

UPDATE FROM THE CHIEF OFFICERS GROUP (COG)

Update from Meeting on 21st November 2023

Following the launch of the “Aberdeen Protects” [website](#), members of COG agreed that they would provide a summary following each meeting. 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.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

National Care Service (NCS)

The COG noted that the Aberdeen NCS Programme Board continued to meet, to keep apprised of national developments and oversee related local workstreams. A number of relevant national reports had been published / were due to be published. Scottish Government had established several workstreams which will help inform future revisions of the NCS Bill. Many of these will be supported by working groups with Aberdeen representation. The decision-making process in relation to the development of the NCS was due to recommence in 2024.

ADP Emergency Planning Event

At the last meeting of the COG, it had been agreed to hold a multi agency workshop to scenario plan and prepare for an emergency situation developing in the city, in relation to the potential emergence of potent harmful synthetic substances in our community. This workshop had been held on 2nd November 2023, and had been attended by nearly 50 representatives of multi agency partners and services across Aberdeen having an involvement in work relating to safety around use of drugs.

The event had been very productive, in developing thinking around what the City’s response should be in such a situation, and had resulted in a range of actions. The COG endorsed these actions, and agreed that a communication should go out to multi agency frontline staff to make them aware of plans in this regard.

Interface Protocol Letter

COG members noted a letter from Scottish Government, which advised that they were setting out a plan to improve mental health and substance use services, working across disciplines to ensure that other initiatives and policy areas are aligned to support this work. The plan has three broad objectives which are to:

- 1) ensure mental health and substance use services know how they should work together;
- 2) empower the workforce to deliver high-quality care; and
- 3) embed clear lines of accountability so that we know services are delivering better care for people on the ground.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) had been commissioned to produce an exemplar interface protocol which sets out how these services should work together. The interface protocol will build on existing protocols which are already in operation, but also help deliver

the relevant MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) standards, and the recommendations from both Scottish Government's [rapid review](#) into mental health and substance use services, and those from the Mental Welfare Commission's report, [Ending the exclusion](#).

COG agreed that discussions on local implementation of the protocol would be picked up with the public protection leads group, which would report back in due course.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Bairns' Hoose

Members were delighted to hear that Aberdeen City Council had been notified by the Scottish Government that the partnership's application to develop a Bairns' Hoose had been successful. Aberdeen City was one of six successful partnerships - others were Aberdeenshire, Fife, North Strathclyde, Outer Hebrides and Tayside.

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. More information can be found at [Bairns' Hoose - Scottish Barnahus: vision, values and approach - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

The partnership now needed to complete a 'funding bid' to evidence how much funding would be required over the two years of the pathway period. The COG would be updated on progress.

Child Protection Committee (CPC) National Self Evaluation Tool for the implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland

The COG noted the completed 'self evaluation tool', which had been required to be submitted to Scottish Government by the CPC, to provide assurance about the implementation of the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#). Any feedback from Scottish Government about the self evaluation would be reported back to COG.

ADULT PROTECTION

Delivering Equally Safe Fund – Year 1 Report

Members also noted a report on the use, during the first year, of 'Delivering Equally Safe' funding which the partnership had been successful in applying for in 2021. The [Delivering Equally Safe Fund](#) provides funding to projects supporting women and girls. It is part of Scottish Government's [Equally Safe strategy](#) to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls.

The Report covered the projects which had been progressed to-date in the City, and the positive outcomes achieved. These were in relation to:

- The local implementation of the 'Safe & Together' model. This is an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help key public sector and third sector professionals to become domestic abuse-informed and promote multi-agency, collaborative responses to working with families experiencing violence and abuse.
- The commissioning of Cybersafe Scotland to deliver the Digital Wellbeing and Online Harms Prevention Project in Aberdeen. The project is focussed on providing support for children and young people at an increased risk of online harm due to having a lower level of parental/carer support online - with a strong focus on the prevention of harm and early intervention.
- The creation and employment of a Whole System Approach Coordinator post. The Whole Systems Approach (WSA) is the national programme for deepening the understanding of patterns of need for young people involved in offending. A full time WSA strategic lead coordinates the multiagency approach to reducing the incidences of, primarily young men, involved in higher levels of the justice system.

It was noted that the three projects undertaken in year one of the funding will continue to be delivered in year two. In addition, Year Two funding (currently underway) is also covering the following:

- The recruitment of a Whole Family Approach senior practitioner. The post will lead the development of Whole Family Approaches and link with staff involved in drug and alcohol work and mental health; and
- The creation of a Public Protection Development Officer Post to undertake a review of existing 'public protection' and related policies, strategies, procedures etc, and develop policies/holistic pathways where these are needed, to really embed the Equally Safe Priorities and Objectives across these agendas in Aberdeen.

It was agreed that consideration would be given to focusing on some of the above issues as topics for the 2024 COG Public Protection event.

Date of Next Meeting: 16th January 2024