



West Lothian Chief Officers Group

Terms of Reference

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** West Lothian Chief Officers' Group (COG) has been established to provide leadership, direction, governance and oversight of the Public Protection arrangements within West Lothian.
- 1.2** Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring that their agencies, individually and collectively, work to protect the children, young people and vulnerable adults of West Lothian. They also have responsibility for maximising the involvement of those agencies not under their direct control, including the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the third sector.
- 1.3** This document is intended to provide a framework for Chief Officer leadership and accountability and reflects recent changes to national Child Protection guidance – 'Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities', updated in February 2019, which directs local services to work in partnership in order to achieve effective Public Protection services.
- 1.4** The COG will oversee the development and strategic planning for Child Protection, Adult Protection, Violence against Women & Girls and Offender Management, which is delivered through four separate committees, namely:
- Child Protection Committee
 - Adult Protection Committee
 - Violence Against Women & Girls Committee
 - Offender Management Committee
- 1.5** It is recognised that areas of public protection are often inter-linked and can impact on each other. The COG will aim to provide demonstrable consistency and coherence in terms of leadership, direction and scrutiny in respect of all areas of public protection. It will also ensure that there are links between the four areas of Public Protection and other areas of strategic planning across West Lothian, including structures for integrated children's services planning.
- 1.6** The four Public Protection Committees will report to the COG on a range of devolved matters, in line with agreed action/business plans including quality assurance, performance management, development of policy and procedure for the purpose of delivering on the both local and national priorities.

2.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The Chief Officers' Group will:

- provide individual and collective strategic leadership, direction, governance and oversight of the delivery and improvement of public protection work in West Lothian, including the effectiveness of the four Public Protection Committees namely, Child Protection Committee, Adult Protection Committee, Offender Management Committee and Violence Against Women & Girls Committee.
- ensure there is multi-agency commitment to collaborative working in Public Protection in West Lothian through active senior officer commitment and engagement from all relevant agencies.
- ensure that the four public protection committees are properly constituted and resourced, so their arrangements are clearly focused and relevant to the respective area of protection activity.
- oversee the roles, visions, values and aims of the four public protection committees to ensure they fulfil their statutory functions, adhere to national policy and guidance and remain aligned to their respective terms of reference.
- ensure effective planning is in place to respond to the assessment and management of risk, providing appropriate resourcing, and reassurance to the public.
- call for and review performance / management information reports for the four public protection committees to assure themselves that work is continuing to deliver effective services and to address any areas for improvement identified through inspections, audit or significant case review reports.
- endorse Annual Reports, Biennial Reports, Improvement Plans and other improvement activity.
- consider the development of a communications strategy in order to raise awareness of the role of the four separate Public Protection Committees and the COG locally
- ~~call for and submit an annual report to Elected Members, as a means of strengthening Elected Member engagement in the public protection agenda.~~

Ensure activity around public protection overseen by the COG is included in the annual Chief Social Work Officers annual report which will be endorsed by the COG. The report will be submitted to Council Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels.

West Lothian Council and the Integrated Joint Board the strengthen elected member engagement in the public protection agenda.

- promote reflective learning from Significant Case Reviews and direct the implementation of associated recommendations where appropriate to local Public Protection arrangements.
- scrutinise the stability of Public Protection arrangements in times of significant organisational change. The COG will consistently promote collective responsibility and collaborative working across the committees on cross-cutting protection themes, to enable improved outcomes for all vulnerable people.
- agree the appointment of the Chair, Vice-Chair(s) and members of the four public protection committees, ensuring they have the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to fulfil their individual and collective responsibilities. The COG will also ensure that the Chair of each committee has the time, resources and dedicated professional and administrative support to fulfil their role.
- be responsible for appointing a Chair to each of the four committees and for any contractual agreement required. They will also be responsible for the terms of reference, role, remit and performance of each Chair.
- will ensure that members of the four committees have the delegated responsibility level and capacity to make decisions on behalf of the service or agency they represent.

2.2 Consideration of Initial and Significant Case Reviews: The COG should be advised by the Chair of the respective Committee of any cases that should be considered in respect of meeting the criteria for warranting either an Initial Case Review (ICR) or Significant Case Review (SCR). Once agreed by the COG, the respective Committee should consider and agree the method of review to be undertaken, who should lead the review and ensure appropriate communication takes place with regard to contacting the Care Inspectorate, who oversee all child ICRs and SCRs.

2.3 Once reviews are concluded, all findings and/or recommendations should be considered by the COG, with focus of attention on:

- Key themes within the findings and how to share these findings with staff, agencies and bodies involved to support and embed learning and improvement locally;
- The possibility of any systemic failure within or between key agencies or bodies involved;
- Any remedial or urgent action that is required;
- The proposed action plan to address the findings and how improvement priorities will be implemented, monitored and reviewed;

- How any learning and development will be taken forward and embedded in practice;
- Any resource issues that are relevant for either the management of the case itself or production and progress of the action plan;
- Publishing the report (with appropriate safeguards) in order to promote and support national learning and improvement activity, unless the COG can demonstrate there are exceptional circumstances that justify not publishing; and
- Whether it is appropriate to develop a press statement.

3.0 MEMBERSHIP

3.1 The core membership of the West Lothian Chief Officers Group should comprise the following:

- Chief Executive, West Lothian Council or nominee
- Chief Superintendent, Police Scotland or nominee
- Chief Executive NHS Lothian or nominee;

3.2 Core members can nominate replacements but they must be of a sufficient seniority to make required decisions.

3.3 Attendees

- Chief Social Work Officer, West Lothian Council
- Depute Chief Executive, West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
- Nurse Director, NHS Lothian
- Chief Nurse, NHS Lothian
- Chair of the Child Protection Committee
- Chair of the Adult Protection Committee
- Chair of the Offender Management Committee
- Chair of the Violence Against Women and Girls Committee
- Locality Reporter Manager, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

3.4 The Chair of each of the four Public Protection Committees is required to attend each Chief Officers' Group and to provide a written report on the work of their Committee including information on progress and challenges. This objective assessment should also contain issues relating to both the effectiveness of inter-agency work and challenges identified for single agencies.

3.5 COG attendees provide expert knowledge and assistance in respect of both operational and strategic developments, both local and national. In addition, Chief Officers have the opportunity to seek clarity on key

matters as well as directing attendees to undertake specific tasks on their behalf.

- 3.6 Other officers may be required to attend the group at the discretion of the Chief Officers Group Chair. This may include representation from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), and senior officers from the agencies represented in the core membership as deemed necessary and appropriate.

4.0 MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1 The Chair of the COG will be drawn from the core membership and rotate every two calendar years.
- 4.2 The Chief Officers' Group will meet quarterly or otherwise, as may be dictated by extraordinary circumstances, and at the discretion of the Chair.
- 4.3 Administrative support for the COG will be undertaken by the administrative support available to public protection areas.

5.0 QUOROM

- 5.1 All statutory agencies (Local Authority, Police and NHS) have to be present for the COG to be quorate. This can include nominated representatives of the core membership. If the meeting is not quorate, it can still be held but decisions will have to be deferred until the next quorate meeting.

6.0 CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION SHARING

- 6.1 All agendas, reports and other documents and proceedings of the COG shall be treated as confidential unless and until they become public in the ordinary course of the COG's business or are authorised to be communicated to, and are available for, publication by the press or other news media and in accordance with a formal decision of the COG and approval by the Chair.

7.0 RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENCES OR DISPUTES

- 7.1 In the event of the work of any of the four Committees being significantly impaired by failure to reach an agreement, it is the responsibility of the Chair to notify the Chief Officers Group as a matter of urgency, who will then arbitrate on the matter.

In the event of the Chief Officers Group failing to reach an agreement, it is responsible for bringing the issue to the attention of the Scottish Government to agree a course of action to resolve any dispute.

8.0 PROCESS FOR AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

8.1 The Terms of Reference document will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if a significant change is made.

8.2 Amendments may also take place where new legislation or national guidance/direction is available or where there are developments in public protection which suggests new approaches are necessary to ensure continuous improvements in the care and protection of vulnerable people in West Lothian.