



*It's everyone's job to  
make sure I'm alright*

**Aberdeen City's Child  
Protection Committee  
Annual Report 2024–2025**





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## ACRONYMS

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ADP	Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
APC	Adult Protection Committee
CEC	Criminal Exploitation of Children
COG	Chief Officers Group
COPFS	Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
CPP	Child Protection Partnership
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CPR	Child Protection Register
CSB	Children's Services Board
IRD	Inter-Agency Referral Discussion
JII	Joint Investigative Interview
LOIP	Local Outcome Improvement Plan
P&QA	Performance & Quality Assurance
SCIM	Scottish Child Interview Model
SCRA	Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
SCTS	Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
VAWGP	Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership





## PREFACE FROM CHIEF OFFICERS

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It is with pride and gratitude that we present this year's Annual Report from the Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee. The dedication, resilience, and collaborative spirit combined with respectful and robust challenge that have characterised our work over the past year have provided a strong foundation for the continued protection and wellbeing of children and young people across our city.

Our achievements have been realised through the tireless efforts of all partner agencies, who have worked together under the shared vision that, "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright." This ethos has guided us as we have refined our structures, strengthened our leadership, and driven forward improvement initiatives to ensure that every child in Aberdeen is safe, supported, and able to flourish.

This year, we have continued to develop robust multi-agency partnerships, guided by the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021-23 and our ongoing Child Protection Improvement Programme for 2024-2026. The collaborative work of the Committee, supported by our Chief Officers Group and in close alignment with other key partnerships such as the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and Children's Services Board, has enabled us to deliver effective and innovative responses to the complex challenges facing children and families. Regular reviews, learning opportunities, and the commitment of our Independent Chair and dedicated staff have been instrumental in ensuring that our services remain responsive, evidence-based, and rooted in the needs and voices of our community.

As we reflect on the year's progress, we also look ahead with ambition and purpose. We recognise that effective child protection is an ongoing endeavour—one that requires vigilance, adaptability, and the collective will of all those committed to safeguarding Aberdeen's children and young people. With the support of our partners and the community, I am confident that we will continue to build on our achievements, address emerging challenges, and strive for excellence in every aspect of our work.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our shared mission over the past year. Together, we will keep children and young people at the centre of all we do, ensuring a safer, brighter future for every young person in Aberdeen.



Angela Scott  
*Chief Executive  
Aberdeen City Council*



Laura Skaife-Knight  
*Chief Executive  
NHS Grampian*

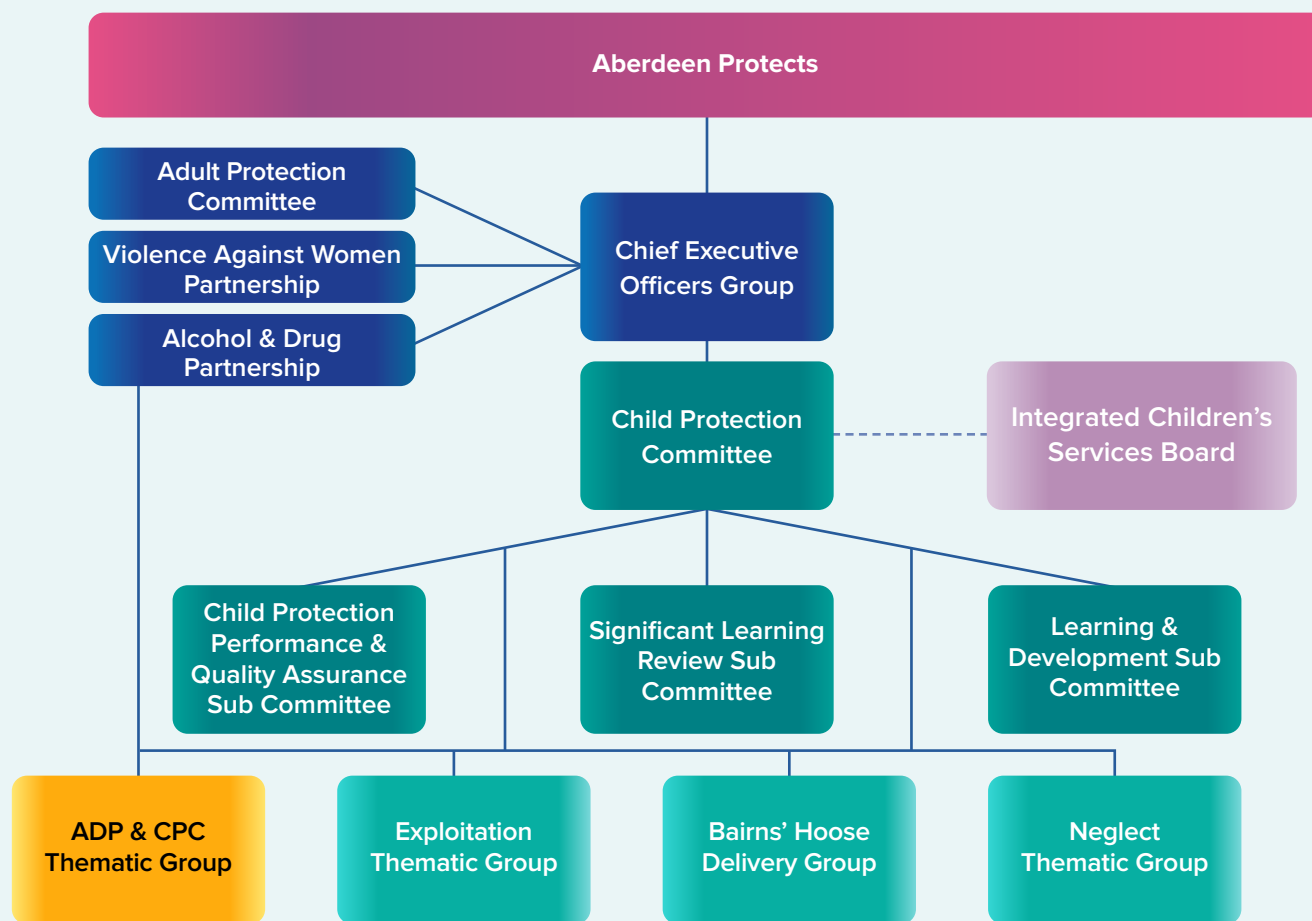


Kate Stephen  
*Divisional Commander  
Police Scotland*



## CPC LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

The CPC structure for 2024/2025 can be found below



The Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee (CPC) is the key local body responsible for implementing and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies, bodies and the Aberdeen community. The CPC has a crucial role in identifying and managing risk to children and young people, monitoring and improving performance and promoting the ethos that, **“It’s everyone’s job to make sure I’m alright.”** Its role, local structures and membership, provide leadership and direction for the management of child protection services across Aberdeen City.

As illustrated above, the CPC is governed by the Chief Officers Group (COG) who have clear responsibilities set out in the [Protecting children and young people: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer responsibilities guidance](#) published by the Scottish Government in February 2019.

The Aberdeen City COG is well established as is the relationship between the COG and CPC. The structure also illustrates the connectedness through the COG of the CPC with the other strategic partnerships in the City, namely APC, VAWGP, and ADP, all working together under the banner of Aberdeen Protects to take forward child protection policy and practice across the local area and across Scotland. Strong links exist between the CPC and Aberdeen City’s Children’s Services Board (CSB) through the [Children’s Services Plan 2023-2026](#), enhanced further by the Chief Social Work Officer as chair of the CSB and vice chair of the CPC.

## CPC MANAGEMENT & STRATEGIC LINKS

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The CPC operates in line with the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021-23, with this report detailing the progress made and ongoing self-assessment. To fulfil its main responsibilities, the CPC relies on its established structure and the collaborative, multi-agency Child Protection Improvement Programme covering 2024-2026.

An Independent Chair, who also chairs the Adult Protection Committee, provides a unified approach to governance, supported by senior figures from partner organisations throughout Aberdeen. The Committee convenes quarterly to review performance data, share learning, consider national developments, and discuss ongoing improvement work. In addition to regular meetings, a development session was held with input from subcommittees and thematic working groups.

The Aberdeen City Chief Officers Group (COG, comprised of representatives from Aberdeen City Council, NHS Grampian, and Police Scotland, oversees both the strategic direction and resource allocation for the CPC. Their support ensures sufficient funding for essential staff, key priorities identified in this report, learning reviews, and delivery of the Child Protection Programme 2024-2026. Key staff include the Independent Chair, a dedicated Lead Officer, and a multi-agency Learning & Development Coordinator.

Regionally, the Child Protection Partnership (CPP) brings together the Lead Officers from the CPCs of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray. The CPP's main responsibility is managing the North East Child Protection Register, with costs shared by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council, NHS Grampian, and Police Scotland.

Beyond the North East, the CPC maintains strong links with external bodies such as the Care Inspectorate, the Central & North Scotland CPC Consortium, the Scottish Government, CPC Scotland, and the National Leadership Public Protection Group. These connections help shape the CPC's ongoing improvement strategy and planning.



## CPC ACTIVITY IN 2024/25

Over the course of the year the CPC, and all those working across the partnership, have worked towards delivering on the many initiatives and improvements striving to support and improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

- Bairns Hoose
- QAF audit
- Staff Survey
- Self Assessment
- Introduction of our CP improvement programme 2024-26
- Q&A Webinars

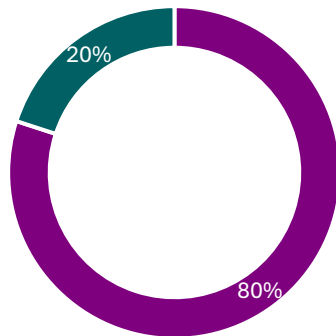


## CHILD PROTECTION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME 2024-2026

### Yearly Progress

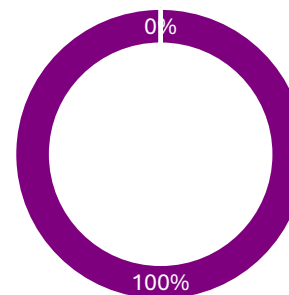
The pie charts below illustrate our progress on the activities we have undertaken to deliver on the priorities in our improvement programme.

Priority: Neglect



■ Activity underway ■ Activity not yet started

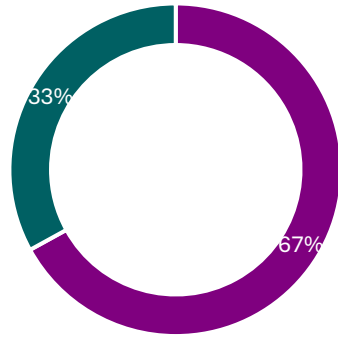
Priority: Child Protection & Parental Substance Use



■ Activity underway ■ Activity not yet started

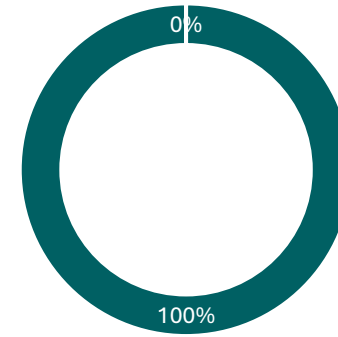


### Priority: Exploitation



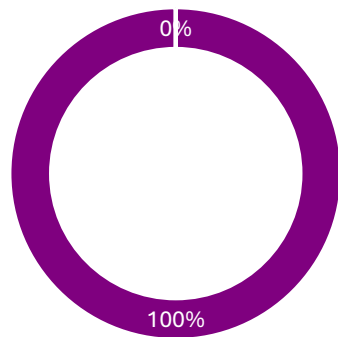
■ Activity underway ■ Activity not yet started

### Priority: Child Protection & Domestic Abuse



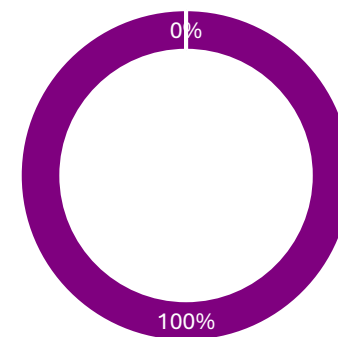
■ Activity underway ■ Activity not yet started

### Priority: Interdisciplinary multi agency working



■ Activity underway ■ Activity not yet started

### Priority: Learning & Development



■ Activity underway ■ Activity not yet started

## SUB-COMMITTEES AND THEMATIC GROUPS

Sub Committees and Thematic Groups are multi agency in representation and have met regularly through 2023/2024, with each delivering on specific improvement priorities.

### Performance & Quality Assurance Sub-Committee

#### Why is this important?

The P&QA sub-committee submits quarterly data and scrutiny reports to the CPC, based on the national minimum data set version 2 and local indicators adopted in November 2022. Through regular meetings, the members are able to take a holistic view of the Partnerships performance and, as a result, are able to respectfully challenge each other to tease out potential gaps in service provision that may require the attention of the CPC. Similarly, the sub-committee are able to recognise through data and discussion areas of strength and improvements.

Quarterly reports highlight key child protection trends for the CPC's attention and show the landscape of child protection in Aberdeen City through our data (see Appendix 2).

#### What have we done?

The P&QA sub-committee provided robust oversight of child protection data trends and performance indicators across the partnership.

The P&QA sub-committee continue to refine their methods of scrutiny aided by PowerBI. Further, the sub committee have made more improvements to its scrutiny and analysis by considering and discussing:

1. What in our data tells us there are improving outcomes for children & young people?
2. What in our data is helping us understand cause and effect?
3. How does our data tell us children & young people are safer?

In 2024/25, the committee's quarterly reports highlighted several key shifts in our data since 2023/24:

- 10% reduction in the number of referrals received by Children's Social Work
- 24% reduction in the number of IRDs undertaken
- 23% reduction in the number of JIs undertaken

- 21% increase in the number of children on the CPR at year end (31 July)

7% increase in the number of children registered on the CPR because of parental/carer mental health.

#### What we plan to do next

The sub-committee identified areas for improvement, including:

- Understanding the "other concerns" category in child protection registrations.
- Strengthening therapeutic support for adults with mental health needs.
- Supporting the development of Aberdeen City assessment tool for neglect, in collaboration with the Neglect Thematic Group.



## Learning Review Sub-Committee

### Why is this important?

The Learning Review sub-committee are mandated by the CPC to review and conduct Learning Reviews on its behalf. The sub-committee follows the National Guidance for CPCs undertaking Learning Reviews, which was updated in 2023. Learning Reviews are used for detailed analysis and reflection to better understand complex situations and to inform approaches for improving practice and systems within agencies. Decisions about cases selected for review are submitted to the CPC and the COG for ratification.

### What have we done?

The Learning Review sub-committee has actively contributed to child protection efforts throughout the reporting period. Key activities included reviewing the Perth and Kinross Learning Review, which will lead to the development of multi agency guidance for the supervision of children in hospital settings, coordinated by NHS Grampian.

The group also supported new guidance for the management of childhood poisoning and explored relevant health guidance for wider sharing. In response to regional data on child deaths, the sub-committee discussed underlying factors such as poverty and prematurity, and committed to more detailed reporting to better understand these trends.

Collaborative work has focused on safe sleep messaging and substance use risks, with NHS colleagues engaging in focus groups to improve outreach to vulnerable families. The sub-committee has played a vital role in integrating local informal efforts with the formal Child Death Oversight Group, ensuring ongoing review and enhancement of protocols to protect children across the North East.

During this reporting period, the Learning Review sub-committee considered one initial notification for a learning review. This did not proceed to a learning review due to no **new or additional learning** being identified. When considering the initial notification, the sub committee identified many areas of good practice such as regular support, timely responses, good information sharing, and that literature for safe sleep practices were being shared with parents.

In response to the revised National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews (2021, updated January 2024), Aberdeen City CPC collaborated with partners across Grampian to deliver a comprehensive Learning Review Training programme aimed at strengthening local capacity to undertake systemic reviews.

### What we plan to do next

Looking ahead, the Learning Review sub-committee will continue to strengthen the local Learning Review process by finalising updated multi-agency practice guidance. This work aims to ensure a shared understanding of when a Learning Review should be initiated, how agency information is assessed following a notification, and what outcomes are available. The revised guidance will support robust scrutiny at each stage of the process, ensuring it is both efficient and effective.

Additionally, the committee will explore the integration of Safe Sleep messaging at the IRD stage, particularly for families with substance use vulnerabilities, and will continue to contribute to the Child Death Oversight Group, with a focus on poverty-related data analysis and improved support pathways.





The CPC is committed to ensuring that the Learning Review trained professionals are given opportunities to apply their learning in upcoming reviews. The Learning Review Sub Committee will continue to monitor and support the implementation of the training outcomes, ensuring alignment with national standards and local improvement priorities.

Additionally, it is the CPC's intention to deliver a webinar for the workforce which will cover the principles of a Learning Review and its potential outcomes, particularly where there isn't a requirement for a Learning Review, however other learning has been identified.



## Learning & Development Sub Committee

### Why is this important?

The L&D sub-committee is responsible for identifying and addressing opportunities for multi-agency child protection learning that enhance professional practice throughout Aberdeen City, thereby contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people.

### What have we done?

The CPC's Learning & Development Coordinator post has been vacant since October 2024. Notwithstanding this vacancy, the L&D sub-committee has delivered a wide-ranging programme of training, development, and strategic planning aligned to the CPC Improvement Programme 2024–26. The sub-committee has focused on enhancing practitioner confidence, embedding national frameworks, and responding to emerging needs across the child protection workforce. The sub committee has supported and delivered a diverse range of training opportunities:

#### Multi-Agency Training Highlights

- Safe and Together Overview & CORE Training: Delivered to 38 participants across Social Work, NHS, Housing, and third sector partners.
- Mock Children's Hearing: A fictional hearing scenario delivered by SCRA, CHS, and Aberdeen City

- Social Work, attended by 43 professionals.
- Non-Disclosure Training: Focused on principles and application within Children's Hearings, attended by professionals from NHS, Social Work, and Education.

The CPC are also re-assured that single-agency training continues to be delivered:

- NHS Grampian delivered sessions on Neglect, Protecting Children and Substance Use, and Case Supervision for Supervisors, reaching over 40 staff
- Police Scotland provided inputs on IRD processes, GP awareness, and Sgt Continuous Professional Development programmes, enhancing understanding of child protection procedures.

The sub-committee launched a new series of Q&A Panels to provide accessible, practitioner-led learning on key child protection topics:

The first panel, held in Spring 2025, focused on Physical Abuse and was attended by over 150 practitioners, followed by Neglect in June. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants valuing the opportunity to engage directly with experienced professionals and ask questions in real time.

*"I felt that it was reassuring to hear that everyone from different services had the same attitudes and goals - but highlighted that there may still be a lack of knowledge on the part of some services on what Social work can and should do when child protection matters arise. It was also helpful to hear, Health, Police and Education all acknowledge that it is not the responsibility of social work to solely manage child protection concerns and that their services can be offering support."*

Social Work





*“Although the duration of the session was probably only an hour for a reason, maybe as this was a practical length of time to fit in with everyone’s schedules, it could easily have been longer and covered more info. I think it is a great idea as a way to learn more and for information sharing across different agencies.”*

Social Work

*“Really enjoyed hearing from the staff involved in the decision making process and felt it was very relevant to my role.”*

NHSG

Planning is underway for the next panel scheduled for Summer 2025. The sub-committee is exploring how to use these panels to address recurring themes from audits and Learning Reviews, such as Safe Sleep, substance use, and information sharing. These panels are designed to complement formal training and provide a flexible, responsive format for workforce development.

### What we plan to do next

It is expected that the CPC’s L&D coordinator post will be filled in September 2025, which will allow us to regain our learning & development momentum. Key priorities for next year are to:

- Enhance our communication with the workforce
- Ensure better alignment in learning and development across public protection
- Collaborate with the Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership to deliver on year 2 of our CPC improvement programme
- Become more innovative in the way that learning and development opportunities are delivered and accessed.





## Exploitation Thematic Group

### Why is this important?

The Exploitation Thematic Group supports the coordination of the multi agency response to exploitation. The group, and the CPC, recognise that all identifying, preventing, and responding to all forms of child exploitation is a priority for Aberdeen City, and nationally. In this reporting year, the criminal exploitation of children has been a focus for this group.

The prevalence and impact of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is recognized as a significant issue, particularly for children aged 14-17 years. These children face severe risks, including physical and sexual harm, trauma, and developmental issues. National and local data indicate significant numbers of referrals, with many involved children experiencing substantial harm. County lines groups deliberately target victims of exploitation due to factors such as age, sex, or disability, making these individuals disproportionately affected due to their specific vulnerabilities.

### What have we done?

A strategic governance oversight group was established in February 2025 to oversee the pilot and ensure effective governance. This group includes members from various partnerships to reflect shared governance and accountability. The

group has linked with COPFS to ensure child criminal exploitation is recognised and responded to correctly under a child protection lens.

Actions identified include adopting the working definition of Child Criminal Exploitation from the National Guidance for Child Protection Guidance in Scotland, supporting attendance at a CEC Framework focused workshop sessions for multi-agency staff delivered by Action For Children. Additionally, members of the Group have explored examples of best practice for supporting practitioners to work with children who are or at risk of being exploited.

### What we plan to do next

The group plans to continue its work in alignment with the CPC Improvement Programme throughout 2025. This includes enhancing data collation to better understand the shifting local context and collaborating with other areas of the country where multi-agency practice has developed further. The group will also work on putting in place information-sharing protocols to ensure shared accountability of risk and inform safety planning.

More broadly, the Exploitation thematic group have, over the course of the year, began to explore and understand more about Tech Facilitated Sexual Exploitation, Child Sexual Extortion, and AI Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material.



## Neglect Thematic Group

### Why this is important

The Neglect Thematic Group was re-established in 2022 after a quality assurance audit. Neglect is a priority for us, as it is the most common issue for children on our Child Protection Register.



### What have we done?

The Neglect Thematic Group has made progress this year in developing a structured, evidence-informed approach to identifying and addressing neglect across Aberdeen City. Building on national guidance and examples of best practice, the group has focused on designing a bespoke assessment toolkit that supports early identification, intervention, and improvement tracking.

Following a detailed scoping exercise, the group agreed to adapt the Somerset Family Strengths and Needs Assessment Tool and its companion Effective Support for Children Toolkit to create an Aberdeen-specific resource. The neglect thematic group engaged directly with the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, who shared their implementation journey, challenges, and lessons learned. This included access to training sessions and practical advice on embedding the toolkit into core practice.

The neglect thematic group are committed to developing the Aberdeen City Family Strengths & Needs Toolkit, a strength-based, SHANARRI-aligned tool designed to:

- Support practitioners in identifying neglect and measuring change.
- Align with The Promise and the National Practice Model.
- Provide operational guidance on use, recording, and escalation.

- Enable early help and preventative pathways
- Identify the correlation between poverty and neglect.

### What we plan to do next

The neglect thematic group will continue to develop our Aberdeen City specific toolkit over the course of the next year. The thematic group have established a timeline to ensure:

- Focus group engagement and practitioner input.
- Two test-of-change phases with iterative revisions.
- Development of training materials and operational guidance.
- Full implementation and evaluation

## ADP/CPC Thematic Group

### Why this is important

- Our learning from our data and notifications from learning reviews has told us that we need to enhance our preventative approach in a whole family way where there are drug and alcohol concerns. In September 2024, the CPC and Aberdeen City's Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) agreed to establish a joint thematic to group to improve the outcomes for families affected by problem substance use within Aberdeen City.

### What have we done?

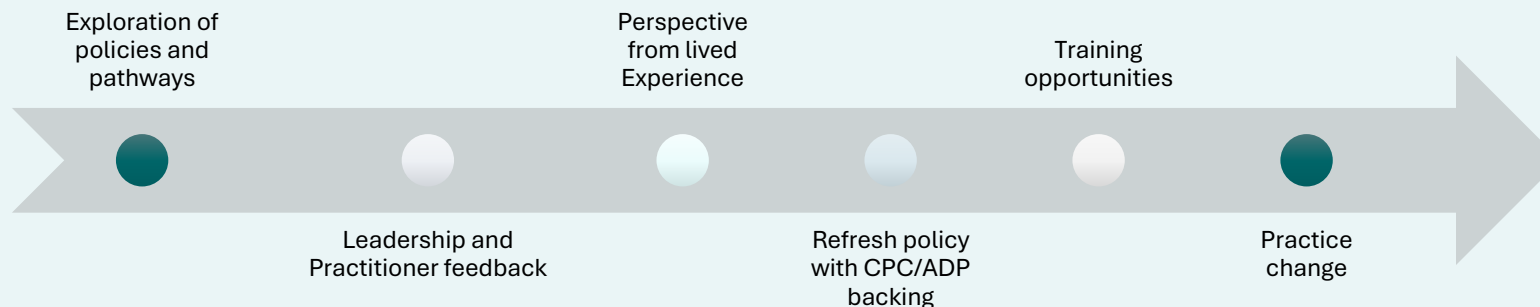
The thematic group have agreed three priorities:

1. Develop a multi-agency escalation pathway for young people exhibiting early indications of problematic alcohol and/or drug use.
2. Develop an escalation pathway for parents/adults that are exhibiting high levels of vulnerability due to their alcohol and/or drug use and/or mental health needs and they are not possibly being picked up between services due to complex trauma
3. Establish joint leaning opportunities for Adult and Children's Services, specifically in respect of points 1 and 2.

Over the last 12 months the group have undertaken various activities to achieve these priorities.

### What we plan to do next

The pathways are expected to be embedded within practice in late Summer 2025 following a test of change. Notwithstanding, this area is a priority for both adult and children's services and is expected to feature in the 2026-2036 Local Outcome Improvement Plan.





## Bairns Hoose Delivery Group

### Why this is important

In November 2023, Aberdeen City Partnership were notified that we were one of the 6 Bairns Hoose pathfinder sites in Scotland. The aim of a Bairns' Hoose is to deliver integrated support to best meet the needs of children and young people who are victims of abuse or have witnessed violence as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour (currently 12 years of age) has caused significant harm to others. A key aim of the model is to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences.

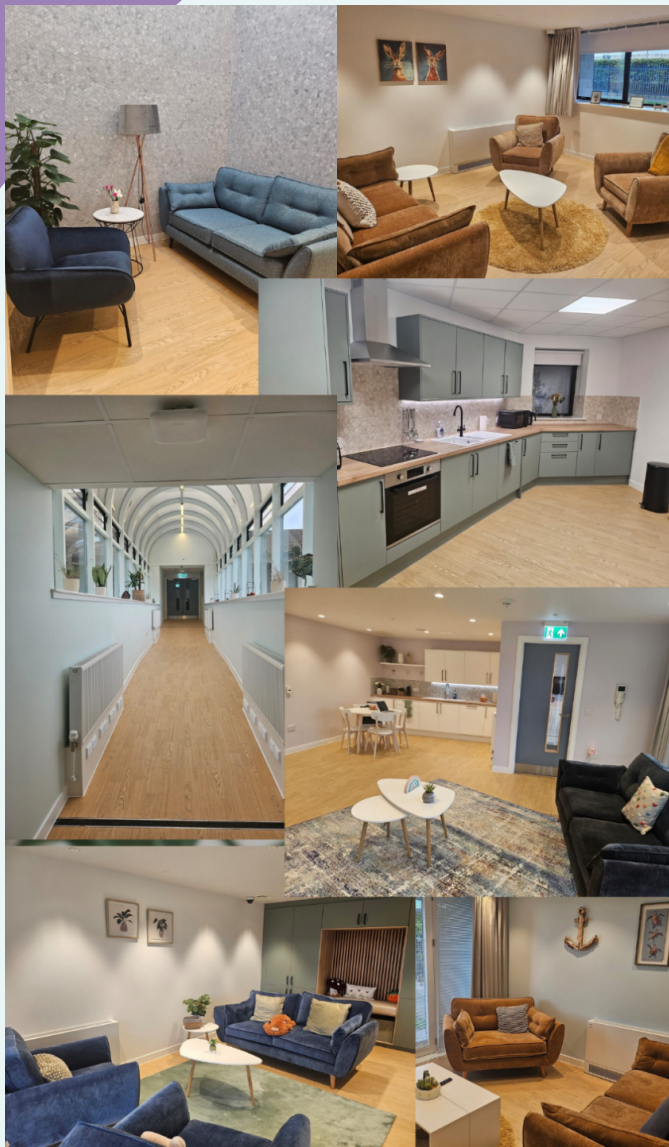
### What have we done?

Aberdeen City's designation as a Pathfinder site for Bairns Hoose marked a transformative step in delivering trauma-informed, child-centred justice and recovery services in Aberdeen City. Over the past year, the multi-agency Bairns Hoose Delivery Group has made substantial progress across capital development, system change, health integration, recovery planning, and justice reform:

- The redevelopment of our identified site for a Bairns Hoose is now complete. Significant alterations to the building have been made taking on board the feedback from Children and Young People who told us what they liked and what they didn't like.

- Learning from the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) and direct feedback from children and families has driven system improvements.
- Children are now offered choice in interview location, a change that has moved from pilot to standard practice.
- Operational guidance for Bairns Hoose is in advanced development, ensuring consistent understanding of the service and its "four rooms" model.
- A Health Coordinator has been appointed by NHS Grampian to lead health and wellbeing checks and address unmet needs within the Bairns Hoose.
- A test of change is expanding support for children with complex communication needs, enabling best evidence through the Speech and Language Therapy service.
- A recent successful bid has enhanced local paediatric capacity, allowing a broader range of medicals to be conducted on-site.
- Aberdeen City's recovery model is being finalised, with a test of change underway in Northfield ASG to develop a pathway for children to access support when ready. The model adopts a whole-family approach, recognising that most Joint Investigative Interviews (JIIs) relate to abuse by parents or caregivers.
- Strong links are being built with community supports and income maximisation services to ensure proportionate and holistic responses.
- A deeper dive into the Justice element confirmed that system improvements are reducing the need for children to give evidence in court.
- COPFS, SCTS, and SCRA have endorsed the facility, with SCTS committing to install live link IT equipment to enable remote evidence-giving from Summer 2025.





### Why this is important

Planning has been enhanced to ensure the Bairns Hoose is future-proofed against policy changes, including:

- Potential increase in the age of criminal responsibility.
- Changes to rules of evidence for children.
- Implementation of Trauma Informed Domestic Abuse Management (TIDAM).
- Rollout of the Children's (Care & Justice) Act.

The group continues to take a considered and incremental approach to integrating these changes into the Bairns Hoose model. As we continue on our Pathfinder journey we will continue to evaluate the impact of our Bairns Hoose in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh. In the coming year this will have an increased focus on our model of recovery support provided to children, young people and families.



Our Bairns Hoose logo, designed by our Changemakers Group

## CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT

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### Child Protection Improvement Programme 2024-26

#### Why this is important

In August 2024, the CPC launched its [Improvement Programme for 2024–26](#), setting out a clear and ambitious agenda to strengthen child protection practice across Aberdeen City. This programme builds on the city's trauma-informed and strengths-based approaches, and is shaped by local self-evaluation, national learning, and strategic priorities outlined in the Children's Services Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

The programme identifies six key priorities: Neglect, Child Protection & Parental Substance Use, Exploitation, Child Protection & Domestic Abuse, Interdisciplinary Multi-Agency Working, and Learning & Development. These priorities reflect both the most pressing concerns identified through local data and learning reviews, and the areas where collaborative, multi-agency action can have the greatest impact. Each priority is supported by a structured plan that outlines what will be done, how it will be achieved, and how progress will be measured.

The CPC retains oversight of the programme's delivery, ensuring that progress is regularly monitored and that the programme remains responsive to emerging needs, including findings from audits, inspections, and case reviews. This flexible and phased approach enables the CPC to embed sustainable improvements in practice while making the best use of available resources. A summary of progress made during the first year of implementation can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.





## Self Evaluation Activity

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In our report last year, we reported that the CPC had undertaken several self evaluation activities and had formulated a working group to take forward further evaluation work. Over the course of 2024/25, the CPC undertook further comprehensive self-evaluation activity to assess the effectiveness of our services for children and young people in need of care and protection. This initiative involved a multi-agency approach, where we engaged various stakeholders to gather insights and feedback. The key activities were:

- Distribution, collection and analysis of the Care Inspectorate's Staff Survey
- The extent to which we involve children and young people in the development of our services
- Case File Reading Exercise
- A CPC/Children's Services Board Development Session
- Self assessment of progress to achieve the Bairns Hoose Standards.

### What We Found Out

The analysis of the staff survey indicated a generally positive response from the workforce. Practitioners expressed confidence in their understanding of relevant guidelines and felt that leaders were visible, communicative, and knowledgeable about the quality of frontline work. The survey highlighted the strength of multi-agency training, with 79% of participants

reporting improved collaboration, and 84% having a clear understanding of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021-23. The survey also identified areas for improvement, such as the need for more consistent multi-agency collaboration, better information sharing, and greater access to mental health services for families. Additionally, staff expressed concerns about understaffing and its impact on service delivery.

The self-evaluation also focused on involving children and young people in the evaluation process. By embracing the UNCRC and implementing a Rights Respecting approach, we have ensured that the voices of children were heard and valued, including those who are pre-verbal or face communication challenges. This is further evidenced by the engagement with children and young people through our Changemakers Group, who have been influential in the design of our Bairns Hoose.

Our dedication to capturing and responding to the views and complaints of children, young people, and their families is reflected in improved documentation and service delivery.

A joint CPC/CSB development session focused on what our data tells us and doesn't tell us, and how we can make better use of data to enhance improvement planning. The CPC's Performance & Quality Assurance sub-committee receives child protection data from various sources, including children's social work, Police Scotland, and Health.

This data is presented using PowerBI, which allows us to visualize the journey of a child protection concern into children's social work services. Since the introduction of D365, a new data recording system for social work in October 2022, we have seen significant improvements in what data can be collected and presented.





We also undertook a file reading exercise using the Care Inspectorate's guidance to review the impact of services on the lives of children and young people in need of care and protection. The audit report highlighted several strengths in our child protection services, such as timely sharing of concerns, effective multi-agency collaboration, and the quality of the initial multi-agency response. However, it also provided key recommendations for improving child protection services, including better information gathering, considering the views of children and parents, and improving immediate action responses.

### Next Steps

To address the identified areas for improvement, we have already initiated several actions. We are developing and delivering a series of themed Q&A Panels to enhance practitioners' understanding of each other's roles and address any unrealistic expectations. These sessions are facilitated by CPC members and will include both operational and strategic leaders as subject matter experts. Additionally, we are working on improving our record-keeping practices by sharing a practice note with the workforce, highlighting examples of good recording and areas for improvement. The CPC's Learning and Development sub-committee will continue to monitor and report on progress to ensure that our improvement activities are effective and aligned with our priorities.

The Self Evaluation Group concluded their activity by presenting the findings to the CPC in January 2025. The CPC agreed that while areas for improvement have been identified, there were no critical or previously unknown areas for improvement.

The CPC and the Self Evaluation Group agreed on the following areas which require focus:

- communication with the workforce about our child protection improvement activity and progress
- increasing staff confidence in the skilled and collaborative intervention they are involved in
- better illustrating and communicating the links between strategy and practice
- increasing the quality of recording
- better understanding the roles and responsibilities of the multi-agency practitioners involved in supporting children and families.

Aberdeen City was last inspected in 2019 and received a rating of Good. At the focus session in January 2025, it was agreed that as a Partnership we have undoubtedly improved since our last inspection.

Despite a change in focus for inspection, from children in need of care and protection to children looked after at home by their parents, activity undertaken by the Partnership over the last 12 months will only enhance our position and our capacity for improvement. Our honest and transparent approach

has been delivered by a partnership willing to appropriately challenge each other as we strive to improve our service delivery against many of the current challenges, not least poverty.

We are confident our governance processes will ensure the areas for focus are delivered timeously. Overall, the self-evaluation has contributed to improving outcomes for our workforce and most importantly children and young people within Aberdeen City.



## LOOKING AHEAD INTO 2025/26

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Looking ahead, the CPC remains committed to driving forward its Improvement Programme with a continued focus on the priority area of Child Protection and Domestic Abuse. This strand of work recognises the complex and often hidden nature of domestic abuse and its profound impact on children and young people. Over the coming year, the CPC will work with the Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership to strengthen multi-agency responses, improve identification and support, and embed learning from case reviews and national guidance into everyday practice.

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement and in response to evolving national inspection priorities, the CPC and CSB initiated Audit 8 under the Quality Assurance Framework 2024–2025. This audit focuses on services provided to children in the ‘care system’ who are living at home with their parents under compulsory supervision orders. The decision to undertake this audit follows the Care Inspectorate’s announcement of a shift in inspection focus and reflects our own self-evaluation findings. Through this audit, we aim to assess the quality, consistency and effectiveness of multi-agency support, identify areas of strength and development, and ensure that children looked after at home receive the support they need to achieve improved outcomes. The findings and recommendations will be reported to the CPC at its business meeting in September 2025.



## FINAL THOUGHTS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am pleased to bring you the eleventh annual report for the Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee. The CPC is a key local body for developing, implementing, and improving child protection strategy across the City and beyond. The CPC performs several crucial functions to jointly identify and manage the risk to children and young people. It also ensures the functions are carried out to a high standard and are aligned to national strategies.

Child Protection is not exempt from the many challenges that are faced both nationally and indeed locally, not least child poverty. That said the partnership continues to work collaboratively to ensure all children and young people remain safe throughout Aberdeen City.

A significant internal, self-evaluation exercise aligned to Care Inspectorate methodology, rated the partnership Very Good, albeit as ever there are always areas in which we can improve, which are detailed within the report. I think it would also be fair to say the recent development and opening of the Aberdeen City Bairns Hoose is truly transformational in how the partnership responds and cares for children and young people who have faced abuse and trauma in their lives.

I would wish to take the opportunity to sincerely thank everyone across the partnership, both statutory and voluntary, who amid the challenges faced, strive selflessly to keep children and young people safe. I would also wish to thank Amy Anderson, our Lead Officer for her significant contribution to the work of the CPC over the past year.

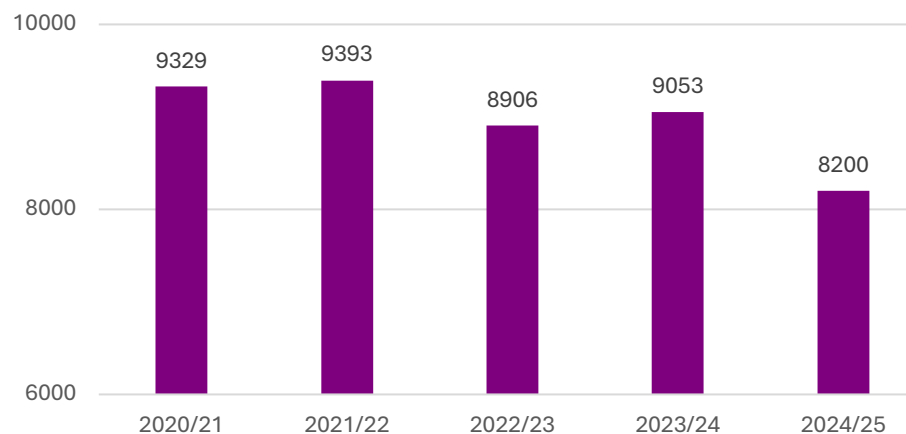
**Campbell Thomson QPM**

*Independent Chair of Child Protection Committee*

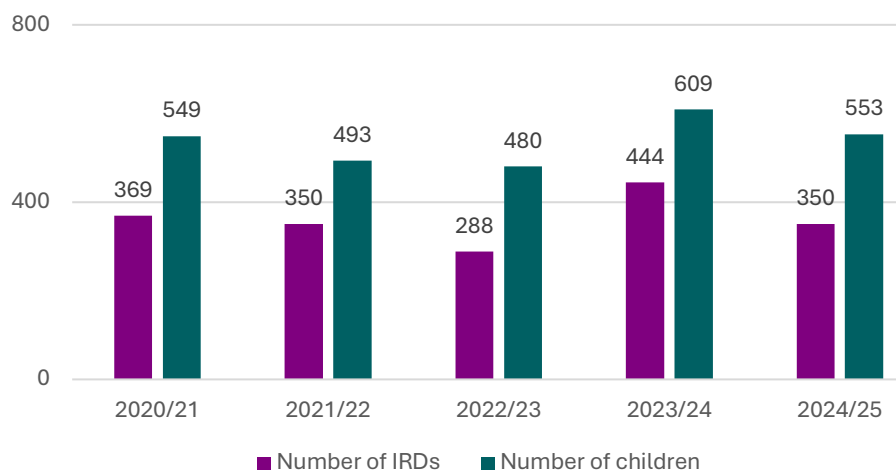


## Appendix 1 – Annual Data report

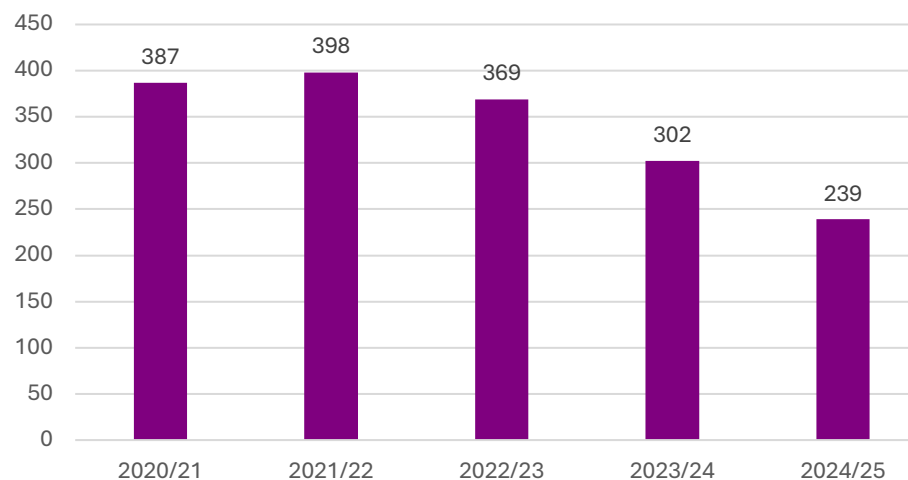
Total number of referrals to Children's Social Work (includes initial & further referrals)



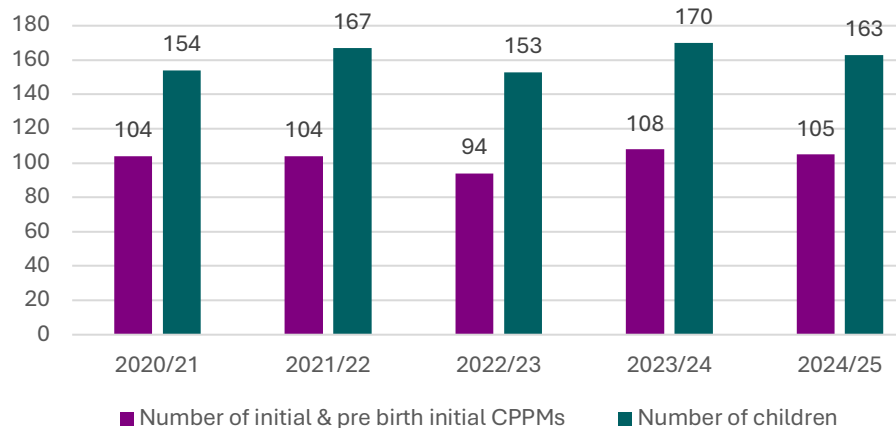
Number of IRDs & Number of children



Number of JIs

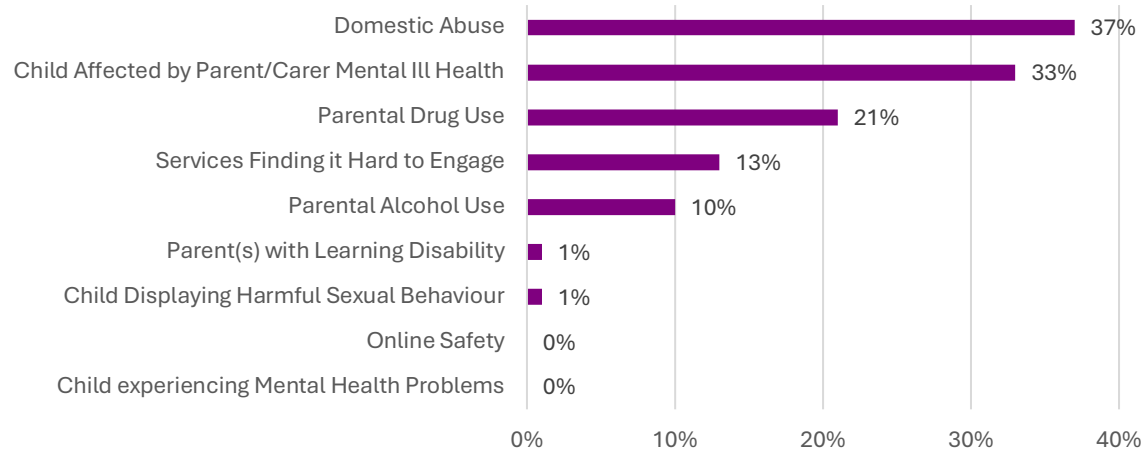


Number of initial & pre-birth initial CPPMs, and number of children

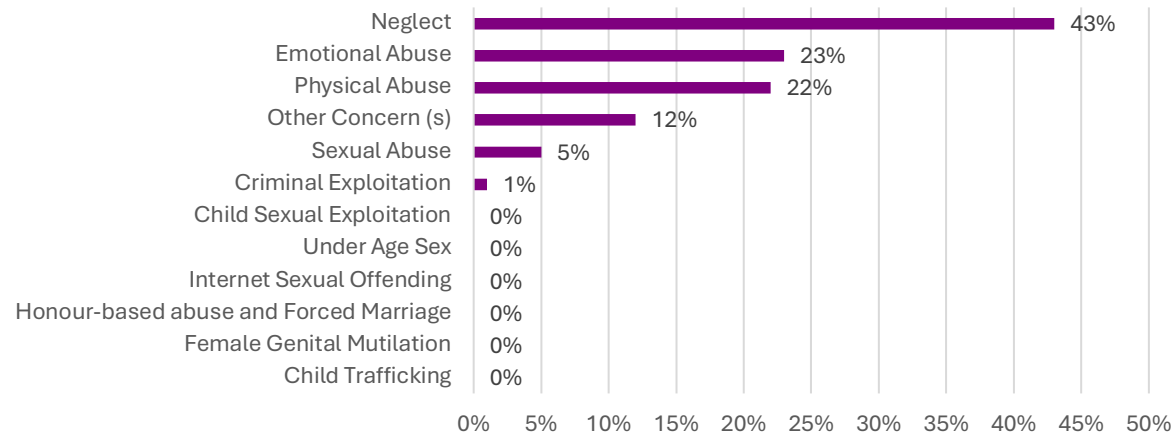




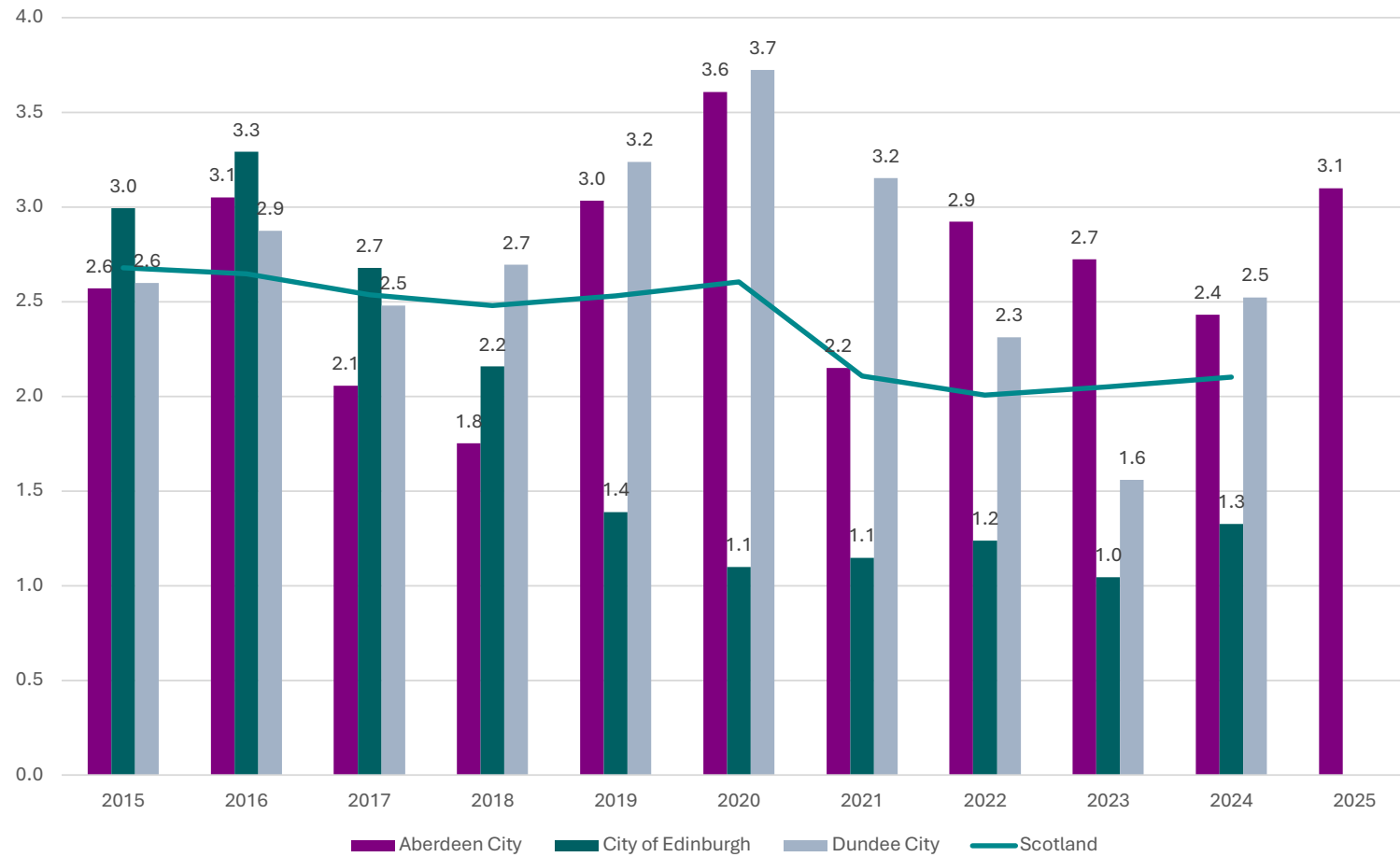
### Vulnerability concerns for children on the CPR (on 31 July 2025)



### Impact on the child for children on the CPR (on 31 July 2025)



Children on the CPR - Rate per 1000



## Appendix 2 – CP Improvement Programme 2024-26 with 1st year progress

### Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee Improvement Programme 2024-2026

Aberdeen City Child Protection Committee (CPC) is a multi-agency strategic partnership governed by the Chief Executive Officers of Aberdeen City Council, NHS Grampian and the Police Commander for the area. It is committed to providing individual and collective leadership and direction for the management of child protection services in the Aberdeen City area. Improvements are driven through the Child Protection Programme.

The CPC works alongside Integrated Children's Services in Aberdeen to ensure that improvement areas are aligned. In this way we ensure the best and most effective use of resources. The CPC also aims to work collaboratively with other strategic partnerships in the City such as the Children's Services Board, Aberdeen Violence Against Women & Girls Partnership (particularly in relation to child protection and domestic abuse), Adult Protection Committee, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

Progress on improvement activity is reported to and monitored by the CPC through its connected sub committees which are; the Significant Learning Review, the Performance & Quality Assurance, and the Learning & Development sub committees. The CPC produces an Annual Report which is made widely available across agencies and demonstrates the work of the CPC through these connected structures.

#### CPC Improvement Aims

The Child Protection Programme aims to improve the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people. As a partnership we achieve this by

- recognising and responding when children and young people need protection
- helping children and young people stay safe, healthy and, for those who have experienced abuse and neglect, to recover from their experiences and
- providing strong and effective collaborative leadership to deliver the Child Protection Programme ensuring the CPC is ready to adapt and adjust as required to both local and national developments

#### Improvement Activity

The Child Protection Programme includes and is aligned to improvement activity identified by:

- Local self-evaluation through data analysis, case file auditing, local and national learning from Learning Reviews, and the collaboration of multi agency professionals in the City,
- National initiatives driven by legislation and other Scottish Government priorities and
- Local priorities identified in the Children's Services Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

This programme will be delivered on a phased basis, building on the trauma informed and strength based practice approaches used across the City. All improvement priorities are a multi-agency responsibility and sit collectively with the agencies and members of the CPC. This will ensure and support the embedding of improvements in practice as well as realistically enabling the CPC to deliver on the programme with the resources available. It is acknowledged that, whilst this is a comprehensive programme, it requires to be sufficiently flexible to be adjusted as needs arise, such as from the findings of case reviews, audits, joint inspections as well as developing areas identified in the LOIP or by Integrated Children's Services.

#### Our priorities in the programme 2024-2026

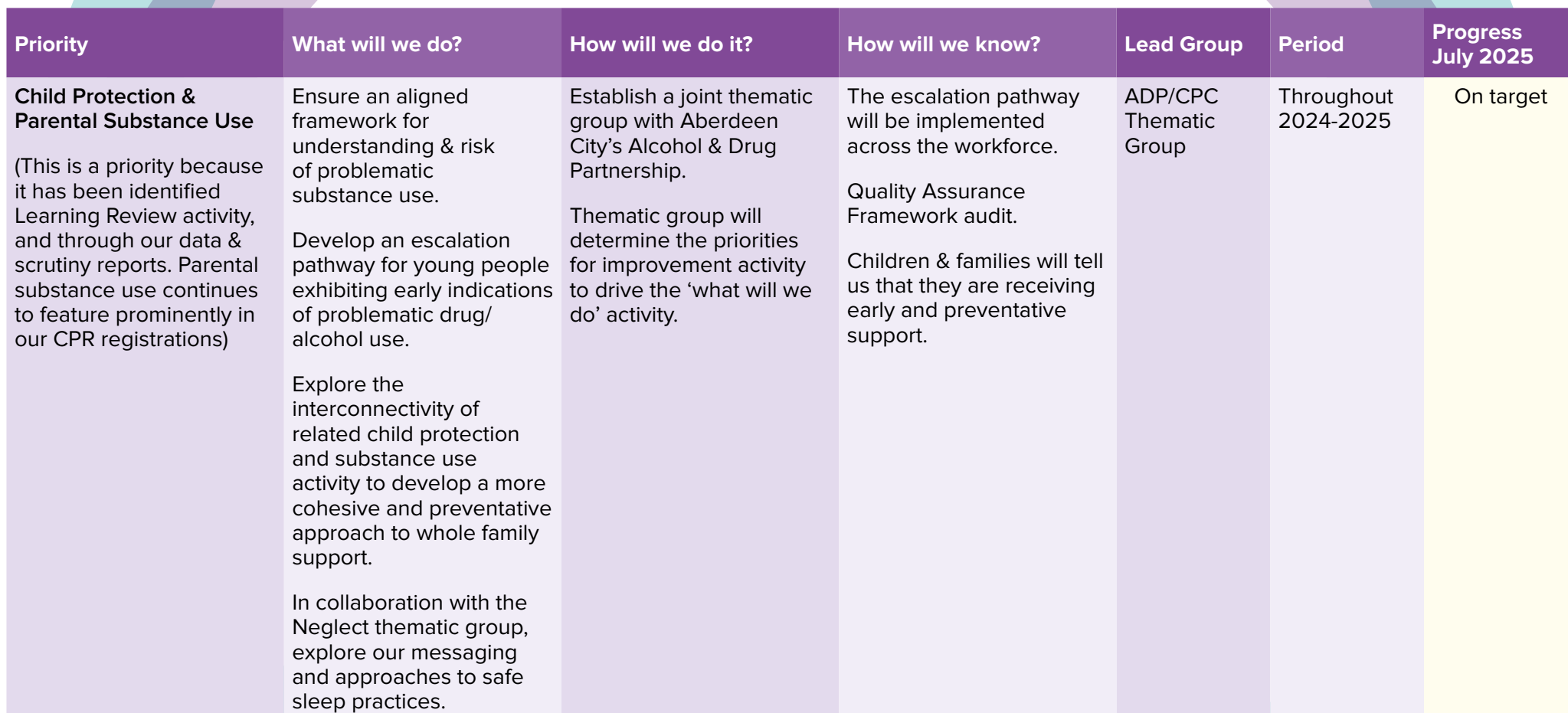
- Neglect
- Child Protection & Parental Substance Use
- Exploitation
- Child Protection & Domestic Abuse
- Interdisciplinary multi agency working
- Learning & Development

#### Alignment to LOIP 2016-2026

The delivery of the CPC improvement programme directly supports the delivery of the [LOIP](#), in particular stretch outcomes that relate to children, young people and families (SO3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10,11, and 12)

Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period	Progress July 2025
<b>Neglect</b> (This is a priority because Neglect is the most prevalent concern for children on our Child Protection register and also has featured within Learning Review activity)	<p>Increase practitioner's skills and confidence in preventing, identifying, and addressing neglect. This will recognise the correlation between poverty and neglect.</p> <p>In collaboration with the ADP/CPC thematic group, explore our messaging and approaches to safe sleep practices.</p>	<p>Review &amp; refresh the remit of our multi agency thematic group.</p> <p>Establish a multi agency workforce group to identify and mitigate the barriers to naming and responding to neglect.</p> <p>We will seek to understand the lived experience of children, young people and families who have experienced neglect.</p> <p>Consider the use of the Graded Care Profile.</p> <p>Explore the development of a neglect pathway that mitigates the escalation into child protection/ statutory processes.</p>	<p>Review of the multi agency Neglect training.</p> <p>Monitor data around neglect and children re-registered under neglect.</p> <p>Children &amp; families will tell us that they are receiving early and preventative support.</p> <p>Data from our audit and learning review activity.</p>	<p>Neglect Thematic Group</p> <p>Clear links with Best Start In Life</p>	<p>Throughout 2024-2026</p>	<p>On target</p>





Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period	Progress July 2025
<b>Child Protection &amp; Parental Substance Use</b>  (This is a priority because it has been identified Learning Review activity, and through our data & scrutiny reports. Parental substance use continues to feature prominently in our CPR registrations)	<p>Ensure an aligned framework for understanding &amp; risk of problematic substance use.</p> <p>Develop an escalation pathway for young people exhibiting early indications of problematic drug/ alcohol use.</p> <p>Explore the interconnectivity of related child protection and substance use activity to develop a more cohesive and preventative approach to whole family support.</p> <p>In collaboration with the Neglect thematic group, explore our messaging and approaches to safe sleep practices.</p>	<p>Establish a joint thematic group with Aberdeen City's Alcohol &amp; Drug Partnership.</p> <p>Thematic group will determine the priorities for improvement activity to drive the 'what will we do' activity.</p>	<p>The escalation pathway will be implemented across the workforce.</p> <p>Quality Assurance Framework audit.</p> <p>Children &amp; families will tell us that they are receiving early and preventative support.</p>	ADP/CPC Thematic Group	Throughout 2024-2025	On target

Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period	
<b>Exploitation</b> (This is a national and local priority. Our exploitation thematic group share this position and recognise, like the rest of Scotland, there are few children on our CPR under this category)	Increase practitioner's skills and confidence in preventing, identifying, and responding to all types of exploitation.  Consider how we communicate with the public to raise awareness of the risk of all types of exploitation.	Develop, review and disseminate local multi-agency guidance, or other awareness raising materials in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation, Sextortion, and other relevant forms of exploitation.  Improve data gathering in relation to all forms of exploitation, particularly in universal services.  Develop and disseminate a contextual safeguarding e-module.	The guidance or other materials will be developed and disseminated across the workforce. The impact will be measured by engaging with the workforce.  The data from universal services will illustrate the prevalence of children and young people at risk of exploitation in Aberdeen and the impact of preventative interventions.	Exploitation Thematic Group  (Establish links with Youth Justice, and the Corporate Parenting Groups)  L&D Sub Committee	Throughout 2024-2026	On target
Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period	
<b>Child Protection &amp; Domestic Abuse</b> (This is a priority because it has been identified through Learning Review activity and through our data & scrutiny reports)	We will undertake a joint learning & development session in collaboration with the Violence Against Women Partnership to explore the interconnectivity of related activity to develop a more cohesive and preventative approach to supporting women and girls who experience violence and abuse.	Establish a joint thematic group with the Violence Against Women Partnership to deliver on improvement priorities in relation to violence and abuse experience by women and girls.	Improvement priorities will be identified through the joint development session. This will include quality assurance activity.  Women and girls will tell us that they are receiving early and preventative support.	VAWP/CPC Thematic Group	Throughout 2025-2026	On target

Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period	
<b>Interdisciplinary multi agency working</b>  (This is a priority because services to children and families need to be more holistic)	<p>Align strategies and procedures to the fullest extent across public protection.</p> <p>Provide whole family support where there are children &amp; young people at risk of significant harm, or are at risk of causing significant harm.</p> <p>Ensure children, young people and their families have their say in decisions made about them and that they are listened to.</p>	<p>Review practitioner guidance in relation to the transition from child to adult services.</p> <p>Continue to explore opportunities to integrate and collaborate via the public protection leads group.</p> <p>Review our local child protection operational guidance ensuring that the family's journey through our child protection processes is proportionate.</p> <p>Develop and open our Bairns' Hoose.</p>	<p>Young people will be supported by the service that best meets their needs.</p> <p>Develop a work programme for the public protection leads group.</p> <p>IRD quality assurance, P&amp;QA data and conversion rates.</p> <p>Evaluation of our Bairns' Hoose.</p>	<p>CSB/IJB (CPC/APC)</p> <p>PP Leads Group/CPC Lead Officer</p> <p>P&amp;QA Sub Committee</p> <p>Bairns' Hoose Delivery Group</p>	Throughout 2024-2025	On target

Priority	What will we do?	How will we do it?	How will we know?	Lead Group	Period	
<b>Learning &amp; Development</b>  (This is a priority because it is a fundamental part of the learning and development function required from the CPC)	Ensure all multi-agency staff have access to appropriate learning and development resources in relation to our child protection improvement priorities.	Undertake a learning needs analysis to identify the learning & development requirements of the workforce, and refresh our L&D plan.	Develop and deliver a workforce learning & development strategy, in collaboration with other strategic public protection groups to meet the learning requirements of the workforce.	L&D Sub Committee	Throughout 2024-2026	On target
	Develop our Learning & Development strategy to the <a href="#">National Framework for Child Protection L&amp;D in Scotland 2024</a> .	Communicate with the workforce in relation to child protection improvement activity.  Consider how we communicate with the public in relation to child protection improvement activity.  Further develop the Aberdeen Protects website.	Issue quarterly CPC bulletins to the workforce reflecting local and national priorities and activity.  The workforce will tell us.	CPC Lead Officer and L&D Coordinator		

**Report Author: Amy Anderson**

**Designation: CPC Lead Officer**



