

Child Protection Committees

139. Child Protection Committees were first established in each local authority area in Scotland in 1991. Since then, they have been subject to many reforms and reviews, in particular in 2005 when they were strengthened as part of the then Scottish Executive's Child Protection Reform Programme.¹⁸ The national guidance for Child Protection Committees was published in 2005 and has been embedded in this revised guidance with some amendments.

140. Child Protection Committees are locally-based, inter-agency strategic partnerships responsible for the design, development, publication, distribution, dissemination, implementation and evaluation of child protection policy and practice across the public, private and wider third sectors in their locality and in partnership across Scotland. Their role, through their respective local structures and memberships, is to provide individual and collective leadership and direction for the management of child protection services across Scotland. They work in partnership with their respective Chief Officers' Groups and the Scottish Government to take forward child protection policy and practice across Scotland.

141. This guidance is, therefore, deliberately specific in its content to reflect the continuing significant importance of Child Protection Committees. It emphasises the need for a clear, co-ordinated and unambiguous approach to child protection across Scotland within the wider GIRFEC framework.

142. Chief Officers must ensure that their Child Protection Committees are properly constituted and resourced that arrangements are clearly focused and relevant to all members of the committee itself, as well as any sub-committees and partner agencies, and the wider public at large. Child Protection Committees must work within the wider planning framework so that their work is fully integrated with other planning fora and is as effective as possible.

143. Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring that resources include dedicated finance to support the collective work and/or specific core functions and/or activities of their Child Protection Committees. Chief Officers will ensure that their Child Protection Committees have dedicated professional and administrative support staff. Chief Officers and Child Protection Committees should consider joint funding and effective approaches to sharing resources for appropriate areas of activity.

144. Each Child Protection Committee should appoint a lead officer to co-ordinate its activities, including the work of any sub-committees. Each Child Protection Committee should have in place the necessary resources to deliver inter-agency child protection training, such as a dedicated child protection training officer.

145. Membership of the Child Protection Committee will be representative and inclusive and all members must fully understand their role, remit and purpose. Chief Officers' Groups will appoint or agree the appointment of the chair of their Child Protection Committee, including their contractual arrangements and/or terms of reference, role and remit. Chief Officers may appoint a chair from a single representative service or agency, or

¹⁸ [Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committees](#), Scottish Executive (2005).

appoint an independent chair. This remains at local discretion. Chief Officers will also appoint, or agree the appointment of, a vice chair and the rest of the committee members.

146. Chief Officers will ensure that the chair and vice chair fully understand their specific role, responsibilities and remit, and that they have an in-depth knowledge of child protection. Chief Officers will agree their working arrangements, terms of office and reporting and accountability arrangements.

147. Chief Officers will ensure that all members of their Child Protection Committee have the relevant delegated responsibility level and capacity to make decisions on behalf of the service or agency they represent. All Child Protection Committee members will have designated deputies who will attend the regular meeting in their absence and on their behalf.

148. Chief Officers will make certain that all members of their Child Protection Committee are properly inducted, have access to child protection training (particularly inter-agency child protection training) and have protected time in which to fulfil their responsibilities before, during and after meetings. They will also ensure that the work of their Child Protection Committee is transmitted widely, so that it is understood and embedded into their respective service or agency's child protection policy and practice arrangements. Work arising from the Child Protection Committee must be properly implemented and monitored effectively so as to measure impact and outcomes.

149. Chief Officers will decide on the local reporting arrangements for their Child Protection Committee and the requirement for an annual report and/or annual plan, in addition to any other national and/or local planning and reporting requirements.

Functions of a Child Protection Committee

150. The functions of a Child Protection Committee are **continuous improvement, strategic planning, public information** and **communication**. The work of the Child Protection Committee must be reflected in local practice and meet local needs. The following describes in more detail the core business functions of Child Protection Committees and provides a working framework. They are presented here in no particular order of priority or importance. This list should not be considered all-inclusive or exhaustive.

Continuous improvement

151. Child Protection Committees have a key role to play in the continuous improvement of child protection policy and practice. A number of functions relate directly to this key role.

Policies, procedures and protocols

152. Child Protection Committees will design, develop, publish, distribute, disseminate, implement and regularly review and evaluate clear and robust inter-agency child protection policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines. This may be done in conjunction with other Child Protection Committees or as part of cross-authority consortia. Each Child Protection Committee will:

- encourage constituent services and agencies to have in place their own up-to-date child protection policies, procedures, protocols, guidelines and other relevant materials;
- ensure all services and agencies have robust whistle-blowing policies in place and that these are sufficiently disseminated and understood by all practitioners and managers;
- ensure that child protection policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines are developed around existing and emerging key issues, where there is agreement that this is required, specifically in relation to disability, child trafficking, child sexual exploitation, online and mobile phone child safety, and children and young people who are missing; and
- publish and regularly review their own inter-agency child protection guidelines, which must reflect national and local policy developments, including GIRFEC and the arrangements for the management of Child's Planning meeting.

The importance of self-evaluation in improving services to protect children

153. Self-evaluation is central to continuous improvement. It is a reflective process through which Child Protection Committees and strategic planning groups for services for children and young people get to know how well they are doing and identify the best way to improve their services. Relevant frameworks of quality indicators are designed to assist this process by:

- encouraging reflection upon practice to identify strengths and areas for improvement;
- recognizing work which is having a positive effect on the protection of children ;
- identifying where quality needs to be maintained, where improvement is needed and where services should be working towards achieving excellence; and
- allowing services to inform stakeholders about the quality of services to protect children.

154. Self-evaluation is about change and improvement, leading to well considered innovation in service delivery. It is based on professional reflection, challenge and support and involves informed decisions about what actions need to be taken. It is a continuous, dynamic process which establishes a baseline from which to plan and set priorities for improvement. Used effectively, continuous self- evaluation helps to monitor progress and impact.

155. The quality indicators set out in ¹⁹[How well do we protect children and meet their needs?](#) published by HMIE in 2009 are designed to cover key aspects of the work of Child Protection Committees and services involved in protecting children. It is recommended to Child Protection Committees as the toolkit to help with evaluating and improving the quality of services to protect children, young people and families. The quality indicators set

¹⁹ [How well do we protect children and meet their needs?](#):HM Inspectorate of Education, March 2009

out in ²⁰ [How well are we improving the lives of children, young people and families?](#) published by the Care inspectorate in 2012 and due for revision in 2014 are designed to cover key aspects of the work of Community Planning Partnerships in the delivery of services for children, young people and families. These self-evaluation guides are based on the same framework and are designed to enable consistent evaluation of how well services are doing. This means that the evidence and outcomes from self-evaluation activity carried out in relation to one should be able to inform the other.

156. Robust and systematic performance management and quality assurance arrangements across all relevant services are essential in order to provide Child Protection Committees with the information they need. This helps partners to monitor how well the range of services are doing and to identify those areas where resources are inefficient or where improvement is required. These arrangements include:

- systematic approaches to self-evaluation and quality assurance which focus on the experiences and outcomes for children and families;
- establishing effective systems to monitor the quality of key child protection processes, such as core groups, risk assessment and Child's Plans (which incorporate Child Protection Plans);
- involving all key stakeholders, including children and families, in self-evaluation and review;
- monitoring and implementing improvement plans effectively to ensure they lead to positive changes;
- communicating learning effectively to staff, including learning from self-evaluation;
- building capacity among the workforce by supporting the development of practitioner fora and other methods of sharing good practice;
- providing an overview of management information and statistics relating to children and young people on the local Child Protection Register, which includes analysis of trends to inform a strategic assessment of service need;
- ensuring that management information and statistics reports inform the development of inter-agency child protection policy and practice; an
- measuring the extent to which self-evaluation, and changes made as a result of self-evaluation, contribute to actual improvements in services and outcomes for children

Promoting good practice

157. Child Protection Committees have a responsibility to identify and promote good, evidence-based policy and practice developments, address issues of poor policy and practice, and encourage learning from effective policy and practice developments. Each Child Protection Committee will:

²⁰ [How well are we improving the lives of children, young people and families?](#) :Care Inspectorate, Oct 2012

- have robust mechanisms in place for the identification, consideration and undertaking of significant case reviews on behalf of the Chief Officers. These should include a vigorous evaluation process for actions resulting from the review,²¹
- have in place mechanisms to identify and disseminate lessons from past and current practice, including learning from significant case reviews, inspection reports and other inquiry reports;
- ensure that these lessons directly inform inter-agency child protection planning, training and staff development; and
- identify networks, mechanisms and opportunities to share these lessons more widely across services and agencies and between Child Protection Committees across Scotland.

Learning and development

158. The importance of professional judgement in dealing with the risk and uncertainty of child protection situations means that training must be a core consideration. Multi-agency training is an essential component in building common understanding and fostering good working relationships, which are vital to effective child protection. Child Protection Committees are well placed to help develop and deliver such training. Training on a single and an inter-agency basis can help develop the core skills needed to support effective inter-disciplinary working both on actual cases of abuse and on prevention and post-abuse programmes. Child Protection Committees should make sure mechanisms are in place for the delivery and evaluation of local training initiatives.

159. In 2012, the Scottish Government published a national framework for child protection learning and development²². The purpose of the framework is to set out a common set of skills and standards for workers to ensure the delivery of a consistently high standard of support to children and young people across the country. The main aim is to strengthen the skills and training of professionals and improve the advice and tools available to them in assessing, managing and minimising risks faced by some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

160. Individual agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and confident in carrying out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing. Child Protection Committees should develop training programmes that complement and build on the work already done by individual agencies and which embrace multi-agency training needs among the staff of the agencies concerned. Different staff groups will have different skill sets, knowledge and responsibilities and staff from all agencies should be confident about their own roles and how these fit into the wider picture. Child Protection Committees need to identify collective training needs on an ongoing basis, responding quickly to any

²¹ For further information on significant case reviews, see [Protecting Children and Young People: Interim Guidance for Child Protection Committees for Conducting a Significant Case Review](#), Scottish Government (2007).

²² Scottish Government (2012) [National Framework for Child Protection Learning and Development in Scotland 2012](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

gaps highlighted by inspection reports, significant case reviews or other sources, working in collaboration with single agencies which may have their own training responsibilities.

161. Child Protection Committees should have an overview of the training needs of all staff involved in child protection activity, including:

- Staff with a particular responsibility for protecting children, such as Lead Professionals, Named Persons or other designated health and education practitioners, police, social workers and other practitioners undertaking child protection investigations or working with complex cases. They will need a thorough understanding of working together to promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing of all children and young people.
- Other staff who work directly with children, young people and parents/carers and who may be asked to contribute to assessments, for example children's group workers. This group will need a fuller understanding of how to work together to identify and assess concerns, and how to plan, undertake and review interventions.
- Other staff who have regular contact with children as part of their job, for example school bus drivers. These staff are well placed to recognise signs of abuse and raise concerns about a child's wellbeing and should understand their responsibility to share such concerns appropriately.
- Those in regular contact with parents/ carers, who are well placed to identify where a parent's or carer's behaviour may impact on a child. This group must be aware of their responsibility to consider such issues and know what they should do if they are concerned about a child's wellbeing.

162. Training and development for managers is also essential, at both operational and strategic levels. As well as „foundation level“ training, this may include training on joint planning and investigations, chairing multi-disciplinary meetings, supervision and support of staff, and decision-making. Some managers will also need training on the conduct of significant case reviews.

163. Training may be delivered more effectively if there is collaboration across local areas, especially where local policing divisions or health service boundaries span more than one local authority area. The content of training should reflect the principles, values and processes set out in national guidance on work with children and families as well as local protocols. It should be relevant to different groups from the statutory, third and other sectors, including volunteers, and be regularly reviewed and updated in the light of research and practice experience. A number of resources are available to assist staff development and training and some of these can be found in [Appendix B](#).

164. Child Protection Committees are responsible for publishing, implementing and reviewing an inter-agency child protection training strategy. They should also quality assure and evaluate the impact of that training.

Strategic planning

165. Child Protection Committees are the key local partnerships in terms of the planning of child protection policy and practice. This needs to be done in conjunction with other planning mechanisms and priorities, in particular arrangements for integrated children's services planning and community planning and other public protection fora. The contribution of Child Protection Committees to strategic planning falls into the following two broad categories:

Communication, collaboration and co-operation

166. Effective communication, collaboration and co-operation, both within and between practitioners and across all services and agencies, remain essential for the protection of children and families. Each Child Protection Committee will:

- demonstrate effective communication and co-operation at committee and sub-committee level;
- actively promote effective communication, collaboration and co-operation between all services and agencies;
- identify and resolve any issues between services and agencies that hinder the protection of children and young people;
- demonstrate effective communication with other inter-agency partnerships and bodies;
- communicate effectively about the work of the Child Protection Committee with staff in constituent services and agencies; and
- identify opportunities to share knowledge, skills and learning with other Child Protection Committees via national and local networks and fora across Scotland.

Making and maintaining links with other planning fora

167. Child Protection Committees need to be clear about their links with other multi-agency planning partnerships and structures. Each Child Protection Committee will:

- clearly identify the key links that need to be made with other bodies and ensure that they are made;
- ensure that Child Protection Committee plans and priorities are clearly linked to other national and local plans;
- in conjunction with other bodies, identify areas where joint working would be beneficial or duplication could be avoided and ensure that action is taken to address these issues; and
- have in place, and regularly review the effectiveness of, joint protocols around particular identified issues

168. While this list is not exhaustive, these connections will include:

- the Chief Officers' Group;
- all services and agencies represented on the Child Protection Committee, sub-committees and/or groups including the local authority, the NHS, police and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration;
- Elected Members Committees;
Adult Protection Committees;
- adult services (e.g. mental health, criminal justice or learning disability services);
- sex offender management and MAPPA;
- children's services planning;
- community planning;
- Child Protection Committees in other areas;
Community Safety Partnerships;
- Alcohol and Drug Partnerships or their equivalent;
Violence Against Women/Domestic Abuse Partnerships;
community care planning structures;
- Child Care Partnerships;
- the third sector;
- youth justice;
- the Scottish Government;
- the Scottish Ambulance Service;
- the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service; and
- NHS Child Protection Action Groups.

Public information and communication

Raising public awareness

169. Child Protection Committees will determine the level of public awareness, understanding and knowledge of, and confidence in, child protection systems within their area and address any issues as required within their business and/or improvement plans.

170. Child Protection Committees will produce and disseminate public information about protecting children and young people. Child Protection Committees will design, develop, publish, distribute, disseminate, implement, regularly review and evaluate a public information and communications strategy that includes the following elements:

- raising basic awareness and understanding of child protection issues within communities, including among children and young people;

- adapting good practice from others and exploring opportunities to fulfil these responsibilities with other Child Protection Committees;
- promoting the ethos that “child protection is everyone's job” in keeping with the GIRFEC approach; and
- providing information about how members of the public can report concerns about a child and what could happen.

Involving children and young people and their families

171. Child Protection Committees will ensure that the views of children, young people and their families are clearly evidenced in their work, in accordance with GIRFEC principles. It is vital that this area is not addressed in a token manner and that children's views are fed into the planning and implementation of improvements. [The Children and Young People Act \(Scotland\) 2014](#) contains provisions that, when implemented, will require the CPC to consult other service providers who contribute to the preparation of the plan. Each Child Protection Committee will:

- be able to demonstrate that its work is informed by the perspective of children and young people, including the most vulnerable and those with direct experiences of child protection services;
- review and develop their strategies for doing so; and
- involve children and young people in the design, development and implementation of Child Protection Committees' public information and communication strategies, to ensure that information is accessible and that children's experiences and perspectives are properly reflected

172. There are a number of ways of doing this. For the purposes of illustration these could include:

- drawing on the experience of the third sector in eliciting the views of children and young people;
- receiving regular reports from children's rights officers on the views of children and young people;
- commissioning independent surveys, either individually or collectively with other Child Protection Committees, on the views of children and their families;
- improving decision-making and recording practices to ensure that the views of children and families are better able to be gathered together and reflected;
- promoting the establishment of community-based advocacy services for children and young people; and
- ensuring that the views of children and young people are accounted for through the application of inter-agency quality assurance mechanisms.