



Annual Report 2024/2025

Contents

Chair Introduction.....	3
Message from Chief Officers	4
Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee Arrangements	5
Improvement Planning and Activity	7
The Promise.....	8
Aberdeenshire Children and Young People's Rights and Participation Strategic Group	9
Bairns' Hoose	11
Child Protection Data.....	15
Child Protection Inter-Agency Referral Discussions	18
Scottish Child Interview Model.....	20
Strengthening Our Response to Neglect.....	21
Multi-Agency Learning and Development.....	22
Multi-Agency Training Needs Analysis - multi-agency survey	22
Child Protection Training.....	24
Parent and Carers Insight Series.....	25
Multi-Agency collaboration.....	26
Child Protection Partnership.....	27
Children and Families Network.....	28
(Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action)	28
Learning Review.....	29
Conclusion	30

Chair Introduction

I am delighted to present our Annual Report for Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee (CPC). As demonstrated throughout this report the committee continues to work hard in order to fulfil our responsibilities in relation to continuous improvement, strategic planning, and public information and communication.

This report gives an overview of our CPC activity over the past year. It identifies our key strengths, our achievements and our areas for improvement as identified through robust data scrutiny and self-evaluation. It is testament to the demanding work and dedication of the practitioners in Aberdeenshire that we have achieved so much, without their willingness to go the extra mile this would not have been possible.

This year has also seen us developing our Bairns Hoose having been awarded Pathfinder Status by the Scottish Government in 2023. We have been working closely with colleagues from Edinburgh University to evaluate our progress and share our learning as we go. This is important work, not only because we will be able to offer a much-improved service to our children, young people and families moving forward, but because

we are aiming to develop a service that will deliver a consistent approach across Aberdeenshire through our 'hub and spoke' design.

The CPC continues to be focused to ensure we support practitioners to deliver child protection services of a high standard. We do this by ensuring that we provide a wide range of learning and development opportunities, clear and concise guidance, and the practice tools they need to do their job.

The past year continued to throw up more challenges than ever in relation to supporting services to recover after the pandemic, increasing poverty and workforce challenges, which have an impact upon our children, young people, and families. I am grateful to all members for their commitment to the work of the committee and their determination to keep Aberdeenshire's children safe throughout the year. As a result of their hard work and the support of the subgroups the CPC delivered the key objectives as described throughout this report. I am also grateful to our Lead Officer, Jac Duffin, for her support and hard work.



Susan Maclaren
Independent Chair
Aberdeenshire CPC

Message from Chief Officers

The Executive Group for Public Protection (EGPP) are pleased to support and welcome you to the Aberdeenshire CPC Annual Report 2024-2025 which covers the work of the CPC during the period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Protecting Children and Young People: CPC and Chief Officer responsibilities published in 2019 outlines the role of the Chief Officers in relation to child protection – in Aberdeenshire, the EGPP undertakes this function. The Chief Officers of the public sector organisations in Aberdeenshire, Grampian NHS Board, the Command Team of Police Scotland's Grampian Division, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action and Aberdeenshire Council are responsible for the leadership, direction and scrutiny of the local child protection services and they have strategic responsibility for the Aberdeenshire CPC.

The EGPP continually strives for excellence in Aberdeenshire's children's services by providing strong and robust collective leadership; direction; governance; scrutiny; challenge and support to the work of the CPC ensuring commitment to the protection of Children and Young People in Aberdeenshire remains paramount.



Jim Savege
Chief Executive
Aberdeenshire Council



Kate Stephen
Chief Superintendent
Police Scotland



Laura Skaife-Knight
Chief Executive
NHS Grampian

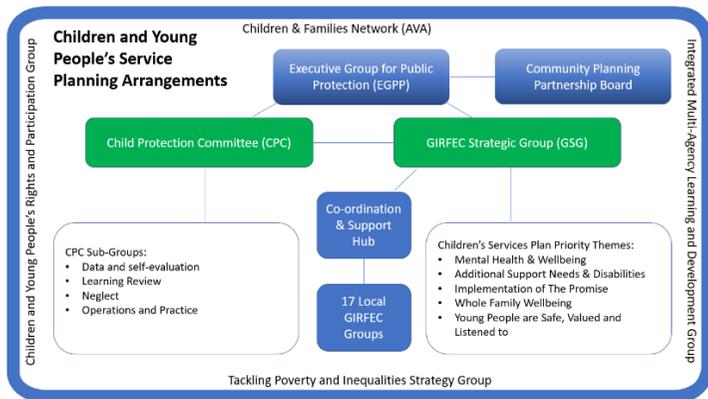
The Aberdeenshire CPC has a key role to play in the continuous improvement of child protection policy and practice as a locally based, multi-agency strategic partnership responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of child protection policy and practice across Aberdeenshire. The CPC is also responsible for the quality assurance of multi-agency practice and ensuring that the performance measures put in place ultimately lead to improving outcomes for Children and Young People.

Strong leadership and a competent and confident workforce play a critical role in child protection. Two key issues are the importance of leadership in local child protection, particularly regarding the way in which services are steered by senior managers, and the professional development of those working in child protection. The EGPP would like to recognise and thank the wider child protection community and all staff working in the public, private, third and independent sectors across Aberdeenshire; whose commitment, dedication and hard work continues to provide better outcomes for vulnerable Children and Young People at risk of harm, abuse and exploitation.

Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee Arrangements

The Aberdeenshire CPC is a strategic partnership responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of child protection policy and practice across the public, private and wider Third Sectors in the Aberdeenshire area. All agencies have the objective of improving outcomes for children by making sure children get the help they need, when they need it and have the right to be safe, protected from abuse, neglect, and harm.

The Aberdeenshire CPC is part of a larger framework of Public Protection arrangements in Aberdeenshire. The overall aim is the prevention of harm to vulnerable groups and involves working with both victims and perpetrators. Improvements are driven through the Child Protection Improvement Plan and are monitored by the Committee.



The relationship between the CPC and Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) Strategic Group is key to driving forward:

'Our commitment to Aberdeenshire's Children and Young People, to provide them with the right support, in the right place at the right time. In helping them reach individual potential and goals, we will work together to make Aberdeenshire the best place in Scotland to grow up.'

The functions of the CPC can be found in 'Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities (2019)'. The core functions are as follows:

Public Information, Engagement and Participation

- The way we engage with the public, children, young people and their families/carers
- Raise awareness regarding children at risk of harm

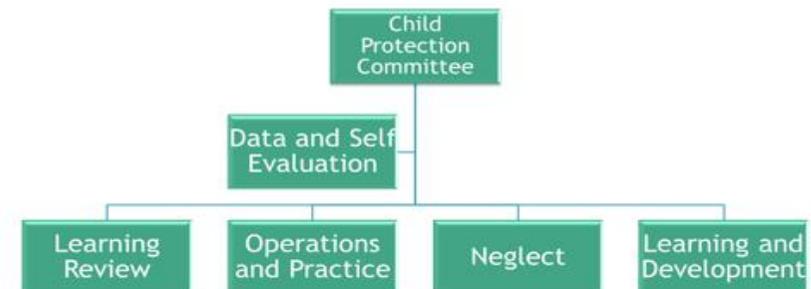
Continuous Improvement

The CPC has an overview of the quality of work being carried out to protect children and uses data, self-evaluation, and scrutiny to identify any trends, patterns and practice that impact on keeping children safe.

Strategic Planning and Connections

We work closely with all partners and strategic groups to ensure wider links across children's services.

The CPC at a minimum, holds four business meetings per year and two development sessions, including an annual review. This gives the CPC members the opportunity to reflect on aspects of the work of the CPC, as well as our annual review of how effective our evaluation and scrutiny work is in helping us understand the child protection landscape in Aberdeenshire. We undertake an annual anonymous survey to CPC Members related to the effectiveness of our CPC structure, roles, and functions. This gives us the opportunity to reflect on and refine our arrangements, sub-structure and how the subgroups report and connect with the CPC. The permanent subgroups work towards achieving the Improvement Plan through an appropriate workplan which is reported directly to the CPC.



Improvement Planning and Activity

This CPC Improvement Plan, 2023-2026, presents a shared commitment among partners to a robust agenda of outcome-driven improvement, evidencing our focus for ongoing development. As a plan of action, it is both broad in scope and high in aspiration, serving as our agreed plan for the continual improvement of services safeguarding Children and Young People in Aberdeenshire. Aberdeenshire’s CPC has a clear vision for all children in Aberdeenshire to be safe and protected from harm.

The CPC Improvement Plan is aligned with the [Local Outcome Improvement Plan \(LOIP\) 2017-2027](#), and [the Children’s Services Plan, 2023-2026](#). Aberdeenshire CPC and partners are committed to continuous improvement through quality assurance and self-evaluation as demonstrated by the CPC Improvement Plan. This shared commitment is also demonstrated through our partnership Quality Assurance Strategy and Programme, CPC Dataset Reports, CPC Development Days, and this CPC Annual Report; all of which support to shape the CPC Improvement Plan.

National Context				
GIRFEC	UNCRC	The Promise	Trauma	
Aberdeenshire Local Outcome Improvement Plan				
Reducing Child poverty	Connected and Cohesive Communities		Changing relationships with alcohol	
Aberdeenshire Child and Young People’s Service Plan, 2023-2026				
‘We will work together to make Aberdeenshire the best place in Scotland to grow up’				
Mental Health is Promoted and Improved	Children with Additional Support Needs and/or Disabilities and Their Families are Well Supported to Achieve Their Full Potential	Keep The Promise to our Care Experienced Young People	Whole Family Wellbeing – Right Support Early and Effectively	Safe, Valued and Listened to in Our Communities
Aberdeenshire’s Child Protection Committee Improvement Plan				
Voice and Participation	Confident and Competent Workforce		Older Young People	
Overarching areas				
Data and self-evaluation	Bairns’ Hoose		Communication Strategy	

The view of our workforce is key; therefore, three workshops took place north, central, and south of Aberdeenshire. Multi-agency practitioners considered the draft Improvement Plan and recommended changes and other areas for consideration. The proposed changes were taken to the CPC who agreed to the finalised version of the plan. As we progress, we will expand on how we seek the views of multi-agency professionals, Children, Young People, and their families.

The Improvement continues to be reviewed annually each March, including an evaluation of our results against the previous year's aims. Any adjustments to the strategy as a result of progress, or amendments in response to Government or environmental changes, can be agreed by the CPC. The following three areas of improvement were agreed:

- Voice and Participation
- Confident and Competent Workforce
- Older Young People

The Promise

The Independent Care Review, published as The Promise in February 2020, highlighted the need for systemic change to ensure children feel loved, safe, and supported. At the midpoint to 2030, progress has been made, but significant work remains. The Promise Oversight Board's third report identifies delays caused by unforeseen events and systemic barriers, particularly in workforce and whole-family support. Consequently, the Promise is not yet halfway to being fulfilled. Despite this, the Board remains confident, citing ongoing progress and renewed commitment from delivery partners.

In Aberdeenshire, we continue to be fully committed to achieving The Promise by 2030 and the responsibility to lead this sits within the Corporate Parenting Leads Group. The Corporate Parenting plan has seven priorities:

-  1. Your voice will be heard. Your views will be listened to and your rights upheld. You will have access to services including advocacy to ensure this happens.
-  2. Where you are safe in your family and feel loved, you will receive all the support you need to stay together.
-  3. You will belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as you need to. When you cannot live with your family, you will have high quality alternative care. You will receive all the support you need during periods of change.
-  4. When living with your family is not possible, you will stay with your brothers and sisters. If it is not safe for you to stay together, your relationship will be cherished and protected.
-  5. When you are ready to move on, you will be fully supported to do this at a pace that is right for you. You will receive all the support you need to thrive and succeed.
-  6. You will share trusting relationships with the people that are there to support you, who understand your story.
-  7. You will have access to the support you need to thrive educationally, physically, and emotionally.

Our corporate parenting action plan is updated frequently and can be found [here](#).

We continue to work together across various organisations and services to ensure that The Promise is on everyone's agenda. A community of Promise Champions with 126 members across children's services, education, health, police, legal, leisure, Third Sector and others have committed to working together to ensure that the vision of The Promise is acknowledged and acted upon across Aberdeenshire. For a full update on Aberdeenshire's progress to #KeepThePromise, the Corporate Parenting Annual Report can be read [here](#).

The CPC, GIRFEC and The Promise came together to hold a Connection Event for our Children and Young People. We spent the morning together looking at our CPC and GIRFEC logos to consider what home and safety meant to them. We asked them to design new logos which we plan to use for our new designs. Connecting with Children, Young People and their carers/families will continue to be a priority. Some of their wonderful creations and thoughts of the day can be seen at the front of our annual report.

Aberdeenshire Children and Young People's Rights and Participation Strategic Group

To support the implementation of the UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland) Act (2024), thereby ensuring that all babies, children, and young people in Aberdeenshire can realise their rights all of the time. We do this by:

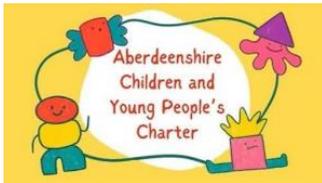
- Listening to babies, Children and Young People and responding to what they tell us
- Enabling colleagues, teams, and services to be informed of Children and Young People rights and supported to uphold them confidently
- Advocating for babies, children, and young people when they need it

We should all think about the three Ps:

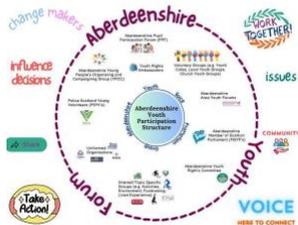
- Provision: what services are we providing (or not providing) that could impact Children and Young People?
- Protection: how are we protecting children and young people from harm?
- Participation: how are children and young people given a voice in decisions that impact them (and how are we acting on what we hear)?

.....and how do we evidence all of that?

The Aberdeenshire Children and Young People's Charter



The charter has been refreshed and relaunched this year. It sets out what Children and Young People need from us in order to claim their rights.



Youth participation in Aberdeenshire puts children and young people at the centre of policy and practice. We do this by creating and supporting ways in which Children and Young People can get involved in decision-making at an individual, community, local authority, and national level.

See the YPOC (Young People's Organising and Campaigning) group [song aimed at tackling stigma](#). The song was created in collaboration with the Aberdeenshire Youth Music Initiative. Please share widely!

The first of our UNCRC Podcasts can be found on the [Rights and Participation page](#) of the GIRFEC website alongside lots of other resources to support you in understanding, upholding and further effecting Children and Young People 's rights.

Next up in 2025/26....

Rollout of the Youth Rights Ambassadors (will you sign up?)

Raising awareness and supporting teams and services beyond children's services

Working with parents, carers, and wider communities to promote an awareness of rights and to do some myth busting.

See the Bairns' Hoose section of the report to find out how else we are being led by our Children and Young People.

Bairns' Hoose

In December 2023, Aberdeenshire CPC was selected as one of five Scottish Government Bairns' Hoose Pathfinders. This designation provides funding and support to test a potential blueprint for delivering the model. Based on Iceland's Barnahus approach, Bairns' Hoose represents an opportunity for transformational change through a child-centred, trauma-informed response for Children and Young People who are victims or witnesses of significant harm, ensuring improved access to justice, care, and recovery. The model combines both an approach and a physical space, where children can access joint investigative interviews, recovery support, medical services, and court links—all within one building. Our ambition is that:

“All children in Aberdeenshire who have been victims or witnesses to abuse or violence, as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused significant harm/abuse will have access to trauma-informed recovery, support and justice.”

Given the geography of Aberdeenshire, having one Bairns' Hoose would be challenging due to the geography, road network, and winter conditions. This could also result in long travel times for our Children and Young People. As a result, we continue to develop and test a 'Hub & Spoke' model which will offer. The map shows the spread the Hub and Spoke model gives to our Children and Young People in Aberdeenshire.



Children First Team within Bairns' Hoose

We are delighted to be partnering with Edinburgh University who will be supporting us on our journey. Based on learning from the North Strathclyde Bairns' Hoose Evaluation, colleagues from Edinburgh University will take an approach to evaluation, informed by realist evaluation processes.

As part of the Aberdeenshire Bairns Hoose Pathfinder we have also partnered with Children First who have been developing a team to support Children, Young People and their families who are caught up in child protection and justice processes as victims or witnesses of crime or abuse.

The first advocacy, rights and recovery worker (ARR) started in June 2024 closely followed by the appointment of the Bairns Hoose Coordinator in August 2024. A second ARR was appointed in September 2024 to complete the team.

The team work closely alongside the SCIM team, Police and Social Work colleagues to ensure that Children, Young People and their families are offered the right support at the right time to help them to make sense of their experiences, understand the complicated justice processes and to be able to move forward in a positive way.

The service has developed by not only delivering direct support but also by ensuring children's voices are heard and they have their rights upheld in terms of having a say in decisions that impact them. The families we have met and supported have also helped us to develop the spaces and places where interviews and follow up support happens ensuring these are suitable and fully trauma-informed for all ages of Children and Young People and their parents/carers.

Within the first 6 months Children First supported twenty-six young people of which nineteen were female and seven males. The reasons that Children and Young People were referred were varied but with a clear spike in numbers around teenage peer on peer sexual offending. There were also several referrals with a theme around unsafe social media use.

Recovery work takes various forms with the key element, taking a relational approach to building trusting relationships with Children, Young People, and their families, allowing time to create emotional safety.

The families have come from a widespread geographical area spanning the whole of Aberdeenshire. The most referred age group were twelve to fifteen followed by five to twelve years, sixteen plus and just one referral for a child in the zero to four years age group.



Bairns' Hoose Thematic Funding - Trauma

The Bairns' Hoose thematic funding supported the implementation of Bairns' Hoose (BH) Standards in Aberdeenshire, with a strong emphasis on trauma-informed practice. Despite delays in funding and recruitment, significant progress was achieved within a condensed five-month period (November 2024–March 2025).

Key Achievements

Trauma-Informed Approach: A Service Development Officer (SDO) applied [The National Trauma Transformation Programme - How we design and deliver services - trauma - informed lens walkthrough tool across child protection processes and physical environments](#). Both to our Child Protection process and the environments.



Standard 1 – Key Principles:

A multi-agency session, supported by the Scottish Government and Edinburgh University, examined families' experiences of trauma-informed services that promote choice, trust, safety, collaboration, and empowerment. Transaction points in the Child Protection process were reviewed through a trauma-informed lens to understand systemic impacts on families. The session resulted in the development of tests of change and a tracker.

Standard 4 – Design and Environment:

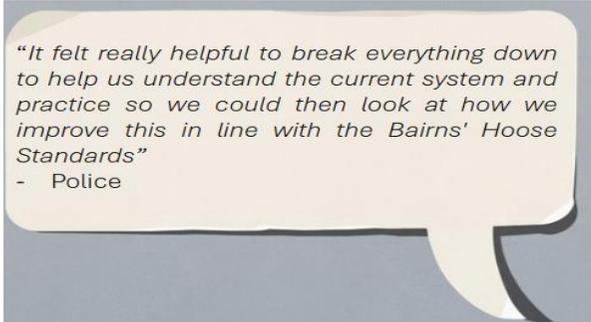
Aberdeenshire's geography and road networks, winter weather made having a single Bairns' Hoose challenging. From the outset, we agreed to test a Hub and Spoke model. This led to six spokes being agreed, ensuring accessibility across the region and choice to our Children, Young People, and their families.

Using the walkthrough tool, we introduced consistent elements across spokes:

- three-room model: dedicated family welcome room, waiting area, and interview room
- Warm tones and soft furnishings
- Toys and house-style shelving



Feedback from Children, Young People and their families and multi-agency professionals in this improvement work has been positive:



Children and Young People were key to the design of our Bairns' Hoose.

Sharing Stories for Change pack and booklet is a method that has been long established within Children First and further developed in Bairns Hoose Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. It is a way for Children and Young People to share their views on people, places and spaces and support. Young people across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire were giving the opportunity to explore this pack with their someone they felt comfortable with helping us in our development of the design of Bairns Hoose and also to inform what needs to change around the child protection, civil and criminal justice system.



Sharing Stories
for Change



[Go to our Bairns' Hoose webpage](#) learn more about what the seven Children and Young People and their views using creative ways to explore the right spaces, places, people, and support.

Child Protection Data

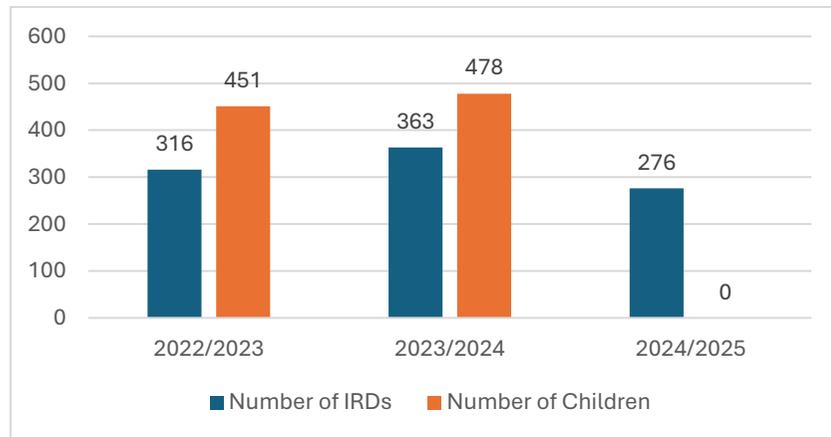
The CPC collects data on a quarterly basis in line with the national minimum dataset. A data report is presented to the CPC every six months with verbal updates in between. The data shows us any trends or changes which then supports us to identify areas for our audit cycle and improvement work.

Key headlines from the data include:

- The highest number of concerns recorded in child protection registration relate to Child affected by parent/carer mental ill health, neglect, Emotional Abuse and Domestic Abuse
- During the reporting period the age at registration has remained consistent. Children aged 5 to 10 remain the highest number of registrations
- There was an increase in the number of children on the child protection register

The data below offers a snapshot of key data considered by the CPC on a quarterly basis.

Chart 1: Number of IRDs and Children Involved



Due to a change in Police data capture we are now unable to collect number of children. There has been a drop in the number of IRDs as we have developed our IRD process. This includes not automatically interviewing siblings as witnesses. The approach now taken is considered more trauma-informed and not subjecting Children and Young People to proceed when it is not necessary.

Chart 2: Number of IRDs resulting in a Child Protection Investigation (CPI). Child Protection Investigation resulting in Child Protection Planning Meeting (CPPM)

Child Protection investigations

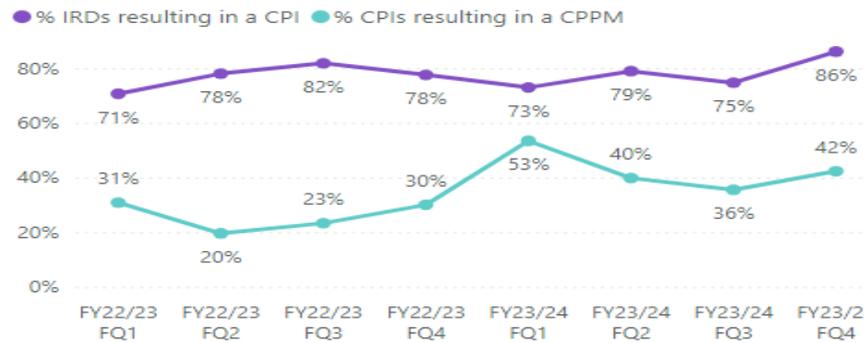


Chart 2. The conversion rates IRD to a Child Protection Investigation remain stable. The IRD process has been refreshed to ensure robust multi-agency decisions are agreed. The conversion rates of Child Protection Investigations to Child Protection Planning Meetings also remain stable.

Chart 3: Total number of Initial and Pre-Birth CPPMs

Total no of Initial & Pre-birth CPPMs

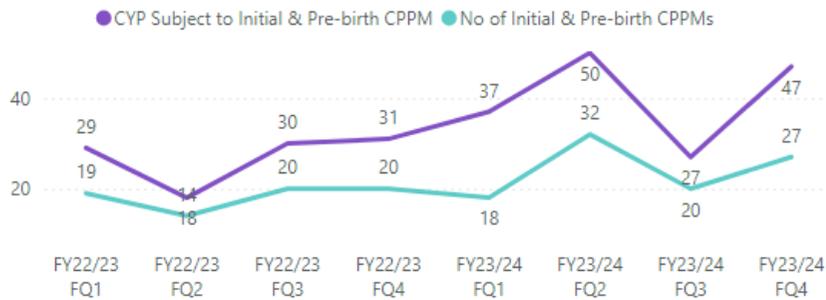


Chart 3. There has been an upward trajectory over time of CPPMs. This is in line with the increase in IRDs. Upwards and downwards Spikes in data often represent larger sibling groups. Nationally, the rate of pre-birth and initial CPPM per 1,000 children is 3.5, in Aberdeenshire it is 2.3 (The Children’s Social Work Statistics 2022-2023).

Chart 4: Number of children on the child protection register

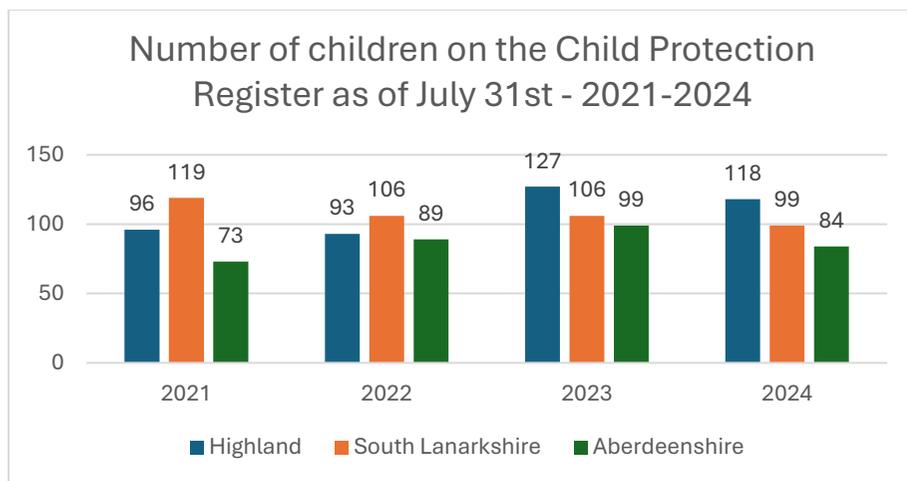


Chart 4. The number of children on the child protection register was on an upward trajectory through 2023, then dropped slightly in 2024. Comparator Local Authorities; Highland and South Lanarkshire have also both risen through 2023, then fallen in 2024. Nationally the rate of children on the child protection register per 1,000 children is 2.3 and in Aberdeenshire per 1,000 2.0. It is important to consider comparator Local Authority data and national data to recognise possible trends (The Children’s Social Work Statistics 2023-2024).

Chart 5: Age of child at time of name being placed on the Child Protection register

Fiscal Year	a Unborn	b Aged 0 - 4	c Aged 5 - 11	d Aged 12 - 15	e Aged 16+	Total
FY23/24	20	48	158	119	6	351
FQ4	5	8	33	31	1	78
FQ3	5	14	48	39	1	107
FQ2	5	14	46	26	2	93
FQ1	5	12	31	23	2	73
FY22/23	18	59	181	159	2	419
FQ4	3	15	55	36	1	110
FQ3	5	11	42	57		115
FQ2	3	14	37	32	1	87
FQ1	7	19	47	34		107
	38	107	339	278	8	770

Chart 5. During the reporting period, the age at registration has remained consistent. Children aged 5 to 10 years remain the highest number of registrations. Nationally 42% of children on the child protection register are age between 0-4 and 32% age between 5-10 trends (The Children’s Social Work Statistics 2022-2023).

Child Protection Inter-Agency Referral Discussions

As mentioned earlier in this report Aberdeenshire became a part of the Scottish Governments Bairns' Hoose Pathfinder project at the end of 2023. As the initial point of multi-agency planning within child protection practice, the IRD process has been regarded as integral in developing our Aberdeenshire Bairns Hoose Model.

Our IRD process has continued to be subject to a monthly quality assurance process, undertaken by the original IRD Working group with representatives from police, social work, health, and education.

For other aspects of development work the IRD group expanded into the Bairns Hoose Child Protection Process Group, involving a number of other professionals including our Bairns Hoose Co-ordinator and Scottish Government Improvement Advisor, Lead Officer for Child Protection and some input from our colleagues in Edinburgh University. The group undertook a trauma-informed lens to our child protection processes, beginning from the initial disclosure or identification of a child protection concern, to IRD and beyond. This resulted in a number of 'tests of change' to align our practice and processes with the Bairns Hoose Standards and improve the experiences of children and their families.

Other findings from this year's quality assurance process have been:

- Just over 70% of IRDs were graded four or above (6 being exemplary) with a grading of four being the most common at 45%. This is in line with 2023/2024 data 74% of IRDs were graded four or above with a grading of five being the most common at 33%

Fundamental to these changes has been more coordinated planning and support within the child protection investigation stages, in which children and their families are given more informed choice and control to ensure that processes are tailored to their needs. To achieve this, changes were made to ensure a closer alignment between the IRD and the SCIM Team (Scottish Child Interview Model), which also brought in the role of the Bairns Hoose Coordinator. With their agreement, the Bairns Hoose Coordinator began to make contact with families following the IRD to provide information about the supports available, and to coordinate supports for the investigative stages in line with the family's preferences.

To ensure informed decision making and continued individualised support to children and their families beyond the initial investigation process, there has been a focus on the use of Reconvened IRDs. This along with other aspect of the process, has continued to be monitored through the IRD quality assurance meetings. Some changes were made to the shared North East IRD record template, to capture the new 'tests of change.' Whilst it has been evident that there is more to be done to embed reconvened IRDs into practice, where they were used, there was evidence of the views of children and families being more central to planning outcomes and further supports.

- IRD number decreased by just over 8% in 2023/2024 compared to 2022/2023. A decrease can be attributed to the work around Bairns' Hoose and the fuller consideration prior to undertaking an IRD.

Next steps

- The monthly multi-agency IRD QA sessions to continue
- Changes are to be made to the IRD feedback form used to gather information in the QA sessions, to reflect the changes and ensure the most meaningful data is being gathered.
- There will be further scrutiny and emphasis on the use of reconvened IRDs.
- The Bairns Hoose Process Group will continue work on developing a tracking tool, to help track and review the changes and 'tests of change' to our existing processes.

Scottish Child Interview Model

SCIM – ABERDEENSHIRE

The Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) is now a well embedded part of the Child Protection process within Aberdeenshire. The approach is based upon five component parts: strategy, planning, action and outcomes, and ongoing support and evaluation. The two key intended outcomes of the SCIM are that the child is **protected**, and **evidence secured**.

The SCIM Oversight Group continues to govern the process in the North East and meets twice yearly. In addition to this SCIM Managers across the North East meet every eight weeks to discuss the day-to-day operation of SCIM, reporting into the Oversight Group.

The core team of interviewers currently comprises of eight Police Officers and seven Social Workers, three from Aberdeenshire, two from Aberdeen City and two from Moray. A soft boundary approach remains in place across the three local authority areas, ensuring Children and Young People are receiving the required specialist response and support.

When SCIM went live in practice (November 2022) the commitment of the SCIM team was to conduct 60% of all JIIs in the North East, with the remaining JIIs being conducted using the Five-Day Model. The SCIM team has constantly exceeded this target, consistently conducting over 90% of all JIIs in the North East. The SCIM Annual Report has been replaced by a six-monthly report, which provide statistical analysis relating to SCIM i.e. interview locations, age of child etc. This report is shared with the three associated CPCs.

The six-monthly report dated April to September 2024, showed that in Aberdeenshire 84 SCIM interviews were conducted, six interviews were planned for but did not go ahead and 4 JIIs were conducted using the Five-Day Model. This equates to 96% of all JIIs in Aberdeenshire being dealt with by the SCIM team.

The six-monthly report dated October 2024 to March 2025, showed that in Aberdeenshire 104 SCIM interviews were conducted, nine interviews were planned for but did not go ahead and 1 JII was conducted using the Five-Day Model. This equates to 99% of all JIIs in Aberdeenshire being dealt with by the SCIM team. The SCIM team continue to seek feedback from children post JII, results of which are published in the SCIM reports.

SCIM is an integral part of the Bairns Hoose process. The aim is for the testimony provided by the child (Joint Investigative Interview) to be used as Evidence in Chief, removing the need for children to give evidence in court thus reducing trauma for child victims and witnesses. The SCIM team are currently playing a pivotal role in the Bairns Hoose pathfinder journey and have been involved in 'tests of change' aimed at enhancing the support offered to the child and their family, before, during and after their Joint Investigative Interview.

Strengthening Our Response to Neglect

In Aberdeenshire, our commitment to safeguarding children remains steadfast. This year, we have taken significant strides in refreshing the GIRFEC Neglect Toolkit—an essential resource designed to support practitioners in identifying and responding to neglect. Guided by the Scottish Government’s definition of neglect, which emphasizes both persistent and single instances of harm, our work is rooted in the belief that early, informed intervention can change lives.

Challenges: A Toolkit for Today

Recognising the evolving needs of practitioners and the children they support, a dedicated multi-agency working group has been leading the refresh of the Neglect Toolkit. This includes the development of a new assessment tool that is not only more accessible but also aligned with trauma-informed practice. The refresh is being shaped by direct feedback from practitioners across Health, Education, and Police services, ensuring it reflects real-world challenges and insights.

- Training Expansion: Updating the e-learn, offering bite-sized training, and developing workshops based on anonymised case studies.
- Reflective Practice: Piloting monthly peer reflection groups and providing facilitator guides to support meaningful discussions.
- Building Confidence: Creating training focused on courageous conversations and developing a language guide to help practitioners navigate sensitive topics with empathy and clarity.

Listening to Practitioners

A recent survey gathered valuable input from twenty-four practitioners. While awareness of the toolkit is relatively high, many reported difficulties in using it—citing its complexity and lack of user-friendliness. Only 17% felt extremely confident discussing neglect in a trauma-informed way, with common barriers including family reluctance, limited services, and the difficulty of having courageous conversations. Despite these challenges, the survey revealed a strong appetite for growth. Practitioners expressed a clear interest in peer reflective sessions, interactive training, and practical tools that support confident, compassionate engagement with families.

A Shared Commitment Across Agencies

All partner agencies are now working collaboratively to update their 7-minute briefings on neglect. These briefings will reflect a trauma-informed approach and incorporate the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), now embedded in Scottish law. Importantly, we are also expanding our understanding of neglect to include online neglect, acknowledging the growing impact of digital environments on children’s wellbeing.

Moving Forward Together

In response, we are taking a multi-pronged approach:

- Toolkit Redesign: Simplifying the layout and language and introducing a quick start guide to make the toolkit more accessible.

Looking Ahead

As we await the results of the current practitioner survey, we are preparing to develop new training opportunities that directly respond to what practitioners are asking for. Additionally, we are reviewing our website to ensure it is more user-friendly and better supports practitioners in accessing the tools and information they need.

Multi-Agency Learning and Development

The Multi-Agency L&D Group is responsible for identifying the learning and development needs of practitioners in Aberdeenshire who work with children, young people, and their families. This is a combined GIRFEC and Child Protection subgroup. The strategy document sets out the key priorities and work plan for 2023-2026. For further information on GIRFEC Learning and Development see the [Integrated Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group Annual Report Year 2: 2024-25](#)

The following e-learns are currently available within the Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Online (ALDO) GIRFEC: Child Protection portal for the multi-agency workforce:

- Child Protection Basic Awareness for the multi-agency workforce
- Neglect
- Domestic Abuse Portal
- Disability E-Learn
-

The following e-learn resources are under development for the multi-agency workforce:

- Care and Risk Management
- Child Protection Planning Meetings
- Services who find it hard to engage

Multi-Agency Training Needs Analysis - multi-agency survey

The Multi-Agency Training Needs Analysis Survey, conducted between the 8th and 24th of May 2024, provided a comprehensive insight into the learning needs and priorities of professionals across Aberdeenshire. This work was undertaken in response to the Scottish Government's requirement for CPCs to self-evaluate the implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021, updated 2023. It also aligns with the recently published [Child Protection Learning and Development 2024: National Framework](#), which sets out expectations for workforce development.

Participation and Engagement

A total of 467 multi-agency professionals completed the survey, reflecting a strong commitment to continuous improvement in child protection practice. Respondents represented a wide range of services, with the largest proportion from Education (298), followed by Social Work (71), Health

(53), and smaller numbers from Police, Housing, and the Third Sector. This breadth of engagement demonstrates the shared responsibility for safeguarding Children and Young People.

Analysis of responses identified clear priorities for future training. The most significant areas of need were:

- Children experiencing mental health problems
- Children affected by parent/carer mental ill-health
- Online safety
- When services find it hard to engage

These priorities were consistent across most sectors, although some variation was noted. For example, Police highlighted domestic abuse and online safety, while housing prioritised parental mental ill-health and parental drug use. The emphasis on mental health reflects both the complexity of cases and the increasing prevalence of these issues within child protection contexts.

Professionals were also asked to identify immediate operational training requirements. Four areas emerged as critical:

- Care and Risk Management (CARM)
- Child Protection Planning Meetings
- Initial Referral Discussions
- Learning Reviews

The survey explored preferred methods of delivery. While professionals acknowledged the convenience of online learning, the majority expressed a preference for in-person or live online sessions, citing the value of interaction and opportunities for discussion. A blended approach combining digital and face-to-face learning was also suggested to accommodate time constraints and maximise accessibility.

Gaps and Recommendations

The findings highlight gaps in current provision and a reliance on national e-learning resources, which often lack local context and flexibility. To address this, Aberdeenshire CPC:

- Consider training from the context of Bairns' Hoose
- Explore the role of a Learning and Development Coordinator to develop Aberdeenshire-specific training that reflects local practice and priorities.
- Establish mechanisms to evaluate the impact of training annually, ensuring continuous improvement.
- Explore opportunities for live multi-agency learning

Child Protection Training



When determining priorities for the next phase, consideration was given to the outcomes of the training needs analysis, feedback from training surveys, the Child Protection minimum dataset, audit findings, actions arising from Learning Review notifications, and insights gained from the implementation of Bairns' Hoose. As a direct result, a series of training sessions were delivered across a range of topics, primarily facilitated by external providers. Highlights:

- Total Training Sessions Delivered: 18+
- Total Staff Reached: Over 1,000 (multi-agency)
- Delivery Mode: Webinars, virtual sessions, and half-day workshops
- Providers: NHS Grampian, Zoe Lodrick, Women's Aid, Future Voices, Safer Futures, Action for Children

Key training themes:

- Trauma and Exploitation: Sexual Exploitation (54 attendees), Adverse Childhood Experiences (82 attendees), Trauma-informed practice (170 attendees)
- Domestic Abuse and Risk Management: Psychology of the Offender (170 attendees), Safe and Together Core (60 attendees), Managers chairing risk meetings (24 attendees)
- County Lines and Exploitation Awareness: Multiple webinars and workshops (approx. 315 attendees)
- Specialist Topics: Sudden Unexpected Death of an Infant (safe sleep) and Substance Use (100 attendees), Trauma-Informed Parenting (59 attendees), The Exploitation of Children (71 attendees)

Impact

- Increased multi-agency understanding of child protection complexities
- Enhanced skills in trauma-informed approaches and exploitation prevention
- Strengthened collaboration across Social Work, Health, Education, police and Third Sector

Actions

- All training was evaluated and improvements made
- For each webinar multi-agency participants were sent out further information on the topics and when required 7-minute briefings created.
- When required, new webpages were created to ensure multi-agency professionals could access information and guidance in the future.

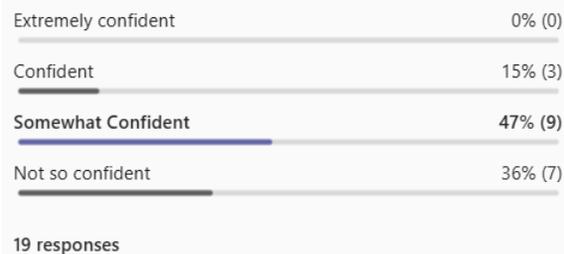
Parent and Carers Insight Series

Aberdeenshire CPC created the Parents and Carers insight series based on the understanding that parents and carers are the people who keep their Children and Young People safe. By offering insights for Parents and Carers into the areas where harm takes place, we support to build in them confidence to support their Children and Young People and reduce the potential for harm. Follow on sessions continue to be developed based on feedback. The first session took place in March 2025 on: The Risk of Social Media: Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online.

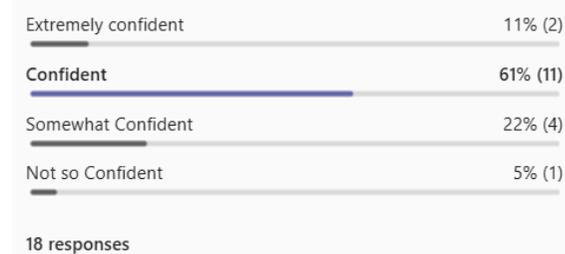
The series was advertised with eighty-one parents/carers signing up and thirty-nine attending on the night. Levels of confidence of parents increased by the end of the session:



Confidence before the session



Confidence after the session



Feedback was also positive:

- thank you for this session, it has given me the confidence to speak with my foster boys regarding some of the things in this session.
- Thank you for this session, it is so important for us parents to know more, really appreciate it.
- Thank you very much, very insightful (and scary)
- Thank you very helpful That was such a shock tbh, how so easily a young person can get drawn into a situation so quickly. Thanks very much! Really helpful session 😊

Further monthly insights were planned on Consent and Disclosure by Women's Aid and County Lines and Exploitation by SaferFutures. A [webpage](#) was developed and is now live for easy sign up. Evaluation of the series will take place which will support future development.

Multi-Agency collaboration

We value the work of the multi-agency workforce, as they are the professionals who carry out the operational work and are key to improving outcomes for children and families. A strong multi-agency workforce is essential to safeguarding Children and Young People effectively, and understanding the role of the CPC is a key part of this. When professionals understand the CPC's remit—such as developing policies, monitoring performance, and coordinating responses—they can align their work with shared priorities and contribute to a consistent, high-quality approach to protecting Children and Young People. This shared understanding fosters collaboration, accountability, and confidence in decision-making, ultimately improving outcomes for Children, Young People, and families.

To achieve this, we have:

- Created newsletters after every CPC business meeting to explain the role of the CPC, highlight members, share the work undertaken by the subgroups and highlighted areas of practice to support shared learning.
- Regular multi-agency training sessions have taken place during which the role of the CPC and Bairns' House is highlighted.
- Workshops took place north, central, and south to give multi-agency professionals the opportunity to have their voice heard within our Improvement Plan, this will continue.

Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee Newsletter December 2024 (Issue 1)

Welcome to issue 1 of the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) newsletter. The newsletter will be issued quarterly, following each Aberdeenshire CPC business meeting, to provide our multi-agency workforce updates on our work, along with local and national developments in child protection. It is aimed at practitioners working across the statutory and voluntary sector in Aberdeenshire. Aberdeenshire CPC last met on the 27th of November 2024.

[What is the Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee](#)





Children and Families Network

(Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action)

Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA) brings together a diverse range of Third Sector organisations that support the wellbeing of children, young people, and families across Aberdeenshire, forming the collective Children and Families Network.

This Network plays an increasingly vital role in delivering high quality support to children, young people, and families within our local communities. The Third Sector contributes significantly to the priorities outlined in the CPC Improvement Plan, and the Network provides a valuable platform to connect and collaborate in pursuit of these shared aims. Through regular meetings, Network members share their work, explore opportunities for partnership, and strengthen links with the CPC Improvement Plan.

This year, Aberdeenshire became an Early Adopter of the 'How Good is Our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning' tool. Together AVA the GIRFEC Strategic Group and CPC have worked together to implement this tool which has enabled focused, transparent, and equitable dialogue between partners, enhancing the quality of planning and strengthening the engagement and participation of Third Sector organisations. As a result, our partnerships have grown stronger, with a clearer understanding of the actions needed to ensure that the voices of Third Sector organisations are meaningfully represented, valued and evident within the Children's Services Planning and CPC Improvement Plan process.

Over the coming year, as we implement our Improvement Plan, we will see positive developments in the way we work together e.g. formation of 3 C's Engagement Sessions, giving Third Sector, Children Service's and Child Protection their own space to connect, communicate and collaborate with work areas, priorities, approaches and processes; Lunch & Learn opportunities; and strengthened communication.

Learning Review

Learning Reviews, which replaced Significant Case Reviews in 2021, serve as our updated methodology for understanding and improving child protection systems. The framework was further refined in June 2024, to strengthen how we capture learning and drive continuous improvement. As a Learning Review Sub Group, we continue to:

- Reflect, learn, and improve child protection systems and practice when a child or young person has died, is significantly harmed or was at risk of death or significant harm or where effective practice has prevented harm or risk of harm.
- Provide a multi-agency forum to consider learning around both local and national Learning Reviews and make recommendations to the CPC on any improvement activity arising from these reviews.
- Link with Data & Self Evaluation, Operations and Practice and Learning and Development subgroups and associated activities
- Recommend improvement priorities to the CPC
- Inform the ongoing development of the CPC Risk Register.

There have been four Learning Review Notifications received within this timeframe. Each notification is considered collaboratively by the multi-agency learning review subgroup. The Subgroup considers the information collated across partners and works together to agree any initial or immediate learning that could be collectively implemented and whether a Learning Review is required. One notification has progressed to the Learning Review stage. Two Learning Reviews have still to begin where we will seek advice and guidance from the Procurator Fiscal's Officer prior to commencing.

Key themes identified for multi-agency improvement, through the learning review subgroup, include information sharing, when services find it hard to engage, professional curiosity, thresholds, suicide, and parental drug use.

Whilst some of the learning points will inform the Terms of Reference for our Learning Reviews, initial learning and improvement activity is systematically collated and embedded across the CPC sub-group framework, as well as within the wider Children's Services Planning Framework. This framework includes key priorities such as promoting mental health and wellbeing and ensuring that Children and Young People feel safe within their communities. All identified learning is translated into actionable steps, with progress monitored and tracked to ensure accountability. Furthermore, this learning directly informs and strengthens our Improvement Plans, supporting a culture of continuous development and enhanced outcomes for children and families.

Conclusion

This report evidences the commitment to the work of the CPC from all agencies involved. As a CPC, we have grown and developed as collaborative leaders keeping the child and their experience at the centre of everything we do. We continue to mature in terms of our data collection and self-evaluation resulting in the CPC embedding a strong, natural curiosity to data and learning. Our subgroup culture has led to innovative and effective strengthening of process, practice, and skills across the partnership with our neglect work being a particular example. This has given us the confidence to build on existing good practice, including developing our Bairsns Hoose for Aberdeenshire's children.

The committee is not complacent, recognising there is still much to do and improve upon. During the next year, the committee will be concentrating on implementing our current CPC improvement plan with a particular focus on:

- Voice and Participation
- Confident and Competent Workforce
- Older Young People

In addition to these areas identified the CPC have also supported the development of our 'Bairsns Hoose' for Aberdeenshire Children and Young People.

To progress the above the CPC will continue to implement our Improvement Plan 2023 – 2026, whilst beginning to identify and plan how to deliver on our priorities beyond 2026. Our plans will always be ambitious to improve our services based on learning through self-evaluation, learning reviews, and new guidance; we will continue to review and update the plans regularly in response to new developments.

Thank you to all who contributed to the work over this past year