

National Public Protection Leadership Group Newsletter August 2025



Welcome to the fourth e-update of the National Public Protection Leadership Group (the “NPPLG”). This update covers the seventh meeting of the NPPLG that was held on 23rd of July 2025. We, the NPPLG, will write out to you after each future meeting to share with you a summary of what we’ve discussed, decisions that we’ve taken, and updates on pieces of work that we are supporting or leading. We hope you find these updates helpful and welcome any feedback and suggestions regarding the content.

Summary of NPPLG discussions

During the seventh meeting of the NPPLG held on 23rd July 2025, members engaged in a wide-ranging and constructive discussion focused on strengthening Scotland’s public protection landscape. Key topics included the development of a coherent approach to learning from reviews, with updates on the joint Adult and Child Protection work plan and the emerging Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review model. The group explored how national oversight and clearer governance could support implementation of recommendations and improve learning dissemination across systems.

The meeting also considered the importance of culture change in public protection, particularly in relation to trauma-informed practice and lived experience. Members welcomed the contribution of the Resilience Learning Partnership and discussed how to embed these perspectives more meaningfully in future work.

Progress was made on workstream sponsorship, with new leads confirmed for Priority 4 (information sharing and chronologies), and early scoping underway for Priority 6 (transitions and pathways between services). The group also endorsed plans for a national event with Greater Manchester colleagues to explore learning from their recent child sexual exploitation review, and agreed to invite Welsh Government representatives to a future meeting to share insights on their unified review model.

Further detail on some of these discussions is below. We are always interested to hear about work you are doing in your COGs so please do share with the secretariat at NPPLG@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Update on Workstreams

In this section, we provide updates on the various workstreams that are currently underway. These updates include progress reports, challenges faced, and future plans to ensure alignment and collaboration across our initiatives. We hope you find these insights valuable as we continue to work together to enhance public protection and drive positive change.

Priority 1: enhancing our culture of learning through reviews:

This workstream generated extensive discussion, reflecting the complexity and volume of review activity across Scotland with updates given on the joint Adult and Child Protection work plan and the Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review model. Elaine Torrance and Julie White, the co-sponsors of this workstream, highlighted the need to map the hierarchy of reviews – such as child protection, adult protection, MAPPA, and the emerging Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review model – to clarify responsibilities and avoid duplication. Members emphasised the importance of national oversight and governance to ensure recommendations are

implemented and learning is shared effectively. The group discussed the potential for NPPLG to play a role in identifying national themes and supporting dissemination of learning, while maintaining a focus on improvement rather than accountability. There was also strong support for integrating lived experience and trauma-informed perspectives into review processes, and for ensuring coherence across guidance and terminology. The group welcomed the Care Inspectorate's upcoming summary report and discussed the importance of aligning guidance and terminology across review types. This is the Care Inspectorate's first summary report of child and adult learning reviews. You can read this [here](#).

Priority 2: enhancing our culture of learning through independent scrutiny and inspection:

Jackie Irvine provided an update on the Public Protection Scrutiny Working Group, which is developing a more proportionate and strategic inspection model. The group's terms of reference were endorsed, and members welcomed its alignment with NPPLG's priorities. The Care Inspectorate's upcoming summary report on learning reviews for children and adults (link to report above) was noted, with plans for a more analytical report in 2026. The group also discussed the potential for validated self-evaluation to complement inspection activity, enabling more targeted scrutiny and supporting local improvement efforts.

The Scottish Government provided an input on the national ASP self-evaluation programme, which aims to support robust multi-agency local partnership self-evaluation to inform local and national improvement. This work will also inform a more proportionate and targeted scrutiny and inspection activity in future. The programme builds on existing activity, evidence and data, and will be co-designed with local partnerships and inspection bodies. Members welcomed the initiative and emphasised the importance of aligning it with other public protection strands to avoid siloed approaches. The group discussed the potential for NPPLG to support coherence across guidance and ensure learning is linked to risk and protective factors. Offers were made to assist with bilateral engagement and to share local approaches to self-evaluation, including the use of external facilitation and impact assessment. Further updates on the ASP self-evaluation programme will be provided to the NPPLG Scrutiny and Inspection priority workstream.

Priority 3: enhancing our culture of learning through supporting the public protection workforce:

Priority 3 workstream sponsors Iona Colvin and Fiona Duncan outlined plans to commission IRISS to map public protection training across Scotland. The aim is to understand current provision and identify gaps, with a view to informing how we might support a more consistent and trauma-informed approach to workforce development. The group discussed the need to include third sector and housing staff, and to distinguish between awareness-level and intervention-level training. Members emphasised the importance of embedding digital capability and AI awareness into training, and welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the scoping of the IRISS work. Members were informed that a deep dive workforce group has been set up by National Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation Group to bring together practitioners to identify potential actions to improve workforce training and learning on child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland.

COGs and Public Protection partnerships should look out for the scoping request from IRISS in the coming months.

Priority 4: tackling the difficult issues of information sharing to enhance multi agency oversight of chronologies:

Work within this priority is at an early stage. The group endorsed the National Chronologies Group's terms of reference and welcomed their offer to provide regular updates. A new sponsorship team was formed to scope the broader issues of information sharing and intelligence, with a focus on detecting unreported harm. Members agreed that this workstream should remain closely connected to other priorities, particularly learning from reviews and workforce development.

Priority 5: tackling the difficult issues of having the right data for improvement and assurance and risk escalation at a local and national level:

Carron McDiarmid shared plans for a national workshop in September to explore existing and emerging public protection datasets. The session will examine data maturity across different strands, including child protection, adult protection, ADPs, suicide prevention, and violence against women. It will also explore innovative approaches to linking data across silos, using case studies and touchpoint analysis. Dumfries and Galloway will present their integrated local dashboard, and the group will consider how data can be used to identify and prevent harm. Members expressed strong interest in attending and contributing, and agreed that NPPLG has a key role in promoting coherence and supporting the development of meaningful, actionable data.

Priority 6: tackling the difficult issues of transitions and pathways between services:

Work within this priority is at an early stage. Early scoping discussions have begun, with a short-life working group to be established by co-sponsors Alison White and Jon Henderson. Members noted the importance of linking this workstream to others, particularly around data and information sharing. Offers of support and examples of good practice were welcomed, and further updates will be provided at the next meeting.

Scottish Government Policy Developments

Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review Model

The tenth meeting of the Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review (DHSR) Taskforce took place on 19 June 2025. The meeting reflected on Stage 2 of the Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews (Scotland) Bill, which included several significant changes. These changes expanded the review model beyond the point of death to include post-death considerations, ensured the model is anchored in domestic abuse, and allowed for future adjustments to the types of deaths and relationships included in the model.

Additionally, the terminology was updated from "joint" review to "combined" review to clarify that a combined review can encompass multiple deaths or events, such as a domestic homicide review and a child protection learning review.

The Taskforce also discussed the recent event in May, which focused on statutory guidance and gathered practitioner views on key areas such as combined reviews, family involvement, structuring recommendations, and disseminating learning. An online version of the event will be shared to gather further input, and a report of the in-person event will be made available.

Ongoing discussions under the Taskforce governance structure include the work of the Model Development Subgroup and Task and Finish Groups on information governance, public appointment of chairs, and training procurement for the learning review process.

The Taskforce is scheduled to meet again in August 2025.

Scotland's Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy 2025

The Scottish Government's updated Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy 2025 continues its commitment to eradicating human trafficking and exploitation across the country. Building on the original 2017 strategy, the 2025 version reinforces a three-pronged approach:

Identifying and Supporting Victims

Ensuring victims are recognised early and provided with trauma-informed support to aid recovery and reintegration.

Identifying and Disrupting Perpetrators

Strengthening law enforcement and justice responses to detect, disrupt, and prosecute those responsible for trafficking and exploitation.

Addressing Root Causes

Tackling the wider social, economic, and global factors that enable trafficking, including poverty, inequality, and demand for exploitative labour.

The strategy is underpinned by multi-agency collaboration, including Police Scotland, COSLA, the Crown Office, and third sector partners. It also reflects insights from survivors and independent research into public awareness. Scotland remains aligned with international frameworks such as the Council of Europe Convention and the EU Directive on Human Trafficking, ensuring a rights-based, victim-centred approach. Read the full strategy [here](#).

Reports Referenced during NPPLG

Learning from Greater Manchester

Over the past five years, a series of independent assurance reviews were commissioned in Greater Manchester to examine systemic responses to child sexual exploitation (CSE). These include:

Operation Augusta: Investigated historical failures to protect children in Manchester from organised exploitation.

Operation Span: Focused on the Rochdale grooming cases and the missed opportunities to disrupt perpetrators.

Oldham Assurance Review: Explored safeguarding practices and allegations of institutional failure.

GMCA Ofsted Summary Report: Aggregated inspection findings across 10 local authorities, highlighting strengths and gaps in complex safeguarding.

These reports were commissioned by the Mayor of Greater Manchester and reflect a commitment to transparency, learning, and improvement.

The findings go beyond local policy differences. They reveal cross-cutting themes that resonate across Scotland's public protection landscape – highlighting challenges in leadership, multi-agency coordination, victim-centred practice, and disruption of harm.

The NPPLG has agreed to host a national learning event featuring colleagues from Greater Manchester. This event will offer Chief Officer Groups and wider Public Protection colleagues a unique opportunity to reflect on these findings and explore their relevance across child and adult protection, justice, health, education, and community safety. Invitations will be issued shortly, and Chief Officer Groups are encouraged to look out for further details.

Links to Reports:

[Independent Assurance Review Part One - Operation Augusta \(PDF, 1.4MB\)](#)

[Independent Assurance Review Part Two - Historic Safeguarding Practices in Oldham \(PDF, 1.2MB\)](#)

[Review into Operation Span and the investigation of non-recent child sexual exploitation in Rochdale \(PDF 1MB\)](#)

[Greater Manchester children's services response to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation \(PDF, 193KB\)](#)

Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR)

The Welsh Government has introduced the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR), a pioneering approach that consolidates multiple safeguarding reviews—such as Child Practice Reviews, Adult Practice Reviews, and Domestic Homicide Reviews—into a single, streamlined process. This model aims to reduce trauma for families, accelerate learning, and improve safeguarding outcomes across Wales.

SUSR brings together agencies and practitioners in a safe learning environment to understand incidents, identify opportunities for improvement, and develop clear action plans. All learning is captured in the Wales Safeguarding Repository, supporting national consistency and evidence-based practice.

At the recent NPPLG meeting, it was agreed that Welsh colleagues will be invited to a future event to share insights from the SUSR model and what learning the NPPLG can take from it.

Read about the Single Unified Safeguarding Review [here](#).

Items of Interest

[Public Protection Learning Event Report](#)

This report outlines the discussions and learning from an event held as part of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2024, hosted by Scottish Government and COSLA. This national event brought together stakeholders working across different areas of public

protection. The event aimed to explore where there are opportunities to work together collaboratively to strengthen links in public protection, in order to better support outcomes for women, children and young people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). The Improvement Service have circulated the report to public protection stakeholders and asked which of the next steps or opportunities identified at the event they would like to see prioritised, and if any align with work that they are currently progressing or planning to progress.

Matters raised by 3MBs

No new 3 Minute Briefings (3MBs) were submitted at the July meeting of the NPPLG. However, updates on previously submitted 3MBs are included below. These briefings are crucial for guiding our ongoing initiatives and shaping the future direction of our work. We will continue to track the actions and decisions that emerge from these discussions to ensure effective implementation and progress. Please keep an eye out for the updated 3MB tracker, the updated version of which is included in this newsletter, to stay informed about the latest developments and updates.

If there is a matter you would like to escalate to the NPPLG for consideration, please complete a 3 Minute Briefing using the template at the end of this newsletter and send it to the Secretariat at NPPLG@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

Homeschooling 3MB

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable increase in parents opting to home educate their children, often due to neurodivergence, anxiety, or distrust in the school system. This trend is observed both locally and nationally, with a 21% rise in homeschooling in England. However, home-educated children are often not monitored by universal services, posing potential risks, as highlighted by the case of Sara Sharif. The UK Parliament is exploring ways to improve the visibility of home-educated children. Under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents must seek local authority consent to withdraw their child from a public school, but not for home education itself. Consent is not required to withdraw a child from school if the child: has never attended a public school; has never attended a public school in that authority's area; is being withdrawn from an independent school; has finished primary education and one school but has not started secondary education in another; if the school the child has been attending has closed; or if the child is not yet of school age. There are concerns about children being unknown to health and education professionals, impacting their development and wellbeing. The local authority has systems in place to assess and support home education requests, but challenges remain in ensuring the safety and education of these children.

Following concerns raised about the visibility and safeguarding of home-educated children, NPPLG members discussed the implications for public protection. The group welcomed a recent meeting between Scottish Government and NPPLG representatives, which explored the legislative gaps and data-sharing challenges that make some children effectively invisible to services. It was confirmed that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has committed to a national review of home education. Members emphasised the importance of linking this issue to broader public protection concerns, including missing persons and early years engagement, and agreed that NPPLG should continue to support and monitor progress in this area.

| Raised by: | Topic: | NPPLG Meeting Discussed At: | Outcome of Discussion: | Update: |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Aberdeen City COG | Homeschooling - Concerns were raised about homeschooling, particularly in relation to children who had never attended school and potential risks they may face as we may have no awareness of their existence. | 29 th April 2025 | The issue was flagged as needing further attention and possibly a national response due to its implications for child protection. It was agreed that this issue should be raised with the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate by CPC Scotland and the Chief Social Work Advisor. | Meeting held between SG and NPPLG representatives. The meeting focussed on the issue of the invisibility of some home-educated children. The issue was taken as far as it could be in the recently updated home education guidance, to go further would require legislative change. There was agreement in the meeting that is important that any response is proportionate. The importance of data sharing between health and schools to close information gaps was emphasised. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has committed to a review of home education. |
| Child Protection Unit - SG | Whistleblowing - The group acknowledged challenges with current whistleblowing procedures, especially in terms of clarity and confidence among staff to raise concerns. | 29 th April 2025 | SOLACE representative to facilitate access to Local Government HR function. The item to be brought back to group following further discovery work. | Update to come to October NPPLG meeting |

Future Meetings

So far meetings have been held bi-monthly but will move to quarterly during 2025. Future meetings of the NPPLG have been scheduled for:

- Thursday 30 October 2025
- Tuesday 27 January 2026

Contact details

Your feedback regarding this e-update, or any other matter relating to the NPPLG, is very welcome. Please email the NPPLG Secretariat: NPPLG@aberdeencity.gov.uk. If you have a matter that you would like to escalate to the NPPLG, you can do so by either contacting one of the members, or by completing the 3 minute briefing template at Appendix 1 and sending it to the Secretariat for consideration.

Appendix

National Public Protection Leadership Group 3 MINUTE BRIEF

What? (e.g. What is the current situation? What information is known, or unknown)

So What? (e.g. What does that mean? How can the situation be interpreted?)

Now What? (e.g. What can this lead to? What can happen next? What do we need to consider for the future?)

Decisions? (e.g. Are any decisions needed at this point? Or at a point in the future? Is the decision requiring a national policy response or an inspection response? Would you like to get the views of the NPPLG initially? Include options if appropriate)