

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Scrutiny Committee – 29 November 2021

Council – 15 December 2021

PERTH AND KINROSS CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2020/2021

Report by Jacquie Pepper, Chief Social Work Officer
(Report No. 21/225)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee (CPC), in compliance with Scottish Government guidance, publishes an annual Standards and Quality (S&Q) report. The S&Q report for the academic year 2020/2021 provides an overview of the key activities and work of the CPC partners to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.

This year's report describes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, young people, and families, how performance has been maintained, and how services and agencies have successfully adapted. This report also confirms that the CPC continues to focus on learning and improvement and has prepared a programme of improvement work for 2021 and beyond.

1. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 All 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 2020 to 31 July 2021.
- 1.2 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 2019).
- 1.3 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 quality assurance and self-evaluation activities. It describes achievements, key strengths and areas for further improvement. This report also describes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more importantly, how services and agencies have successfully adapted and continued to meet demands.
- 1.4 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 2021 and beyond.

This improvement programme has been informed by various national and local drivers; including legislative and policy changes; planning and

self-evaluation frameworks; recent local self-evaluation and review activities; and research into Tayside Initial Case Reviews (ICRs) and Significant Case Reviews (SCRs) commissioned by the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC).

- 1.5 Page 5 of the S&Q report provides a summary infographic. It identifies the key changes in the volume and activity of key multi-agency child protection processes.
- 1.6 The reporting and analysis of performance data has continued to improve over the last year. The CPC has continued to receive more frequent data in a more integrated way as a result of the improved governance for child protection during the pandemic. The headline statistical data, presented on pages 8 to 18 of the S&Q report, has been expanded to include additional key performance indicators and the report benefits from more detailed multi-agency contextual analysis and narrative.
- 1.7 The data shows that the number of Child Concern Reports (CCRs)¹ has risen for a fifth successive year; by far the majority of CCRs continue to come from Police Scotland. The number of children and young people, who have been the subject of an inter-agency referral discussion (IRDs)² and the number of child protection investigations have continued to increase continuing a year-on-year trend for the last five years. There has also been an increase in the number of joint investigative interviews and joint paediatric forensic medical examinations.
- 1.8 The number of unborn baby referrals received has increased over the last year (134 in 2020/21 compared to 92 in 2019/20). The number of unborn babies being considered at pre-birth child protection case conferences has risen significantly (33 in 2020/21 compared to 18 in 2019/20). Of the 33 unborn babies considered at a pre-birth child protection case conference, 31 (94%) went on to be placed on the child protection register (CPR). This suggests that practice continues to be effective, and that frontline staff have remained alert to risks and vulnerability in pregnancy throughout the pandemic. The additional resource approved by Council in 2019/20 (which provided the equivalent of 4.0 full time employees (FTE) social workers for two years in to Services for Children Young People and Families) has helped to mitigate the unprecedented demands experienced in the first 6 months of the pandemic and expanded the ability to provide intensive and flexible family support in evenings and weekends.
- 1.9 The number of children and young people being considered at initial child protection case conferences has fallen sharply this year (72 in 2020/21 compared to 110 in 2019/20). Of these, 51 (71%) children and young people's names were placed on the CPR. Whilst the conversion rate has reduced from

¹ 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.

² Note: An IRD is a discussion between practitioners, services, or agencies, where a child concern report and/or multi-agency screening arrangements have determined that a child or young person may need care and protection from harm, abuse, or neglect; or there is a likelihood or risk of significant harm, abuse, or neglect.

90% in 2019/20, this remains relatively high. Unborn babies, children and young people placed on the CPR are the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan.

- 1.10 In 2020/21, there were 95 new CPR registrations during the year compared to 138 in 2019/20 in line with the reduction in the number of children and young people being considered at child protection case conferences. The number of children and young people whose names were included on the CPR on 31 July 2021 was 69 compared to 97 in 2020. This is directly attributable to new and creative ways of working as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. A resumption of virtual multi-agency case conferences; including review case conferences has re-enabled multi-agency decision-making to take place more effectively and frequently. The return of children and young people to early learning and childcare and schools, as restrictions have eased, has also meant that the protective factors of universal services have contributed to decisions to remove children's names from the CPR.
- 1.11 The areas for concern, for children in need of protection, continue to be parental mental ill-health, domestic abuse and parental alcohol or drug use; sometimes referred to as the "*trio of risk*". Neglect and non-engagement also continue to feature highly. It is also recognised that in the majority, if not all of these cases, there will be an element of emotional abuse.
- 1.12 The data and information provided by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) has been expanded, by The Reporter, to demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 and resulting Scottish Government emergency legislation and guidance on Children's Hearings.
- 1.13 Overall, there has been a reduction in both the number of referrals and the number of children and young people referred to SCRA. The CPC continues to monitor the use of legal measures, including the number of children subject to compulsory supervision orders (CSOs). This has increased slightly by 3% and attributable to the reduced capacity to arrange hearings and to terminate CSOs.
- 1.14 The number of child protection orders (CPOs) has decreased (25 in 2020/21 compared to 32 in 2019/20). The Reporter has proposed that despite the COVID-19 restrictions, vulnerable children and young people in Perth and Kinross have continued to be seen and early intervention and support arrangements have been effective in avoiding the need for compulsory measures of care.
- 1.15 The S&Q report evidences a continually improving picture in respect of listening to and engaging with children and young people, with access to independent advocacy support. These services have successfully adapted to the COVID-19 restrictions through a creative and blended approach to contact, visits and engagement.

The commitment to seeking and representing the views of children and young people in key child protection processes has been continued, and in many ways enhanced, through innovative working and the use of existing and new technologies.

- 1.16 The S&Q report acknowledges that whilst there has been no multi-agency face-to-face child protection training carried out since March 2020, the CPC has

successfully adapted its existing multi-agency child protection training offer and developed a range of alternative options. This includes new courses via online modules and webinars.

- 1.17 The Perth and Kinross CPC continues to have a very good virtual presence and footprint on social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) and has supported periodic national child protection campaigns from CPCScotland. The public facing website has been refreshed and there are plans to revive the key message that child protection is everyone's job over the winter months of 2021/22.
- 1.18 A clear demonstration of that commitment and approach to learning and improvement can be found on pages 37 to 39 of the S&Q report, which highlights the ongoing work of the TRIC Priority Group 5 (PG5): Safeguarding and Child Protection which continues to provide added value to the work of the CPC. Of particular note, is the commissioned research work completed this year by Dr Sharon Vincent of Northumbria University, into case reviews carried out over a three-year period across Tayside. This has provided a sound evidence base for both the TRIC PG5 and the CPC planned improvement work for the next two years.
- 1.19 The S&Q report evidences the collective commitment to leadership, as we continue to emerge from, and recover from, the COVID-19 pandemic. It describes how we have developed our protecting people (public protection) arrangements, and more importantly, the shared commitment to change and improvement. This is evidenced within the CPC Improvement Plan 2021 - 2023 (Appendix 2).

2. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 In conclusion, the Perth and Kinross CPC annual S&Q report provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of the work across all partners to keep children and young people safe and protected. It clearly sets out the extent to which the CPC, managers and staff have prioritised their work to support the most vulnerable and at-risk children and young people through the challenges of the pandemic. Notably, child protection partnership arrangements have been strengthened and there has been a sharper focus and attention to performance information to ensure that key processes remained highly effective.

This report provides evidence that risk and vulnerability has continued to be identified and that child protection processes have ensured an effective response to children and young people.

There are new pressures and demands arising as a result of the new context presented by the pandemic and the CPC's S&Q report clearly shows that these are being monitored closely, analysed, and understood. The additional resource, approved by Council in 2019/20 (which provided the equivalent of 4.0 FTE social workers for two years into Services for Children Young People and Families), has helped to mitigate the unprecedented demands experienced in the first six months of the pandemic and expanded the ability to provide intensive and flexible family support in evenings and weekends. The continued need for

additional resourcing in to child protection beyond the two years will be kept under review.

2.1.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- (i) Scrutinises and comments as appropriate on the Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee Standards and Quality Report 2020/2021 (Appendix 1) and the contents of the Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 August 2021 – 31 July 2023 (Appendix 2).

2.1.2 It is recommended that Council:

- (i) Notes the wide range of work being carried out by Perth and Kinross Council, and partners through the CPC to provide high quality services to protect children and young people, in particular, the high-level commitment to continuous improvement through self-evaluation; and
- (ii) Endorses the contents of this report and the Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee Standards and Quality Report 2020/2021 (Appendix 1) and the contents of the Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 August 2021 – 31 July 2023 (Appendix 2).

Author

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Sheena Devlin	Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)	2 November 2021

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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 resource implications at this time.

Workforce

2.2 There are no known workforce implications at this time.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 There are no asset management implications at this time.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 This report has 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 matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and 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 Not Applicable.

Legal and Governance

3.4 There are no legal implications at this time.

3.5 N/A

Risk

3.6 There are no associated risks at this time.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Head of Legal Services, Head of Human Resources, the Children, Young People and Families Partnership, Education and Children's Service's Senior Management Team and the Child Protection Committee and partners have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

External

- 4.2 The Child Protection Committee and partners have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

5. Communication

- 5.1 There are no communication issues at this time.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee Standards and Quality Report 2020/2021

Appendix 2: Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 August 2021 – 31 July 2023