



MEETING TITLE:
HIGHLAND CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE MEETING via MICROSOFT TEAMS

DATE:
21st August, 2025
11:00 to 13:00

PRESENT:

Highland CPC – Mhairi Grant (Chair), Donna Munro (Lead Officer), Fiona Mackintosh (L&D Officer), Mike Mawby (S&T), Mary Cameron (Minute)

Highland Council Social Care – Fiona Duncan (ECO Health & Social Care), Jack Libby (Head of Service - Children, Young People & Families), Gillian Buchanan (Strategic Lead - Early Intervention & Protection), Louise Smith (strategic Lead - Social Care), Pol McClelland (Strategic Lead - Youth Justice), Wendy Lowrie (Children's Services Manager – Bairns' Hoose)

Highland Council Health – Nancy Healy (Lead Nurse – Child Protection),

Highland Council Performance and Improvement – Ian Kyle (Head of Integrated Children's Services), Sadie Kevill (Integrated Children's Service Officer) Jonathan Denovan (Business Intelligence Officer), Jennifer Baughan (Whole Family Wellbeing)

Highland Council Legal – James Noone (Legal Manager, Litigation & Advice)

The Promise Programme Manager – Carrie McLaughlan

Police Scotland – DI Reuben Lindsay (PPU)

NHS Highland – Isla Barton (Director of Midwifery), Deborah Stewart (Child Health Commissioner, Public Health)

Highlife Highland – James Martin (Director of Sport, Leisure & Safeguarding)

Third Sector – Clair Wallace (Youth Highland)

Children's Hearings Scotland – Lisa MacDonald (Area Convener)

APOLOGIES:

Highland Council Education – Yvonne Ross (Education Psychology, Child Protection Officer, Education & Learning), Annika Jansson (CO Education – Primary)

Highland Council Housing – Brian Cameron (Service Lead Housing Policy & Performance)

Highland Councillor Representative – David Fraser

Scottish Prison Service – Kerry O'Hagan (Head of Offender Outcomes)

Army Welfare Service - TBC

SCRA – Karen Erskine (Authority Reporter)

Care Inspectorate – Tim Ward

GUEST: Claire Wallace (Senior Health Improvement Specialist (Guest))

NO.	AGENDA ITEM	SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION	ACTION/DECISIONS	RESPONSIBLE
1	Welcome & Apologies	Chair welcomed all to the meeting noting the large number of apologies.		Chair
2	Previous Meeting Minute & Matters Arising	<p>Committee approved the minute of the previous meeting (20/03/2025). Chair had a few housekeeping messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Any papers of sub-group update reports should be submitted in good time to prevent delay in the papers going out ahead of meetings. -At the start of the year it had been hoped to alternate the meetings between business and face to face. For various reasons this has not happened but the plan is for the December meeting (04/12/2025) to be held face to face. -Please ensure you reply to meeting invites. 		Chair
3.	Early Protective Messaging	<p>Claire introduced herself and talked committee through a presentation. Children are subjected to multiple influences today and Early Protective Messaging (EPM) is here to support them and keep them safe. EPM is not a project, it's a way of supporting practitioners working in the early years promoting confidence in staff and ensuring that consistent messaging and language surrounds the child. The message of EPM is intended to be delivered in day to day practice by implementing and reinforcing the key message and terminology. The use of EPM is intended to engage families while respecting the language used in their own homes.</p> <p>Current situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training the Trainers completed -EPM workshop presented at the CPC conference -Steering Group formed with engagement from stakeholders and families. -Training and communication plan is being developed. -Evaluation methods considered and tested. -Pilot of EPM has been undertaken at the Merkinch Family Centre. <p>Putting this in place with young children now will give the teenagers of the future the confidence to know what is acceptable and the ability to understand consent and their own boundaries. EPM is fully endorsed by Safe, Strong & Free and CALA. Carrie confirmed that Each & Every Child are very interested in EPM.</p> <p>Sign off and endorsement by CPC is required.</p>	CPC AGREED TO IMPLEMENT EPM	Claire Wallace & Fiona M

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		<p>Fiona Duncan highlighted that Education are not present to confirm agreement but Donna advised that Education had given their support off table and are part of the EPM Steering Group.</p> <p>Mhairi noted that this is one of the issues with an agency not being represented in a meeting, fortunately here authority had already been given.</p>		
4.	Starting Out Group – Updated attached	<p>Nancy gave verbal highlights of her paper.</p> <p>Completed activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Brighter Beginnings Conference attracted approximately 500 children. -Updated Communicating with our Youngest Children Toolkit -ICON rollout, significant ongoing programme aimed at preventing head trauma in infants. -Updated Vulnerable Pregnancy Toolkit – well received. <p>Ongoing projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ICPPMs previously not meeting the 28 week gestation timescales so there is an improvement project looking at this and targets are already improving off the back of this. - An Antenatal project (Skye) looking at families affected by rurality looking at more vulnerable families to ensure they receive the correct support. What is on offer in Inverness is not available in more rural locations. - The Alcohol and Drugs Partnership/Health Improvement Team are continuing their work into parental cannabis use. - Donna and Gillie are looking into and upgrading the Neglect Toolkit. <p>Highlighted from work being done by the Starting Out Group is the ongoing issue of systems not talking to each other. Not just in health but across agency partners.</p> <p>Ian advised that as part of the Highland Council delivery plan there is a workstream looking at this, it is progressing but some way to go yet.</p> <p>Fiona Duncan noted that this ongoing problem needs to be articulated better and put to the COG, unless they are told they will not know.</p> <p>➤ ACTION: Fiona, Mhairi and Donna to discuss</p>	Mhairi, Fiona D and Donna to meet off table	Fiona D, Donna & Mhairi

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		<p>Deborah advised committee that a new Child Health System for the pre-5 age group is due to go live in October.</p> <p>Jack Libby highlighted the need for an interim resolution for practitioners in dealing with this issue.</p> <p>It is a national and multi-agency issue and while Mhairi is not placed to put together a business plan/group she will raise it with the COG.</p>		
5.	<p>Quality Assurance Update:</p> <p>a) CPC Audit- verbal</p> <p>b) Q3 Dataset – attached</p> <p>c) Annual Data Comparison Report – attached</p> <p>d) IRD Audit - attached</p>	<p>Gillie gave a verbal update of the reports.</p> <p>a) There were 22 readers completing 32 case files. Jonathan is crunching the data and will bring the results to the next meeting (30/10).</p> <p>Many thanks to the readers and to Donna for organising the two weeks.</p> <p>b) the Q3 Dataset report is attached and leads into the Annual Data Group report which appears to show an emerging pattern of highs and lows, this picture will be examined. As always we record that in Highland variations in data are easily influenced by large family groups. We welcome committee feedback on the reports and those reflections often inform the work of the QA sub-group.</p> <p>Mike confirmed that he will pull together a report to see what effect the Safe & Together training has on how staff write up reports.</p> <p>d) IRD reporting continues in its current format but a deeper dive will be carried out. Are the numbers correct and what subsequently happens to children – support, follow up procedures.</p> <p>Wendy L, Nancy and the Police are collating the numbers to provide a sample – hopefully by September.</p> <p>Donna is planning to hold a 'round the table' discussion with partner agencies to look at IRDs but this will not be until Gillie is back at work in October.</p> <p>➤ ACTION: Mhairi, Donna and Ross to arrange IRD meeting</p> <p>The police are clear that the request for an IRD is because the child is at risk of significant harm, either to itself or others, not as a means to access CARM.</p> <p>Jack noted in the chat - there is no legal definition of 'Significant' harm or a distinction between harm and significant harm. It is a matter of professional judgement if the level of harm a child is at risk from is</p>	<p>IRD Meeting to be arranged</p>	<p>Gillie</p> <p>All</p> <p>Mhairi, Donna and Ross</p>

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		'significant': where judgement is based upon information about the child and family which is lawfully and proportionately obtained.		
6.	CPC Development Day & Improvement Plan 2025	<p>A number of items have come up since the CPC conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Education particularly school refuses and home educated pupils. This is being looked at nationally but it is more about what actions the CPC wants to take around this. -Vision 26, we wanted feedback from children and families to establish what children and families need to feel and be safe. Fiona is currently collating the data. -The Development Plan is being developed – to be presented at December CPC meeting -Continued working on the Inspection Improvement Plan. -Working towards the Starting Out Sub-Group Plan. -The Re-Imaging Justice for Older Children Plan <p>The intention is that all these come together in one over-arching delivery plan we hope to have ready for December.</p> <p>Also working with Ian and Sadie (ICSB) to ensure we are in sync with their 2026 – 2029 plan.</p> <p>Fiona D the CPC needs to give consideration want it needs and wants from partners and there is nothing wrong with asking them to provide a paper/update on what they would like discussed – even come along to meetings.</p> <p>Members will know that letters have gone out about the new Inspections for children and if you have any friends, or people in the know, please ask them about them and find out what is being asked. Fiona also confirmed that as an authority we are not currently on the list.</p> <p>Mhairi confirmed that hopefully information will come through the national CPC group too and as soon as she hears anything it will come straight to this group. We know the approach will be thematic.</p>		Mhairi & Donna
7.	Re-Imagining Justice / Older Young People Update:	Current challenge is that we had hoped to have a clear timeframe for the implementation of the additional parts of the Care and Justice Act but we have heard nothing. Carrie advised that some of the proposed changes are to be rolled into The Promise which is only at stage 1.		Pol, Carrie & Donna

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	a) Youth Justice Voices Report – attached b) Highland Missing Children Procedures - attached	<p>Carrie – The Voices report is attached and we undertook due diligence to catch the voices of children. It is not the easiest read but some feedback is similar to that around our residential homes, we now need to feed this back to the children.</p> <p>Donna agreed that it is a difficult read but we must act on this. We want to share this with COG but before then need to discuss what our response and suggestions would be.</p> <p>Fiona advised that part of the CPC role is to ask questions and act accordingly.</p> <p>Also she was at the CSWO meeting this morning and they have been told that the Care and Justice Act will be implemented by April 2026.</p> <p>As a final aside to these points, Fiona advised it is estimated that the extension of age (16 & 17 year olds) in referrals to the reporter could increase significantly.</p> <p>Jack was there any discussion around the re-distribution of finances in terms of the Care and Justice Act? None yet.</p> <p>Pol confirmed they are doing a piece of work around numbers of 16 and 17 year olds they have worked with over the past few years in an attempt to anticipate changes.</p> <p>Gillie noted that until we have the details about the changes it makes it difficult to prepare.</p> <p>Jack noted (linking in with Carrie) that we have eight months to prepare and we must try and put in some form of strategy around a plan for the workforce to support children.</p> <p>We are talking about an already pressurised service with out additional expectations so the sooner we start preparing the better.</p> <p>Gillie agrees but we know that what we are currently doing for 16 & 17 year olds will shift and the numbers that will be referred for mental health issues will be significant.</p> <p>Mhairi asked if the work will be done through sub-group and Donna confirmed but the lack of detail on this is making it more difficult to move forward.</p> <p>Pol mentioned there will be a strategic briefing delivered by a colleague from North Lanarkshire around Contextual Safeguarding followed by a</p>		

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		<p>practitioners briefing in the afternoon. Probably towards the end of September and invites will be sent out in due course.</p> <p>The other item is the 'Buddy Tag' system – operates in England and is a voluntary scheme. A paper will be sent to senior police officers in the next few weeks for opinions and Pol will come back to the group with the results.</p> <p>Donna – the final draft of the Highland Missing Children Procedure is attached and brings together all the procedures into one document with tools and advice.</p> <p>If you have any final comments to make please get them to Donna by next Friday.</p> <p>Gillie approved procedures.</p> <p>Fostering & Adoption and residential have agreed.</p> <p>Pol agreed it would be good to have them in place to help staff understand when and when not report and to clarify the 'not at home' policy.</p> <p>They have been through all the agencies and agreed and Mhairi advised that once the comments are back from the CPC the procedures will be presented to the COG.</p> <p>➤ ACTION: Members to give Donna any comments or updates to the Missing Children Procedures by Friday 29/08/2025</p>	Comments to Donna re Missing Children Procedures	ALL By 29/08/2025
8.	Safe & Together Update – attached for noting	Full papers attached		Mike
9.	Learning & Development Update – attached for noting	Full papers attached		Fiona M
10.	AOB: a) Roll of CPC b) Child Safety Leaflet c) Belladrum 2025	<p>a. Roll of the CPC & Scrutiny:</p> <p>Part of our role as the Child Protection Committee is to reassure the COG and the public at large that we do have oversight of practice and procedures across Highland regarding child protection; that policies are up to date and practice is satisfactory. To that end, as professionals around the table who understand what is happening in our agencies, I</p>		Chair and Jack

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		<p>would ask that you bring issues to the table if you feel they are not working or any information which doesn't join up.</p> <p>Good news is always welcome but if you feel something isn't working we need to know. It is Risk Assessment for our children.</p> <p>It is our responsibility, across our agencies, to bring these things to the CPC table.</p> <p>We must accept the direct correlation between what our services do individually, what we do as a partnership and the number of vulnerable children and families in our community. There are things beyond our control on the number of referrals but there are lots within our control and this is where data is critical in showing the impact of what we do. As a committee we should be critically analysing what difference we are making: we should be seeing our response being better and the number of times we have to respond reducing.</p> <p>Themes and trends.</p> <p>b. Child Safety Leaflet: The safety tips leaflet, produced by the CPC as a result of a few incidents and accidents reported by Stephanie and our intention is to circulate the leaflet and put it on the website. Housing have also offered to distribute it. If you have any comments to let Donna know.</p> <p>c. Belladrum: CPC have been involved since 2019 when Donna Manson only agreed to the licence if the CPC were involved to ensure the safety of children. It now plays host to around 25000 people. The new organisers have pushed the boundaries in child protection provision – TLC welfare, The Anchor Project, Joint Outreach (guardianship this year) and Donna and Fiona. Close working with the police and a direct line into the duty social work team. 99% of interactions were minor. There were only 195 welfare cases (mainly alcohol related) with 43 under 16. Less drug incidents this year.</p> <p>As a CPC we can offer advice but are not responsible for the children on site but we do have to report to the COG.</p>		<p>Donna</p> <p>Donna</p>

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		<p>A huge thank you to Fiona. If anyone would like to offer support next year please do and Donna will be sending out a request next year.</p> <p>Mhairi – it is not a function of the CPC to be responsible for the children but thanks to it being passed to Donna in 2019 (knowing that she would do all the necessary work, as it has been). Donna has single handedly pulled in all the necessary agencies so that the right help and advice is on site. It is not a CPC function and Mhairi will deliver this message to the COG when she reports.</p> <p>James agreed that Belladrum has grown arms and legs and wonders if it should be discussed in more detail. If Donna and Fiona are sitting until the small hours of the morning it changes the dynamic and it questions the level of responsibility of this group. If CPC officers are asked to be on-site until the early hours what are the expectations on the group.</p> <p>Clair (Youth Highland) attended with 25 young people to be on site to help keep people safe. She will write up her report and share with committee.</p> <p>➤ ACTION: Clair will share her Belladrum report before the next meeting</p> <p>Donna advised there is not expectancy for the CPC to be on site it is a choice Donna has made. Donna and Fiona will continue to attend but a little help would be welcome. It is much easier when on site to help with any issues.</p> <p>It was much better this year and they have some of the strictest policies in the UK.</p> <p>Reuben has not heard anything negative from police colleagues.</p> <p>James – There will be a National Alert Alarm 07/09/2025 at 15:00 So please share social media and pass this onto any families who may be holding a secret safety phone so they can turn them off.</p>	<p>Clair to share her report by October meet</p>	<p>Clair</p> <p>James M</p>

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		<p><i>The December meeting will be in-person at the Highland Rugby Club from 10:00 to 13:30 with lunch and mince pies provided. Invites have been sent and please reply in order to assist catering numbers.</i></p> <p>Meeting closed at 13:06</p> <p>Next Meeting – 30th October 2025 – 11:00 to 13:00</p> <p>Chair: Mhairi.grant@highland.gov.uk Lead Officer: donna.munro@highland.gov.uk</p>		