

UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP (COG): Update from 29th August 2023 Meeting

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

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Bairns’ Hoose

Bairns’ Hoose is a transformational, whole-system approach to delivering child protection, justice, and health support and services to child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm. The overall vision of a Bairns’ Hoose in Scotland is that all children in Scotland who have been victims of or witnesses to abuse or violence, as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused significant harm or abuse, will have access to trauma informed recovery, support and justice.

Bairns’ Hoose is based on the Icelandic model ‘Barnahus’ (child’s house) and brings together services in a ‘four rooms’ approach with child protection, health, justice and recovery services available in one setting. A key aim of the model is to reduce the number of times children have to recount their experiences.

Scottish Government is committed to rolling this approach out across Scotland. This will be underpinned by national [Bairns’ Hoose Standards](#), which are based on European Barnahus Quality Standards.

In order to progress this, Scottish Government has offered funding which local areas can apply for to develop a small number of local ‘Pathfinders’ which will help test out the approach to delivering the necessary transformational change, and also to test the application of the national standards at a local level. Aberdeen City partners have applied for the Pathfinder funding, although this is very much the direction of travel in Aberdeen anyway. COG will be kept up to date with progress on this.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

COG was updated in relation to local guidance for staff around this complex issue. Practice guidance had previously been developed to ensure there is ‘whole system approach’ to supporting intervention and planning for the small but significant number of children and young people who present a high risk to themselves and others. They are considered to be at high risk because their behaviour has already caused serious harm. Many young people involved with offending of a serious nature will have complex needs and may have experienced multiple traumas in their lives. The guidance ensures there is a consistency in assessment, planning and evaluation, to make sure that the children for whom there are growing concerns are well supported and protected in a timely manner. The principles of GIRFEC remain central to its application.

In order to build on this, a working group has been set up to develop further multi agency guidance which will support prevention and early intervention as well as the response to situations once significant harm has happened. The group aims to draw together the wealth

of available material to support this, including learning from local cases in which the Justice Social Work Service has had an involvement. COG heard that training developed by the Child Protection Committee is also now available to support staff working with young people in this area.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

Drug Related Deaths

COG received a presentation on the position in relation to Drug Related Deaths in the City. Figures published showed that Aberdeen had seen the third largest reduction in the country in 2022 compared to 2021, in terms of the number of drug related deaths, although 'spikes' in monthly numbers were still being seen, likely relating to drug supply. The meeting heard that all drug related deaths in the City were now being reviewed, to help inform work to tackle the issue.

A number of areas of work were being prioritised, including considering how to respond in an emergency situation (eg when there is a spike in deaths), continuing to roll out the provision of Naloxone, and having a more effective alert system in place.

NHS Public Protection Accountability and Assurance Framework

The [Framework](#) was published in October 2022 and sets out standards and expectations to guide health boards in assessing the adequacy and effectiveness of their public protection arrangements at both strategic and operational levels, and informs existing health board and shared multi-agency governance and assurance arrangements. NHS Grampian colleagues are in the process of using an accompanying 'toolkit' document to assess and provide evidence as to whether and how those standards are currently being met, and to inform any future action needed. This is to be reported to COG in January 2024.

Date of Next Meeting: 3rd October 2023