

WEST LOTHIAN CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE



ANNUAL REPORT 2023 – 2024

IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024 – 2026



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FOREWORD

On behalf of West Lothian Child Protection Committee (CPC), I am pleased to present the annual report for 2023/24 and the improvement plan for 2024/26. This report covers the work of the CPC from 1st August 2023– 31st July 2024.

The West Lothian CPC is the key local body for developing, implementing and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies and the local community. The annual report is structured around CPC core functions. The CPC performs a number of crucial functions in order to jointly identify and manage risk to children and young people, monitor and improve performance and promote the ethos that **"It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright"**.

Members of the CPC have worked hard over the last 2 years to embed learning from case reviews into practice, develop a learning culture offering support and opportunity to staff engaged in the challenging work to protect children and ensure that the voice of the child is heard in all our interactions with families. Changing culture is not an overnight event and the CPC recognises that this is a work in progress which will require continued commitment for a number of years.

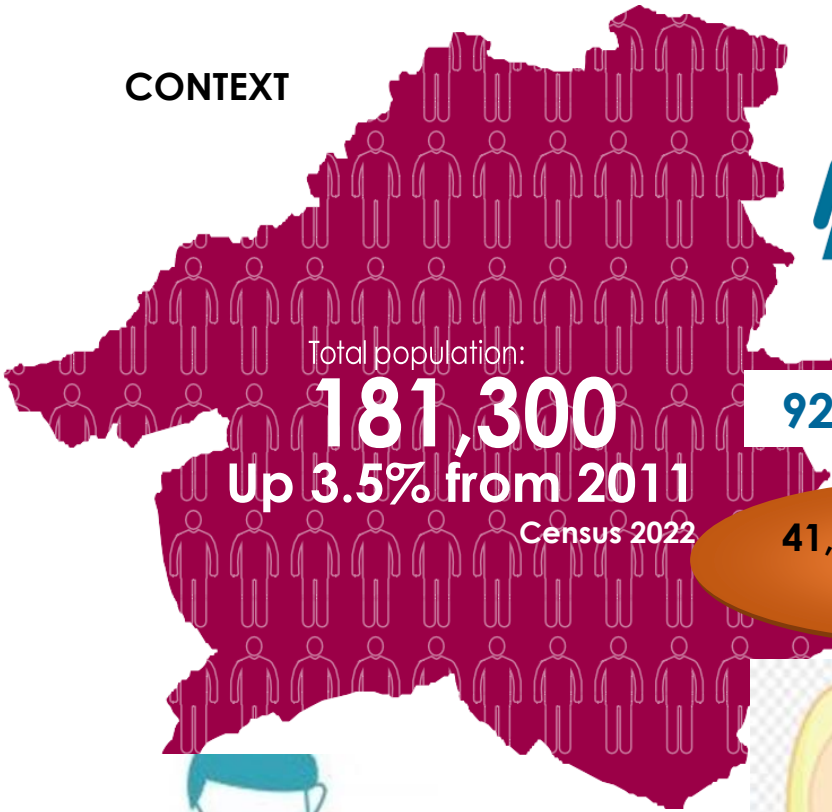
The CPC meets quarterly and there has been active oversight from the Chief Officers' Group (COG). Membership of the CPC has changed during the last 12 months offering new perspectives. In response to publication of the National Child Protection guidance, local child protection procedures have been revised and supporting procedures/guidance and paperwork reviewed and updated. The new procedures went live in January 2024 and one of the challenges for the next 2 years will be embedding the revised Child Protection procedures into practice, ensuring processes work effectively.

The CPC will continue to learn from single and multi-agency quality assurance activity, the lived experiences of children and national and local issues identified through case reviews. The CPC will strive to continuously improve outcomes for West Lothian children at risk of significant harm and make sure that staff have the tools and support to build meaningful relationships with children and their families to effect lasting change.

Stevie Healy
CPC Chair



CONTEXT



92,700 - 88,700

41,700 0-19-year olds

West Lothian has 13 priority regeneration areas and 35 data zones in the most deprived 20% in Scotland

31.07.23 – 331 Looked After children
 31.07.24 – 302 Looked After children

31.07.23 – 92 children on CP register
 31.07.24 – 62 children on CP register

Number of households:
79,800
 Census 2022



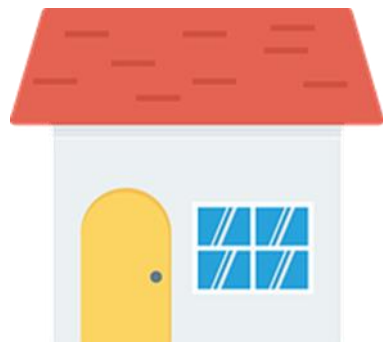
estimates 24.6% of West Lothian children live in poverty (2022-23)



29.5% of W. Lothian babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks. (41.4% NHS Lothian)



1719 births registered April 22 - March 23



2023 – 24 Homeless Applicants

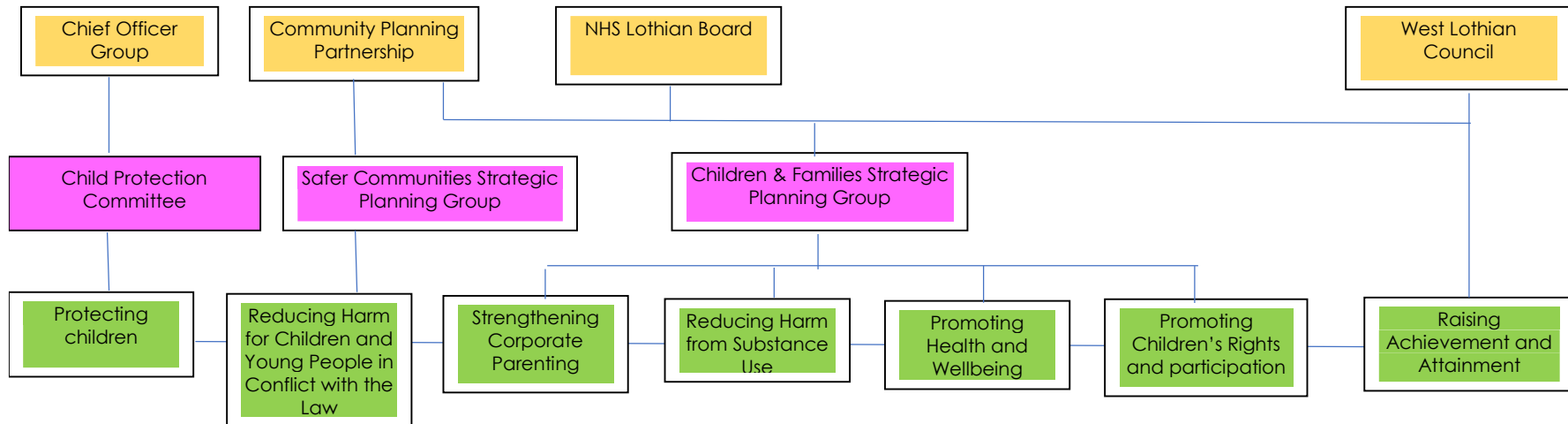
Total: 1169

24% were single parents
 30% were aged 16 – 25
 10% cited domestic abuse



ACCOUNTABILITY

Chief Officers are ultimately responsible and accountable for improving the experience of and outcomes for children who may need protection. The local CPC is the inter-agency mechanism to take forward this work. Chief Officers are individually and collectively responsible and accountable for the effectiveness of the Child Protection Committee (CPC). Members of the CPC and its subcommittees are also members of a variety of other strategic groups ensuring robust strategic planning links.





CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) is the key local body for developing, implementing and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies, bodies and the local community. The CPC is expected to jointly identify and manage risk to children and young people, monitor and improve performance and promote the ethos that "It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright".

CPC Vision

All West Lothian children have a right to be safe and protected. All services have a responsibility to ensure children are safe and their needs are met. The Child Protection Committee will work in partnership with children, families and the community to achieve this.

Objectives:

We will work together to:

- keep children and young people safe
- provide strong and clear leadership and direction
- ensure staff learning and development
- evaluate performance and ensure continuous improvement
- communicate and engage with children, young people and families

Key functions:

- continuous improvement
- public information, engagement and participation
- strategic planning and connections
- annual reporting on the work of the CPC





LOGO

Young people were asked to design a new logo for the CPC. The competition was organised and judged by young people in the Children's Rights Network



Indi is 7 years old. Her design was chosen by other young people and she was presented with her Amazon gift voucher by Stevie Healy (CPC Chair). Indi said her design shows that the CPC helps and supports all children, no matter where in the world they have come from and no matter whether they have a disability or not.

A graphic designer converted Indi's vision into a new logo





CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITY 2022 - 2024.

1. LEADERSHIP AND VISION

Feedback from focus groups of staff revealed that not all staff were aware of the vision, priorities or functions of the CPC, why changes in practice occurred and what influenced these changes. As a result, a newsletter is circulated to all agencies after each CPC meeting and published on the website, a 7-minute briefing outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Officers' Group (COG) and the CPC was circulated and published. Members of the CPC meet virtually with multi-agency staff to provide information and listen to the views of front-line staff on what works well and what could be improved. Managers in all agencies are encouraged to raise awareness of the CPC's vision of a learning culture and ensure their staff are given protected time for learning.

The CPC has strong links with the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group and is involved in work to ensure that GIRFEC guidance is up-to-date, clear, fit for purpose and embedded in practice.

Voice of the Child/Children's rights

The Children's Rights network was launched on 30/1/24. A further event took place on the 29th May, focused on preparing young people to be part of a forum and to have the confidence to share their views, how to grow the network and voted on the entries for the CPC logo. A website is planned and the Public Protection website will link to this when it has been created. A 7-minute briefing to raise awareness of children's rights and the new UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 public authority duties across all service areas was circulated to staff. Work has commenced on the roll out of a children's rights eLearning module.



Bairns' Hoose

The Scottish Government has committed that by 2026: "All children in Scotland who have been victims or witnesses to abuse or violence, as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused significant harm or abuse will have access to trauma-informed recovery, support and justice." West Lothian has been successful in applying to the Bairns' Hoose Development Fund, Scottish Government grant funding to support development of the aims and principles of the Bairns' Hoose model in West Lothian. In partnership with Children 1st, recovery workers will enhance existing supports for families through provision of trauma recovery support; building trusting relationships that allow children and young people to explore the harm they have experienced and support them in their recovery and supporting their family in aiding their recovery.

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Social Work Services has secured funding to work with Action for Children, Youth Justice, West Lothian Youth Action Project to develop a project focused on young people in conflict with the law. The team is known as ACT – Assess and Connect Team.

Public Information, Engagement and Participation

The CPC has a communication strategy and plan. At the point of transition from primary to secondary school parents are given information about child sexual exploitation. Child protection information is available for the public and professionals on the Public Protection website. Social Media and the Public Protection website have been used to promote any national messages/campaigns from Child Protection Committees Scotland or other organisations such as Police Scotland. Once the Children's Rights network is more established the CPC will ask to meet with the group.



The CPC heard from a parent involved in the Children First research [Oor Lives, Oor Ane](#), explaining parents' experiences of involvement with services and how professional responses and interactions with parents could improve. The parent and a support worker involved in the research also presented a practice reflection session encouraging the multi-agency audience to reflect together on how they engage children and families effectively, ensure their views are heard and considered and involve them meaningfully in planning.

"Powerful. Thoughtful. Thought provoking. Thank you for carrying out this piece of research. The film sent a very powerful message and has made me reflect on my work. Honest and thought provoking. It was good hearing these things from parents. Thank you so much, I appreciate you being so open and honest about your experiences. It's been really thought provoking and really made me reflect on my practice going forward. A feeling of sadness that these little things can matter so much."

Feedback from Practice Reflection Session

Strategic Planning and Connections

The CPC has robust links with other planning fora in West Lothian. Some review and quality assurance findings are being addressed by the Children and Families Strategic Group e.g. findings related to GIRFEC and wider planning for children. The involvement of children and young people in child protection processes is being taken forward by the Corporate Parenting Group. Members of the CPC and its subcommittees are also members of a variety of other strategic groups ensuring strategic planning links. The CPC responds to national consultations and ensures that practitioners or managers attend national events that are available to all.

The Chair and Lead Officer attend Child Protection Committees Scotland (CPCS) meetings and the Lead Officer is a member of the National Learning and Development Group, the National Lead Officer Group and a Care Inspectorate Reference Group for Quality Assurance. Public Protection Lead Officers work together on cross-cutting issues.



2. LEARNING CULTURE

The CPC is committed to creating a learning culture where staff have a range of opportunities to learn and improve, there is less reliance on formal training and increased opportunities for staff to feel involved and supported, front line managers are committed to reinforcing improvements and supporting staff and practice change is embedded. Single & multi-agency training continues to be provided. There has been a particular focus this year on training staff to use the Assessment of Neglect toolkit. Information about research / podcasts / webinars / news reports and externally provided training is circulated weekly. Multi-agency practice reflection sessions have taken place giving staff the opportunity to focus on a single issue and discuss with colleagues from different agencies. The introduction of the virtual GIRFEC practitioner forum promotes networking opportunities, the chance to hear from teams/projects/agencies about the work they do and an opportunity to discuss local practice. The forum held an in person half-day event and plans to continue with this annually.

Following the successful pilot of core group supervision, the CPC agreed that this should be embedded into practice. Independent Reviewing Officers facilitate a reflective discussion with professional members of the core group, allowing them to reflect on the progress of the child protection plan, think the unthinkable, respectfully challenge and listen to the experiences of others involved with the family. It is not a planning meeting without parents. It is hoped that similar opportunities for reflection will be available for members of the Team Around the Child if GIRFEC cases are particularly complex or the child's plan is not progressing as expected.

Learning from Case Reviews

In the last year a Learning Review was completed. The scope of the second Learning Review was restricted on the advice of the Procurator Fiscal and cannot yet be published due to ongoing legal proceedings. However, the actions to address the findings of all case reviews and quality assurance activity are incorporated into the CPC's Improvement Plan. Some of the findings will result in culture change which will take time and reinforcement on an ongoing basis to embed into practice.



3. CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES & GUIDANCE

The Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures were updated to reflect national guidance and went "live" in January 2024. All staff in all agencies were expected to attend a briefing outlining the main differences between the old and revised procedures. Briefings were provided by single agencies with additional multi-agency briefings for staff in the third sector and those who missed their own agency's briefing.

Guidance, procedures and briefings have been updated or produced, circulated to staff and published on the website.

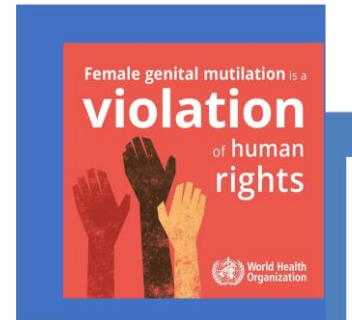
- CSE guidance
- Human Trafficking
- Professional Curiosity Guidance
- FGM briefing
- Transitions Guidance
- 7-minute briefings
- Challenging Conversations guidance
- Organised/large scale CSE procedure



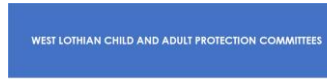
WEST LoTHIAN CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE
**CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS
A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE**



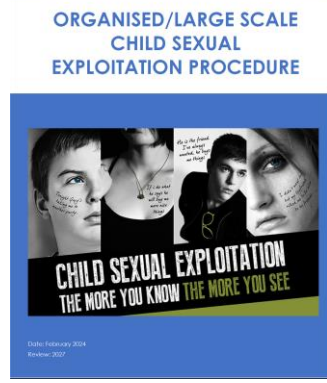
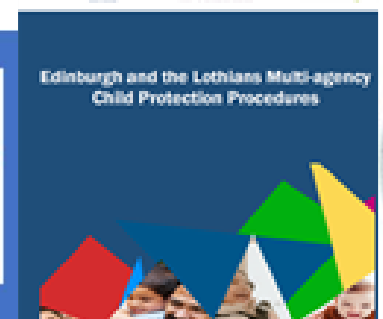
WEST LoTHIAN CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE
FGM BRIEFING 2024



WEST LoTHIAN CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE
**PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY
A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE**



WEST LoTHIAN CHILD AND ADULT PROTECTION COMMITTEES
**TRAFFICKING & EXPLOITATION PROCEDURE
CHILDREN AND ADULTS**





4. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Child Protection Quality Assurance and Self-Evaluation (QASE) Subcommittee is responsible for audit and evaluation of child protection work using the CPC's Quality Assurance Framework. The Management Information Group (MIG) analyses child protection data on a quarterly basis.

In the last 12 months QASE has audited the quality of CP plans, delivered briefings re the revised Child Protection procedures, had discussions with core groups where parental mental health was identified as an issue, discussed learning from SCRs and Learning Reviews, revised templates and processes, discussed single agency audit activity and data analysed by the MIG.

The QASE Subcommittee is flexible and responsive, tailoring activity in response to themes identified in single agency audit activity, feedback from the IRD Review Group, practitioners, children and families, Reviewing Officers; learning from Case Reviews (local and national); trends identified from the analysis of child protection data and; the implementation of new guidance, policy and procedure. Work already identified for next year include improving the quality of child protection planning and the Care and Risk Management (CaRM) process.

The quality and outcomes of Inter-agency Referral Discussions are reviewed on a regular basis by a multi-agency review group. This work and any themes identified are reported to the CPC on a 6-monthly basis.





CHILD PROTECTION DATA

Child Protection data is collated from information provided by Police Scotland, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and West Lothian Council Social Work Services. Data is recorded using the Child Protection Minimum data set. The Management Information Group (MIG) analyses data quarterly, considering trends, exploring anomalies and reporting to the CPC and COG.

The Scottish Government published the Children's Social Work Statistics 2022-23 – Child Protection on 26th March 2024. This covers data on children subject to Child Protection processes. The data relates to the reporting period 01/08/22 – 31/07/23.

Headline National Statistics

- On 31/07/23, 2,094 children's names were on the Child Protection Register (CPR) in Scotland – up 4% on 2022 and down 21% on 2013

On the same date 92 children's names were on the CPR in West Lothian – down 11% on 2022 and down 22% on 2013

- During 2022-23, 3231 children were registered on the CPR in Scotland, down 2% on 2021/22 and down 24% on 2012/13

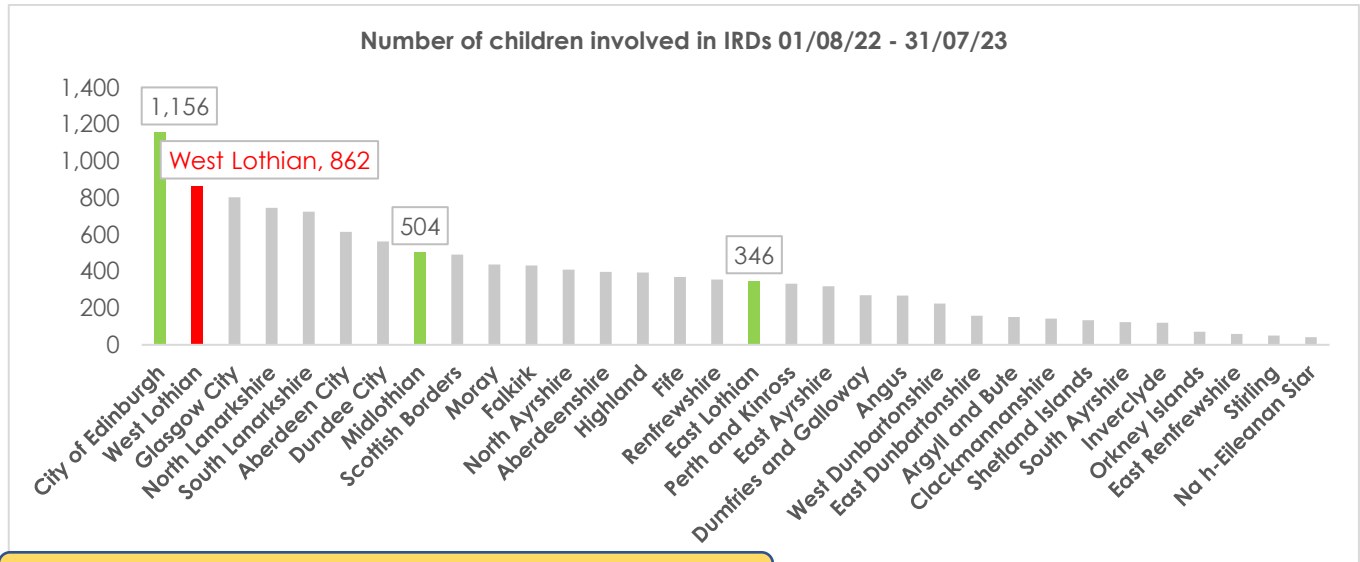
During 2022-23, 147 children were registered on the CPR in W. Lothian, down 11% on 2021/22.

The most common concerns identified at registration in 2022-23 were:	
WEST LoTHIAN	SCOTLAND
Physical abuse (16%)	Domestic abuse (16%)
Emotional abuse (16%)	Neglect (15%)
Domestic abuse (15%)	Parental mental health problems (15%)
Parental mental health problems (14%)	Parental substance misuse (15%)
Parental substance misuse (13%)	Emotional abuse (12%)

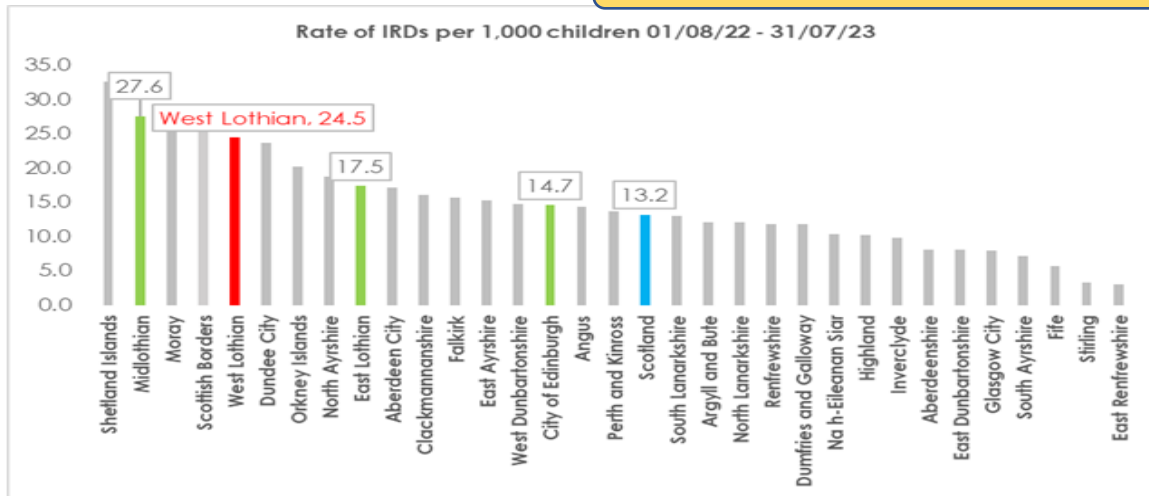


Neighbouring CPC areas with the same procedures

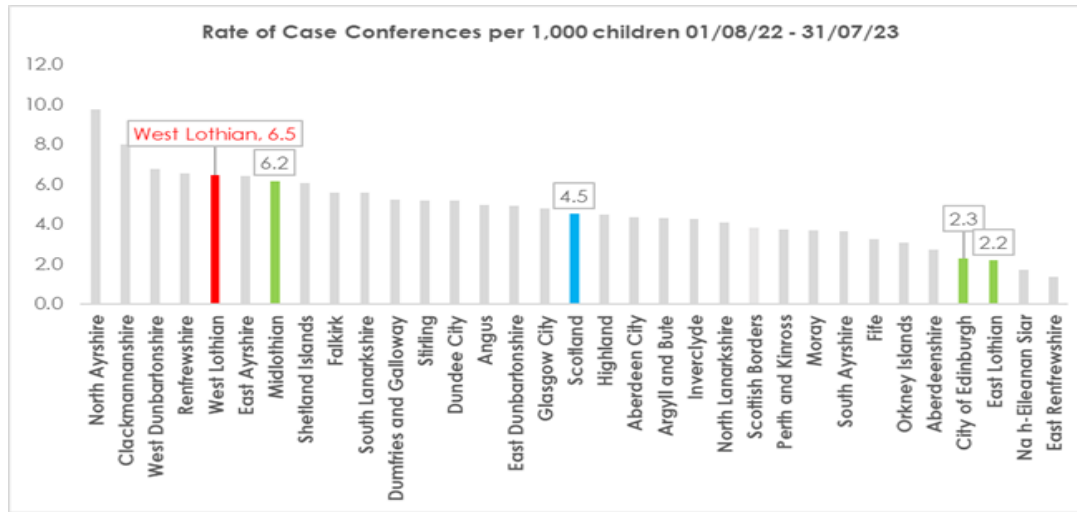
CPC area	2023 IRDs (no. of children)	2023 rate per 1,000 children
West Lothian	862	24.5
East Lothian	346	17.5
Midlothian	504	27.6
Edinburgh	1156	14.7
Scotland		13.2



Note: children may have had more than one IRD in this period



IRDs are conducted by Social Work Team Managers, Police Sergeants & NHS Paediatricians or Child Protection Advisers. These practitioners have begun to meet twice a year to discuss issues related to IRDs such as thresholds, decision making, interim safety planning etc. to ensure consistency and best practice. Every IRD is considered by the IRD Review Group which reports to the CPC twice a year



Since the revised Child Protection procedures were implemented in Jan 2024 case conferences are referred to as Child Protection Planning Meetings (CPPMs). The decision to hold a CPPM is made by IRD participants. A CPPM should only take place without parents present in exceptional circumstances.

2023 – 2024

Number of children on the CP register	31.07.23 92	31.07.24 62	↓ 33%
No. of children registered	01.08.22 – 31.07.23 150	01.08.23 – 31.07.24 82	↓ 45%
No. of IRDs	01.08.22 – 31.07.23 536	01.08.23 – 31.07.24 420	↓ 22%
No of CPCCs/CPPMs (initial & pre-birth)	01.08.22 – 31.07.23 144	01.08.23 – 31.07.24 71	↓ 51%

The Management Information Group and QASE subcommittee will be exploring the recent CP data in more depth in the coming months.

CONCLUSION

The CPC views the implementation of the National Child Protection Guidance incorporated into revised local child protection procedures, as an opportunity, over the next few years, to embed best practice, lessons learned from quality assurance activity, case reviews and feedback to ensure that staff in all agencies feel supported, well equipped for working with children and their families and that outcomes for children are the best they can be.



IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024 – 2026

Objective	What are we going to do?	How will we do it?	Timescale	Responsibility	How will we know?
LEADERSHIP & VISION Leadership is required at all levels to promote a learning culture. Practice change is embedded.	Newsletter after each CPC summarising topics discussed & decisions made	By email and publish on website	Quarterly	Lead Officer CPC members	Staff report having a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of the CPC. Staff understand West Lothian's vision for protecting children. They are updated regularly about the work of the CPC.
	Self-evaluation	CPC will consider a self-evaluation exercise	July 26		
	"Meet the CPC" events	Virtual or face to face events focused on a theme or combined with, for example, feedback from a Learning review	Twice a year		
Learning Culture Staff have a range of opportunities to learn and improve. There is less reliance on formal training and increased opportunities for staff to feel involved and supported. Front line managers are committed to reinforcing improvements and supporting staff. Practice change is embedded.	Training	Multi and single agency training Single agency training/team meetings and discussions Single agency induction / e-learning / supervision. Practitioners taking responsibility for their own learning Practice Reflection sessions Safe and Together training	Opportunities to learn are provided on an ongoing basis	All agencies CPC COG Lead Officer GIRFEC Working Group	Staff report that learning events; opportunities for group supervision and reflection enhance practice; improve working relationships and ensure best practice is embedded. Staff feel supported & equipped to fulfil their role. Quality Assurance activity confirms that practice change leads to better outcomes for children and young people.
	Multi-agency learning events / practitioner forums / discussions	Practitioner forums / discussion groups / learning events offer staff the opportunity to reflect and learn from each other. Core Group Reflection Consider when & how multi-agency supervision may be provided in "well-being" cases			
Quality Assurance There are a range of mechanisms to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement. Front line practitioners are involved	Continue multi-agency QA activity with an initial focus on CaRM, CP planning & the reduction in CP registrations; enhance the learning from case reviews; explore identified themes & trends; suggest practice improvements to the CPC, ensuring the voices of children & families are heard. Single agency quality assurance of reports and practice. IRD Review group identifies best practice and themes. IRD participants meet to reflect on best practice.	The activity of the QASE subcommittee is informed by: Single agency identification of themes/issues/good practice; Themes / issues / good practice identified at IRD; CP data; Issues / themes / good practice identified in local and national Learning Reviews Involve multi-agency practitioners in QA activity where appropriate	July 26	Members of QASE CPC All agencies	Working relationships between professionals, children and families are respectful and inclusive Children and their families have a stake in improving outcomes. A strength-based approach to planning, meaningfully involving children and families is developed



<p>Participation of Children and Young People</p>	<p>Involve children and young people in a meaningful way in planning and developing services and practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure C & YP's views have been sought and are considered at CP Planning & Child's Planning meetings. • Provision of advocacy for C & YP at CP Planning meetings. • Ensure that the views of existing young people's groups such as Having Your Say and the Children's Rights Network inform the development of services and practice. • Encourage CYP involvement at their planning meetings, Identify & break down barriers to ensure attendance is possible. • CPC will meet with members of the Children's Rights Network 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>CPC members</p>	<p>There is evidence that children's voices are heard at meetings affecting their lives. Feedback from children.</p> <p>Children and YP are involved in developing services.</p>
<p>Assessment and Planning Multi-agency GIRFEC Guidance</p>	<p>Ensure robust assessment and planning at an earlier stage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop local guidance/report templates; • Provide training and materials to support improvement; • Identify staff to facilitate professional discussion / reflection when required 	<p>July 26</p>	<p>Chair of GIRFEC Planning Group Chair of C&F Strategic Planning Group CPC members</p>	<p>There is a seamless transition between GIRFEC & child protection</p> <p>Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Children and young people have one plan. Meetings are kept to a minimum</p>