

National Public Protection Leadership Group Newsletter November 2025



Welcome to the fourth NPPLG e-update, summarising our eighth meeting (30 October 2025). After each meeting, we share key decisions and updates on our workstreams. Please share this newsletter to your COGs, colleagues and networks/ groups as appropriate.

Update on Our Workstreams

Priority 1: enhancing our culture of learning through reviews:

The Reviews workstream continues to drive improvements in how Scotland learns from child and adult protection learning review cases. Recent training sessions for partnerships have reached over 150 attendees, and a new list of reviewers is now available to support local review activity (to note anyone can put themselves forward to be included on this list). The Care Inspectorate has published its first joint summary of learning reviews, highlighting common themes and areas for improvement. A short-life working group is being established to clarify the hierarchy of reviews and governance arrangements. The workstream is also exploring how to better review deaths among homeless people and a further CP and ASP national learning event is planned for December. Ongoing efforts focus on sharing learning, clarifying terminology, and ensuring joined-up governance across review types, including the new domestic homicide review model.

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

The Public Protection Scrutiny Working Group which reports into the Scrutiny, Inspection, Assurance and Regulatory Advisory Group has completed a major engagement phase with Chief Officer Groups, gathering insights from nearly all local areas. Emerging themes include a desire from several COGs for a single, proportionate scrutiny approach across all public protection strands, and enthusiasm for validated self-evaluation as a tool for improvement from COGs who have experienced it. The group is now considering options for future scrutiny model, including a focus on violence against women and girls, and developing a wider framework for assurance. Next steps include refining these options and reporting back to the Scrutiny, Inspection, Assurance and Regulatory Advisory Group for formal agreement of the options in December, with a continued emphasis on supporting improvement and sharing best practice.

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

Workforce development remains a key focus, with Iriss commissioned to map public protection learning and development provision across Scotland. The mapping will identify current training, gaps, and impact on practitioner confidence and skills. Details about the initial stages of this work are below. Related initiatives include the development of a national framework for Adult Support and Protection learning and development, new standards for post-qualified social worker learning, and targeted work on child sexual abuse and exploitation. The workstream is committed to ensuring consistent, high-quality training and supporting continuous professional development across all sectors with clarity on what will be provided “Once for Scotland” versus what should be provided at a local level .

Learning and Development in Public Protection

This project aims to capture a picture of what single-agency and multi-agency training opportunities are available across the six areas of public protection and the impact of this on practice. The Scottish Government has asked Iriss to undertake this work which will contribute to the workforce L&D priority of the National Public Protection Leadership Group (NPPLG). In

line with the NPPLG terms of reference, the six core areas of Public Protection are: Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Alcohol and Drug related harms and deaths, Violence Against Women and Girls, and Suicide Prevention. A specific question on child sexual abuse and exploitation L&D has been included to support the work of the important work of the National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group Workforce Subgroup as it progresses recommendations in relation to workforce child sexual abuse and exploitation L&D. A question about Prevent training has also been included.

Whilst developing this project, we have identified a number of challenges due to the breadth of public protection L&D including defining who the public protection workforce is; defining the target audience for the training is in terms of skills/ competency level; identifying who should respond to the request for information. We are also aware of survey fatigue, and that there are other approaches to L&D in addition to training offers. The approach outlined below attempts to mitigate these challenges. We acknowledge that this approach may be limited due to gaps in the information available and the capacity participants have to respond within the planned timescales.

Collecting data from you and our ask

The first phase of this work is to compile and map existing information on the provision of learning and development opportunities in public protection. We have asked Chief Officers to identify people within their Local Authority or Health and Social Care Partnership who will be a single point of contact for collating data on training opportunities.

To help us to map the existing information we will be asking the identified points of contact to:

- Send us copies of training calendars covering the 6 public protection strands
- Respond to a small number of clarifying questions

If you have been identified as a point of contact, we will send you an information sheet and a link that you can use to share your data. If you have any questions about the project please contact grace.robertson@iriss.org.uk.

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

The Information Sharing workstream is tackling the complex issues around sharing data to support risk assessment and joint working. The group will be reviewing current protocols, identifying gaps, and considering the development of a national framework and toolkit to support lawful, confident information sharing. Staff confidence and clarity around data protection remain challenges, and the workstream is engaging with the Care Inspectorate and other partners to gather further insights. Future work will focus on developing templates and training as required, and securing systems to improve multi-agency collaboration and safeguarding.

National Chronologies Group Update

The National Chronologies Group continues to drive improvement in the creation, sharing, and use of chronologies across Scotland's public protection landscape. Chronologies remain a well-recognised challenge, but recent joint inspection reports show encouraging progress, with green shoots of improvement in practice now evident. The group brings together partners from health, local government, police, and national organisations to share learning, test new tools,

and support culture change. Recent meetings have focused on sharing stories of impact, supporting partnerships to test the Leading Chronology Improvement tool, and merging subgroups to streamline work on culture change, communication, and messaging. The group's next meeting will focus on clarifying support needs, subgroup workplans, and how best to embed consistent, effective chronology practice across Scotland.

Spotlight: Chronology Technical Solution Review Subgroup

The Technical Solution Review Subgroup is tasked with developing a model for the electronic creation and sharing of chronology information for both child and adult services, ensuring flexibility to comply with current and future legislation. The subgroup has mapped the complex landscape of over 16 business-critical systems used across agencies, highlighting the need for solutions that are feasible, suitable, and acceptable to all stakeholders.

Key recent developments include:

- **Engagement with Experts:** Presentations from the Digital Health & Innovation Centre (DHI) and the SAVVI project (Sustainable Approach to Vulnerability Via Interoperability) have provided valuable insights into technical and legal interoperability, data sharing, and prototype solutions.
- **Collaboration:** The subgroup is working closely with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and the Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR) to ensure robust data protection and governance.
- **Next Steps:** The group is reviewing its membership to ensure all relevant stakeholders are represented, and is inviting further engagement from interested agencies and workstreams. The SAVVI model will be considered for wider rollout in partnership with the Improvement Service.
- **Resources and Communication:** All key documents, presentations, and newsletters are being shared via the group's SharePoint site, with plans to publish updates on the Scottish Government's website.

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

Following a successful national workshop, the Data workstream is mapping how data is used locally and nationally to identify risk and measure response quality. Innovative projects like the Scottish Prevention Hub and SAVVI are advancing multi-agency data integration, while local examples (Dumfries & Galloway, Dundee) demonstrate the benefits of joined-up governance. The workstream is now focusing on aligning local and national data, sharing best practice, and exploring the development of a national public protection integrated dataset. Next steps include further mapping, engagement with Chief Officer Groups, and supporting partners to use data for prevention and early intervention.

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

The Pathways workstream is building momentum, with recent engagement at national conferences and events highlighting the importance of joined-up support for families. The group is exploring positive examples of pathways, such as single appointments for multiple needs, and reaching out to local initiatives for case studies. The focus remains on identifying barriers, sharing good practice, and ensuring workstreams complement each other. Offers of support and recommendations are welcomed as the group continues to scope future activity.

Scottish Government Policy Developments

Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review Model

The Domestic Homicide and Suicide Review (DHSR) model has now been passed into primary legislation under the Criminal Justice Modernisation and Abusive Domestic Behaviour Reviews (Scotland) Bill, making it a statutory requirement for all relevant partners in Scotland. This marks a significant step forward in the national approach to learning from the most serious incidents of harm, ensuring that lessons are identified and acted upon to support safer outcomes for individuals and communities.

Implementation of the DHSR model is expected to begin in April 2026. All local systems, including Chief Officer Groups (COGs), are encouraged to begin preparing now to ensure robust review processes are in place and how the DHSR will fit with existing review structures. Early engagement and planning will be key to ensuring the model delivers on its promise of meaningful learning and improvement.

It is also important to recognise that the success of the DHSR model will depend on the strength and sustainability of the wider public protection system, particularly the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector. The VAWG sector plays a vital role in both prevention and response, and the NPPLG recognises the ongoing challenges around the commitment to secure, long-term funding within this area.

We look forward to working with all partners as we embed the DHSR model and continue to strengthen Scotland's approach to learning, prevention, and protection.

Refreshed National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland 2025

The Scottish Government has published the refreshed National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland 2025, marking a significant milestone in the country's approach to preventing missing episodes and safeguarding those at risk. Since the original Framework was launched in 2017, Scotland has seen a 36% reduction in missing person investigations, thanks to the dedication and partnership working of Police Scotland, local authorities, social work, health, education, and the third sector.

The refreshed Framework builds on this progress, updating good practice and incorporating learning from the past eight years. While the policy direction remains unchanged, the new Framework emphasises the importance of multi-agency working and the need for consistent implementation across all areas of Scotland.

Key developments include:

- A new self-evaluation tool (to be developed by the Scottish Government and the National Missing Persons Working Group) will help local partnerships and Chief Officer Groups monitor implementation, review practice, and track progress on a multi-agency basis.
- Continued support from the Missing People charity and the Framework Implementation Project, with National Coordinators available to help embed the Framework, develop local protocols, provide training, and build multi-agency practice and oversight.
- A call to action for Chief Officer Groups and public protection leaders to promote the Framework, engage with the Implementation Project, and ensure oversight and direction for missing persons work in their areas.

Read the refreshed Framework here: [National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland 2025](#).

Updates and Items of Interest

New National Chief Social Work Adviser

Joanna Macdonald has been announced as the new **National Chief Social Work Adviser** and will take up post in December 2025.

In this key advisory role of National Chief Social Work Adviser, Joanna will also serve as **Chief Executive of the National Social Work Agency**. This new dual appointment marks an exciting and significant step forward in strengthening social work leadership and collaboration across Scotland.



Iona Colvin, OBE

A lifetime of dedication to social work

As Iona Colvin steps into retirement, we pause to honour a career that has shaped the very fabric of social work in Scotland. From her early days in local government to her transformative leadership as Chief Social Work Adviser to the Scottish Government, Iona has been a tireless advocate for justice, compassion, and the dignity of every individual. Iona has championed integrated approaches to care, fought for the recognition of social work as a cornerstone of public service, and mentored a generation of leaders who will carry her values forward. She reminds us of the power of relationships, the resilience of the profession, and the enduring importance of listening deeply to those we serve.



National developments to support social work

Partners across social work are collaborating. The National Social Work Agency (NSWA) is developing its first corporate plan and as part of the Scottish Social Work Partnership, Scottish Government (NSWA), COSLA and Social Work Scotland are shaping a national strategic plan for social work.

[Click here to read the engagement pack and share your feedback.](#) The engagement pack is designed to spark conversations, gather insights and ensure everyone's voice is heard as we move forward together.

To sign-up for national social work updates, email NSWAcommunications@gov.scot

The Hoarding Taskforce (Scotland)

Launched in September 2024, the Hoarding Taskforce addresses hoarding as a growing mental health issue affecting 1 in 10 people and contributing to a third of fire deaths in affected homes. The Taskforce brings together partners from social work, housing, emergency services, health, and peer support groups like Clutter Chat to promote a coordinated, multi-agency response.

In its first year, the Taskforce held stakeholder events and identified key needs:

- Greater public awareness to reduce stigma and recognize hoarding as a complex, long-term mental health condition, not a lifestyle choice.
- A person-centred, trauma-informed approach, acknowledging impacts on both adults and children.
- A shift toward harm reduction, early intervention, and sustainable funding, avoiding costly clear-outs or evictions.
- Consistent, evidence-based education, training, and a national framework for good practice.

The Taskforce continues to collaborate with those with lived experience and encourages ongoing engagement. For updates, sign up to the Iriss newsletter: <https://www.iriss.org.uk/>

Matters raised by you via 3MBs (3 minute Briefings)

Emerging area of concern regarding young people engaging in self-harm by ingesting batteries, with evidence of escalation and peer encouragement via social media.

A new 3 Minute Briefing (3MB) was submitted at the October meeting of the NPPLG, highlighting an emerging area of concern regarding young people engaging in self-harm by ingesting batteries, with evidence of escalation and peer encouragement via social media. This briefing, submitted by the National Health Leadership Group for Adult Support and Protection (SHLAP), outlines the multi-agency safeguarding response already underway and seeks NPPLG's views on any further national action that may be required. The full 3MB is included in this newsletter for partners' awareness and comment.

We would welcome feedback from colleagues on any further national activity or responses that might be appropriate to address the issues raised in the 3MB - particularly suggestions that go beyond awareness raising.

An update on the previously submitted whistleblowing 3MB is also provided 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, 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.

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

The National Health Leadership Group for Adult Support and Protection (SHLAP) is a sub-group of SEND – the Scottish Executive Nurse Directors. Its role is to coordinate and share information and expertise across Health Board leads for Adult Support and Protection.

At its most recent meeting in August 2025, a concerning and emerging area of harm was identified where young people were noted to be regularly ingesting batteries as a form of self-harm. This was happening repeatedly, with multiple attendances to hospital as a result.

What was of particular note, was that:

- These young people were from different areas of Scotland.
- There appeared to be a deliberate attempt to travel to Emergency Departments and Hospitals that were NOT in their own home area.
- They appear (from self-disclosure) to be using a WhatsApp group to share their experiences; encourage each other to self-harm; and also encourage each other to 'escalate' their activity. i.e. the awarding of 'points' for higher levels of risk taking/harming activity.

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

Individual safeguarding activity for each young person has already been initiated with ASP and Child Protection referrals being triggered as appropriate within their 'home' local authority areas to support a multiagency response.

For the currently known young people – contact have been established between the various hospitals they have been attending – to attempt to ensure a 'joined up' and consistent response when they attend after self-harming.

The matter has also been tabled at the Scottish Nurse Leadership for Child Protection forum to ensure that Child Protection Health Leads are also fully aware.

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

This is an emerging area of concerning harm amongst young people. The use of social media/instant messaging to support and encourage self-harm and *escalating* self-harm is of particular concern.

Whilst appropriate public protection referrals have been initiated for the known individuals who have presented at hospitals with self-harming presentations, there remains a concern that:

1. This behaviour may persist;
2. Other young people may already access (or will soon) access the WhatsApp group and will also become at risk of self-harm.

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)

At present, this is primarily being flagged nationally for the awareness of all public protection partners. Both Adult and Child Health Leaders Groups are now briefed on this developments and will continue to monitor developments from a healthcare perspective.

View of the NPPLG would be welcome on any other suggested national activity or response that might be appropriate – beyond awareness raising.

Update on Whistleblowing 3MB

Since the last update in April 2025, there has been ongoing political and public interest in complaints and whistleblowing processes within local authorities, especially in the Education sector. Key developments include:

- Continued engagement around Petition PE1979, which calls for an independent inquiry and a national whistleblowing officer to investigate concerns about the handling of child safeguarding enquiries by public bodies.
- The Education (Scotland) Act 2025 was enacted, though proposed amendments to give the Chief Inspector oversight of complaints and whistleblowing were not passed. However, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills remains committed to exploring oversight issues, as discussed at the Education and Childcare Assurance Board (ECAB) in September.
- The Scottish Government is considering options to support national consistency, but responsibility for complaints and whistleblowing processes remains with local authorities and senior leaders.
- Ongoing engagement continues between the Child Protection Unit, COSLA, ADES, and GTCS.

Looking ahead, the NPPLG is invited to discuss how to foster a culture where concerns can be raised, the effectiveness of local oversight arrangements, and whether national frameworks or guidance could further strengthen assurance and consistency in investigations. An agenda item on the issue is proposed for the January meeting to discuss these issues in detail.

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.	Scottish Government officials will meet with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to discuss the options for a review of home education options and next steps in late November. The views of the NPPLG will be sought with regards to the safeguarding aspect of the review. A further update will be provided to NPPLG members at the January meeting.
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 provided above
National Health Leadership Group for Adult Support and Protection (SHLAP)	Self-harm – Concerns were raised about an emerging area of concern regarding young people engaging in self-harm by ingesting batteries, with evidence of escalation and peer encouragement via social media.	30 th October 2025	The NPPLG recognised the scale of the issue and agreed to seek feedback from across Scotland via the newsletter.	

Learning Events

We are pleased to share that our first NPPLG-hosted learning event took place on 12th November 2025, focusing on learning from Greater Manchester's response to child sexual exploitation. The event was a great success, with strong engagement and over 80 participants joining us. For those who were unable to attend or wish to revisit the session, the recording is now available. Key insights and learning from the event will also be highlighted in future newsletters.

Watch here - [NPPLG Learning Event - Child Exploitation: Learning from the Experiences of Greater Manchester](#).

Looking ahead, we have another learning event scheduled for 29th of September 2026, and we are keen to ensure it meets the needs and interests of our community. We welcome suggestions for the theme or focus of this event - please get in touch with your ideas or topics you would like to see explored.

Upcoming Events

Falkirk Council warmly invites you to join us online at 10:30am 1st of December for:
[*Spider in the Glass – The Spiderlings with Myra Ross*](#).

This live session explores how storytelling drives cultural change and deepens understanding in the fight against violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Why your presence matters:

- Scotland's *Equally Safe Strategy* (relaunched in 2023) sets a national mission to end VAWG. Myra Ross's poem *Imagine* became a powerful symbol of that commitment, featured at the launch and widely shared during the 16 Days of Action campaign.
- Creative approaches like poetry and storytelling continue to reach thousands across public protection, health, policing and beyond — over 7,700 participants so far, with demand still growing.

This event builds on that momentum, using narrative as a professional learning tool to strengthen Scotland's collective response to abuse. Join us live: [join us online](#)

Future Meetings

Future meetings of the NPPLG have been scheduled for:

- Tuesday 27th January 2026, 2pm-5pm
- Tuesday 28th April 2026, 10am-1pm
- Tuesday 21st July 2026, 10am-1pm
- Tuesday 27th October 2026, 10am-1pm

Contact details

We welcome your feedback on this e-update or any NPPLG matter. Please email NPPLG@aberdeencity.gov.uk. To escalate an issue, contact a member or complete the 3-minute briefing template (Appendix 1) and send it to the Secretariat.

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)