



Fife Child Protection Committee

Annual Report 2021-2022

CPC Independent Chair



Preface from Chief Officers

Welcome to the Fife Child Protection Committee Annual Report for 2021-2022.

The Child Protection Committee works locally, regionally, and nationally across all services to support the multi-agency workforce and community. This ensures that Fife is the best place in Scotland to grow up, promote our children's care and welfare, and protect children from abuse and harm when needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020 and has had far-reaching consequences for every aspect of our lives, including delivering child protection services. As we navigated the uncharted waters of the pandemic, our primary focus was ensuring the safety and well-being of our most vulnerable children. Our staff worked tirelessly to deliver uninterrupted service and maintain robust partnerships with agencies and professionals involved in child protection. Children at risk of harm or abuse continued to receive support and assessment, often in innovative ways that prioritised their safety.

During this extraordinary period, we recognised the importance of addressing the immediate needs of our community while maintaining the integrity of our reporting process. Consequently, the annual report for 2021-2022 was delayed, allowing us to focus our resources on safeguarding children and families.

We appreciate the understanding and support of Fife's agencies, partners, and the community for their ongoing efforts to protect children and young people. Together, we will continue working to ensure that Fife remains a safe and nurturing environment for all children to grow up in. This report captures not only the achievements of our staff and Committee during this extended timeframe but also outlines our plans for the forthcoming year.


We are delighted to approve this report and look forward to the year ahead.



Steve Grimmond
Chief Executive
Fife Council



Derek McEwan
Divisional Commander
'P' Division Police Scotland



Carol Potter
Chief Executive
NHS Fife



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Aim, Values, Priorities, Role and Membership

Fife Child Protection Committee (CPC) has a clear vision for all children in Fife to be safe and protected from harm. As a partnership, Fife's Child Protection Committee exists to develop, implement, and improve child protection strategy and thread child protection work through a wide range of local agencies and across the community. The CPC embodies the ethos that "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm all right."



WE AIM to see Fife's children achieve their full potential by providing a safe and supportive environment.

OUR VALUES

We will:

- Treat children as individuals, considering any diversity.
- Ensure we use the least intrusive intervention needed.
- Hear children.
- Maximise the strengths within families and communities.



OUR PRIORITIES We will always consider the steps outlined in the 'Six for Safety' in all of our practice.

The needs of children are at the centre of all practice.



'Six for Safety' promotes best practice when working with children and families. Developed from analysis and learning from Learning Reviews, these are day-to-day best practice principles of working to support and protect children and young people and support improved decision-making.



Ensuring that all relationships with children, parents/carers are effective, constructive and are central to improving wellbeing and minimise risk of harm.



All assessments and plans are effective in achieving outcomes in meeting needs and minimising risk of harm. All available resources, techniques and tools are used to best effect.



Relevant information is shared appropriately, clear lines of responsibility for action are understood across partners and communication is effective in minimising potential risks.



Early and effective intervention is achieved where possible, minimising the risk of harm to children and young people.

A culture of effective management support and/or supervision is embedded which embodies the values and principles of Fife Child Protection Committee.



Context

On 30 June 2020, the population of Fife was 373,550, making it the third-largest local authority in Scotland. It is located between the River Tay to the north and the River Forth to the south and has a mixture of urban and rural settlements. Two-thirds of people live in an urban setting, mainly in or near one of its three large towns: Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes.



Between 2000 and 2020, the population of Fife increased by 7.4%. The 0-15 population was 63,680 in 2021, accounting for 17% of the population. The 0-16 age population is projected to decrease by 6.0% by 2028, which contrasts with the national picture, with a projected increase of 1.8%.

In 2020, 50,014 children and young people were registered in Fife Council Primary or Secondary school provision.

A significant segment of the population experiences challenging financial and material circumstances.

The Fife Child Poverty Action Reports (2020 – 21) highlight:

- Almost 21% of children in Fife experience relative poverty, and 19% of children in Fife are in absolute poverty
- 21.8% of P4-7 and 17.9% of secondary pupils are registered for Free School Meals
- 14.1% of workers earn below the Living Wage

Within Fife, child poverty remains highest in the Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, and Cowdenbeath areas, with some regions recording relative child poverty rates as high as 34%. In comparison, others are as low as 11%. While absolute poverty has seen little change since 2014/15, relative poverty has increased from 16% to 21% between 2014/15 and 2019/20.

Our Work

Fife's Child Protection Committee is a locally based, inter-agency strategic partnership which leads the development of local inter-agency Child Protection Policy and Practice. The Committee also works with the Scottish Government and other partners to implement Policy and Practice Developments.

The CPC ensures there is full consideration of key related areas of work for example a connect with Fife Violence Against Women Partnership and Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

The Committee is committed to promoting individual and collective leadership, recognising cross-cutting themes and the complexity of child protection working.

Improvements are driven through the Child Protection Improvement Plan and are monitored by the Committee. Our Annual Report is made widely available.

Structure, Function and Overview



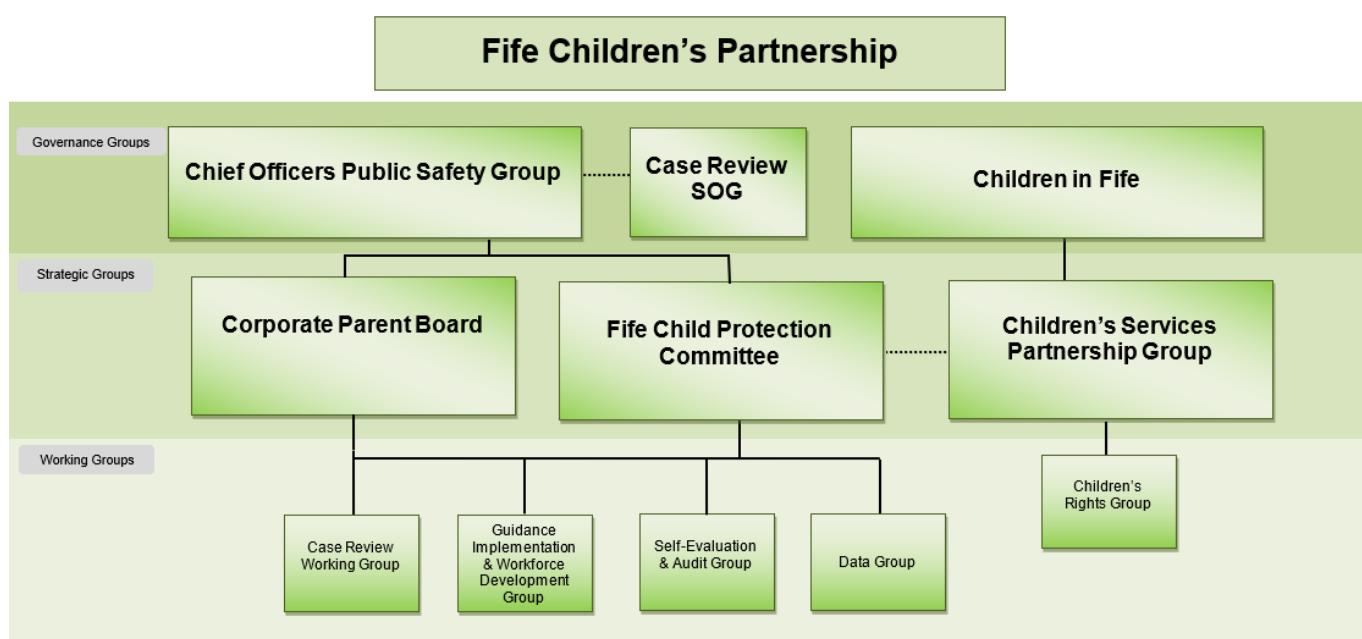
The Committee retains a strategic overview of child protection policies and procedures, reporting every quarter to the Chief Officers of the Public Safety Group. In 2019, the Scottish Government published refreshed guidance outlining the Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer responsibilities in "Protecting Children and Young People".

Fife CPC functions were already well established and are aligned to the functions the guidance supports in respect of:

- Continuous improvement, developing policies, procedures, and guidance
- Public information, engagement and participation
- Data on Child Protection Services and Performance
- Quality Assurance and Self Evaluation
- Forging strong links to strategic plans locally, regionally and nationally
- Strategic planning and connections
- Annual reporting on the work of the CPC

The CPC met five times in the reporting period. Four permanent subgroups are tasked with delivering an appropriate work plan and report directly to the CPC.

The diagram in Appendix 2 shows the subgroup structure and more comprehensive governance structure in which the CPC currently operates.



Strong links exist between the Committee and the Fife Children's Services Partnership through the Fife Children's Services Plan (2020 - 23). The vision for the Committee and the Partnership is to achieve our vision of 'Making Fife a place where every child and young person matters.'

The Children's Services Plan was developed following consultation with children, young people, parents, carers and staff, whose collective feedback assisted in the formation of the Plan's four main priorities;

- Delivering the Promise,
- Supporting well-being,
- Closing the Equity Gap,
- Promoting Children's Rights.

In line with the GIRFEC well-being indicators, we aim to ensure children and young people are safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected, and included.

The Committee has a crucial role in achieving these aims along with the Children's Services Partnership, Chief Officers Group - Public Protection, Fife Child Protection Committee Quality Assurance and Audit Group, The Guidance Implementation and Workforce Development Group and the Case Review Working Group.

Working Group Activity

Working group meetings have continued to meet throughout the pandemic, although remotely. As the lockdown eased, most groups moved to a hybrid forum, allowing for flexibility in attendance. A brief synopsis of the group's contribution within the reporting period follows.

CASE REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Child Protection Committees, on behalf of the Chief Officers, are responsible for undertaking Learning Reviews and reporting / recommending total Learning Reviews when the agreed criteria are met. The Committee uses the learning from Learning Reviews to promote good practice, improve practice, and improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Group:

- Considers the findings and lessons from the inspection nationally about practice in Fife and from Learning Reviews
- Co-ordinates Learning Reviews as necessary
- Continues to work on any externally commissioned Learning Reviews
- Monitors the progress of actions resulting from case reviews.

What we have done:

- We have maintained a combined, streamlined process for tracking and reporting Learning Review action plans.
- We have taken forward learning from Initial Learning Reviews completed throughout the year.
- We have considered learning from Significant Case Reviews carried out elsewhere in the country and considered the Fife context within this.
- We have continued to liaise with and consider feedback from the Care Inspectorate in their role as the central repository for Learning Review reports.
- We have contributed to the National Community of Practice for Learning Reviews.
- We have finalised a new Learning Review protocol to align our local processes with the recently published National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews (2021).

What we will do next:

- Undertake work to review our more comprehensive policies and procedures across the partnership to incorporate learning from national reviews.
- Consider the interface of the Child Death Hub and ensure that our policies and procedures interface seamlessly with this group.

SELF-EVALUATION AND AUDIT WORKING GROUP

The Self-evaluation and audit working group audits and evaluates multi-agency child protection work, including work around the Minimum Data Sets for Child Protection.

The Group:

- Report quarterly to the CPC.
- Agrees, implements, and reviews multi-agency quality assurance mechanisms for inter-agency work (Self -Evaluation Calendar aligned to CPC Improvement Plan) .
- Ensures that the quality assurance mechanisms contribute directly to improving services to protect children and young people.
- Considers the findings and lessons from the inspection nationally and from initial and significant case reviews.
- Reports on the outcome of the quality assurance processes and makes recommendations to the Committee.

What we have done:

- The National Minimum Dataset (NMD) for Child Protection Committees is a 'package' of resources supporting Scotland's 30 Child Protection Committees to collate, analyse and report on an agreed set of indicators consistently and meaningfully. The first report of the Minimum Data Sets was presented to the Committee in February 2021 and for Q1, August to October 2020. Since then, quarterly reports have been given to the CPC, and we have worked to embed our use of the Minimum Data Set for Child Protection.
- We have undertaken an audit of all children subject to a reregistration on the Child Protection Register within 12 months.

What we will do next:

- Review the scope and structure of the Self -Evaluation Framework to ensure alignment on areas identified as priorities by the Committee and within the parameters set down by the Care Inspectorate.
- Continue to embed the Minimum Data Sets, ensuring analysis of data informs improvement activity as well as consider what additional indicators may support increased granularity.

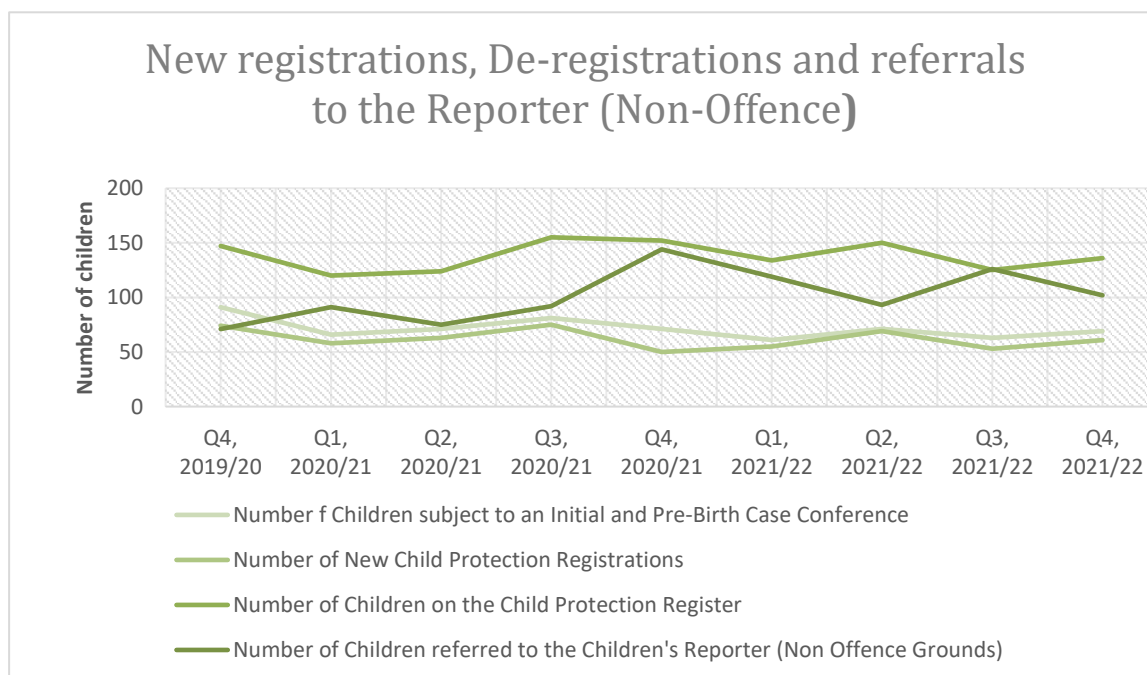
GUIDANCE IMPLEMENTATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

The new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 was enacted on 6 September 2021, with a 24-month implementation period. The CPC agreed that changes would be proposed and implemented in phases. A detailed self-evaluation of the implications of the new guidance on local processes and practice was undertaken, and a significant number of changes were identified in the new guidance, which supersedes the 2014 version of the guidance. The self-evaluation activity identified some of the changes already embedded across the partnership. Actions to implement the remaining changes were scheduled, and work is underway to deliver on these needed developments. The CPC continues to monitor the implementation of the guidance and evaluate the impact of performance and how changes to strategy and practice improve outcomes for children and young people.

Key Statistics

The indicators below provide an overview of activity levels and trends. The chart shows the number of children who come to an Initial or Pre-Birth Case Conference, the number of new child protection registrations, the total number of children on the Child Protection Register and the number of children referred to the Reporter.

By considering these statistics in trend, we can see where there are changes, seek explanations for those changes, adjust resources and practice accordingly to meet any change.



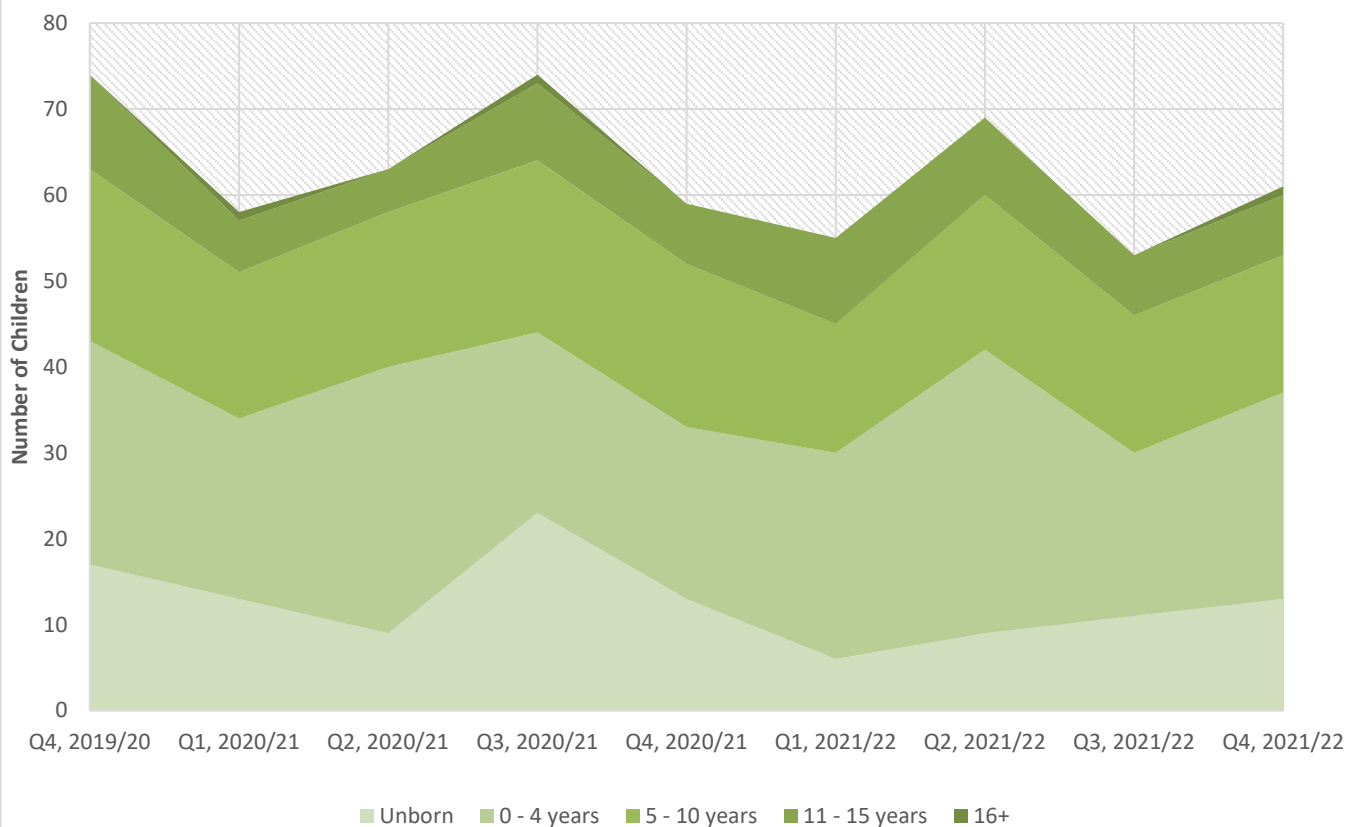
Key Messages

- There has been a steady decline in children on the Child Protection Register over the preceding 24 months. This is consistent with the national trend.
- There has been an increase in the number of children referred to the Children's Reporter on Non-Offence Grounds.

Concerns recorded at Child Protection Case Conferences

In the last 12 months, a range of concerns have been recorded as the impact or likely impact on a child, with risk factors of parental mental health problems and parental substance misuse and neglect most frequently recorded as the issues most often raising concern.

Characteristics Of Our Vulnerable Children and Young People



Key Messages

- Unborn babies and children under 4 constitute approximately 60% of children on the Child Protection Register.
- Analysis of the data in real time has enabled the partnership to consider both single and multi-agency themes which require more scrutiny. An example of this has been work undertaken by the Children & Families Reviewing Service which has a key function in child protection planning across the partnership. Work has involved considering parental participation at Child Protection Conferences, as well as multi-agency representation.

Priority Areas for Development

The Committee, through self-evaluation and learning, has identified several priority areas for development in the next year. These will form part of the refreshed improvement plan.

- Implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection 2021.
- Implementation of the National Guidance for Learning Reviews 2021.
- Increased capacity around multi-agency child protection training.
- Implementation of the new national Child Joint Investigative Interview model.
- A focus on neglect.

Enquiries

Please get in touch with the Lead Officer: Child Protection Committee for further information or enquiries regarding this report.

Fife Child Protection Committee

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