

Perth And Kinross Council

**Scrutiny And Performance Committee
11 December 2023**

**Perth And Kinross Council
6 March 2024**

**PERTH AND KINROSS CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE
STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2022/2023**

**Report by Jacquie Pepper, Chief Social Work Officer
(Report No. 24/67)**

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee (CPC), in compliance with Scottish Government guidance, publishes an annual Standards and Quality (S&Q) report. This report is routinely presented to Elected Members on an annual basis. This S&Q report, for the academic year 2022/2023, provides an overview of the key activities and work of the CPC partners to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- 1.2 This report describes the CPC's achievements, key strengths and areas for improvement. It also includes an update on the CPC's new Improvement Plan, confirms that the CPC continues to focus on learning and improvement, and has in place, a comprehensive programme of improvement work for 2023 and beyond.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2,1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny and Performance Committee:

- Scrutinises and comments, as appropriate, on the Perth and Kinross CPC Standards and Quality Report 2022/2023 (Appendix 1) and the contents of the Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 April 2023 – 31 July 2026 (Update) (Appendix 2).

It is recommended that Council:

- Notes the wide range of work being carried out by Perth and Kinross Council and their partners, through the CPC, to provide high quality services to protect children and young people, in particular, the high-level of commitment to continuous improvement through quality assurance and self-evaluation; and
- Endorses the contents of this report, the Perth and Kinross CPC Standards and Quality Report 2022/2023 (Appendix 1) and the contents of the Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 April 2023 – 31 July 2026 (Update) (Appendix 2).

3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:

- Section 4: Background
- Section 5: Analysis
- Section 6: Further Considerations
- Appendices

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Child Protection Committees in Scotland are encouraged to publish an annual report in compliance with the requirements described in [protecting children and young people: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer responsibilities](#) (Scottish Government: February 2019). This S&Q report covers the work of the CPC for the academic year from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023.

4.2 The S&Q report reflects the Care Inspectorate's Quality Indicator Framework: [A quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection](#) (Care Inspectorate: Revised 2022).

4.3 The S&Q report presents an overview of performance in services to protect children and young people and is based on sound evidence, obtained through a range of single and multi-agency key performance indicators (data), quality assurance and self-evaluation activities. It describes achievements, key strengths and areas for further improvement.

4.4 The S&Q report confirms that the CPC continues to be a listening, learning and improving CPC, and the report sets out the CPC's shared programme of improvement work for 2023 and beyond.

5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Page 5 of the S&Q report (Appendix 1) provides a summary infographic. It identifies the key changes in the volume and activity of key multi-agency child protection processes and practices, and key improvements realised in 2022/2023¹. Pages 8 to 15 of the S&Q report (Appendix 1) also provides a high-level analysis of child protection key data performance indicators, with an extended descriptive narrative.

¹ Note: In some instances, the percentage (%) increases and decreases relate to relatively small numbers, which should be considered in the overall context of the data presented on pages 8 to 15 of the S&Q report.

- 5.2 This year, the data shows that the overall number of Child Concern Reports (CCRs)² has once again risen; this year by 14% (13% in 2021/2022), and this is now a well-established longitudinal trend, extending back several years.

By far, the majority (66%) of CCRs continue to come from Police Scotland; whilst Education Services account for 13% and Health Services account for 7%. CCRs can relate to the same child or young person; some may be repeated concerns, and many are increasingly complex in their nature.

- 5.3 Whilst the CPC and their partner agencies continue to closely monitor this trend, we recognise that by far, the majority of CCRs relate to much wider wellbeing concerns, with a smaller number being identified as child protection. The CPC is exploring this increasing trend and acknowledges the pressures this is placing on existing single and multi-agency screening arrangements, as all CCRs are proportionately shared, screened and investigated. Work is also underway to identify both the initial nature of the CCRs, and in particular, the outcomes for the children and young people concerned. Nevertheless, this increasing trend would suggest that staff across services and agencies remain alert, are identifying concerns early and taking the appropriate action (by submitting CCRs) to meet vulnerability, needs and risks, which in many cases, are increasingly complex.

- 5.4 However, this year, the number of children and young people, who have been the subject of an inter-agency referral discussion (IRDs)³ and the corresponding number of children and young people who have been the subject of child protection investigations⁴ have decreased for the first time, following a year-on-year increasing trend over the last several years.

- 5.5 On page 10 of the S&Q report, we have explored these two key child protection process reductions further and we continue to do so. We have concluded that there are a number of contributory factors and recent child protection practice developments which are having a bearing on this. This includes, improved multi-agency partnership working (in particular with the third sector), recent service re-design, a shift towards much earlier intervention, with support being provided at a much earlier stage and continued for as long as is necessary. We are also making increasing and effective use of multi-agency child or young person's plans, invariably being co-ordinated by a children's social worker (lead professional), thus reducing the need for formal multi-agency child protection procedures being taken.

² Note: A Child Concern Report (CCR) is a mechanism by which any practitioner or manager across the public, private or third sector, or indeed, any member of the public, can raise any worry or concern they may have about a child or young person's health and/or wellbeing.

³ Note: An Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is the start of the formal inter-agency process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision-making, following a reported concern about the abuse or neglect of a child or young person up to the age of 18 years; in relation to familial and non-familial concerns; and of siblings or other children within the same context. This includes any concern about an unborn baby that may be exposed to current or future risk.

⁴ Note: A Child Protection Investigation is carried out jointly by specially trained police officers and social workers. Such investigations are carried out where a Child Concern Report, including an unborn baby referral, indicates that a child or young person is in need of care and protection from harm, abuse or neglect; or there is a likelihood or risk of significant harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- 5.6 This year, there has been a very slight increase in the number of unborn baby referrals received (127 in 2022/2023 compared to 126 in 2021/2022); which equates to 11.9% of women booking for pregnancy care this year (11.4% last year). Of these 127 unborn baby referrals, 24 were considered at pre-birth Child Protection Case Conferences (CPCCs), where 23 (96%) went on to be placed on the Child Protection Register (CPR). Those unborn baby referrals, which did not proceed to pre-birth CPCCs and registration, all received various other/alternative supports, pre, and post-birth.
- 5.7 However, the CPC and their partner agencies have recognised that there are opportunities to raise further awareness and understanding of the Tayside Multi-Agency Practitioner's Guide: Concern for Unborn Babies, which aims to support and empower staff across all local services and agencies, to identify such concerns early and to make the necessary referrals for support. This will ensure that frontline staff across services and agencies remain alert to risks and vulnerability in pregnancy and that vulnerable pregnant women and their unborn babies are supported at an early stage.
- 5.8 This year, the number of children and young people (67, up from 59 in 2021/2022) being considered at initial CPCCs has risen for the first time since 2018/2019. Of these, 58 (87%) children and young people's names were placed on the CPR. All unborn babies, children and young people, placed on the CPR, are the subject of a multi-agency Child Protection Plan and co-ordinated by a children's social worker (lead professional). Those not placed on the CPR received alternative single and/or multi-agency supports, by way of a multi-agency child or young person's plan, again co-ordinated by a children's social worker (lead professional).
- 5.9 This year, the number of new CPR registrations⁵, during the year, has remained static at 84. This number includes the 23 previously mentioned unborn babies (see section 5.6 above), the 58 new registrations following initial CPCCs (see section 5.8 above) and the 3 registrations which were temporarily transferred in. In addition, the number of children and young people whose names remained on the CPR on 31 July 2023 was 49⁶ (55 on 31 July 2022), the lowest level since 2013. Whilst the CPC monitors registrations, they also monitor de-registrations and re-registration trends.
- 5.10 Whilst these registration trends are fairly consistent with a reduction in the number of IRDs and child protection investigations, we have concluded that recent service re-designs, and more effective use being made of multi-agency child or young person's plans at an earlier stage, has also reduced the need for registrations. Furthermore, on pages 19 to 21 of the S&Q report, following the significant investment made within Services for Children, Young People

⁵ Note: Registration periods are child-centred and unique to each child or young person's circumstances. Registration periods vary in length and a child or young person's name is only removed (de-registered) from the CPR where there is no longer a risk of significant harm; where there has been a recognised, significant and sustained improvement in their care and their removal from the CPR is a multi-agency decision, taken at a Review CPCC. During 2022/2023, a total of 90 children and young people's names were removed (de-registered) from the CPR. During the same period, a total of 17 children and young people were re-registered on the CPR.

⁶ Note: CPR Analysis - From a starting point of 55 on 31 July 2022, 84 were added (registered) (totalling 139), 90 were removed (de-registered), leaving 49 children and young people on the CPR on 31 July 2023.

and Families to secure a full-time, dedicated co-ordinator for the consistent chairing of CPCCs, we have provided an evaluation on the positive impact of this work, which has undoubtedly improved our performance, consistency (decision-making and registrations), lived experience and outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- 5.11 The age profile of those placed on the CPR remains unchanged. Unborn babies and younger children currently make up the majority of those now placed (registered) on the CPR. The most common areas for concern, for children in need of protection, continue to be parental mental ill-health, domestic abuse, and parental alcohol and/or drug use (and complex combinations thereof). Neglect and non-engagement also continue to feature highly, and we also recognise that in the majority, if not all of these cases, there will be also an element of emotional abuse.
- 5.12 The data and information provided by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) shows that there has again been a reduction in the overall number of children and young people referred to SCRA in Perth and Kinross. The number of children and young people subject to new or continuing Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs)⁷ has again dropped this year, and the number of Child Protection Orders (CPOs)⁸ has also dropped slightly this year, albeit the numbers are relatively low. The Reporter sees these as continuing positive trends in Perth and Kinross, in keeping with [The Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995 and the no Order principle](#) and the recent service redesigns and practice changes outlined in sections 5.5 and 5.10 above. The Reporter has also noted, that in Perth and Kinross, the conversion rate from referral to a Children's Hearing is currently at 49%, which is twice the national average, thus confirming that only those children and young people who are in need of compulsory measures of care and require to be referred, are being appropriately referred in Perth and Kinross.

Impact

- 5.13 Following previous feedback from Elected Members last year, the CPC has undertaken a multi-agency quality assurance review of IRDs (see previous footnote 2). This was a small-scale sample study, in effect, a proof-of-concept exercise which has now been tested out and implemented across Tayside. The key findings from this review, which overall were very positive, can be found on pages 17 to 19 of the S&Q report.

⁷ Note: A CSO is a legal document that makes a child or young person looked after by the local authority in Scotland. The child or young person may live at home or away from home, depending on the needs and risks of the child or young person. The local authority has to provide care, protection, and guidance to the child or young person, and follow a plan that involves the child or young person, the family, and other professionals. The child or young person and the family have to comply with the terms and conditions of the CSO, which lasts for a maximum of one year.

⁸ Note: A CPO is an order that can be granted by Sheriff in Scotland to address emergency and/or high risk situations where measures need to be put in place immediately to protect a child or young person. The Order can require any person in a position to do so to produce the child or young person to a specified person or authorise the removal of the child or young person by the specified person to a place of safety and the keeping of the child or young person in that place.

- 5.14 The S&Q report continues to evidence an improving position in terms of listening to, engaging with and consulting with children and young people. On pages 24 to 25 of the S&Q report, we have described the much-improved Independent Advocacy provisions now in place as a result of our partnership working with Independent Advocacy Perth and Kinross (IAPK).

The S&Q report also describes some of the ongoing work with third sector partners to support vulnerable Young Carers and the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) work in schools to keep younger children safe.

- 5.15 The S&Q report describes the increasing support being provided to staff, with increasing numbers of multi-agency staff undertaking online modular and webinar child protection learning and development opportunities. It also confirms that we have recently re-instated our in-person inter-agency child protection training and that we are working to significantly increase participation in that offer.
- 5.16 The S&Q report highlights the importance of, and the use being made of, the much improved CPC's public-facing website pages and our use of social media to extend the CPC's reach and footprint; whilst recognising that going forward, there are further opportunities to expand this.
- 5.17 The S&Q report also highlights the added value of the partnership work with the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC): Priority Group 5 (PG5): Safeguarding and Child Protection, aimed at improving child protection day-to-day culture, ethos and practice across Tayside.

Leadership and Improvement

- 5.18 Pages 41 onwards in the S&Q report, evidences our collective commitment to leadership and our strengthened public protection partnership arrangements.
- 5.19 The strengthened Public Protection Chief Officers' Group (COG); the Protecting People Co-ordination Group (PPCG) and the Children, Young People and Families Partnership (CYPFP) continue to provide strong leadership and direction to the work of the CPC partnership; particularly in terms of the scrutiny and accountability role that they have for the CPC's thematic reporting and update reports, and they also have direct oversight of the CPC's improvement work.
- 5.20 Page 45 of the S&Q report recognises that the CPC is a listening and learning partnership. Learning lessons and making improvements, particularly from Learning Reviews, are fundamental to the work of the CPC and to its commitment to continuous improvement through quality assurance and self-evaluation.
- 5.21 Finally, an update on the CPC's new Improvement Plan 1 April 2023 – 31 July 2026 is provided at Appendix 2. This plan co-ordinates the CPC's three-year improvement work which is articulated by various actions and tasks. Our key improvements planned for 2023 onwards include the following:

- Improvements in our use of key data; with deeper dives to inform our understanding of trends, patterns and outcomes;
- Improvements in key child protection processes; including IRDs and child protection planning meetings, to ensure consistency of practice and better outcomes;
- Further engagement opportunities with children, young people and their families, particularly by those with lived experience;
- Promote and/or develop key practice guidance (supported by training) aimed at empowering and supporting staff and improving practice in relation to unborn babies; IRDs; trauma awareness; mental health; domestic abuse; problematic drug and alcohol use; involvement of fathers and significant others; assessments and planning; recording practices and supervision; and
- Increased inter-agency child protection learning and development opportunities, with a significantly scaled-up offer of in-person child protection training.

6. FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 In conclusion, the annual Perth and Kinross CPC Standards and Quality Report 2022/2023 provides a comprehensive, high-level overview and analysis of the work carried out by the CPC, partner services and agencies to keep children and young people safe and protected. It sets out clearly, the work and priorities of the CPC to support the most vulnerable and at-risk children and young people. It describes the CPC's key strengths, areas for improvement and its capacity for further improvement. It confirms that the CPC is a listening and learning partnership, remains vigilant and is not complacent.

Author

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Jacquie Pepper	Chief Social Work Officer, Perth and Kinross Council	ECSCcommittee@pkc.gov.uk 01738 475000

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Sheena Devlin	Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)	27 November 2023

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes/None
Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	N/A
Workforce	N/A
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	N/A
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	N/A
Strategic Environmental Assessment	N/A
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	N/A
Legal and Governance	N/A
Risk	N/A
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	N/A

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No. (i).

Corporate Plan

1.2 This section sets out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives:

- (i) Giving every child the best start in life;
- (ii) Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;
- (iii) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;
- (iv) Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and
- (v) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.

This report relates to Objective No. (i).

1.3 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Vision, Values and Priorities in respect of the following key Priority area:

- Safe and Protected

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 There are no known financial resource implications at this time.

Workforce

2.2 There are no known workforce resource implications at this time.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no asset management resource implications at this time.

3. Assessments

3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

3.1.1 The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

3.2.1 The proposals have been considered under the Act; however, no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Sustainability

3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:

- In the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets.
- In the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaption programmes.
- In a way that it considers most sustainable.

3.3.1 The proposals have been assessed as not applicable.

Legal and Governance

3.4 There are no associated risks at this time.

3.5 Not Applicable.

Risk

3.6 There are no associated risks at this time.

4. Consultation

Internal

4.1 The Head of Legal and Governance Services; the CYPFP, Education and Children's Service's Senior Management Team and the CPC and their partners have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

4.2 The CPC and their partners have been consulted in the preparation of this report – including NHS Tayside, Police Scotland – Tayside Division and the SCRA.

5. Communication

5.1 There are no communication issues at this time.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (and not containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing this report.

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Perth and Kinross CPC Standards and Quality Report
2022/2023

Appendix 2: Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 April 2023 –
31 July 2026 (Update)