

OFFICIAL

Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee

Working Together to Achieve the Best for Children Young People and Families

Annual Report 2020/21

OFFICIAL

Contents**Page**

Forward by Chief Officers Group Public Protection

Introduction by the Chair of Child Protection Committee

1. Child Protection Committee Governance

- 1.1 Governance
- 1.2 Demographics
- 1.3 Deprivation
- 1.4 Child Protection Services in Argyll & Bute
- 1.5 GIRFEC
- 1.6 Child Protection Statistics
- 1.7 Child Protection National Minimum Data Set

2. What We Have Been Doing Over the Last Year

- 2.1 Self Evaluation
- 2.2 Continued Improvement Through Multi Agency Audit
- 2.3 We effectively identify children at risk and act together
To protect them from harm
- 2.4 We work together to improve the Outcomes for Children
at risk
- 2.5 Our Policies, Procedures and Practice Supports staff to
Keep Children Safe
- 2.6 The CPC Uses Robust Data to Monitor Quality, Performance
To Identify Patterns and Trends to Support Continuous
Improvement
- 2.7 Views and Feedback from Children, Young People and their
Families
- 2.8 Leadership
- 2.9 Learning & Development
- 2.10 National Developments

3. Our Core Programme of Work for 2021/22

- 3.1 Core Self Evaluation activity

4. Conclusion

Appendix A

Business Improvement Plan 2021-2023

Key Contacts

Independent Chair - Moira McKinnon

Child Protection Committee
Argyll & Bute HSCP Kilmory Lochgilphead PA31 8RT
cpcenquiries@argyllbute.gov.uk

Child Protection Lead Officer - Susan Cairns

Child Protection Committee
Argyll & Bute HSCP Kilmory Lochgilphead PA31 8RT
Tel 01546 604281 susan.cairns@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Forward By the Chief Officers Group Public Protection

The Chief Officers of the public sector organisations in Argyll and Bute and the Health and Social Care Partnership are pleased to present the Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee (CPC) Annual Report for 2020-2021 and Business Plan 2021/23.

Our individual and collective commitment to the protection of children and young people in Argyll and Bute remains paramount. It is our belief that safeguarding, supporting and promoting the wellbeing of all children and young people and protecting them from harm and abuse is a key priority.

We take this responsibility very seriously and we are committed to improving outcomes, tackling inequalities and minimising the impact of child poverty.

Getting it right for every child remains a key approach in Argyll and Bute to achieving our vision of working together to achieve the best for children young people and families.

The Chief Officers Group Public Protection continues to provide robust leadership; direction; governance; scrutiny; challenge and support to the CPC. Over the last year, we have scrutinised the work of the CPC regularly and our strengthened partnership working is improving outcomes for Argyll and Bute's children.

As a partnership we are committed to continuous improvement through self-evaluation. We remain vigilant and are pleased that this annual report shows our children's services continue to improve outcomes for children. Together with the CPC, we strive to realise fully our capacity for continuous improvement and achieve our collective vision.

We acknowledge the efforts of the CPC, members of the CPC Sub Groups, the wider child protection community and all staff across the public, private, third and independent sectors, whose commitment, dedication and hard work is achieving better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people at risk of harm and abuse in Argyll and Bute.

Pippa Milne
Chief Executive
Argyll and Bute Council



John Paterson
Chief Superintendent
Police Scotland



Pamela Dudek
Chief Executive
NHS Highland



Introduction by the Chair of Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee

I am pleased to present the Argyll and Bute Annual Report summarising our multi-agency activity for the past year. This report presents the findings from a range of single and joint self-evaluation activities which are focussed on prevention; early intervention; keeping our most vulnerable children and young people safe and taking action to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation. It sets out our key achievements, strengths and areas for further improvement.

The past year has been dominated by Covid 19 which has impacted us all both personally and professionally. The CPC saw first-hand the demands placed on children's services to adapt, almost overnight, to a set of circumstances that were unprecedented, rapidly changing and causing fear and distress, not only to children and families known to services, but for those front line workers who continued to provide support to our most vulnerable children and families.

The CPC met more frequently to ensure oversight of our collective response to the pandemic. I have been greatly impressed by the work of all CPC partners who have worked tirelessly to ensure that vulnerable children and their families received the support and assistance they required through some very challenging times.

While the past year brought many challenges, it has also highlighted a strong ethos of partnership working within Argyll & Bute, which has been evident throughout ensuring service responses have been co-ordinated and directed to those in greatest need.

It has not been possible to achieve all that we set out to do, however, significant progress has been made, even during these challenging times. We know ourselves and have a good understanding of "how good we are now" and "how good we can be" going forward... As a result, this report concludes that our capacity for continued improvement remains strong.

Once again 2020/21 has been a very demanding and challenging period for the CPC. Our work has continued against an ever-changing legislative, policy and practice landscape, a health and social care integration agenda and both organisational and transformational change.

This report shows we have continued to deliver our services to protect children and young people effectively and efficiently. We have enhanced partnership working and strengthened our joint approach to quality assurance and self-evaluation.

The Child Protection Committee has identified its improvement priorities for the year ahead in our business improvement plan attached as an appendix to the report.

The hard work, commitment and dedication of all our staff is our key strength and they are making a positive difference to improving the lived experiences of all children, young people and families living in Argyll and Bute.

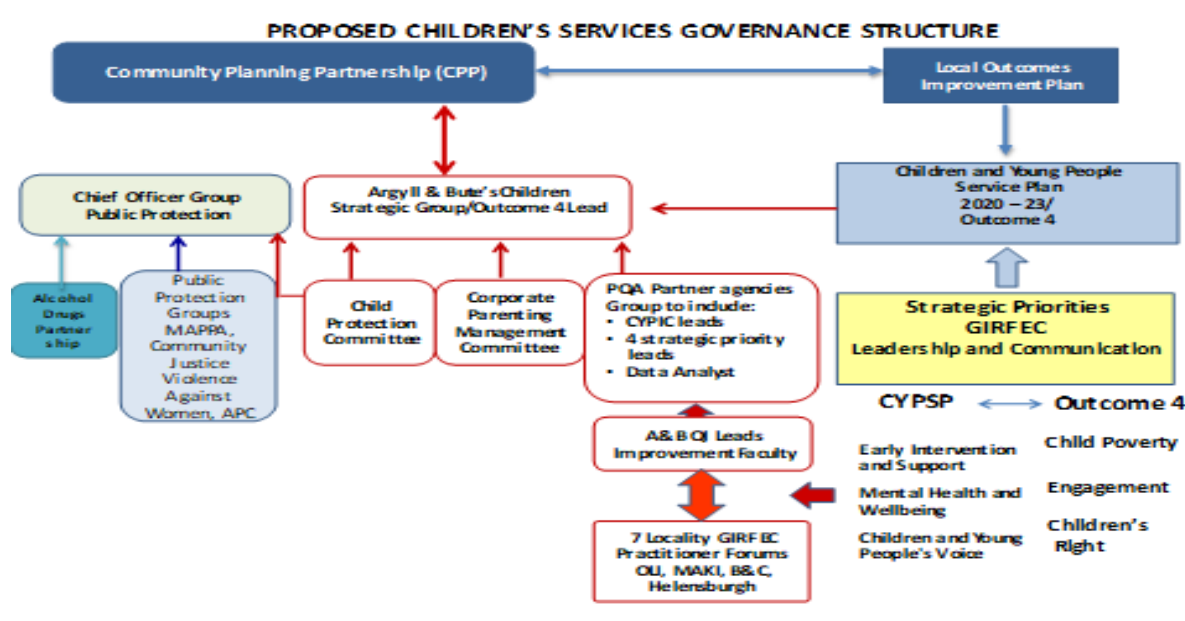
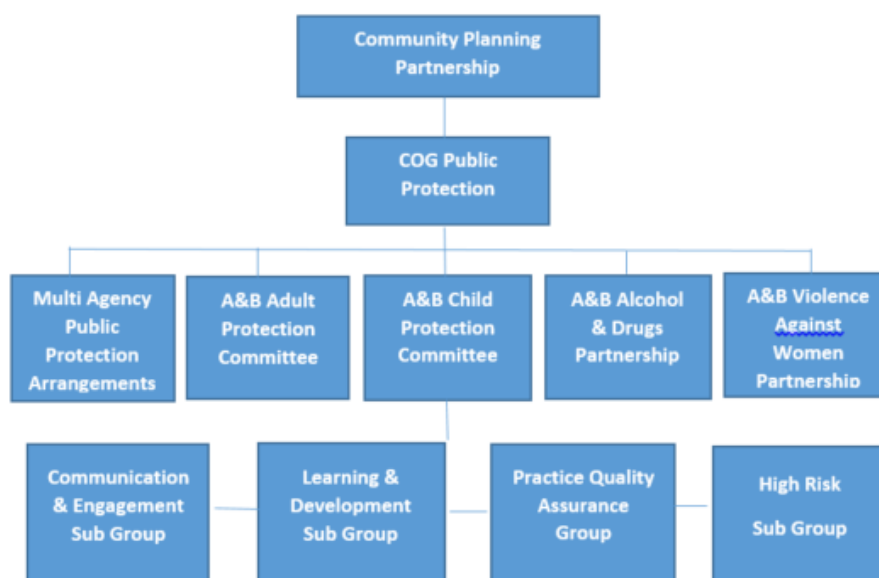
Moira McKinnon
Independent Chair of the Child Protection Committee

1. The Governance Structure of Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee

1.1 Child Protection Governance

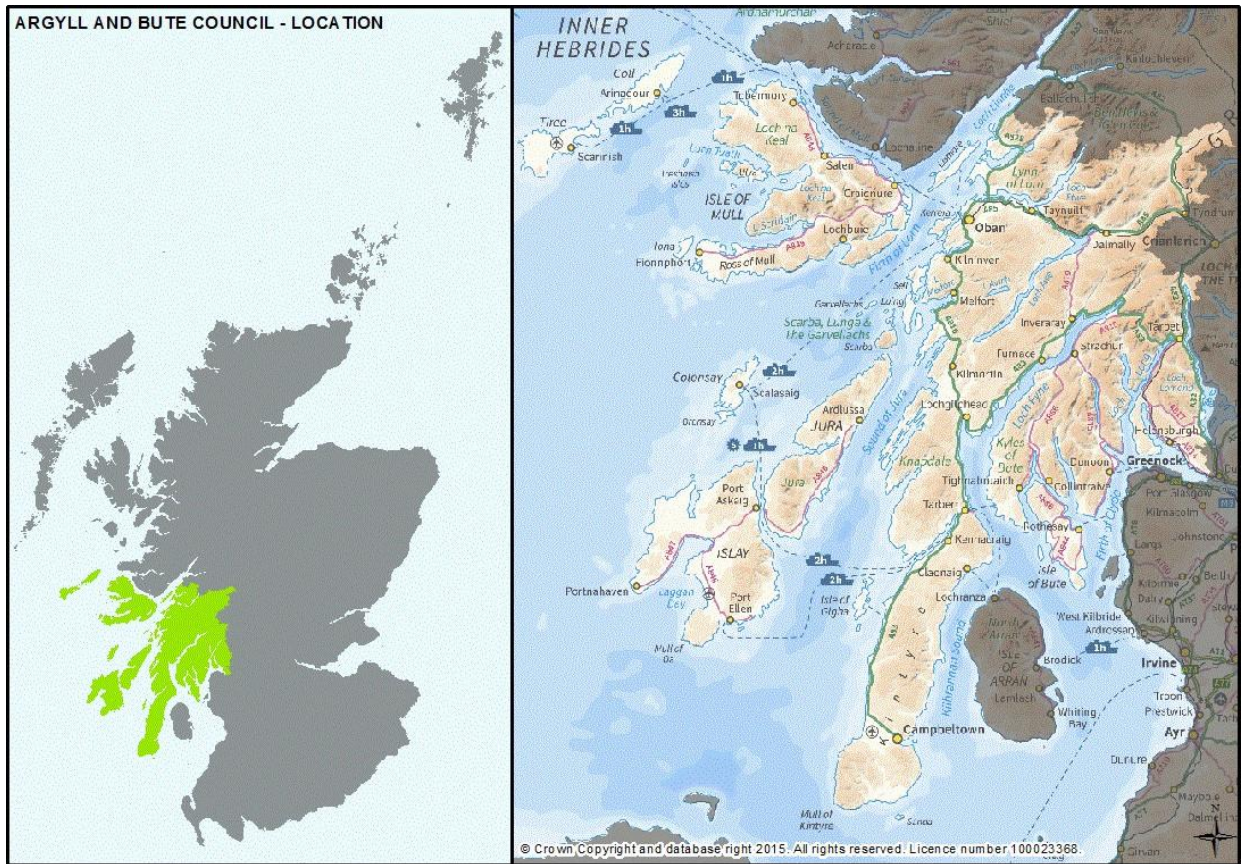
Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee is responsible for ensuring that children are kept safe and protected from harm and abuse reporting to Chief Officers Group Public Protection.

The Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership provides overall leadership to ensure the connectivity between different strategic groups and provides governance to ensure that the Chief Officers and the strategic groups. Partners are focused on the delivery of the Community Planning Partnership priority outcomes and ensures the committees have both the leadership and resources to fulfil their key functions.



1.2 Demographics

Argyll and Bute is the second largest local authority by area in Scotland, after Highland. The authority covers a land area of 690,947 hectares, Argyll and Bute has the third sparsest population (averaging just 13 persons per square kilometre) of Scotland's 32 local authorities (Census 2011).



The landscape is characterised by long sea and freshwater lochs, peninsulas and islands. The physical geography of the area adds considerably to the journey times between settlements and communities. The road network makes the area vulnerable to disruption, and diversions can be long. Island communities are vulnerable to ferry disruptions, particularly in the winter months.

Argyll & Bute has 23 inhabited islands, more than any other Scottish local authority. These are -

Bute, Coll, Colonsay, Danna, Easdale, Eilean da Mheinn, Erraid, Gigha, Gometra, Inchtavannach, Innischoonan, Iona, Islay, Jura, Kerrera, Lismore, Luing, Mull, Oronsay, Seil, Shuna (Luing), Tiree, Ulva (Census 2011).

- Helensburgh and Lomond
- Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay
- Oban, Lorn and the Isles
- Cowal and Bute

Argyll and Bute has a total population of 86,890. The population profile for Helensburgh and Lomond is younger than for the other three Administrative Areas. Nonetheless, the population of Helensburgh and Lomond, in common with the populations across the rest of Argyll and Bute, is ageing.

The population projections for Argyll and Bute indicate a gradual and sustained reduction in the number of children and young people aged 0-16 and an increasing population of older people.

Age Cohort	Base Year 2012	MYE 2015	2015	2020	2030	2037	% change within cohort
0-15	14,069	13,292	13,259	12,806	12,173	11,488	-18%

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) 2012 base population highlights the demographic challenge facing Argyll and Bute. If current trends continue, numbers and proportions of older people will increase as numbers and proportions of people in younger cohorts will fall.

1.3 Deprivation

The Scottish Government index of multiple deprivation identifies small-area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland, 10 data zones within Argyll and Bute were in the 15% most overall deprived data zones in Scotland.

These ten data zones are located in Argyll and Bute's main towns –

- Two each in Helensburgh, Rothesay and Campbeltown
- Three in Dunoon
- One in Oban
- Two in Lochgilphead

As the SIMD identifies concentrations of deprivation, smaller pockets and instances of individual deprivation are not picked up by the index. Deprivation can, and does, occur outside of the most deprived data zones.

Patterns of deprivation vary by deprivation domain. A particular contrast can be seen between levels of access deprivation, which affects most of rural Argyll and Bute and levels of deprivation across other SIMD domains, which show higher levels of deprivation in the towns.

1.4 Child Protection Services in Argyll & Bute

Child protection is delivered through seven area teams working in partnership with Police Scotland, Education, Health, 3rd sector and communities.

Social Work Children services in Argyll & Bute sit within the Health & Social Care

Partnership and work is underway to integrate and align services for children and their families and is overseen by the Joint Integration Board.

The Child Protection Committee has representation on Argyll & Bute's Children and contributes to children service planning around issues of safety and well-being.

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) provides robust multi-agency leadership, direction, governance, scrutiny, challenge and support to all services.

During 2020/21 the focus has been to continue the improvement journey prioritising early identification and improving the quality of assessment and child's plans to ensure the needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families are met timeously.

The CPC delivers leadership through the Child Protection Business Improvement Plan, a multi- agency plan mapping the CPC priorities for all agencies in delivering child protection in Argyll and Bute.

The success of the plan is measured through performance scorecards developed on the Council's pyramid management information system.

1.5 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

Throughout 2020 Argyll and Bute GIRFEC strategic group has continued to provide direction and support to ensure GIRFEC is embedded across all services.

Argyll and Bute became involved on the national GIRFEC leadership programme led by Scottish Government, however was affected by the pandemic and only recently the Scottish Government team has reconvened following a period of re- deployment to address issue related to the pandemic.

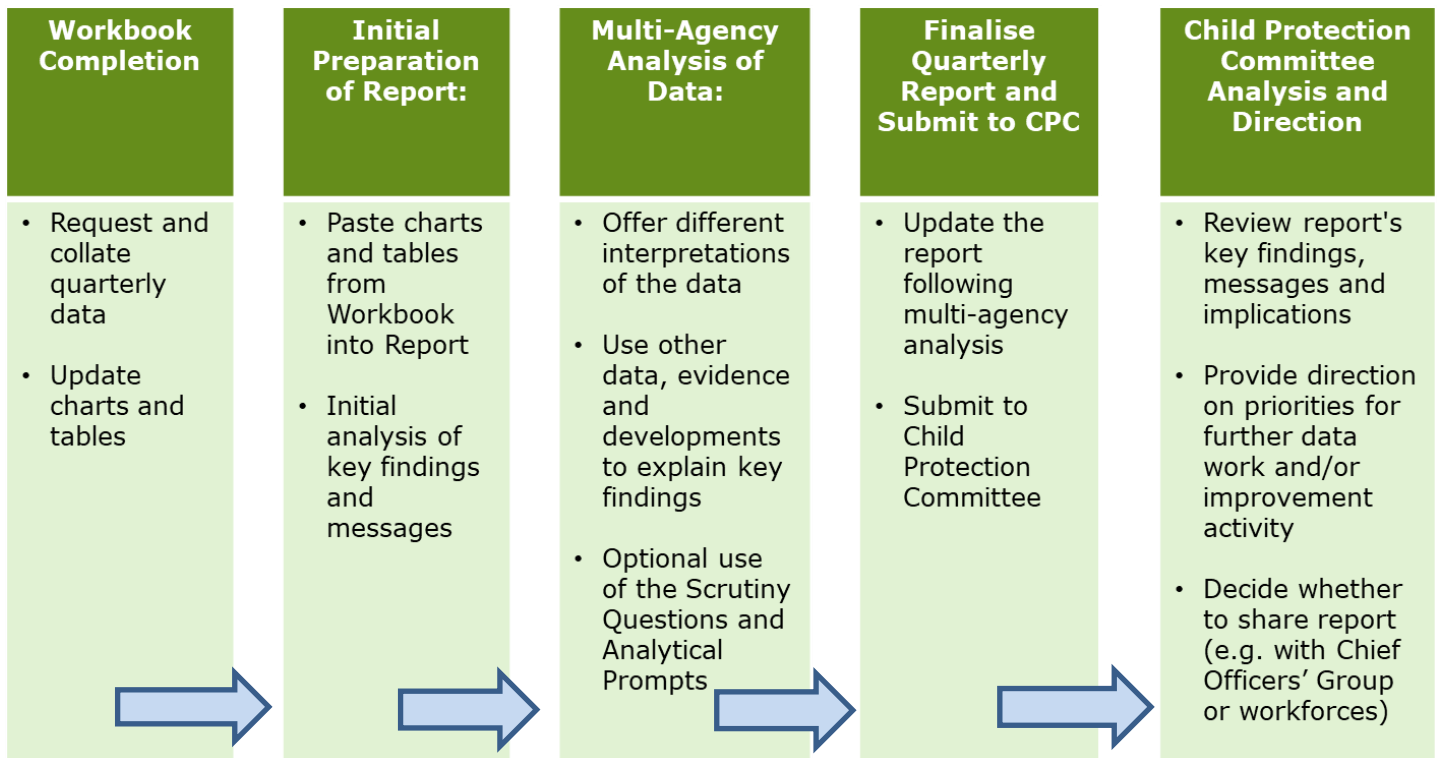
CPC Lead Officer has now joined the GIRFEC Quality Improvement and training sub group in order to better align and ensure Child Protection remains firmly within the GIRFEC continuum.

1.6 Number of Children Subject to Child Protection Processes in Argyll and Bute

The number of child protection investigations has decreased slightly in 2020 to 157 from 161 for 2019. 89 of these progressed to Child Protection Case Conference and 68 to a Child's Plan meeting. The highest area of concern was Domestic Abuse, followed by Poor Parenting and mental health issues and substance misuse.

1.7 Child Protection Minimum Data Set

Within Scotland work is ongoing to develop a minimum data set for all CPC's. Argyll and Bute has been supported by CELCIS to progress the development of a local 'workbook'. At the February CPC meeting Alex McTier from the CELCIS Protecting Children Team delivered a presentation summarising the data set and how the information can be used to scrutinise trends, patterns and inform practice.



The above diagram demonstrates the process of collecting and reporting data to the Child Protection Committee.

The Performance, Quality Assurance sub group plays a central role in scrutinising the data and providing the CPC with an analysis highlighting key trends/areas of interest. The work book contains the minimum data set and it is proposed that additional indicators will be added i.e., 'number of times the social worker has changed' as this give a picture of longevity of a social worker being responsible for a child/children which in turn suggests stability and opportunity to build a strong and meaningful working relationship.

The converse is lack of stability, which would need to be addressed locally.

2. What Have We Been Doing Over the Last Year?

2.1 Self Evaluation

Argyll and Bute CPC is committed to the continuous improvement of our interagency child

protection arrangements which are underpinned and informed by a robust cycle of self-evaluation activity.

As a result of Covid-19 at the beginning of 2020 we were unable to hold an event where front line staff and managers from all agencies could attend and participate in workshop based discussions. Instead, we held 2 virtual events using the Microsoft team's platform. A multi-agency event was held on 26/10/20 and a social work event on 10/12/20. Topics covered were -

- Domestic Abuse and the impact on the child
- Sexual Abuse
- Learning through practice during Covid-19
- How the CPC can communicate better with staff

These were well attended given the pressures on staff working through a pandemic and the subsequent capacity issues. Appendix 1 provides a more detailed report.

2.2 Continuous Improvement through Multi Agency Practice Audit

Two practice audits were undertaken and the findings are briefly discussed below -

IRD

An Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) audit group has been in place for over 2 years and samples IRD discussion records every 8 weeks. The group has met consistently despite the pandemic and of the records audited 100% achieved the grade of Good and above.

This group has also functioned as a development group in order to address issues as they arise, for example thresholds, analysis of risk and a review of the current local guidance.

There have been two development sessions in July and October 2020 resulting in changes to the IRD form and a training programme for Health and Education staff will be rolled out before a 'test of change' is implemented in one locality.

The current IRD protocol continues to be reviewed, however this has now been put on hold in light of the new National Child Protection Guidance due for implementation this year.

YPSP

The West of Scotland Child Protection Procedures and Argyll and Bute CPC protocols and procedures cover most situations where a child or young person still at school may be at future risk of significant harm, these remain our go to procedures for responding to children and young people at risk.

For young people over 16 years who have left school and are not receiving support as a care leaver the relevant adult procedure should be followed.

There are a small number of young people who are still at school or who are care leavers, Where there are very real concerns about their safety and well-being and require additional supports.

The Young Person Support and Protection (YPSP) protocol has been developed to ensure a robust and consistent interagency response to helping protect young people who are at risk of significant harm or of causing significant harm to themselves and others

The High Risk sub group of the Child Protection Committee agreed that an audit of young people should be undertaken to establish how well it has been used and if outcomes for this vulnerable group had improved as a result.

Phased approach to audit

The review will be conducted in two phases with phase 1 gathering quantitative data and phase 2 will involve speaking to young people and professionals to gain insight into the process and effectiveness of the protocol in securing better outcomes of those young people involved in the process.

Phase 1 was completed in February 2020 and the Care Inspectorate audit tool for children and young people in need of protection was adapted for use between the period 2019-2021. A total of 5 young people aged between 18 -20 were subject to YPSP were reviewed.

The ages of the young people involved ranged from 18 to 20 years , and related to three females and two males. It is of note that the average length of time for young people were involved with the YPSP was 15 months. This is not surprising due to the complexity of the needs of this group of young people.

Of the 5 young people reviewed ALL had a substantial care history and all young people were living in children's houses. Concerns included addiction issues, CSE, self-harm, suicidal ideation and sexually harmful behaviour. Two of the 5 YP had physical and developmental disabilities.

2.3 We Effectively Identify Children at Risk and Act Together Timeously to Protect Them From Harm

Early identification and response through the application of GIRFEC continues to be a strength with confident Named Persons, routine use of child's plan meetings and well understood processes and systems to help ensure children receive timely support.

The multi-agency IRD audit group which meets every 8 weeks has used the Care Inspectorate audit tool as a means of auditing practice and identifying and progressing issues as they are identified.

The IRD process is well understood and comprises of the relevant agencies including Named Person. The record of discussion has now been added to Care first and since this implementation there has been significant improvement in the quality of completed IRD's.

Feedback is now given to all participants of the IRD in writing and by phone if appropriate, this is to encourage the multi-agency learning reinforcing that all participants are accountable for the quality of discussion and decision making.

It is very encouraging that 100% of records audited over the last year scored Good or above.

It is to be commended that staff have continued to strive and achieve high standards in these difficult times when front line staff and managers in all agencies delivering child protection services have had to respond to a myriad of pressures.

The audit group has also acted as a development group and has held two multi-agency focus groups, which have been referred to previously.

In addition, the Independent Chairperson and the Lead Officer led a management session on 24/2/21 with Social Work managers looking at the IRD process and exploring some of the challenges for social work as a key partner in the process.

It is planned that the issues raised will be taken back in to the multi-agency audit group for further discussion and recommendations will be presented to CPC in May 2021.

2.4 We Work Together to Improve the Outcomes for Children at Risk

For children at risk in Argyll and Bute the issues of concern continue to be parental substance misuse, which includes both the use of drugs and alcohol, domestic abuse and parental mental health.

Research identifies non engagement as a consistent feature in a number of significant case reviews involving child deaths. Training in working with resistant families was carried out over the past 2 years and evaluated well with evidence of the assessment tool in case files. All core groups are chaired by the social work practice lead and it was an issue identified in the 2018 self-evaluation that more support was required in this area.

New guidance on how to chair a core group was written and support provided to this group. Observations of core groups over the past year has demonstrated a change in how the core group is managed based on a strengths based approach, e.g. family are engaged at the start of the meeting ascertaining what has gone well and referring and amending the multi-agency chronology and plan as appropriate.

Recent feedback from staff and parents is that this approach is working well and, in particular, there is evidence that tools are being used to help families understand what workers are worried about. The use of the resilience matrix supported one family to understand more clearly professional concerns, identify family strengths and how these could be built upon to help the parents to keep their child safe and well.

Assessments where social work are the lead professional, includes routine consideration of the need for home fire safety checks. All Health Visitors consider fire home safety checks as part of the health visiting pathway. Social work and the CAROS routinely consider a referral to SFRS as part of any assessment for children involved in child protection processes. Midwives assess the need for referral within the service's wellbeing tools and promote parents taking up fire home safety visits.

As part of the Public Protection Strategy the Lead officer for CPC attends both the Alcohol

and Drugs Partnership meeting and the Adult Support and Protection Committee. Likewise the lead officers for those committees attend the CPC. This has contributed to better partnership working and knowledge of each committee's functions and responsibilities.

More importantly it has assisted in a shared understanding of all partner's duty of care, including adult services, with regard to child protection.

The protocol for working with children who are impacted by parental mental health was launched in 2017, however a basic scoping exercise of how this has been implemented showed a low usage of this protocol.

During 2019/20 a training pack was developed and delivered on the Impact of Parental Mental Health protocol when workers were given the opportunity to explore how the protocol can be used to support the assessment of need and risk.

Training was delivered in 3 localities during 2020 and another session is planned for April 2021.

2.4 Our Policies, Procedures and Protocols Support Staff to Keep Children Safe

The CPC has developed a wide range of policies, procedures and protocols which are available on the CPC and GIRFEC webpages. Feedback from staff requested that the webpage be reorganised with clear indication of the subject and which client group the policies referred to.

This has been completed and feedback has been positive. The CPC took a decision not to produce any new protocols, but workers should be assisted to make sure they are familiar with existing protocols and tools and the priority for next year will be to embed these in practice.

A link to all documents has been placed on the SharePoint system in February 2021 for easier access and for staff whose organisation cannot access the Google search engine, which is required for the CPC website.

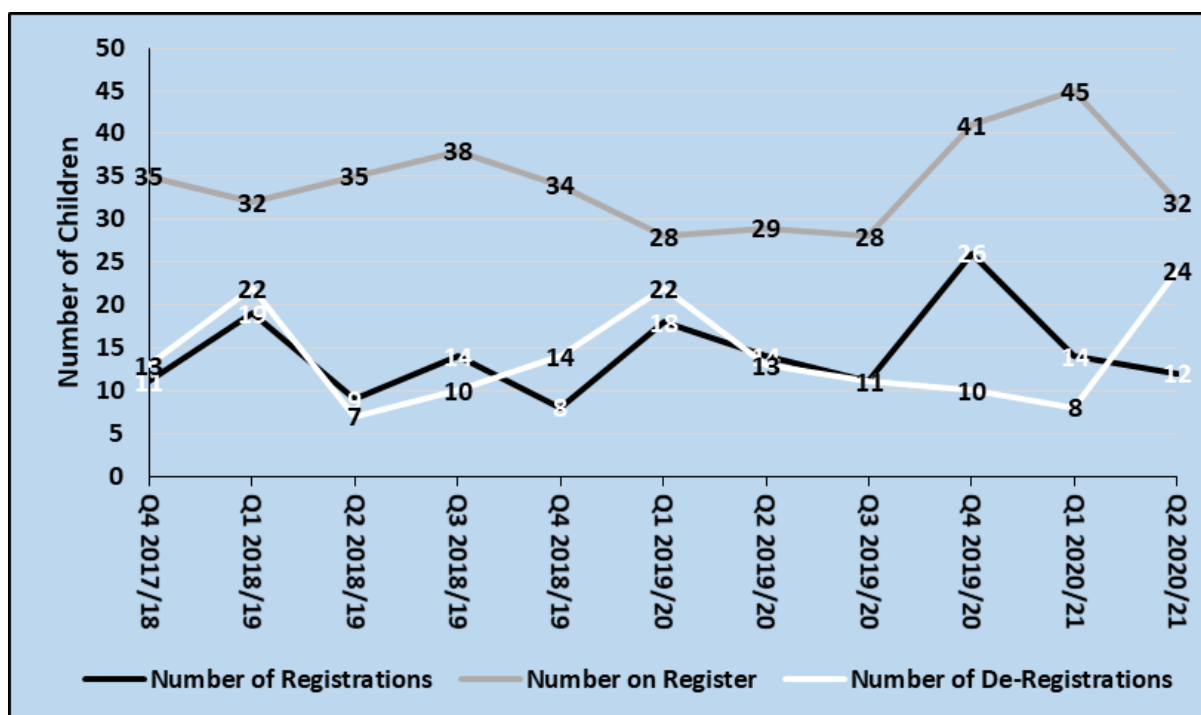
2.6 The CPC Uses Robust Data to Monitor Quality, Performance and Identify Patterns and Trends to Support Continuous Improvement

As previously mentioned as part of the Scottish Government's Child Protection Improvement Programme a minimum dataset has been developed which will support and inform national and local planning and service developments.

There are currently 3 pilot areas, of which Argyll and Bute CPC is not a part of, however members have taken part in workshops facilitated by CELCIS in order to progress the dataset and we now have a workbook in place.

The data that the CPC collected already matched the minimum dataset as set out by CELCIS and partners and the CPC will continue to add to the data set.

Below is an illustration of CP registrations, de-registrations and total number of children on the Child Protection Register between the end of 2018 and January 2021 for all localities in Argyll and Bute.



Registrations peaked in quarter 1 202/21 at 45 and steadily decreased to 28 in quarter 3 20/21. During this period the country experienced significant restrictions and lock down due to the pandemic, and these figures potentially reflect the challenges faced by services in engaging with families.

The following graph highlights the areas of concern at registration.

	Apr-Jun Q1 2019/20	Jul-Sept Q2 2019/20	Oct-Dec Q3 2019/20	Jan-Mar Q4 2019/20	Apr-Jun Q1 2020/21	Jul-Sept Q2 2020/21	Oct-Dec Q3 2020/21	Jan-Mar Q4 2020/21	Apr-Jun Q1 2021/22
Child Placing Themselves at Risk	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Child Sexual Exploitation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Domestic Abuse	5	2	6	12	7	9	7		
Emotional Abuse	5	2	2	8	3	0	1		
Neglect	5	3	0	8	4	1	4		
Non-Engaging Family	6	3	3	0	0	2	0		
Parental Alcohol Misuse	3	1	1	6	8	8	5		
Parental Drug Misuse	2	7	2	8	11	4	5		
Parental Mental Health Problems	9	6	2	8	10	6	5		
Physical Abuse	0	2	3	7	0	2	4		
Sexual Abuse	2	0	0	0	0	1	4		
Trafficking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Other Concern	10	4	1	4	3	6	0		
Total Number of Registrations	18	14	11	26	14	12	10		
	49	30	20	61	46	39	35	0	0

Domestic abuse

Domestic Abuse continues to be an area of concern and we have seen a rise in referrals to statutory services, however, the figures are lower than had first been expected, especially when listening to third sector partners delivering front line services for victims of domestic

abuse who highlight a significant rise in referrals and support to victims. The current social restrictions on movement in communities across Scotland create new risks to those suffering or recovering from domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG.

Some of the concerns about the low referral rate to statutory services may relate to perceptions that statutory services, such as police and homelessness services are not operating; the lack of physical access to normal social networks such as friends and extended family; reduced reach of interventions such as specialist VAWG and universal support services; sickness of frontline specialist service providers; barriers caused through increased use of digital or telephone enabled services; financial dependencies and increased access by perpetrators to women, children and young people because of social distancing and lockdown measures.

In recognition of this, the CPC implemented a Domestic Abuse Pathway for named persons (Appendix 2). The Pathway was launched in January 2021 and was supported by Health and Education managers providing single agency training to support the implementation. Domestic abuse is key priority Strategic Plan for 2021-2023.

The pathway removes the requirement for Domestic Abuse referrals to be screened via the early effective Intervention group. As an additional measure, to monitor this new process, the Lead Officer will carry out 8 weekly audits form cases provided by the Police Concern Hub Inspector.

An audit was carried out in February 2021 and all cases had been responded to by Social Work and named person with robust joint working and an agreed plan on how to support the child and family member who were victims of the Domestic Abuse.

Parental Substance Misuse

A joint session of the Child & Adult Protection Committees and the Alcohol & Drugs Partnership took place on 15/2/21. This was an initial meeting to explore how we progress joint working to achieve a more holistic, family based interventions that are aligned and integrated to provide support to both parents and children.

Ensuring individuals have access to the right interventions at the right time, enabling them to move through treatment into sustained recovery, will require a seamless interface between local services.

As a high proportion of the children on the child protection register have a parent with addiction and mental health issues this approach would be optimal in addressing and reducing the risks for children by providing the right support to the parent to support them to care for their children.

Parental mental health

Parental mental health continues to feature as an area of concern for children on the Child Protection Register and warrants a similar approach to that of addiction issues.

2.7 Views and Feedback from Children, Young People and their Families are Systematically

Gathered and Effectively Used to Inform Improvement Actions

Children 1st no longer provide the advocacy service for children and young people whose names are on Argyll and Bute's Child Protection Register. There is now 1 full time advocacy worker who provides this service to children over the age of 5 years.

Evaluation of this service indicates that engagement and involvement of children is of a high quality and children understand why agencies are concerned and their views are clearly and explicitly considered.

Feedback on the advocacy service is sought primarily from the children and young people who have used the service. They have an opportunity to comment on the service throughout their sessions and are asked to complete an evaluation form on their whole experience during their ending session.

If appropriate, they are also asked to provide feedback on their experience of the child protection process. CAROs and Social workers are also asked to complete an evaluation form to report on the impact of advocacy on their decision making.

Child/Young person feedback on advocacy service –

- *We now get on ok with social work and understand they think they are just trying to help.*
- *I had fun playing games. You are good at listening and then getting what I want to say over at meetings even though it was always the same thing I said.*
- *My favourite thing about seeing Jill was playing Uno and making up games to play over the video calls. That was really funny.*
- *I liked that you didn't force me to see you all the time but still took my views to the meetings so that I didn't have to go to them. I didn't always get everything I asked for but that was ok I suppose because you gave me a reason.*
- *I'm glad you let me text you. I wouldn't have spoken to anyone any other way.*
- *It was good because things I said appeared in the social work plan thing and people helped them to happen. That made me feel really special.*

Child/Young person feedback on child protection process What worked well?

- *I liked playing games and drawing pictures. I was worried about (sister) but I feel better talking about it and (social worker) is helping us. I feel much safer now. Things got better because (social worker) helped (sister) move out.*
- *Mum and Dad stopped arguing.*
- *Being able to tell how I felt and getting help from social work. Mum has been better since she knows how I feel.*

What bits were not so good?

- *I still worry she (sister) might come back.*
- *Having social work in all the time.*
- *Falling out with Dad. Arguing with Mum.*

What changes did you notice in your family?

- *Mummy and I are much happier.*
- *Less shouting.*
- *We are back together again and things are good. Mum doesn't drink as much anymore and if she does it doesn't affect me anymore. We are able to talk about stuff better now.*

2.8 Leadership

With the unexpected arrival of Covid-19, the Child Protection Committee had to respond to a rapidly changing working and living environment for staff, children and families living and working in Argyll and Bute.

In response to Covid-19, the committee met on a 6 weekly basis to provide a platform for agency leaders to meet and discuss service responses, the impact on staff and practice, and prioritisation of the strategic plan.

From March 2020 a weekly sub group met to discuss in more detail the impact of Covid-19 on service delivery. The existing Performance, Quality Assurance (PQA) group assumed this role as all agencies were represented including, Health, Social Work, Education, Police, Third Sector and Lead Officer CPC.

This evolved into a close monitoring of Vulnerable Person Data reports from the Police Concern Hub as an additional layer of scrutiny that child at risk were being swiftly recognised and supports put in place.

The independent chairs and lead officers for ADP, CPC and APC met regularly throughout 2020 to ensure robust communication and provide an opportunity to address any cross committee/service issues.

A specific development session for CPC members has not been achieved in 2020, however one is planned for May 2021.

2.9 Learning & Development Sub Committee/ Communications

By promoting good practice throughout the delivery of our learning and development strategy, the CPC supports the multi-agency workforce to effectively protect children across Argyll and Bute.

We now have a Communications sub group incorporated into our learning and development group and have updated our strategy and welcomed new members. We have continued to

participate in the 'eyes and ears open' campaign which we have delivered twice in 2020.

As a result of Lockdown and Covid-19 related restrictions, we were aware from Police colleagues that there had been a significant increase in young people being targeted and groomed online. In response to these concerns, we sent messages via Education links on two occasions to children, young people and parents/carers, warning of the dangers and how to keep safe online.

We asked staff how the CPC could communicate better and responded to their comments creating a staff message board located on our website where current information and new developments are posted.

In addition, the Lead Officer hosts a CPC chat session on a monthly basis and 2 have been held so far, with very good attendance and feedback. This is designed to be informal where staff can attend as they choose when and how long for. This is in its infancy, but it is hoped that it will continue to be of value.

It was acknowledged that our posters and leaflets required a refresh, therefore we ran a competition in schools and had 10 winners! This was very successful, and each winner received a prize.

The posters will be seen Argyll and Bute wide once it is possible to have them placed in schools and public places.

On 3 March 2021, Scottish Government launched a 3 week awareness raising campaign to draw attention to Child Sexual Exploitation, to improve public understanding and empower those with concerns to act on them. The Lead Officer, with assistance from Education and the Council Communications team, circulated this message in the form of 2 posters with a clear message that Child Sexual Exploitation is happening across Scotland and can happen online or offline and to boys and to girls. All children, no matter what their circumstances are could potentially become a victim of abuse and exploitation.

Delivery of core programme

In response to the impact of Covid-19 and subsequent restrictions, face to face training has been suspended since March 2020. In order to continue delivering our programme training has been redesigned to be delivered online. Throughout 2020, 3 level 1 courses on Introduction to Child Protection, 1 Identifying Child Protection Concerns and 2 Assessing Parental Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Domestic abuse were delivered. In early 2021, 1 level 1 course on Introduction to Child Protection was delivered.

Supporting multi-agency working

Training continues to be developed and delivered in partnership with colleagues from across children and adult services albeit virtually using Microsoft teams. This brought subject knowledge and expertise and gave a core message to participants that partnership working is at the heart of child protection in Argyll and Bute.

Supporting improvements in risk assessment

Training which supports improvements in risk assessments remained a training priority in 2020/21 and an online module on Risk assessment was developed.

Assessing parental mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse training was piloted in 2019 and rolled out in 2020 to reflect the high prevalence of these issues in child protection investigations and registrations.

This training is delivered with a half day recall to give participants time to reflect the formulation of their risk assessments and plans.

Participants reported at first stage evaluation, the training had given them increased knowledge of these subject area and better understanding of risks.

A full review of this training is scheduled for April 2021, the review the impact of Covid-19 on delivery of the programme.

2.10 National Developments

During 2020 our child protection committee members contributed to 3 national consultations:

- Learning Review Guidance
- Care Inspectorate survey of SCR/ICR
- Draft National Child Protection Guidance

The Lead Officer and Learning and Development Coordinator are members of the national Guidance implementation group and work is underway to agree how the Guidance will be implemented and what delivery methods of training would be preferred.

Proposals from this group are currently being collated by CELCIS and a meeting of all CPC Scotland members is scheduled for March 2021. Lead Officer continues to contribute to the West of Scotland Lead Officers and Chairs meeting and the National Lead Officer meeting.

Both the chairperson and Lead Officer are members of Child Protection Committees Scotland. More recently the Lead Officer has joined to Social Work Scotland Child Protection sub-group.

The Children (Equal Protection From Assault (Scotland) Act 2019 was implemented in November 2020 and the CPC played a pivotal role in terms of circulating guidance and forming a small steering group which meets fortnightly to review all EP incidents as recorded by Police Scotland.

The purpose is to learn from discussion and develop more local guidance for staff once there is a multi-agency understanding of how this new legislation translates into practice and the impact on children and families.

3. Our Programme of Work for 2021/22

Appendix 3 details the CPC's work plan for 2021/2023, however there are some key self - evaluation and reporting processes.

3.1 Core Self-Evaluation Activities

The CPC will undertake a systematic programme of self-evaluation and audit activity which will include -

- **Taking a closer look**- consultation with parents and carers who tell us of their experience of services and interventions to improve their and their children's lives.
- **Advocacy reports**
- **Audit and Review**- inter-agency file auditing.
- **Thematic review** - Child Journey Audit which is planned to continue into 2021.
- **Case reviews** – including where required initial or significant case reviews, child protection de-brief and single agency reviews.
- **Learning and development**- where we review the impact of training.
- **Performance review**- where we examine what statistical and other data tells us about our services

4. Conclusion

Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee continues to pursue its functions as outlined in the Scottish Government Guidance to Child Protection Committees, to provide strategic leadership and to develop practice to ensure high standards are maintained in the face of increasingly challenging economic and social circumstances.

This work has continued in the face of a national pandemic which has affected us all both personally and professionally.

The Child Protection Committee would like to express gratitude to all our Police, Social Work, Health, SFRS, SCRA, Legal, Education and Third Sector colleagues who have continued to deliver robust services in such challenging times.

The progress outlined in this report and our plan for 2021/23 demonstrates our continuing commitment to this.