



Annual Report 2020-21

(Covering period 01.08.2020 – 31.07.2021)

Priorities 2021-22

(Covering period 01.08.2021 – 31.07.2022)

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Foreword

The South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) annual report for 2020-21 sets out the work of the Committee over that academic year. It also confirms the CPC focus for the year 2021-22.

This report is an opportunity to celebrate success, recognise challenges while encouraging innovation and improvement. In that regard I must recognise the commitment, flexibility, and aptitude of my predecessor Professor Paul Martin CBE. As well as the members of the committee, and the organisations they represent, for once again supporting practices, driving strategy, and shoring up skill gaps in what remained an uncharted, unprecedented time as a consequence of the ongoing pandemic.



This report merely touches upon the dedication of staff across the multi-agency spectrum. I am aware of countless examples of individuals going above and beyond the standard remit of their role to ensure the children and young people of South Ayrshire were kept safe and protected.

Nonetheless it must also be recognised that these events impacted upon our wider communities and our staff.

Over the reporting period it is evident that child protection processes were not compromised. While most staff worked from home, our Initial Response Team, remained in the Locality Office and the routes to raise Child Protection Concerns remained the same as before the Covid pandemic. This consistency to access Social Work Services, was deemed essential at a time where risk could have been increased for vulnerable children and young people. We remained operational and, wherever possible, aided by ICT, training and development was sustained.

Given the challenges, it was essential that there was good governance and oversight throughout this period resulting in weekly Chief Officer Group (COG) discussions in relation to Child Protection. There was also sustained data recording, ensuring accountability for fulfilling our responsibility to vulnerable children and their families. This meant that all children on the register were visited at home, in one manner or another, throughout lock down.

Data analysis supported a continuous narrative on performance. This was evident and transparent within the COG and partnerships arenas.

Although this report highlights a reduction in referral numbers, this in many ways reflects a commitment to transformation of the culture in South Ayrshire and to risk,

working with families from a strengths-based approach by all multi-agency partners. This ensured that children had access to the right support at the right time from the right person. This was evident throughout the pandemic and is seen clearly today in present practice.

A trend analysis of the low number of Child Protection referrals was commissioned by the Child Protection Committee and assurances sought as to the rationale, this report brought assurance to the CPC and COG and reflects the aforementioned culture change. Similarly, the number of children on the Child Protection Register remained low but not out with range in relation to other local authority benchmarking areas.

Initial Referral Discussions (IRD) audit activity continues to provide additional confidence in the decision-making processes and highlights that collaborative multi-agency decisions were being made.

This audit activity ensured that there was scrutiny over those children who were subject to IRD, but also brought assurance by reflecting on those children who were not considered appropriate for IRD and whether the decision making around this was transparent and appropriate. Both audits brought further assurance to CPC and COG.

The ethos of Signs of Safety was embraced, and CPC continued with an overview of business and a focus of engagement with the Champions Board.

Underpinning all this, the CPC commissioned a further Child Protection Trend Activity Overview report. This report will consider details of the quality assurance activity being undertaken and provide confidence that whilst our child protection numbers are low, decision-making is scrutinised and robust at each stage of the Child Protection process. Finally, the report will also look at over-all trend data and benchmarking, regarding Child Protection, Looked After Children and the overall strategic direction of the support and services for South Ayrshire's most vulnerable and at-risk children.

We all must recognise the impact and consequential challenges of Covid-19 during this review year, which included a second national lockdown as well as local lockdown processes. While bearing these factors in mind I hope, like me, you find that this report provides you with the assurances that the fundamental processes are in place to ensure that the South Ayrshire appropriate safeguarding and respond to issues that impact upon the wellbeing of children and young people.

As always, I am open to discuss improvement ideas or observations as necessary.

Jim Kerr

Independent Chair - Child Protection Committee
South Ayrshire

1: The Work of the South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

Background

The South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) is the local strategic planning partnership which is responsible for delivering continuous improvement in protecting children in South Ayrshire. Its work includes the design, development, dissemination and evaluation of inter-agency child protection policies and procedures. It has a responsibility to promote awareness of child protection to the local public and promote good practice within and across agencies, as well as leading on training and development.

As described in the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland \(2014\)](#) the functions of the CPC are continuous improvement, strategic planning, public information and communication. This work is reflected in local practice and aims to meet local and national needs in keeping children safe.

Vision, Mission, Values and Aims

The following vision, mission, values and aims guide the work of the CPC and have been designed to have a positive impact on the quality of child protection work, the outcomes delivered for children and their families and provide an effective framework for service delivery.

Vision Statement

The South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee is committed to working together to protect South Ayrshire's children from abuse and neglect.

Mission Statement

It's everyone's job to make sure that children in South Ayrshire are safe from abuse and neglect. We will strive to ensure that the protection of children is a responsibility that is shared by all our staff and with the community.

Values

- Respect
- Equity
- Child-centred
- Collaboration

Aims of South Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

- Children are protected by timely and effective action.
- Children are listened to and respected.
- Children understand what to do if they are concerned about their own or others safety and protection from abuse and neglect.
- Our staff are confident and competent in protecting children from abuse and neglect.
- Agencies, individually and collectively, demonstrate leadership and accountability for their work and its effectiveness in keeping children safe from abuse and neglect.
- The public understand what to do if they are concerned about the safety and protection of children from abuse and neglect.
- Collaboratively we ensure continuous improvement by evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of our services.
- We provide an integrated approach to identifying, intervening, and providing ongoing support to protect children at risk of harm from abuse and neglect.

Leadership, Governance and Accountability

Local Governance Arrangements

The CPC is one of several partnerships which have responsibility for public protection. The others include:

- South Ayrshire Adult Protection Committee (APC)
- South Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP)
- South Ayrshire Violence against Women Partnership (VAWP)
- Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)

Chief Officers Group

The CPC reports to the Chief Officers Group for Public Protection (COG). The COG comprises the Chief Executives of South Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire & Arran

and the Commander for Police Scotland. The COG also comprises the Executive Group for reporting purposes to the Community Planning Partnership (CPP).

Supported by the CPC Chair and its members, the COG drives forward an extensive work plan and routinely evaluates its work to ensure there is a clear focus on continuous improvement and accountability. Members of the COG and the CPC support the GIRFEC approach seeking to ensure children, young people and their families get the help they need when they need it.

South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

The South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) which comprises community-based health and social care services for adults and children, is governed by the Integration Joint Board (IJB). The IJB Chief Officer is also the Director of the Health and Social Care Partnership. The Chief Social Work Officer provides professional advice on all Social Work services and practice to the IJB, South Ayrshire Council, the COG, and the CPC. The IJB is supported by a Performance and Audit Committee and by a Health and Care Governance Committee.

CPC Sub Committees

Public Protection Planning arrangements were made more robust by introducing sub-groups which serve both the Child Protection and Adult Protection Committees. The sub-groups are:

- Communication and Engagement.
- Learning and Development.
- Policy, Practice, and Improvement.

The sub-groups have detailed Terms of Reference and have key roles to play in the continuous improvement of child protection policy, practice, and indeed the general continuous development of the CPC.

Following the principles of GIRFEC, work continues to improve outcomes and the wellbeing of children and young people by ensuring they get the support they need at the right time.

The CPC and consequently its associated sub-groups are responsible for delivering continuous improvement in protecting children in South Ayrshire. Business includes the design, development, dissemination and evaluation of inter-agency child protection policy, procedures, and practice. There is a responsibility to promote awareness of child protection to the local public and promote good practice within and across agencies, as well as leading on training and development.

As part of this work, the CPC is responsible for identifying priority areas for the following year.

2: Response to Covid-19

The challenges of the pandemic including the introduction of further additional lockdown measures over this reporting period have remained the greatest risk around South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership delivering community and individual engagement, continuing to protect and support the most vulnerable children and their families.

It was rightly recognised keeping children safe is a legislative requirement that should direct everyday practice. However, the circumstances required particular attention to the health and wellbeing of both individuals and practitioners.

In response to Covid-19, daily practice across Social Work, Education, Health, the Voluntary Sector, Scottish Children's Reporters Administration, Police and Housing Services has required to be adapted, often at short notice, incorporating several diverse creative approaches, to enable the continued delivery of services to our most vulnerable children and families. These approaches have taken many different and varied forms however there has also been the continued delivery of face-to-face contact for those in greatest need. This has required robust Risk Assessments to be completed for these contacts, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of service users and staff, and where required the necessary use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in line with national guidance and direction. Throughout the Covid-19 crisis there has been strong partnership working across Health, Education, Police, community groups and third sectors providers, this partnership working has enabled the sharing of resources and target those families and individuals who were especially vulnerable and in need of coordinated support.

In such circumstances, the overarching primacy was the safety of our service users and practitioners.

The vast majority of staff had both their Covid vaccines, which is extremely positive.

It was of critical importance to ensure that Partnership and multi-agency responsibilities continue to be met and that measures are in place to ensure the safe discharge of statutory duties and that employees and volunteers are supported to carry out their responsibilities.

In order to do this, Partnership and multi-agency partners have utilised and assimilated the advice and guidance issued by the Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate and Health Protection Scotland amongst others and incorporated this in their practice guidance, which has been updated as necessary.

Child Protection Activity

Over this reporting period, despite the pandemic, all children with a Child Protection Plan were seen by a professional and over 95% of Child Protection Investigations were completed on time, with the main reasons for Registration noted to be parental mental health and neglect.

Child Protection and Child Protection Alert visits to known families continued to be carried out on a weekly basis, Social Workers retained responsibility for visiting families/children from their own case list, using their existing relationships, rapport, and knowledge of the family to support the need for intervention. This ensured that the worker who knows the child best and has a relationship with the family were able to respond to needs and risks at the earliest point of identification.

There was also clear evidence of shared responsibility across all CPC Partners, with others involved in the child's plan being available to visit, such as Health Visitor or teaching staff. Many of the children known for vulnerabilities also had regular contact with South Ayrshire supports in terms of free school meal delivery and other third sector partners who support families with other food and prescription deliveries. There is evidence that the Child Protection systems have been tested and functioned effectively during the Crisis, with 70% of the children on the register in the reporting period being subject to registration during CoVID and 25% being de-registered during the same time period, showing an active flow in and also a review process which de-escalates concerns when evidence is clear that this is required.

Operational Social Work

All locality Social Work teams predominately worked from home, nonetheless they continued to undertake essential and necessary visits, using various creative approaches, including garden visits walking meetings and the use of technology. Through excellent collaboration and communication, various CPC partners supported children and had eyes and ears on children's wellbeing when Schools were closed, while the approach to Initial Response Team (IRT) and CP remained the same "open door" for referrals. The Social Work's, IRT, being the "gateway to services" retained all means of raising Child Protection concerns and Alerts using the same telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and being based within a building throughout the pandemic to enable good supervision and support during the crisis.

This team undertook any child protection investigations for new and unknown cases throughout the reporting period. There has been no change to operation of this service and IRDs have continued to be undertaken as per the new guideline.

All Child Protection meetings continued to be online as did all "Looked After" reviews.

Covid Oversight meetings continued to take place weekly and consequently highlighted that staff have found this particular period of lockdown and home working extremely challenging. Workers were noted to be tired and emotionally drained as the demand from families increased. That said, from a survey undertaken of Social Work staff at this time, most reported that there were benefits to the working approach throughout the pandemic and this reporting period. The majority of responses highlighted many benefits in relation to the ability to work from home. Respondents also acknowledged the challenges that home working and home schooling bring, but in general staff were able to establish routine and protected time for work and family.

Staff highlighted the following benefits of homeworking:

- Less stress,
- Better work / life balance,
- More time with own family,
- No need to make daily commute / travel to meetings, saving time,
- Work seemed more service user centred and more specific to the needs of individuals rather than the organisation,
- More time to reflect on planning and approaches,
- Protected time to complete reports and plan work.

Technology

The responses highlighted the benefit of having access to technology and access to council systems at home as well as platforms such as Skype, WhatsApp, and Microsoft Teams to facilitate video conferencing. Staff felt more connected to their children, families, and service users through these systems.

Support and Supervision

The majority of responses highlight that staff benefitted from regular contact with Team Leaders, feeling that they were well supported not only in ensuring that outcomes and standard were being met, but also that their physical and emotional health was also supported. This was achieved by staff using new approaches such as online conference and support through networks and groups and various creative games, discussions topics, book groups, and physical visits at a distance.

However, some comments did reflect the need for staff to have physical meetings and access to their Team Leader with the benefits of face-to-face team meetings and physical access to each other.

Leadership

Responses highlighted that practitioners felt that leadership was strong during this crisis. Workers highlighted that decision making and direction were more prominent. Team Leads had a greater role in having an overview of the service including visit, contacts, report timescales. Staff also highlighted a sense of empowerment allowing them more autonomy over decision making.

Practice Perspectives

Some staff highlighted how they have had to adapt and differentiate between programmes and bespoke methods of working. These adaptations to working have proven to be of significant benefit to individuals and families as they can be delivered at a time and a manner that suits the family and individual. They did not require travel to and from meetings and in the main, contact and meetings were less stressful for families and staff alike. In general, families have felt more listened to, understood and less judged, meetings also seemed to make more sense with a clearer sense of purpose and outcome. Staff also highlighted a growing enablement of families, with parent/s more actively engaged in trying, initiating, and maintaining positive strategies and approaches to improve family life. This resulted in more empowered, families and parent/s with greater social capital and resilience, with Social Workers being less “interventionist” in their approach, which appears to be appreciated by families and staff alike.

It is worthy of note that there has been no notable escalation of concerns over this reporting period. There has however been a steady increase in the number of child protection registrations, with some large family groupings and complex cases noted.

That said, numbers of children registered during this period remained in keeping with the pro rata rate of referrals to the Scottish Children’s Reporter and reflected a “flow” of children onto the register and de-registrations as risks were mitigated against with families evidencing the strengths and resilience required to parent without the need for Social Work involvement.

Notwithstanding the above, staffing has continued to be an issue within operation Social Work and the challenge of service delivery and staff morale was managed. It has also been noted that the lack of face-to-face support from third sector partners was beginning to cause a strain on some families.

Weekly HUB meetings continued to take place over this reporting period and consideration was given to sharing agency databases to ensure as many vulnerable families as possible were being seen and supported without duplication.

The IRD audit group also continues to meet on a two monthly basis to ensure the quality and standard of IRDs were being met. Such quality assurance ensures that

those children who were requiring registration were getting this and it was overseen by the CPC and COG.

Police Scotland

Police colleagues continued to operate in an almost 'business as usual' basis throughout the reporting period. Joint Investigative Interviews have been conducted in an environment where social distancing could be observed.

There has been no marked increase in the number of Domestic referrals, Child Concern referrals or IRD's during this period. There have been no noted issues requiring escalation by the Police.

Child Protection Health

The Child Protection Health Team continues to respond to all CP activity with procedures adapted as required to facilitate meetings, advice & support for staff. Training and Child Protection Supervision continue to take place as do face-to-face visits.

Over this reporting period there has been notable Child Protection concerns highlighted however did not required escalation.

Education

From 19th April 2021 all children across Scotland returned to school. Child Protection activity within education has remained low. When P1-3 pupils returned in March 2021 there was an increase in positive tests with the requirement for two lateral flow tests per week. This had some impact on teaching in the beginning, however this has now settled down and schools are operating well.

Domestic abuse reports began to be raised with teaching staff. Relevant referrals were made to Social Work and the Third Sector, primarily in relation to neglect issues.

During the second lockdown period there was an impact on the well-being of teaching staff. There was also an increase in the number of young people requiring mental health support.

It was noted that during the course of the pandemic there had been a sharp increase in the number of applications from parents to home school their children, however as this reporting period progressed this has now declined.

The Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA)

SCRA continued to hold virtual Children's Hearing's. SCRA noted that they anticipated using a cloud-based service to host Children's Hearing's.

There are facilities now in place to offer face-to-face Hearings if this is required. This will be decided between the Reporter and the child's allocated Social Worker.

Reporters have been continuing to use the CoVID Legislation to renew Compulsory Supervision Orders which were due to expire and extend these for a further six months.

Staff Wellbeing

To safeguard the welfare of workers, regular support and communication via weekly VLOGS and regular supervision continued to be provided to all staff. Team meetings continued to be an important feature on a weekly basis and these are supported by regular briefing circulations.

Staff Wellbeing Hubs continue to operate in three locations throughout South Ayrshire. These Hubs provide a safe, quiet, and safe space for workers who need some time out for self-care.

Regular bulletins 'Keeping Connected' have continued to be issued by CPC Scotland and these are sent to CPC members in South Ayrshire on a regular basis to share knowledge and experiences during the pandemic.

3: Communication and Engagement

The CPC listened to children, young people, families, communities, and employees to routinely produce and disseminate public information about protecting children and young people. All local information and links to national publications were shared.

This included “Keeping Kids safe C-19”, Twitter and Facebook messages focusing on Child Protection.

A feature of the work of the CPC is ensuring that information is up-to-date, relevant, and easily accessible to meet the needs of partners and communities. This was of particular importance during the Covid-19 pandemic when children and young people were not able to engage with services in their usual way.

This work is supported by the Communication and Engagement Sub-Group.

During this reporting period this Sub-Group assessed the viability of having specific social media pages for the CPC. There were various links, helpful websites and information sent to families throughout this time, for example Children’s First’s Parent Line.

In addition, it pressed on with a collaborative approach to engagement with North and East Ayrshire to share common messages.

A key priority was for all groups in society to be represented and engaged with, the primary purpose of the group being to engage internal and external stakeholders.

Despite the ongoing pandemic the group needed to generate a modern and contemporary idea of committee and communication.

The group looked to progress the viability of podcasts, live / online learning, parents forums, getting messages right for age groups, listening to ideas and looking at doing things in sizeable chunks, Getting messages out in right format, social media, and Calendar of events.

The Promise

The CPC was introduced to this programme. An extensive presentation was delivered to CPC, elected members, IJB and Community Planning Partners on the work being driven by the Champions Board in implementing the Promise.

Between February 2020 and February 2021 young people in South Ayrshire were heavily involved in activities, developed good relationships, and opened people’s minds as to what was needed in South Ayrshire to help looked after children and young people.

Unseen Child Protocol

This document was circulated in May 2020 with the following guidance:

Key Practice Messages for staff

- I. Children can be deemed unseen or missing because they are absent from services in their home, foster placement, or children's home.
- II. 'Missing' or 'unseen' covers a range of scenarios.
- III. Where children are deemed unseen or missing, a multi-agency risk and need assessment and coordination is essential for the location of the child and any subsequent support.
- IV. Practitioners should follow South Ayrshire's GIRFEC policy and Child Protection Processes.
- V. Practitioners must refer to their own agency guidance and policies for children unseen and / or missing.
- VI. Records must include details about contact or lack of contact with the child and their family or care giver. Interagency chronologies assist with the assessment of risk.
- VII. Where a child has not been seen or if there are concerns about non-compliance or non-engagement, single agency procedures must be followed and a referral to SCRA must be considered.
- VIII. Services should not be withdrawn unless other protective measures have been put in place for the child.

4: Learning and Development

A key function of the South Ayrshire CPC is to prepare and deliver an extensive programme of multi-agency child protection learning and development opportunities.

This is the remit of the Learning and Development sub-group.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, it was recognised staff required upskilled particularly when involved with complex cases.

Refresher training and shared learning experiences / link in with staff who have the competence to offer more informal training sessions.

More cross training opportunities across the partnership would be developed.

Direction of travel would begin with improvement activity identifying gaps in capacity that existed across practice, which related to quality improvement and audit activity, as well as addressing larger social work complaints. To address this there had been support to create a Quality Improvement Officer post.

Shared learning and frameworks were built upon, using some of the existing structures to identify opportunities for collaborative working.

Joint Investigative Interviews (JII)

Police Scotland and Social Work Scotland continued working in partnership with the Scottish Government with a view to improving the quality of JII. The aim was to reduce the need for children and young people to represent at court, thereby reducing their exposure to further trauma. This resulted in Ayrshire being chosen as the next site for the implementation of the Ayrshire JII approach otherwise known as the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM). South Ayrshire contributed to the Ayrshire strategic and operational groups for the implementation of this model which would be established in July 2022.

South Ayrshire CPC had representation on the National steering group.

Training has increased from five days to five training modules over seven months equating to thirty-eight classroom-based days. However, training under the current five-day model is to be continued until the new training can be rolled out. Ongoing pilots are being run across other local authorities with South Ayrshire HSCP being committed to join these in 2022 due to operational demands.

Domestic Abuse - DARRT

Domestic Abuse had been identified as a national challenge. South Ayrshire had identified trigger points. Domestic Abuse remained a key element of CPC.

Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Tool had been piloted by the HSCP Children and Justice services. It had been promoted as an opportunity to highlight that domestic abuse is everyone's business. This training is now available for everyone to use and is on the council's COAST online training system. Overall, most people agreed or strongly agreed that the tool increased their knowledge of domestic abuse.

Training delivered 2020- 21

The current training is available to all agencies both statutory and non-statutory that support children, young people, and families. At the end of March 2021, the five-day Child Protection Training was undertaken by seven Social Workers. This training went ahead on a face-to-face basis and was the first time the training had been delivered since the start of the pandemic. It is hoped with the recruitment of a new Learning and Development Officer this training will be undertaken again before the end of 2021.

Employees working in South Ayrshire can participate in the inter-agency continuing professional development programme (CPD) designed to reflect best practice and needs. The range of courses enables a focused and targeted approach that leaves practitioners more confident and competent when carrying out work in more specialised areas of child protection. CPD courses delivered in 2020-21 are summarised in the table below.

Table 1 - Training delivered from 01 Aug 2020 – 31 July 2021

Course	Number of attendees	Number of Courses
Child Protection/ Looked After Children (3-day course)	10	1
Difficult, Dangerous and Evasive Families	25	3
Interagency – Neglect Toolkit	21	1
Disability Awareness in Child Protection	5	1
Child Mental Health	7	2
Perinatal Mental Health and Impact on Child	9	1
Impact of Child Poverty	7	1

Table 2 - Mandatory Training

Course Title	Number of Attendees
MAPA	12
Medication	51
Food Hygiene	39
Skilled Dementia	6
Child Exploitation	29
Moving & Handling 2-day induction	6
Moving & Handling Observations	15
Managing Difficult Epilepsy	9

5: Policy, Practice, and Improvement

The Sub-group was tasked with developing models of engagement across the partnership, developing platforms for sharing and disseminating information to address the void that currently exists in Adult and Child Protection Learning & Development. There was a need to review current activity, discuss what the emerging priorities are and evidence to Practitioners that business is changing, and that training is starting again.

Supporting vulnerable children during School closures in South Ayrshire

There was recognition of the need to support Children and families during these stressful times. There has been strong partnership working across Health, Education, Police, community groups and third sector providers. This partnership working has enabled the sharing of resources and responses to target those families and individuals who were especially vulnerable and in need of coordinated support. This incorporated weekly multi-agency hubs allowing the sharing of opportunities and issues, a focus on children with disabilities. Meanwhile, the Champions Board continued their work to meet the needs of children and young people with Care experience.

Poverty, Inequality and Covid Recovery

During this review period the CPC was presented with an environmental scan around these subjects.

The report provided valuable insights into the challenges ahead around those living in socio-economic disadvantage experiencing poor health, lack of income, housing, fuel poverty and educational attainment and consequently will be worse affected by the pandemic. It recognised 90% of lone parents are women and are more likely to be living in poverty who may be forced to choose between childcare / care for elderly relatives, health and safety and going to work.

With schools closed there is an expectation that parents will support their child's learning from home. Parents living in socio-economic disadvantage are less likely to have access to the internet, access to computers or tablets and are more likely to have had poor educational outcomes themselves, so may struggle to assist their children where they can access materials.

CPC continue to consider the implications and seeks to support strategies to alleviate the risks.

These discussions were purposeful in creating links between CPC / COG activity in relation to family poverty and the community planning partnership and continue to progress practical support.

Significant Case Review

Following assessment and referral from the CPC, two Significant Case Reviews (SCR) were commissioned by the COG. These Reviews are nearing completion and will be published following appropriate governance procedures.

An action plan for improvement in respect of Child P and Child H will be identified and progressed.

Child F ICR / SAER was also initiated during this reporting period and remains ongoing.

Signs of Safety

Signs of Safety draws on solution-focused therapy and the direct experience of effective practice by child protection social workers and the experiences of families within the child protection system. The Signs of Safety approach empowers and enables families to make the necessary behavioural changes to live together safely. It is a strengths-based approach and works with family's assets to support change, reducing the need for more significant intervention from statutory agencies to remove children from families.

The Signs of Safety approach has been adopted as part of the transformation proposals set out by Children's Health, Care and Justice services.

During the reporting period, we have begun the implementation change journey:

- Introduced an implementation plan and have this endorsed by the Implementation Board, which consists of senior child protection partners, including Health, Education, SCRA and third sector. The Board has continued oversight throughout the implementation.
- Conducted two-day online training. This is risk assessment training which is targeted at all social work staff within Children's Health, Care & Justice, and all partners within the child protection realm. Feedback from the training was excellent. Many senior managers from all relevant areas also attended, proving that it is a whole system change.
- A working group began process mapping and developing new paperwork for initially CP1s and Child's Assessment & Plans to reflect Signs of Safety and be available for the end of all training.
- The baseline audit was commenced where parents and children who had been involved with social work child protection were surveyed on their experiences. All staff, including senior management were also surveyed. The results of these, along with specific data will be analysed to produce a baseline report. The audit will be undertaken at a future point to assess progress.

- Briefing sessions have started with specific groups such as Children's Hearing panel members and foster carers, to ensure that key people are aware of practice change.

Overall, the progress has been positive despite having to adapt to Covid regulations. Signs of Safety Approach is a culture change and part of this is to ensure that the spotlight is kept firmly on this progress. Therefore, regular flash reports have been presented at various committees, Boards, and groups to ensure focus is maintained. Next steps will involve the specific training of social workers and complete process mapping with all new templates being developed and in regular usage. Feedback to date has been encouraging, with a positive energy to change.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS)

Given the issues around the challenges of the pandemic, the extreme teams approach to refocus CAMHS to ensure that it delivers on the national specification as well as addressing local needs was commissioned. This resulted in a whole scale review of CAMHS in Ayrshire and an action plan which was about ensuring that there was clarity around the role and function of CAMHS as designated by the National Specification for CAMHS, but also that there was an appreciation of the other supports and services for Children's Wellbeing as funded by the Scottish Government. Ultimately it offered greater clarity of roles and functions and supported Children and young people getting access to the right support at the right time from the right person within each locality.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS)

CPC requested more information regarding scrutiny of CP referrals. A Terms of Reference and audit tool was agreed by a newly created multi-agency audit group.

Six referrals were reviewed and the six CP1s audited were correct in not having escalated to IRD. The decision making and action was transparent, these were chosen at random and were redacted. Therefore, the first audit had provided a positive outcome.

Going forward the IRD Audit Group met monthly and will evaluate a random sample of a minimum of six IRD's using the audit tool which is based on the Care Inspectorate indicators. A monthly report will be compiled on the findings and reported to the CPC, Learning and Development subgroup. The quarterly findings will be included within the CPC quarterly performance report.

This same process will be rolled out to consider children for whom CP concerns were raised but did not progress to an IRD or a CP Investigation. The audit activity will test the competence of the decision-making process, the alternative Child's Plan and whether further CP concerns were raised within a twelve-month period.

Sexual Exploitation Strategy 2020-2025

In September 2020 the South Ayrshire IJB, approved the [Sexual Exploitation Strategy](#) for the period 2020-2025. The Strategy was developed in partnership with the Sexual Exploitation Joint Action Group which consists of partners from Social Work, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Educational Services, Community Learning and Development, Community Safety, Police Scotland, Moving on Ayrshire, and South Ayrshire Women's Aid.

The Joint Action Group felt it was important to ensure that the Strategy applies to all children and young people and adults at risk of sexual exploitation.

In line with the National Action Plan to Prevent and Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation Update, the Sexual Exploitation Joint Action Group has agreed that this strategy is working towards the same strategic priorities, including vulnerable adults:

1. The risk that children, young people, and vulnerable adults are exploited is reduced through a focus on prevention and early identification.
2. Children, young people, and vulnerable adults at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation and their families receive appropriate and high-quality support.
3. Perpetrators are stopped, brought to justice and less likely to re-offend.
4. Cultural and social barriers to preventing and tackling sexual exploitation are reduced.

6: Child Protection Committee Priorities for 2021-2022

In November 2019 the CPC endorsed a three-year improvement plan that going forward, forms the basis for its priorities for this period. This approach enabled more effective use of resources and provides focus for improvement activities.

The Improvement Plan is an evolving exercise that facilitates scope for learning as evidence is gathered and feedback on services is offered. Improvement is also about celebrating success and the CPC Improvement Plan will encourage this approach.

An area of focus for the CPC going forward is the Implementation of the revised national CP Guidance presentation Priorities for 2020/2021, Bairns' Hoose, the new Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) and Learning Review Minimum Data Set. Also, the implementation of the Age of Criminal Responsibility, the Justice Bill which will see young people 16 and 17 year olds being supported through the Children's Hearing system rather than taken through adult Courts. In addition, the refresh of GIRFEC, the implementation of the Promise and the implementation of the UNCRC are all significant drivers through this next time-period.

Policy, Practice, and Improvement

- To confirm the status and robustness of the CP policies for South Ayrshire and establish governance arrangements for these.
- To encourage an Ayrshire-wide approach where possible and appropriate to policy development in areas such as sexual exploitation, missing persons, poverty, and neglect.
- To further develop the depth of performance monitoring, analysis, and action.
- To conduct an interagency, multi professional audit of all children and young people on the CP register and establish a common approach across Ayrshire.

Learning and Development

- To build a suite of child protection learning opportunities across organisations.
- To map the interconnections between defined competences, learning and impact for child protection practice.
- To establish clarity on the learning and development resources available and to encourage resource efficiency under the broader guise of Public Protection and Safeguarding.
- To explore learning opportunities required or encouraged by local and national reviews such as Initial and Significant Case Reviews.

Communication and Engagement

- To maximise the child protection message, sharing opportunities by effective use of the 'event' calendar.
- To establish a clear pathway for the engagement, involvement and understanding of staff in the work of the CPC.
- To establish a clear pathway for the engagement, involvement and understanding of children, young people, and families in the work of the CPC.

Appendix 1 - Child Protection Committee Members 2020-2021

Member	Designation
Professor Paul Martin	Independent Chair
Nadine McCord	CPC Minute Taker
Jacqui Ferguson	CPC Minute Taker
Scott Hunter	Chief Social Work Officer, South Ayrshire Council
Douglas Hutchison	Director of People and Depute Chief Executive, South Ayrshire Council
Mark Inglis	Head of Children's Health, Care and Justice Services, South Ayrshire Health, and Social Care Partnership
Jackie Hamilton	Senior Manager, Children's and Justice Localities Services, South Ayrshire Health, and Social Care Partnership
Jayne Miller	Senior Manager, Children's Health, South Ayrshire Health, and Social Care Partnership
Rosemary Robertson	Associate Nurse Director, South Ayrshire Health, and Social Care Partnership
Heather Irving	Link Inspector, Care Inspectorate
Alan Mulrooney	Locality Reporter Manager, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
John Wood	Senior Manager - Planning, Performance and Commissioning, South Ayrshire Health, and Social Care Partnership
Mark Taylor	Acting Adult Support and Protection Co-ordinator
Sara Burdon	Co-ordinator – Public Affairs, People Directorate
Jim Hendrie	Child Protection Officer, Educational Services
Marina McLaughlin	Nurse Consultant Child Protection, NHS Ayrshire, and Arran
Alexa Foster	Clinical Midwifery Manager for Integrated Care SAHSCP
Kenny Armstrong	Detective Superintendent, Police Scotland

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Catriona Caves	Head of Legal, HR and Regulatory Services
Elaine Mullin	Lead Officer (Interim), South Ayrshire CPC
Meg Williams	Lead Officer, South Ayrshire CPC
Faye Murfet	ADP Lead Officer
Dawn Parker	Corporate Parenting Lead Officer (Champions Board)
Liz Paterson	Service Manager, Children's Services, South Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership
Heather Irving	Strategic Inspector, Care Inspectorate
Linda Warwick	Co-ordinator (Community Engagement)
Danielle Rae	Strategy, Policy, and Performance Officer
Lisa Smith	Police Scotland

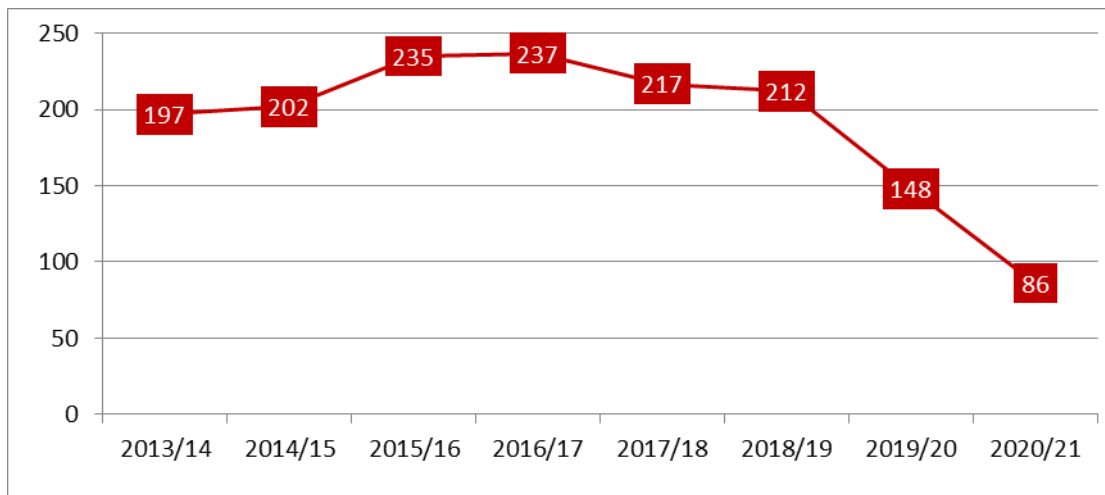
Appendix 2 - Child Protection Committee Performance 2020-21

The CPC continues to monitor performance information through the Minimum Dataset for National Child Protection Committees. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a weekly child protection dataset has been submitted to Scottish Government.

Child Protection Alerts

A child protection 'alert' is raised when the decision is made to investigate under the auspice of child protection. It ensures core agencies (Health, Education and Police) and out of hours social work services are aware a child is subject to active investigation in relation to a child protection concern and can respond accordingly.

Figure 1: Annual Child Protection Alerts (New) 2013/14-2020/21



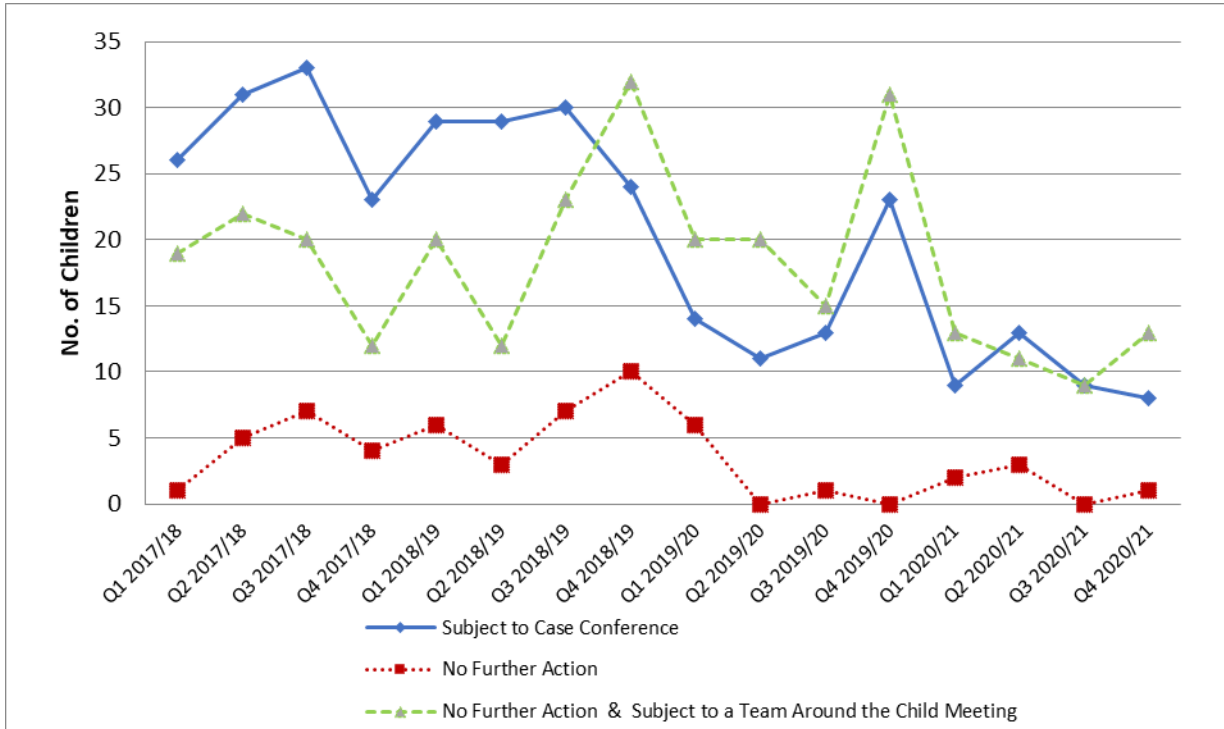
Annual Child Protection Referrals have decreased from 148 in 2019/20 to 86 in 2020/21.

Child Protection Investigations (CP1's)

If child protection procedures are initiated, a CP1 is completed for the family to assess the level of risk posed to each child involved in the referral.

The following data identifies whether a child protection investigation has resulted in a child protection case conference, a child being allocated a social worker or no further action by the social work department.

Figure 2: Outcome of Child Protection Investigations

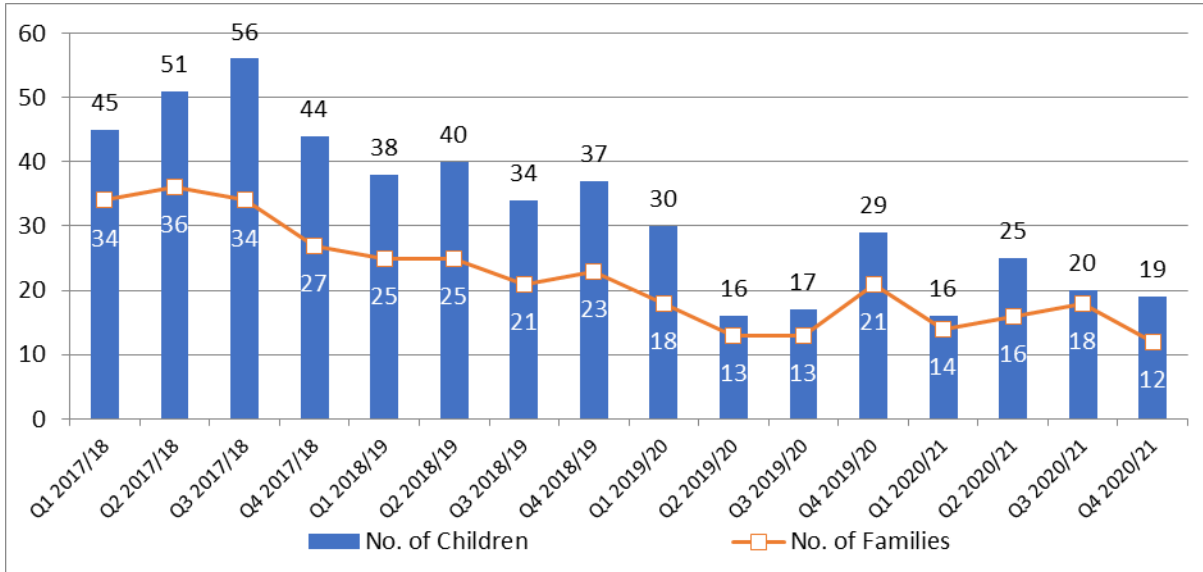


36% of Child Protection Investigations resulted in a Case Conference being convened in Q4 of 2020/2021, which equates to 8 case conferences out of 22 Child Protection Investigations. One resulted in no further action and 59% (n=13) resulted in no further action and a team around the child meeting.

Child Protection Register

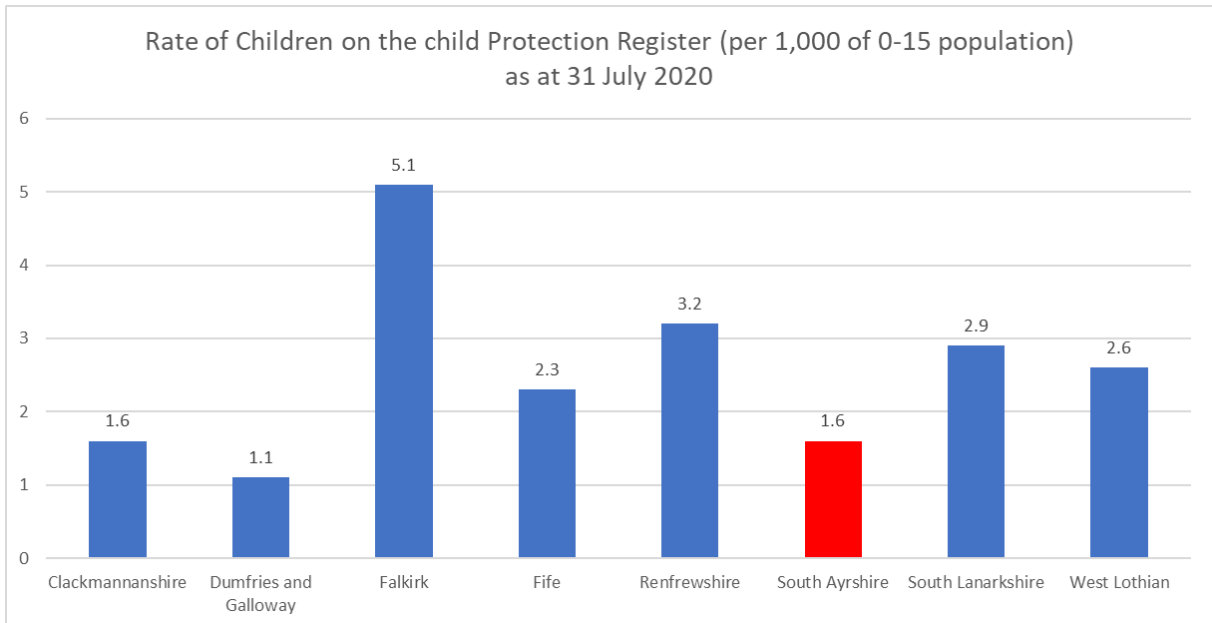
On 31st July 2021, in South Ayrshire, there were a total of 19 children from 12 family groups on the Child Protection Register. This is a decrease from 31st July 2020 when 29 children were on the Child Protection Register from 21 family groups.

Figure 3: Quarterly number of children on the child protection register



Children are placed on the Child Protection Register when there are significant concerns for their safety. Children on the register will be the subject of close monitoring and support with a multi-agency plan to effect changes to reduce risk. If the risks to a child cannot be managed with their remaining at home, alternative care arrangements are considered. Once it is assessed that the level of risk has reduced sufficiently, the child’s name will be removed from the Register.

The chart below shows the South Ayrshire rate of children on the Child Protection Register as at the 31 July 2020 compared to the family group partnerships for benchmarking.

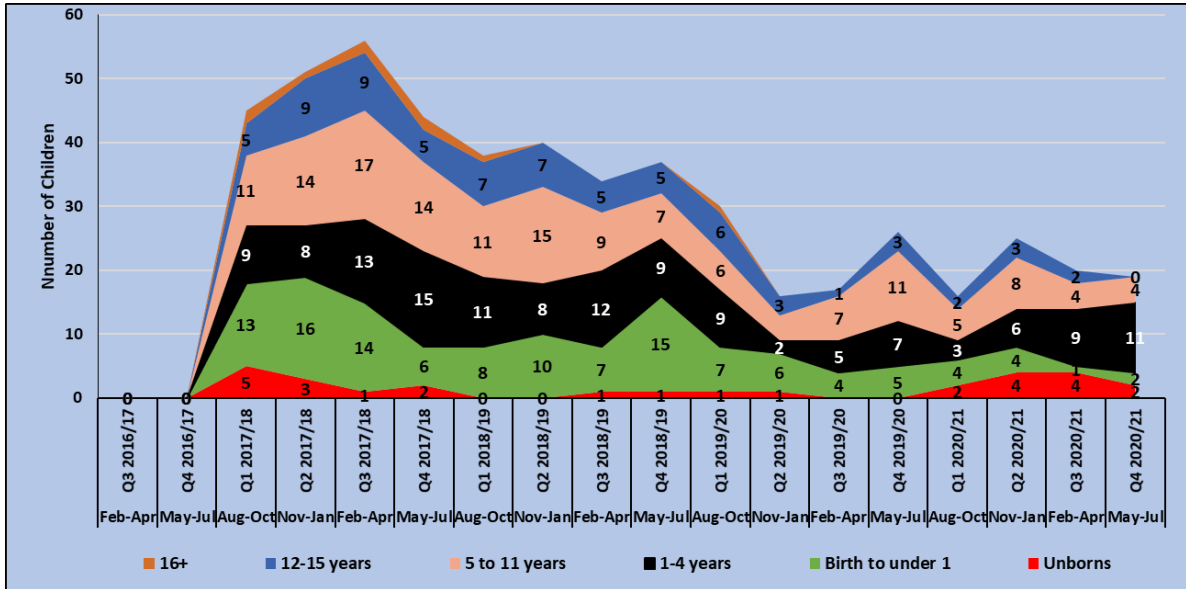


****At time of writing, 2021 statistics had not been published****

Age profile of children on Register

The graph below shows the age profile of children on the Child Protection Register from October 2017 to July 2021.

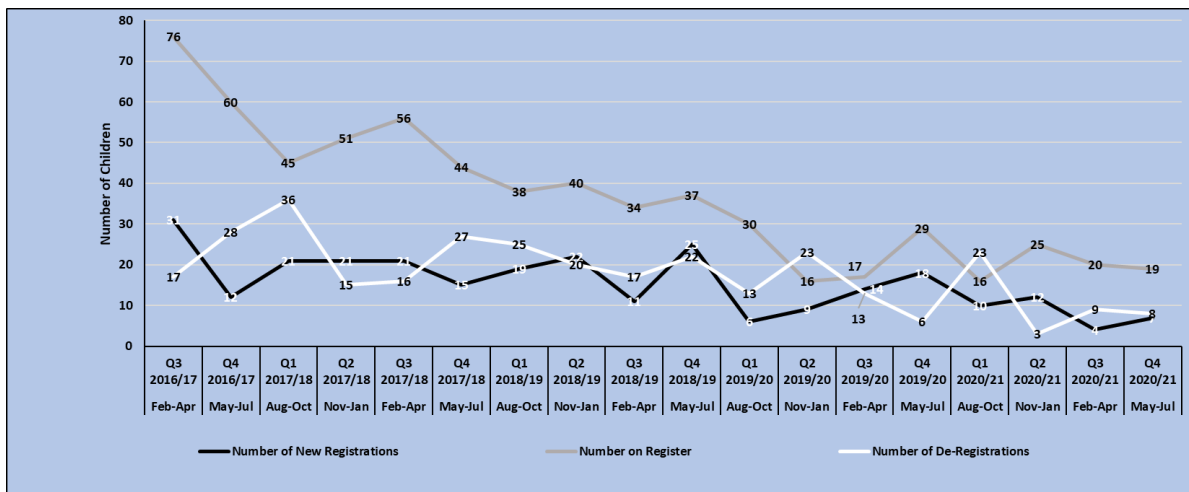
Figure 4: Age profile of children on the register as at end of quarter



As at 31 July 2021, the age range with the highest number of children on the child protection register was ‘1-4 years.’

Registration activity

Figure 5: No. of New Registrations, De-registrations, and number on the Register.



Of note, there have been 6 re-registrations of any child who was previously on the register up to 12 months ago.

Areas of concern (risk factors) – significant prevalence

As of 31 July 2021, the main area of concern was Neglect followed by, Parental Mental Health Problems and then Parental Alcohol Use.

Table 2: Concerns recorded at Registration

Type of Concern	Oct 20	Jan 21	Apr 21	Jul 21
Child Placing Themselves at Risk	0%	0%	0%	0%
CSE	0%	4%	0%	0%
Domestic Abuse	25%	24%	24%	21%
Emotional Abuse	38%	28%	32%	21%
Neglect	50%	72%	52%	84%
Non-Engaging Family	6%	24%	20%	31%
Parental Alcohol Misuse	25%	20%	16%	36%
Parental Drug Misuse	25%	12%	16%	10%
Parental Mental Health Problems	38%	44%	40%	47%
Physical Abuse	19%	20%	28%	21%
Sexual Abuse	0%	8%	4%	5%
Other	12.5%	8%	4%	31%
Total <u>Number</u> of Registrations	16	25	20	19

Please note: A child can have more than one main area of concern recorded therefore the % in figure above will not total 100%.