

UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP (COG): Update from 22nd March 2022 Meeting

Following the launch of “Aberdeen Protects”, members of COG agreed that they would provide a summary following each of its meetings. This will comprise a range of things: decisions taken, sharing of information, and providing updates on longer term pieces of work. We hope you find these updates helpful.

Adult Support and Protection Inspection

Members of COG had an introductory meeting with the external inspection team on Monday 21st March and were walked through timelines (included in previous COG update) and the process to be followed. COG will meet the inspection team formally on the 25th April and will then receive feedback on the inspection at a meeting on the 31st May with the final report expected to be publicly available by the 21st June.

Joint review of diversion from prosecution

Partners have received notification from HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland advising of their intention to undertake a joint review of diversion from prosecution in Scotland during 2022. The context for this inspection is that in 2016, the Scottish Government published a National Strategy for Community Justice which stated that community justice partners should: ‘Maximise opportunities for the use of diversion. This will require a balance of appropriate decision making by the Procurator Fiscal and provision of suitable services by criminal justice social work and the third sector.’

The aim of the thematic review is to assess the operation and impact of diversion from prosecution in Scotland. The inspectors will review and report on diversion practice from a policing, prosecution, and justice social work perspective, highlighting what is working well and identifying potential barriers to the more effective use of diversion.

Given the partnership working required to deliver diversion, a similarly collaborative approach is required for the effective scrutiny of diversion. The review will therefore be carried out in partnership by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland. More details are expected in the coming weeks, including copy of the terms of reference, which will outline further details of this scrutiny activity.

Scottish Government National Care Service Proposals

In preparation for the release of the Scottish Government’s draft bill on a National Care Service before the summer recess, COG will be participating in a local workshop on the 5th May to start early consideration of the implications of the proposals on local public protection arrangements. Further updates will be provided on both the development of the Bill itself as well as COG’s consideration of the implications and thoughts on transition planning.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

COG considered the findings from a recent practice review and welcomed the proposals from the Child Protection Committee to develop further local guidance for practitioners. It was acknowledged that the recent national child protection guidance did provide some guidance on HSB, but it was felt that more local guidance would be helpful. It was agreed that the CPC would aim to have this guidance available by September this year and that a programme of communication and dissemination of the guidance would follow. There was further acknowledgement that the national child protection leadership group were planning further GIRFEC style guidance to guide front line practitioners on the resources and services available for children and young people at risk of HSB, and there are plans to publish this at the end 2022. In addition, HSB audit tool pilot is due to start in April 2022 and there is Planned development of HSB content for Parent Club, to publish end 2022. So, it will be important that any local guidance sits well within this developing national guidance.

Scottish Borders Teachers Abuse Case Inquiry

Considering the publication of the QC's report, COG asked the CPC to approach this report in the same way it would a SCR elsewhere to see if there is any learning for the local system.

Date of Next Meeting: 10th May 2022