus groups and service user feedback sessions. The draft report is currently being developed and will be reported to the Public Protection Committee in April 2026 with an Improvement Plan developed in June 2026. This has been an innovative piece of work as we have had to develop our own Quality Indicator Framework as well as all our own tools. Lessons learned from this work will be taken back to our Performance Quality & Improvement Sub-Committee to inform future self-evaluation activity.



Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Needs Assessment

In early 2025, the Scottish Government and COSLA announced that work would commence to develop a VAWG Needs Assessment Tool, which would support local multi-agency Violence Against Women (VAW) Partnerships and/or other relevant strategic partnerships, to develop a shared understanding of the specific needs of women, children and young people who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, violence, abuse and exploitation in local communities.

There was an opportunity for local areas across Scotland to submit expressions of interest to test the draft VAWG Needs Assessment. Dumfries and Galloway alongside nine other multi-agency VAW Partnerships across Scotland received funding in 2025/26 to participate in an initial Testing Phase of the Tool between September 2025 and March 2026.

From the VAWG Needs Assessment Tool, Dumfries and Galloway focused on what our landscape looks like in terms of population, demographics and social-economic outcomes and to what extend our local systems and services currently meet women, children and young people's needs. Activity from the VAWG Self Evaluation, as noted above, was linked to the needs assessment to support the partnership in our understanding of how we support women and children to feel and be safe from harm.

Funding from the VAWG Needs Assessment enabled joint work with Authentic Voice in December 2025 who were supported by the local Women's Aid and Rape Crisis organisations to engage with victim/survivors of gender-based violence to provide feedback on their experiences of services. Women engaged positively with this process and there will be further opportunities for services to learn from their feedback.

Joint work with Scottish Ambulance Service

In August 2025 SAS led the fourth joint self-evaluation of adult support and protection referrals progressing to ASP inquiry, as part of the wider self-evaluation calendar reviewing cases from March to May 2025.

As previously, the care outcomes of conveyance and meeting Emergency and Urgent health care needs were done to a high standard by the SAS crews involved. The common presentation themes of harm, risk of abuse were consistent with previous findings of complex, chronic mental health issues with an acute presentation and individuals with themes of self-neglect, frailty or addiction issue, sometimes a combination of all three. These themes are consistent with earlier audit findings.

There is evidence within SAS systems that of the 89 identified individuals 17 individuals had contacts with SAS out with the parameters of the identified 15 days, and because of these contacts SAS colleagues have submitted 5 Public Protection Referrals (AP1) following these contacts.

Overall, this remains an extremely valuable and helpful piece of work. This collaborative undertaking between agencies provided further rich dialogue and a detailed narrative of adults at risk of harm in the Dumfries and Galloway locality. It adds to previous data and the thematic information identified and provides further context of the referral rates made by SAS colleagues as well as identifying further areas for learning and improvement.

Learning Reviews

The Public Protection Partnership received four Initial Learning Review Notifications in 2025/26: with two children's cases progressing to full learning reviews which will be completed in 2026/27.

Two adult cases managed through proportionate Initial Learning Review Panel recommendations and Significant Adverse Event Review processes and work, highlighted recurring themes including the need for stronger information sharing, clearer role expectations, improved professional curiosity, and better support for reflective practice. The partnership demonstrated a more mature and proportionate approach to learning, ensuring that findings are embedded within strategic priorities and contribute directly to improved safeguarding practice across the system.

We have formally introduced a requirement for an Immediate Activity and Assurance Report for each LR notification. This was piloted and now forms part of our strengthened LR process and is designed to give COG clear visibility of the immediate actions taken by agencies in response to each specific incident. It is intended to capture evidence that the immediate risk has been recognised and detail those actions that have been taken to mitigate any immediate risk and focus on capturing evidence of early actions to ensure safety and assurance. This is applicable for all LR Notification cases where risks are required to be addressed promptly and is now built into our local Learning Review process and guidance.

Missing People

The updated Missing Persons Protocol was launched at a multi-agency event in Dumfries on 2 September 2025, attended by over 80 representatives from partner organisations. Although led by Police Scotland, the protocol was developed collaboratively across the public protection partnership. The event included input from the Missing People charity, received positive media coverage, and featured information stalls promoting the protocol, associated training, and related initiatives such as the Herbert Protocol and Alzheimer Scotland's Safe Connect device.



Workforce Development

Public Protection Training Calendar

Over the past 12 months, the Public Protection Partnership delivered a broad training programme for Social Work staff and multi-agency partners, using both in-person and online learning. Since April 2025, this has been supported by a full training calendar and an improved website with filterable training options.

Training covered trafficking, trauma-informed practice, neglect, child protection, Adult Support and Protection, domestic abuse and DASH RIC, Getting Our Priorities Right, injuries to non-mobile children, Families Outside, and Safe and Together.

New additions included specialist Domestic Abuse and DASH RIC training, Child Protection specialist sessions, and three CPD-accredited Families Outside sessions funded by the Community Justice Partnership, all with strong attendance. Menopause Awareness training was also launched, and access to ASP, Self-Neglect and Decision-Making workshops was widened through the shared booking system, increasing uptake.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Training Evaluation

Recent improvements in training oversight include the introduction of a Learning and Development Dashboard, first reported to the Public Protection Learning and Development Subcommittee in September 2025, which has strengthened analysis of training delivery and alignment with wider governance arrangements. A Training Evaluation dashboard with standardised questions has also been introduced to allow more consistent comparison of feedback across training programmes, supporting accountability and continuous improvement. Further work will focus on improving evaluation rates.

The training calendar remains under review, and Domestic Abuse and DASH RIC training has received positive feedback for being informative, interactive and responsive to participants' questions.

"Very informative training and enjoyed the mix of training and use of break out room"

"The session was very informative. Was able to ask questions at the end and offer of getting in touch should I have any further questions"



Missing Persons

As referenced earlier, a Missing Persons event was held on 2 September 2025 to mark the launch of the Dumfries and Galloway Multi-Agency Missing Person Protocol. Building on this, plans are in place to introduce locally delivered Missing Person training within the multi-agency training calendar.

Safe and Together

Safe and Together Supervisor Training was delivered by external trainers in November 2025 and March 2026 for managers and supervisors with Core Safe and Together Training taking place across the east and west of the region in August and September 2025. An online overview session was also held in September 2025 as part of the MARAC pilot, followed by a local overview session in November 2025.

Perpetrator Mapping Workshops were delivered in Dumfries and Stranraer, with an additional overview workshop at the Domestic Abuse Conference in December 2025. These were intended to build staff confidence and support the routine use of perpetrator-focused approaches.

Dumfries and Galloway also took part in the Safe and Together and MARAC Integration Pilot from August to December 2025. The pilot focused on integrating Safe and Together principles into MARAC, with the Perpetrator's Pattern Mapping Tool helping agencies analyse risk to victim-survivors and children and make perpetrator behaviour more visible across services.

Public Protection Week 2026

Public Protection Week took place for the sixth time from Monday 23 February to Friday 27 February 2026. The theme, 'Looking After Each Other', focused on empowering individuals to play an active role in keeping their communities safe.



The programme included nine online events and one in-person session, with contributions from across the partnership. Topics spanned Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, and Violence Against Women and Girls. We had a range of presenters including Social Work; Scottish Fire and Rescue Service; Police Scotland; NHS; Wee Minds Matter - Infant Mental Health; Alcohol and Drug Partnership; Change Mental Health and Dumfries & Galloway Health & Social Care Partnership.

The in-person event, held at Change Mental Health premises in Dumfries and Stranraer, provided valuable networking opportunities and raised awareness of non-clinical mental health support available across Dumfries and Galloway.

A focus on staff wellbeing was embedded throughout Public Protection Week, with a mindfulness recording offered at the end of each event to promote wellbeing, reflection, and self-care among attendees.

16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2025

16 Days of Activism programme in 2025 supported the national theme, "All Together to prevent and end violence against women and girls," with a full programme of events that included inputs from across the partnership and included:

A Domestic Abuse Conference bringing together professionals, practitioners, and community members to address domestic abuse, share knowledge, and develop strategies for improved multi-agency responses. Inputs from local and national experts, included:

- Prof. Jane Monckton-Smith presented on the Homicide Timeline and risk escalation in intimate partner relationships.
- A range of workshops covered tools and approaches such as the Safe and Together Perpetrator Mapping Tool, The Caledonian System, and identifying post-separation abuse.
- Sessions on MARAC, Safe and Together, and the Whole Picture Framework highlighted multi-agency collaboration.
- Police Scotland and specialist services discussed justice, prevention, and the disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS).
- Non-fatal strangulation and its justice implications were addressed by ASSIST and the Emily Test Foundation.

The introduction of Reclaim the Night marches in both Dumfries and Stranraer marked a significant development, demonstrating community engagement and a collective stand against gender-based violence.

A White Ribbon Train the Trainer event and Wigtownshire Women's Aid "Own My Life Taster Day" offered professionals with additional training to equip them with greater understanding of violence against women and girls. Additionally, there was a coordinated social media awareness-raising campaign during this period.

A series of online and in-person learning events including Trafficking Awareness, DASHRIC training, Menopause and women we work with, Incel and the Manosphere and Safe and Together.

A key strength of this year's programme was the availability of dedicated funding, which enabled a broader and more varied offer. However, sustainability remains a concern, with partners highlighting increasing pressure on resources, capacity and reliance on goodwill. This will require continued focus to ensure the long-term delivery of high-quality prevention and awareness activity.





Engagement, involvement, and communication

Communication and Engagement Subcommittee

A 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.

Over the past 12 months we developed and implemented a more collaborative and robust process for consistent social media communication, one which is partner led with targeted information about public protection. This involves joint working across the partnership to establish which partner will lead the public protection messaging and the message can then be re-shared among other partners. If a message has no clear lead, it may be the case that the same message is approached differently across key organisations. Broadly this means that the Council leads on social work topics, NHS leads on health topics, and the Police lead on crime and safety topics. For example, the Police led on the social media messaging about National Stalking Awareness Week. Our regular catch-up meeting with communication leads every month supports this process.

The Public Protection website was relaunched in May 2025 and is regularly updated with new content and resources. A promotional poster has been developed for partners to display within their premises to raise awareness of the site. Accessibility has been a key priority, with improvements designed to ensure information is easy to access and navigate for all members of the public, including people with disabilities.

Our newsletter continues to be emailed quarterly in the partnership featuring a variety of updates from partner activities linked to public protection, spotlighting organisations, seasonal public protection advice and partner developments.



Throughout the year policy and procedures continue to be promoted among inter agency staff and on the website including; Domestic Abuse Guidance, Nudes and Semi nudes, Information Sharing Agreement and bespoke ASP guidance with our care home providers promoting increased understanding of ASP, reporting and early intervention launched in May 2025 by the Health and Social Care Partnership, supported by the Public Protection Partnership.

The adult support and protection (Dumfries and Galloway) App has been available for over a year for frontline social care staff and members of the public. Analysis of usage statistics supports our Communication and Engagement Strategy/media toolkit whilst contributing to more effective communications.

Looking forward to 2026 –2027 we will focus 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. Themes are across Adult Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls and include self-neglect and hoarding, commercial sexual exploitation and domestic abuse themes such as stalking.

Challenges and areas for improvement

Resourcing and Staffing

Workforce challenges, particularly in relation to recruitment and retention, have affected service capacity, the timeliness of key processes and the ability to prioritise high-risk cases effectively. These pressures have been further compounded by staff absences through sickness and annual leave.

Increasing Demand and Complexity

Over the past year, our communities and services have continued to face considerable challenges. Demand for support remains high, while the nature of need has become increasingly complex. At the same time, partner organisations and staff have been operating within an environment of ongoing pressure and uncertainty. Although these challenges are likely to persist, the dedication, resilience and professionalism demonstrated by those working across public protection continue to be a defining strength. Our Training Charter continues to underpin the delivery of a comprehensive programme of multi-agency public protection training. Although attendance rates have shown year-on-year improvement, service pressures remain a significant barrier to full participation

In early 2026, planning and activity was impacted on by the demands of the National Review of Group-Based Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, particularly the short notice and significant workload associated with Phase 1, whilst the scope and demands of future phases is also making it difficult to plan and deliver existing public protection priorities. Several planned activities, including reviews of key Public Protection strategies and the 2026 Adult Support and Protection self-evaluation, will need to be delayed or reduced in scope. The greatest concern is the impact on ongoing Learning Reviews, where additional demands from the national review are causing delays to learning and improvement work.

While the Partnership and our local partners fully support national scrutiny and recognised the importance of the review, insufficient consideration was given to the local staffing and capacity implications of undertaking and responding to the review with minimal notice alongside existing public protection responsibilities. We will engage with any discussion at a national level on how regulators and the Scottish Government can better recognise and manage these pressures.

Funding and Commissioning

The Public Protection Partnership recognises the essential contribution that Women's Aid makes in providing specialist support to women and children affected by violence and abuse. The service continues to operate within a challenging environment characterised by increasing demand and ongoing pressures around securing sustainable funding. These specialist services play a critical role in supporting highly vulnerable individuals who may not otherwise engage with, or be reached by, statutory services.

Positive progress has been made through collaborative work between Social Work and Women's Aid, resulting in Dumfries and Galloway Council funding being awarded on a three-year basis. This represents a significant step towards reducing annual funding uncertainty and improving service stability. Efforts are also ongoing to develop a local direct funding model for specialist services and to identify additional funding opportunities, with the aim of simplifying reporting requirements, strengthening long-term sustainability, and supporting the continued delivery of these vital services.

Looking forward

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

Performance and Quality Assurance

The MA VAWG Self-Evaluation Steering Group will use the findings report from the Multi-Agency VAWG Self-Evaluation to develop an Improvement Plan, which will be overseen by the Performance, Quality & Improvement Sub Committee. Reports will then be provided to PPC on a six-monthly basis, so they can be reassured that all actions are being progressed as agreed.

The Multi-Agency ASP Self-evaluation focussing on Self-Neglect will be taken forward by a Steering Group who will identify the scope of the self-evaluation activity and develop the tools that will be used to undertake the work. We would expect that the report from the findings will be available in late Spring/early Summer 2027 which will inform our improvement planning activity.

The second annual review of Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings and ASP Initial Case Conferences will commence in Summer 2026. We will review our audit template prior to use in the summer to ensure we learn from the lessons learned from 2025. The findings from this review will be reported to PQ&I Sub Committee later in 2026 and inform the PQ&I Improvement Plan.

Contextual safeguarding

Dumfries and Galloway is committed to developing a contextual safeguarding approach to extra-familial harm and a contextual safeguarding implementation group is now in place. Responsibility and oversight currently sit across PPC and the Children's Services Planning Partnership, recognising the breadth of this harm across child protection and GIRFEC processes. We are members of the Local Area Interest Network



as well as the contextual safeguarding core group of Child Protection Committee Scotland. These groups will provide support and direction, as well as learning from other local authorities across the country, as we progress our implementation. There has been some excellent work already within the region to ensure children and young people are protected from risks when they are out in the community, but we recognise that the contextual safeguarding approach is underdeveloped within the region. The implementation group will provide oversight and lead on the local implementation over the next 12-18 months on behalf of the Public Protection Committee.

Communication and Engagement Strategy

The PPC Communication and Engagement Strategies are out with timescales for review, due to staffing capacity. To have sufficient time to align with the review of the Public Protection Strategic plan review; partners engagement strategies and the lived experience priority group work, this timescale has been extended until April 2027. This extension will ensure a coordinated approach and allow time to trial and incorporate new methods of sharing public protection messaging into the strategies e.g. podcast trial. It will allow sufficient time to plan and continue to develop the public protection media toolkit.

Sexual Harm

Our first dedicated Sexual Harm Strategy will be launched in summer 2026. A multi-agency launch event, and communications strategy will ensure awareness and continued focus and drive across this priority area and provide an opportunity to reflect on work that has taken place and what we still need to achieve to meet our strategic aims. As we continue to implement the strategy, we will ensure community awareness is maximised to support reporting of sexual harm and access to services. Staff ability to identify sexual harm at an earlier stage and provide support to prevent escalation or repeated abuse will be a primary focus.

Safe and Together

The Scottish Government has announced that there will be an additional two years of funding for the Delivering Equally Safe Fund, which if successful with the plan we have presented, will allow Safe and Together training to 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; more one day overview training sessions; a four-day Core Training session and monthly drop-in sessions with Dumfries and Galloway Safe & Together trainers to help embed safe & together approaches across the partnership. We will help fund the Domestic Abuse Conference as well as undertaking an awareness raising campaign in Dumfries & Galloway within the next financial year. Further training sessions and awareness raising will continue into 2027/28. We aim to have a new co-ordinator in post who will assist with organising events and communicating with the Safe & Together Institute as well as with Inspiring Scotland who administer the funding.

Funding for Reclaim the Night marches in Dumfries and Stranraer was applied for via a participatory budgeting process ran by the local Young Women's Network. Following a public vote, funds were awarded . The Young Women's Network will support the organisation of these on 25th November in Dumfries and 10th December in Stranraer. This will form part of the 16 days programme of events moving forward.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Data

Following Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Partnership's involvement in developing a National Public Protection Dataset, we will be working to expand our existing integrated dataset to include wider areas of public protection. The intention would be to share data with relevant partnerships for management information purposes to support and inform local scrutiny.

This dataset will build on the significant existing integrated data from Child Protection, Adult Support & Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls data, with inclusion of MAPPA, Suicide Prevention and ADP. This would be a longer-term piece of work, recognising the significant inspection activity in D&G, alongside other work commitments.

Multi-Agency Training

Development work has been agreed to bring forward a coordinated proposal for training on Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection case conferences due to concerns regarding staff confidence and preparedness when attending them.

Increasingly it is hoped to be more flexible when creating training content with development work having started on exploring using podcasts/ recordings for multi-agency training subject to appropriate clinical and professional review, communications sign-off, multi-agency oversight and clear approval processes.

Moreover, the training dashboard information will now be shared across relevant partnership groups, including the Violence Against Women and Girls Sub-Committee to support wider quality assurance, identify trends and inform strategic discussions across public protection partnerships.

Possible changes for future training administration have been highlighted, and any possible changes will remain under consideration.

Partnership website

The web team, members of the Lived Experience Priority Steering Group and members of the C&E subcommittee have made positive progress in developing the Lived Experience tab for both professionals and the public which will be launched in the coming year. Moreover, there has been additional information added about Missing People and the website will look to be used to encourage professionals to complete more return discussion forms.