

Agenda Item	10
Report No	JMC-10-25

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL/NHS HIGHLAND

Committee: Joint Monitoring Committee

Date: 12 June 2025

Report Title: JMC Governance

Report By: Chief Social Work Officer, Highland Council

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the arrangements for governance across the partnership. Governance and assurance is defined as a robust system for assuring high standards in the delivery of safe, personalised and effective services.

The report acknowledges and builds upon the previous report to the Committee on the 27th March 2024, in relation to Future Strategic Planning reporting. It reflects the synergies between the functions which are delivered by the Partnership and permits a response to governance which is consistent for both the delivery of adult's and children's services recognising that the governance is different.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the update; and
- ii. **Consider and agree** the recommendations as noted within the report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are specific resource issues arising out of the delivery of Adult Social Care (ASC) by NHS Highland. Those resource issues are governed by the Integration Scheme currently in place, as signed off by the Council and Board in March 2021 and which received Ministerial sign off in February 2022.
- 3.2 **Legal** - The legal arrangements covering the delivery of integrated service, are provided for within the above referenced Integration Scheme. There are no further or additional arising legal issues to be brought to the attention of the JMC, which are not as noted within this report.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - No arising issues.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - No arising issues.

3.5 **Risk** –No arising issues

3.6 **Gaelic** - No arising issues.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report for Committee, requested update on governance arrangements within the partnership. Consequently, an impact assessment is not required.

5 Preamble

5.1 This report builds on the report to this Committee on the 27th March 2024 in relation to Future Strategic Planning reporting.

5.2 Our services play a crucial role in protecting and supporting some of the most vulnerable people and communities in Highland. Effective leadership and robust governance of these services are essential to ensuring that partners can carry out their duties safely, ethically, and with the necessary support.

5.3 Effective governance is the process by which organisations ensure effective service delivery and promote positive outcomes for the people in our communities. Responsibility sits with all practitioners, managers, and leaders. Effective governance should be integral to all practice and provision with shared ownership and accountability at every level regarding practice and service quality.

5.4 This report outlines the governance arrangements across the partnership. The governance is different in terms of responsibility for the integrated adult plan (the Strategic Plan) and the Integrated Children's Services Plan. It is important to note that whilst this Joint Monitoring Committee has responsibility for the Strategic Plan in place for adults, this role in relation to the Integrated Children's Services Plan sits with the Community Planning Partnership. Notwithstanding the approaches which are set out in legislation, it is important that this Committee is apprised in terms of the delivery of all services governed by the terms of the Integration Scheme in place which extends to some children's services.

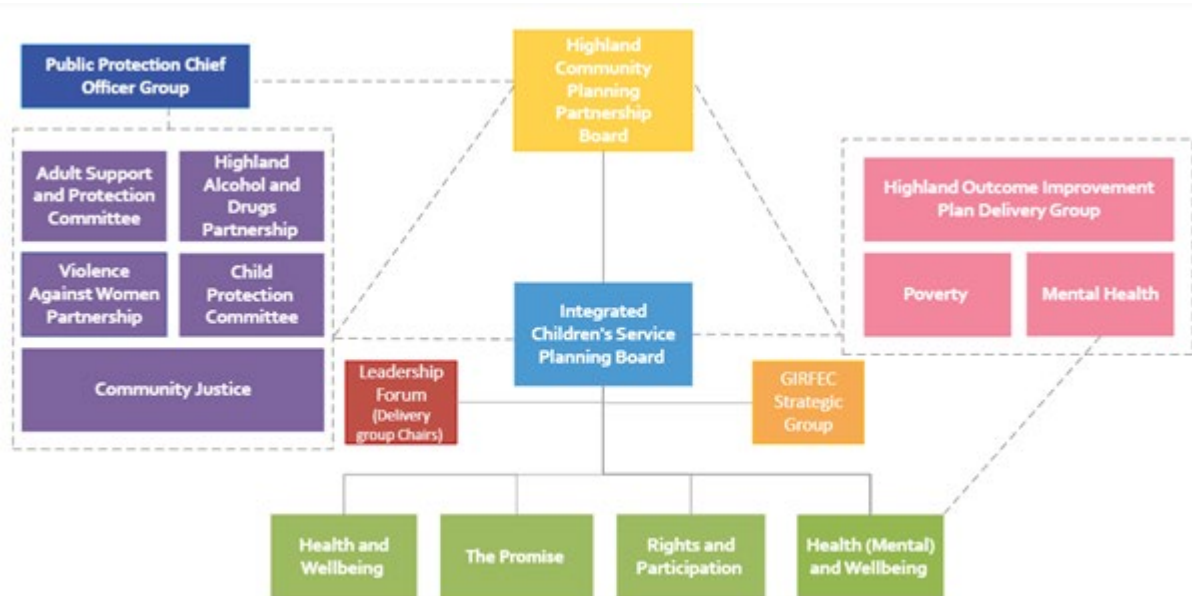
5.5 The Highland Public Protection Chief Officers Group is the over-arching group for protection across our organisations (please refer to graph in 6.1). All protection committees meet regularly and monitor practice across Highland. In turn, these report into the HPPCOG.

6 Children's Services

6.1 Section eight of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Part 3), requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority, in respect of each three-year period. The current plan covers the period between 2023 and 2026.

Within the plan, partnership priorities for improvement are set around the following themes:

- Health and wellbeing
- Poverty
- Children's rights and participation
- Child protection
- Corporate parenting
- Drugs and Alcohol

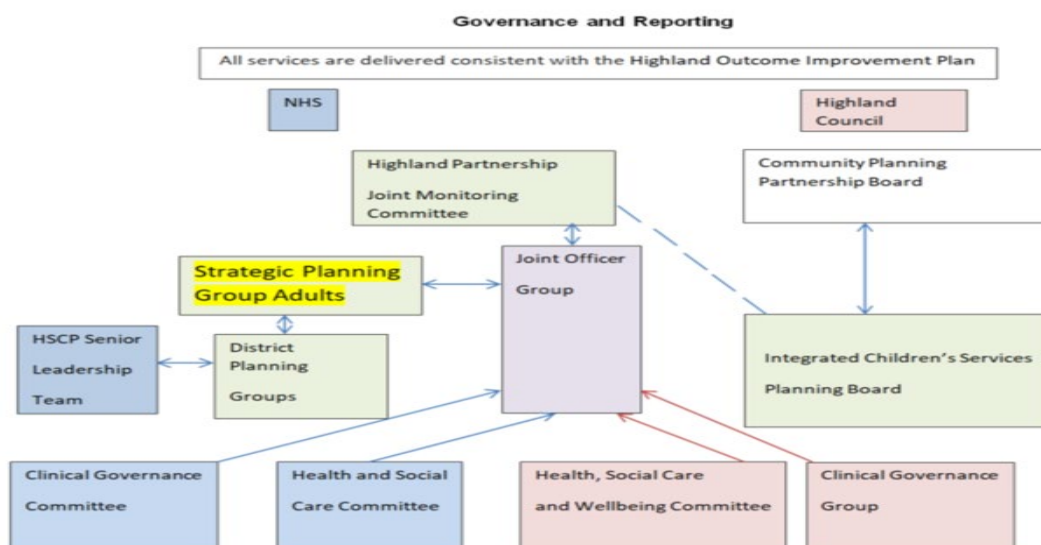


- 6.2 The Integrated Children's Services Partnership recognises that children's services planning is an ongoing process and central to good planning is ensuring a robust connect between national and local strategic planning. Our performance management framework connects partnership strategic planning within a single framework. This framework provides both the tools for planning, self-evaluation, reporting, performance management and assurance.
- 6.3 The Integrated Children's Service Planning Board has responsibility for monitoring progress towards achieving the outcomes outlined within the Integrated Children's Services Plan and utilises a fully developed Performance Framework to achieve this.
- 6.4 Within our planning processes lead officers from partner organisations have been identified for each themed group along with a lead officer for each of the improvement priorities. Partners work together and take responsibility for co-ordinating performance reporting on a regular basis. In addition, our performance is measured through listening to the voices of children, young people and their families, learning from self-evaluation, analysing intelligence and scrutinising an agreed set of qualitative and quantitative improvement measures.
- 6.5 Clinical governance within the partnership in relation to children is achieved via the Infant, children's and young person's clinical governance group (ICYP CGG). This groups spans the NHS Highland Board area to support shared awareness and learning and reports into the Board Clinical Governance Committee. There are also dedicated groups such as the CAMHS and NDAS Programme Boards taking forward specific improvement work that support good governance.

- 6.6 In addition, regular review of key performance measures allows JMC members to monitor the progress of the Partnership in implementing and delivering the outcomes within the Integrated Children's Services Plan.

7. Adult Services

- 7.1 The Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 requires the Partnership to have in place a Strategic Plan which sets out the arrangements for the carrying out of the integration functions for the area over the period of the plan. This also sets out how these arrangements are intended to achieve, or contribute to achieving, the national health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 7.2 This same Act also directs that a Strategic Planning Group requires to be established and in place in to support the development of this Strategic Plan. The Strategic Planning Group continues to be apprised in terms of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, and in turn, gives assurance to the Joint Officers Group through regular updates.
- 7.3 The same Act also directs that Locality Planning Groups require to be established to provide a forum for professionals, communities and individuals to collectively develop and deliver locality plans based on the Joint Strategic Plan and local need. In Highland, these groups are called District Planning Groups.
- 7.4 The Strategic Plan was published in April 2024, as overseen by the Strategic Planning Group. District Planning Groups have been meeting since April 2024 and currently meeting for the fifth time. Their role is to support local delivery in a manner consistent with the Strategic Plan.
- 7.5 A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been published to support local implementation of the Strategic Plan. The assessment has been presented to the Strategic Planning Group, which will consider the implications further.
- 7.6 The governance and reporting structure for the Strategic Planning Group is as follows:



*The governance structure diagram is currently being revised

8. Lifespan partnership governance

- 8.1 The governance structure above (which is under review) highlights a number of groups and committees that bring together governance in relation to children's and adult services. These all link into the committee structures within each organisation.
- 8.2 Clinical and Care Governance within the Board area is currently constituted of Quality and Patient Safety groups and Clinical Governance forum in acute that report on matters relating to the child services within the Board and equivalent groups within the HHSCP relating to clinical and care governance matters for adult services. These forums report to the Clinical Governance Committee for NHS Highland.
- 8.3 There are structures in place in relation to professional regulation and governance for health and social care staff across the partnership with further work underway to explore how to develop this further.

9. National review of social work governance and assurance across Scotland

- 9.1 On the 6th of May 2025, the Care Inspectorate published its review of social work governance and assurance across Scotland. This report presents the key messages from their national review and includes reflections and actions for social work services. The review took place between June and November 2024 and was focussed on social work service delivery across adults, children's and justice social work services, and considered social work in the context of working with other key statutory partners. Considerations were also made regarding the relationship and impact that health and social care partnerships and social work have. The full report can be found [here](#).
- 9.2 The key messages from the report were:
 - 1. Overall, social work leaders and managers worked effectively within often complicated governance arrangements. In most cases these arrangements were well understood by staff.
 - 2. Levels of oversight and assurance were enhanced by dedicated 'social work governance boards or their equivalent.
 - 3. Social work influence was at times more limited within health and social care partnerships where it had a less equal level of representation.
 - 4. The role of the chief social work officer was important in promoting and amplifying the voice of social work.
 - 5. Staff, managers and leaders felt confident to promote and uphold values within social work services. There was a strong belief in the importance of social work values to support ethical practice.
 - 6. Overall social work assurance was mostly effective.
 - 7. Social work services were managing significant levels of risk relating to financial and staffing resources. The impact of both risks was amplified in island and rural settings.
 - 8. Overall, staff were supported to deliver effective services.
 - 9. Most social work staff benefitted from appropriate professional supervision arrangements and received learning and development opportunities which supported them to deliver their role.

The report concluded that although social work governance arrangements were complex, they were mostly effective and social work leaders were making these work. Social work was not always seen as an equal partner within partnership arrangements in a number of areas and was not consistently and robustly represented in some partnerships.

This report will help inform governance conversations as we move forward with changing the operating model within Highland.

Designation: Chief Social Work Officer

Date: 28th May 2025

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