

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	25 November 2025
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps
REPORT NUMBER	F&C/25/273
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Eleanor Sheppard, Executive Director, Families and Communities
CHIEF OFFICER	Shona Milne, Chief Officer, Education and Lifelong Learning and Graeme Simpson, Chief Officer, Children's Social Work and Family Support
REPORT AUTHOR	Chief Officers
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.4

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps in accordance with Education and Children's Services Committee Terms of Reference to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively within the Clusters as detailed in 3.2 below.
- 1.2 When the Risk Registers were last considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee on 28th November 2024, Members asked that officers consider the use of a matrix to reflect the previous year's situation. This request has been actioned within this Report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps set out in Appendices A to D.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for overseeing the overall system of risk management and for receiving assurance that the Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT) are effectively identifying and managing risks. Reviewing the strength and effectiveness of the Council's system of risk management as a whole is a key role for the Committee.
- 3.2 The Risk Management Policy Framework states that committees should receive assurance on the risk management arrangements which fall within their terms of reference. This is provided through the risk registers for the relevant Clusters which fall within the remit for this Committee as detailed below:

- Education & Lifelong Learning (Education risks)
- Children's Social Work and Family Support

Risk Registers

- 3.3 The Council's Risks Registers are tools used by Functions and Clusters to capture and manage the risks which could prevent achievement of organisational outcomes and service delivery.
- 3.4 The Council's Corporate Risk Register (CRR) captures the risks which pose the most significant threat to the achievement of the Council's organisational outcomes and have the potential to cause failure of service delivery. The CRR is scrutinised annually by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.5 The Cluster Risk Registers are set out in appendices A and B and these reflect the risks which may prevent each Cluster from delivering on organisational outcomes and services, these risks may be escalated to the CRR where deemed necessary.
- 3.6 The risks contained within the Risk Register for each Cluster are grouped by risk category in appendix E and show the Council's corresponding risk appetite for each category as set within the Council's Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) which was approved by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee in May 2025.
- The Clusters are working towards a target risk score which aligns with the risk appetite.
- 3.7 The Cluster Risk Registers provides the organisation with the detailed information and assessment for each risk identified including:
- **Current risk score** – this is current assessment of the risk by the risk owner and reflects the progress percentage of control actions required in order to achieve the target risk score.
 - **Target risk score** – this is the assessment of the risk by the risk owner after the application of the control actions. This is aligned with the risk appetite for this particular category of risk.
 - **Control Actions** – these are the activities and items that will mitigate the effect of the risk event on the organisation.
 - **Risk score** – each risk is assessed using a 4x6 risk matrix as detailed below.

The 4 scale represents the impact of the risk and the 6 scale represents the likelihood of the risk event.

Impact	Score						
Very Serious	4	4	8	12	16	20	24
Serious	3	3	6	9	12	15	18
Material	2	2	4	6	8	10	12
Negligible	1	1	2	3	4	5	6
Score		1	2	3	4	5	6
Likelihood		Almost Impossible	Very Low	Low	Significant	High	Very High

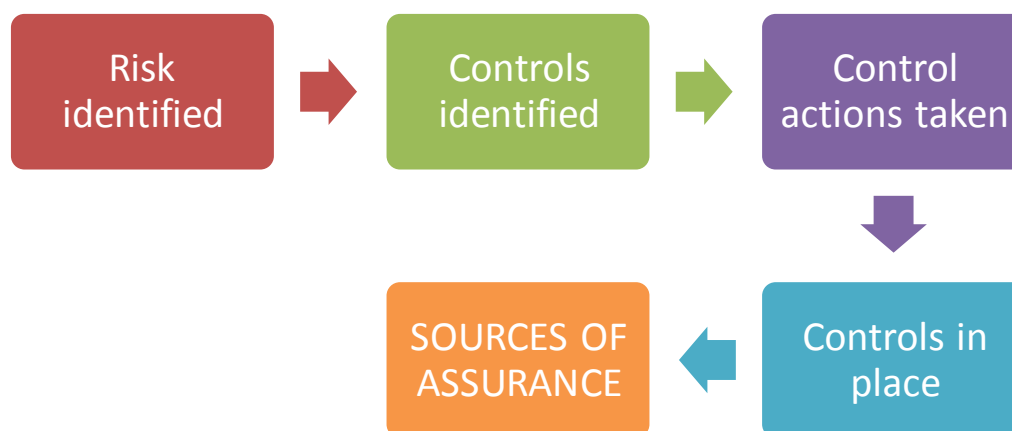
3.8 Development and improvement of the Cluster Risk Registers and associated risk management processes has continued since the Cluster Risk Register was last reported to Committee:

- The Council's Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) was reviewed and updated.
- Work to complete the recommendations from the internal audit of the Council's Risk Management arrangements including enhancements to Cluster Risk Management reporting which are incorporated within this report.
- On-going improvements and updates to the "Managing Risk" pages published on the Council's intranet pages which contains information and links for officers and elected members on the Council's RAS, Risk Management Policy, Guidance and Training. This supports the further embedding of our risk management culture and ensures that everyone knows the part they play in managing risks within the wider system.
- Risk owners and leads continue to review and update risk registers to improve monitoring and reporting across the organisation. These are mechanisms which reflect the day-to-day business of assessing and mitigating the risks and opportunities inherent in delivering public services.

Assurance Maps

3.9 The risk registers which are reviewed by the Council's Committees detail the risks identified within each of the relevant Functions and Clusters and provide detail of the risk, the potential impact and consequence of the risk materialising and the control actions and activities required to manage and mitigate the risk. Assurance Maps as set out in appendices C and D provide a visual representation of the sources of assurance associated with each Cluster so that the Committee can consider where these are sufficient. Sources of assurance are controls which are fully effective, following the completion of control actions.

Presentation of each Cluster's assurance map provides full sight of the defences we have in place as an organisation to manage the risks facing local government.



- 3.10 The Assurance Map provides a breakdown of the sources of assurance within “three lines of defence”, the different levels at which risk is managed. Within a large and complex organisation like the Council, risk management takes place in many ways. The Assurance Map is a way of capturing the sources of assurance and categorising them, thus ensuring that any gaps in sources of assurance are identifiable and can be addressed:

First Line of Defence “Do-ers”	Second Line of Defence “Helpers”	Third Line of Defence “Checkers”
The control environment; business operations performing day to day risk management activity; owning and managing risk as part of business as usual; these are the business owners, referred to as the “do-ers” of risk management.	Oversight of risk management and ensuring compliance with standards, in our case including ARSC as well as CMT and management teams; setting the policies and procedures against which risk is managed by the do-ers, referred to as the “helpers” of risk management.	Internal and external audit, inspection and regulation, thereby offering independent assurance of the first and second lines of defence, the “do-ers” and “helpers”, referred to as the “checkers” of risk management.

Risk Overview and Comparison

- 3.11 Below is a comparison with the Cluster risks last reported to Committee in November 2024 by each Cluster:

Education and Lifelong Learning Overview

- 3.12 At fortnightly Service Manager meetings risks and mitigations are reviewed and updated to take account of any emerging issues or demands.

The work of the safeguarding group has improved the incident reporting procedures for staff and the service is confident all staff in school now know how to report incidents and seek support from their line manager. The group is successfully supporting identified schools to implement mitigations and undertake bespoke training to reduce the number of incidents. Mandatory training for all staff in de-escalation continues to be delivered at the start of each term

We continue to have challenges around the recruitment of senior leaders. This is a national issue and central officers are working with our Associate Assessors to review the current leadership programme to provide more opportunities for teachers within our system to have leadership experience.

In order to mitigate against the lack of specialist teachers in some subjects we are re-establishing subject networks. This will provide support for staff and also help to ensure consistency of delivery. This along with the use of ABZ campus and other consortium arrangements will increase the level of mitigation in place.



Risks de-escalated to Operational level or closed:



The risk relating to Education Demographic Demands was closed as demands have reduced. The inward migration of families has reduced and the mitigations in place, including the partnership work with corporate landlord, have supported schools in their response to greater numbers of learners. We will continue to monitor and will reinstate the risk should there be any future sharp increases in families settling in the city.

New risks added or escalated to Cluster level:

None.

Risks Remaining on the Education and Lifelong Learning Risk Register:

Risk Title	Current Risk Score 2024	Current Risk Score 2025	Movement
The perception of failure to record incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour against school staff.	12	9	
Removal of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding	12	9	

Risk that the number of Senior Leadership vacancies leads to staff in posts that are not of required quality	15	12	
Specialist teacher shortage in secondary schools	8	4	

3.13 **Children's Social Work and Family Support**

On a monthly basis risks and mitigations are reviewed and updated to take account of any emerging issues or demands.

The average length of career for a social worker remains concerningly short – 6.2 years. Efforts to 'grow our own' persist with some success. The main pipeline for new staff remains graduates from Robert Gordon's University. Discussions are continuing with the University to enhance connections, strengthening the pathways for newly qualified staff as well as exploring how they can support the development of our workforce. Due to recruitment challenges, work to deliver the Workforce Development Plan has been hindered. In recent weeks we have however recruited a L&D Coordinator. This will support and drive forward our efforts to support the development and wellbeing of the workforce.

All agencies are recognising that the needs of young people needing care and protection support are more complex and need consequently more resource. Ensuring we have the capacity at a local level to meet this need can be challenging. Work to support young people at an early and preventative stage is providing valuable support but there are other young people whose needs are beyond what these supports can hold. The developing Family Support Model will continue to ensure a focus on preventative support. We are also exploring with the University of Strathclyde how we can better align a more intensive support to keep children in their family network.

The national fostering crisis, the impact of poverty and the cost of living crisis, supporting asylum seeking young people as well as legislative and policy change is stretching social work resources. It is anticipated these challenges will persist in the coming year. The refresh of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan provides the opportunity to revisit how as a City we can mitigate these challenges and use our resources to best effect.

Risks de-escalated to Operational level or closed:

None.

New risks added or escalated to Cluster level:

None.

Risks Remaining on the Children's Social Work and Family Support Risk Register:

Risk Title	Current Risk Score 2024	Current Risk Score 2025	Movement
Budget Constraints/Pressures	24	9	↓
Child Migration including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) and all families requiring resettlement or with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)	9	6	↓
External factors – increase in service demand.	12	9	↓
Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)	16	9	↓
Service Standards/ Performance	9	9	→
Workforce – Children's Services	12	9	↓

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. This report deals with risk management at Cluster level and this process serves to identify controls and assurances that finances are being effectively managed.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The Council's Risk Registers serve to manage many risks with implications for the legal position and statutory responsibilities of the Council.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

- 7.1 There are no risks arising from the recommendations in this report. The Committee is provided with assurance that the risks presented within the Cluster Risk Register are those that may affect achievement of organisational outcomes and delivery of services for each Cluster are identified, appropriately managed and that the Council's activities are compliant with its statutory duties.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	The council is required to have a management system in place to identify and mitigate its risks.	The council's risk management system requires that risks are identified, listed and managed via Risk Registers.	L	Yes
Compliance	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
Operational	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
Financial	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
Reputational	As above.	As above.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	As above.	As above.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

- 8.1 The recommendations within this report have no direct impact on the Council Delivery Plan however, the risks contained within the Council's risk registers could impact on the delivery of organisational outcomes.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Assessment Impact	No assessment required at this stage. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Shona Milne Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning and Graeme Simpson Chief Officer Children's Social Work and Family Support.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	Not applicable.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A and B - Cluster Risk Registers for Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work and Family Support.
- 11.2 Appendix C and D - Cluster Assurance Maps for Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work and Family Support.
- 11.3 Appendix E – Cluster Risks grouped by category.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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