

National Public Protection Leadership
Group Newsletter
May 2025



Welcome to the third e-update of the National Public Protection Leadership Group (the “NPPLG”). This update covers the sixth meeting of the NPPLG that was held on 29th April 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.

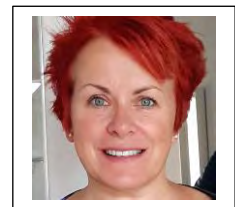
New Membership to NPPLG

We are delighted to welcome the new members to the National Public Protection Leadership Group (NPPLG). As we continue to tackle complex issues and share valuable learning, the addition of new members brings fresh perspectives and expertise to our collaborative efforts. The NPPLG is committed to fostering a collegiate and respectful partnership between national and local partners, ensuring equality and shared commitment to our workplan. With the support and encouragement received so far, we look forward to the contributions of our new members in enhancing our initiatives and driving positive change in public protection.



Jennifer Wilson represents Scottish Executive Nurse Directors on the NPPLG. Jennifer is Nurse Director at NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

Joanna McDonald, Interim Chief Officer/Director of Clackmannanshire and Stirling IJB, represents IJBs on the Group.



Lesley Brown, Executive Director at East Lothian Council, represents ADES on the Group.

Summary of NPPLG discussions

During the sixth meeting of the NPPLG held on 29th April 2025, several significant topics were discussed that are pivotal to the group's ongoing initiatives and future direction. The meeting included discussions around the refreshed missing persons framework, which aims to enhance the processes and protocols for handling missing persons cases. Additionally, the progress of the domestic homicide and suicide review model was reviewed with input from Scottish Government colleagues on progress since the Stage 1 parliamentary process. Sponsors also provided updates on their respective workstreams, sharing progress, challenges, and future plans to ensure alignment and collaboration across various projects and initiatives. The Group also discussed issues raised in relation to home-schooling and whistleblowing via the 3 Minute Brief process. 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 2: enhancing our culture of learning through independent scrutiny and inspection:

The Public Protection Scrutiny Working Group has been established to support the Scrutiny, Inspection, Assurance and Regulatory Advisory Group in developing and delivering effective and proportionate scrutiny and assurance that enhances public protection and fosters a culture of learning.

The working group held its first meeting in late February and will convene monthly. The terms of reference are currently being finalised. The group's focus areas include:

- Developing detailed proposals and plans for future scrutiny and improvement activities for public protection through collaborative efforts and coordination among relevant scrutiny bodies.
- Ensuring that proposals and plans are informed by effective stakeholder engagement.

The group has agreed on the scope, principles, and key timelines for its work. It has started to gather and consider how its approach can be informed by published literature, learning, and experiences across all scrutiny bodies and themes from various reviews related to adults and children.

Principles:

The working group has agreed that its approach to scrutiny and assurance will be:

- Designed to support improvement.
- Mindful of minimizing additional demands on partnerships, building on existing learning and improvement self-evaluation activities.

- Proportionate, based on risk and intelligence.
- Appreciative, focused on what works well.
- Collaborative, with scrutiny bodies working together with partnerships and people with lived experience.
- Innovative, making the best use of technology.
- Transparent and open.

Care Inspectorate staff have completed the following work, which will be considered by the working group to inform its approach:

- Rapid reviews of published evidence, guidance, and data relating to public protection.
- Mapping stakeholders.
- Gathering feedback from Care Inspectorate link inspectors for each local authority area regarding local arrangements.

Upcoming Work:

The working group will engage with Chief Officers Groups (COGs) during summer 2025 to gather their perspectives on how proportionate scrutiny can support learning and improvement. This will include:

- Where COGs are confident that public protection is working well and why, including specific strands such as child protection and crosscutting aspects like communication and quality assurance/self-evaluation.
- Where there are challenges and opportunities for improvement, including areas where successful improvements have been made and where improvement remains more challenging.
- How scrutiny bodies can collaborate with local partnerships and each other to enhance assurance of public protection and outcomes for people of all ages.

The engagement phase will also involve other stakeholders such as Child Protection Committees Scotland, Adult Support and Protection Conveners, and other relevant representative groups. The working group will use the output from the engagement phase and the expertise across its members to develop options and outline plans for scrutiny and improvement activities, commencing in the scrutiny year 2026/27.

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

On 5th March 2025, Workstream 5 held its initial meeting with key partners including the Scottish Government (ASP), Improvement Service, Dumfries and Galloway public protection chair and performance support, Iriss, and Public Health Scotland. These partners were identified to provide professional advice on advancing the priority workstream and advising on the appropriate data for improvement, assurance, and risk escalation at both local and national levels.

The purpose of the workstream is to understand and further develop data used nationally and locally to identify and track risk factors leading to harm, as well as to measure the quality of response to harm identification.

Partner Contributions:

- Public Health Scotland (PHS): Collaborating with the Education sector, Police Scotland, Housing, COSLA, and Improvement Service to consolidate relevant data for public health improvement.
- Primary Care Data Platform: A new platform under development, expected to significantly enhance health intelligence.
- Adult Support and Protection (ASP) National Minimum Dataset: Ongoing development for approximately 5 years, led by Iriss in collaboration with 5 Learning Partners. The dataset is robust with clear definitions and submitted quarterly, focusing on process data with an appetite for developing outcomes data.
- Dundee City Partnership: Recently restructured governance to integrate public protection issues around adults and children, with cross-cutting sub-groups supported by a performance management group.
- Dumfries and Galloway Public Protection Partnership: Integrated governance model established 6/7 years ago, with significant changes since 2021. The partnership uses data, including homeless data, and Power BI for analysis, guided by a performance and quality assurance framework.

Key Points Identified:

- Balance between 'gold standard' and 'good enough' data, and between 'real-time' and 'time-lagged' data.
- Start small and scale up collaborative efforts.
- Opportunity to connect data better at local levels to identify public protection risks.
- Consider the scope of electronic systems and avoid new costs in data provision.
- Be mindful of information governance issues.
- Consider public protection workforce risks, while noting a separate workstream on this topic.
- Share advanced practices from Dumfries and Galloway to help other areas progress more quickly.

Next Steps:

A further meeting is scheduled for May, with new participants identified. The next meeting will focus on key actions to progress through the workstream and how to manage these with current resources. In addition, the group will look at:

- Continued collaboration with Dundee City and Dumfries and Galloway to develop data practices and share learning.
- Exploring learning opportunities at local, national, and sectoral levels to support the development of minimum datasets for various protection areas.

Scottish Government Policy Developments

Missing Persons Framework

The group welcomed the progress on the updated Missing Persons Framework, recognising its potential to support more consistent, prevention-focused responses across Scotland.

Colleagues from the Scottish Government outlined the scale and complexity of missing persons incidents, highlighting that over 16,000 investigations took place in 2023–24, with a significant proportion involving children and individuals with mental health needs. The presentation also noted improvements, such as a reduction in repeat missing episodes, but stressed that multi-agency responses remain variable across the country.

Members emphasised that Chief Officer Groups (COGs) should begin preparing now for the framework's launch by reviewing their local arrangements and ensuring they are ready to implement key actions. The refreshed framework is not a significant departure from the previous framework so COGs should be encouraged to review what their current adoption and compliance of the current framework is. A central theme of the discussion was the need for greater clarity and access to local missing persons data, which is critical for effective oversight and improvement planning. The NPPLG will continue to engage with the Scottish Government to emphasise the need for self-evaluation support alongside the framework. Including advocating for the development of supporting tools such as case studies to evidence good/advanced practice, implementation guidance, and a data indicator set to help local areas translate the framework into practice. In addition, the NPPLG has asked for consideration of whether it is possible to integrate the 3 missing persons protocols (Herbert, Philomenia and Not at Home) into one overarching protocol to avoid having a number of different guidance and processes which can result in confusion for staff. However, it was discussed that the protocols aim to aid police investigations in situations with young people and older adults and are unlikely to become one protocol.

Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review Model

The Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review Model will establish a national, statutory process for reviewing deaths where domestic abuse is a known or suspected factor. Reviews will be initiated following a notification of death and overseen by an independent chair, supported by a panel of relevant agencies. Scottish Government representatives attended the NPPLG and provided an encouraging update on the progress of Scotland's Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review Model. Following broad support during the Stage 1 parliamentary process, the Bill has moved into Stage 2, with work underway to finalise amendments. The Scottish Government have stated that, subject to parliamentary passage, they will work with justice partners and victims to implement the Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abuse Domestic Behaviour Review (Scotland) Bill within the next year. Development continues in several key areas, including reviewer appointments, training, and guidance. The team is also exploring the creation of national standards in collaboration with Healthcare Improvement Scotland. In response to parliamentary interest, the government is considering the feasibility of retrospective reviews. A national event focused on shaping the statutory guidance is scheduled for the 19th of May, underscoring the commitment to inclusive, evidence-informed development of the model.

While members expressed strong support for the aims of the Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review Model, several concerns were raised about its implementation. A key issue was how the new statutory review process would interact with existing local review systems, such as child and adult protection reviews, particularly given the absence of a statutory framework for those processes. Members also emphasised the risk of creating additional pressures on already stretched local systems and highlighted the need for clear guidance to manage overlap and ensure coherence across review types. There was a call to extend the model's core principles – such as consistent training, national standards, and support for reviewers – across all public protection reviews. Finally, members cautioned that without visible

implementation support and alignment with existing structures, the model could be challenging to embed effectively at local level.

Despite recognising that there will be challenges with implementing the model, NPPLG members recognised the importance of having a model that is designed to be trauma-informed, consistent, and person-centred, ensuring that lessons are learned and acted upon. By identifying systemic gaps, improving multi-agency responses, and amplifying the voices of those with lived experience, the model aims to reduce the risk of future harm and drive improvements in practice, policy, and prevention efforts across Scotland.

Reports Referenced during NPPLG

A number of reports and insights were shared during our discussions at the NPPLG meeting. These are listed and linked below for your information. Much of the discussion around these reports was in and around our conversations about enhancing our culture of learning reviews, however, on reflection, it was agreed that the other workstreams would find the reports of benefit, especially around information sharing.

[The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel – I wanted them all to notice](#) - report underscores systemic issues in child protection, such as inadequate risk assessments, poor information sharing, and insufficient coordination among agencies. It stresses that when agencies do not fully understand or respond to cumulative harm – especially in complex family situations – opportunities to intervene and prevent serious harm or death are often missed. Furthermore, the report emphasises the importance of multi-agency collaboration and the necessity for professionals to engage in critical thinking and challenge within safeguarding practices .

The Michael Preston-Shoots reports highlight the issues around Adult Safeguarding. His analyses of Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and serious case reviews provide critical insights into systemic challenges within multi-agency safeguarding practices. These challenges include inadequate risk assessments, poor information sharing, and insufficient coordination among agencies. Preston-Shoots emphasises the importance of learning from lived experiences, advocating for person-centred approaches and psychologically informed practices. His work underscores the necessity of legal and safeguarding literacy, as well as the need for whole-system partnership working.

[Analysis of Safeguarding Adults Review: Findings for Sector Led Improvement](#)

[Second national analysis of safeguarding adult reviews – Final Report: Stage 2 analysis](#)

[Second national analysis of safeguarding adult reviews Final report; Stage 3](#)

Matters raised by 3MBs

At the recent meeting of the NPPLG, two 3 Minute Briefs (3MBs) were submitted and discussed. These briefs are crucial for guiding our ongoing initiatives and shaping the future direction of our work. Below you will find a brief summary of the two 3MBs that were discussed on the 29th of April. 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 first version of which is included in this newsletter, to stay informed about the latest developments and updates.

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. 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

Whistleblowing 3MB

Local authorities often face challenges in properly investigating child safeguarding concerns due to limited capacity and resources. There is a significant lack of expertise and training for those carrying out investigations, and considerable inconsistency in how complaints and whistleblowing are handled across different local setups. In small communities, investigations may be carried out by individuals who know the people involved, leading to potential bias. Other bodies, such as the GTCS, rely on the outcomes of local authority investigations and do not conduct their own investigations unless the local authority has done so. There is nowhere for whistleblowers in the education and children's services space to go outside their organizations. Additionally, there is a lack of national-level guidance specifically about the safeguarding obligations of schools and educators. Foster carers often face difficulties in whistleblowing due to the lack of an independent officer and concerns about the impartiality of local authority procedures.

We would like to remind readers that 3MBs can be submitted for escalation to the NPPLG. These briefs are essential for highlighting urgent matters and ensuring they receive the necessary attention and action. Please use the template provided in the appendix to submit your 3MBs. Your contributions are invaluable in helping us address critical issues and drive positive change in public protection.

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.	
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.	

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:

- Wednesday 23 July 2025
- 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)