

Agenda Item	<b>10</b>
Report No	<b>HCW-13-26</b>

## The Highland Council

**Committee:** Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

**Date:** 27 May 2026

**Report Title:** National Review & Public Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - People

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 3 December 2025, the Scottish Government announced a National Review of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation, to determine the nature and scale of the issue in Scotland. This review will be led by the Care Inspectorate and includes all Public Protection Chief Officer Groups in Scotland.
- 1.2 On 25 February 2026, the Scottish Government further announced a Statutory Public Inquiry into group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation. This will be chaired by Professor Alexis Jay and will examine how public agencies detect and act upon risks of exploitation. The Public Inquiry will focus on the prevalence of abuse where two or more individuals coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child. It will also ensure survivors have an opportunity to share their experiences.
- 1.3 The National Review will report findings to the Scottish Government and will contribute to the Public Inquiry. Details of the scope of the Public Inquiry are currently being finalised.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. Note the scope of the National Review; and
  - ii. Note the commencement of the Public Inquiry.

### 3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – There are no resource implications noted at this time.
- 3.2 **Legal** – Statutory bodies have a legal requirement to contribute to national Inquiries. Highland's response is being co-ordinated by Donna Munro, Lead Officer for the Child Protection Committee on behalf of the Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group (COG).

- 3.3 **Risk** – Any findings and actions which stem from this national review will be published at a later date.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – No identified implications.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – No identified implications.

## **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 and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

## **5 National Review of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE)**

- 5.1 The Review will consider the role of the 30 Public Protection Chief Officer Groups in protecting and supporting children and young people affected by group-based child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.
- 5.2 The Review will be carried out by the Care Inspectorate in three phases:

### **Phase 1: Assessment**

Step 1: Highland Data Return to be submitted by 17 April 2026 **(SUBMITTED)**

Step 2: Highland Information Return to be submitted by 8 May 2026 **(SUBMITTED)**

Step 3: Structured Interview with representatives of Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group to be held on 11 June 2026

Step 4: Initial Report to be produced by Care Inspectorate - end of summer 2026

### **Phase 2: Assurance**

Case file reading – cases from previous 2 years

Focus on risks to children

Identification of key strengths and areas for improvement

National report to be published by Autumn 2027

### **Phase 3: National Report for Scottish Government**

Areas for improvement

National response(s) to exploitation

- 5.3 The Review requires a local co-ordinator and dedicated business support. These have been identified as Donna Munro, Lead Officer, Highland Child Protection Committee and Sharon Bailey, Business Manager, Health and Social Care; all reporting to Fiona Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer.

- 5.4 A partnership working group has been established to ensure all statutory agencies contribute to the Review. Information regarding third sector agencies will also be included in the Review.
- 5.5 The documents will be approved by the Public Protection Chief Officer Group (COG) prior to being submitted to the Care Inspectorate.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – People

Date: 12 May 2026

Author: Donna Munro, Lead Officer, Child Protection Committee

Background Papers: N/A

Appendices: N/A