



Falkirk Child
Protection Committee

Falkirk Child Protection Committee

Annual Report
2024-2025



Contents

Introduction	3
Falkirk's Demographics and background	5
The Child Protection Committee - Functions & Governance	6
Public Protection Information and Engagement	9
Continuous Improvement	11
Forth Valley Policies, Procedures and Protocols Subgroup	15
Falkirk Improvement and Quality Assurance Subgroup	17
Learning Review Subgroup	21
Learning and Development Subgroup	22
Strategic planning and connections	27
Public Protection Chief Officers Group	27
Conclusion	29

Introduction

As the new Independent Chair of Falkirk Child and Adult Protection Committees, I am pleased to present the CPC Annual Report (2024-2025) detailing the work of the Child Protection Committee as a multi-agency partnership. We are proud to report on important progress, whilst our multi-agency plans continue to enhance the care, protection, and wellbeing of children, young people, and families in Falkirk.

Along with many other public protection disciplines, we work together supported by new national child protection guidance and legislation, to strengthen or further develop our processes and practices as a learning organisation. We are striving to hear the voices of children and young people and uphold their rights in a meaningful way. We have evidence of focused work in doing so. Combining much of our activity with child protection committees across the Forth Valley, whilst we strive for a whole-family wellbeing approach, is making a difference.

As a key contributor and core member of Child Protection Committees Scotland (CPCScotland), we align our work with national activities and available child protection data to improve outcomes.

As Independent Chair, I would like to thank all members of the Child Protection Committee and the Chief Officer Group (Public Protection) for their continued support and commitment to this work, including all the staff who do incredible work every day to protect our children and young people.

Caren McLean
Independent chair of CPC



**“Children in Falkirk
will grow up loved,
safe and respected
so that they can
realise their full
potential.”**

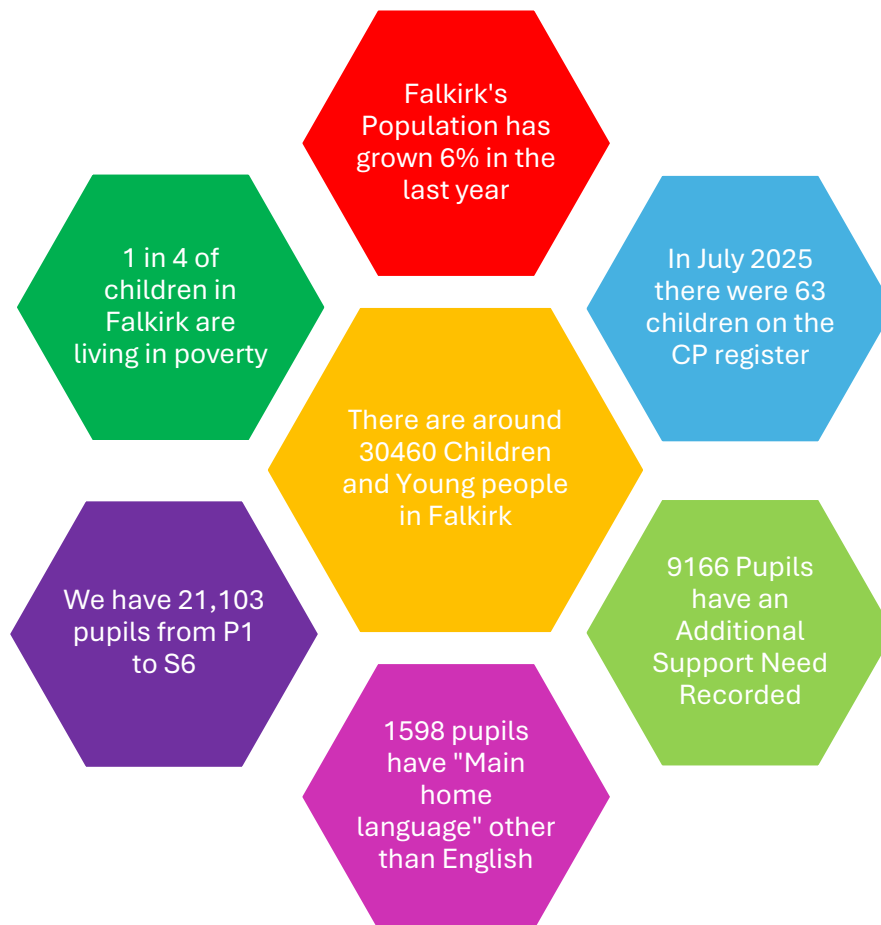
Falkirk's Demographics and background

Falkirk is a diverse area with a mix of urban and rural communities, home to approximately 160,000 residents, including a significant child population. While many families thrive, pockets of deprivation and inequality remain, with some communities experiencing higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and housing challenges. These socioeconomic factors, alongside issues such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, and mental health concerns, contribute to the complexity of child protection work locally.

Falkirk's strong industrial heritage and growing cultural diversity also shape service delivery, requiring approaches that are inclusive and responsive to varied needs.

Understanding these demographic trends is essential for planning, targeting resources, and aligning local priorities with national frameworks.

What we know about the children and families in Falkirk?



The Child Protection Committee - Functions & Governance

Falkirk's Child Protection Committee (CPC) operates within the wider framework of Public Protection and is a locally based, inter-agency strategic partnership. The CPC is responsible for developing, implementing and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies and within the local community. Its overarching aim is to support staff, partners and members of the public in the shared endeavour to make Falkirk the best place in Scotland to grow up, and to keep all children safe from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The CPC is comprised of senior representatives from all key services and agencies involved in the care and protection of children. Membership includes:

- Education
- Social Work
- Housing
- NHS Forth Valley
- Police Scotland
- Third Sector partners
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

The Committee is independently chaired and at the end of the reporting year we said goodbye to our independent chair, Alan Small, due to his retirement. We thank Alan for his dedicated service as Independent Chair and warmly welcome Caren McLean as the new Chair of Falkirk Child Protection Committee.

Falkirk CPC meets four times per year. It reports directly to the Public Protection Chief Officers Group (COG), whose responsibilities are clearly defined in Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities (Scottish Government, 2019). The CPC Chair provides regular assurance reports to COG, highlighting key risks, performance issues, areas of progress, and strategic priorities. The CPC also contributes to the wider Public Protection Governance Framework to ensure alignment across services and to support joint approaches to risk, vulnerability, and early intervention.

The CPC recognises and fulfils its responsibilities as set out in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021). These responsibilities are delivered through the CPC's governance structure and Business and Improvement Plan.

The key roles of the CPC are to provide leadership and oversight across:

- **Public information, engagement and participation**
- **Continuous improvement and assurance**
- **Strategic planning and partnership connections**

Through these core functions, the CPC ensures effective multi-agency practice, contributes to national child protection priorities and promotes a consistent and coordinated approach to identifying, assessing and responding to risk.

In delivering its functions and progressing agreed priorities, the CPC is supported by eight operational subgroups, five of which operate on a Forth Valley basis. These subgroups provide partnership leadership on areas such as training, quality assurance, learning reviews, and public engagement.

This multi-agency approach ensures collective ownership of the child protection agenda and promotes shared understanding of local risks, trends, and pressures.



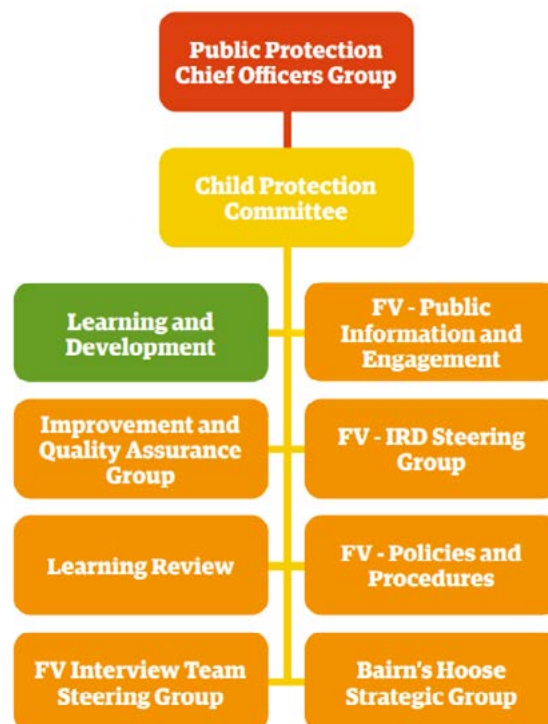
Public Protection Information and Engagement

The Forth Valley Public Information and Engagement (PPIE) Subgroup plays a key role in raising awareness of child protection and promoting engagement with the public, children, young people, and practitioners. In 2024-2025, the subgroup continued to deliver on its core objectives:

Promoting child protection messages within wider public protection campaigns and exploring opportunities for joint work with adult services.

Increasing awareness of the role and function of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) among staff in partner agencies through flexible approaches to learning and strengthening awareness.

Consulting with children, young people, and families to ensure their voices inform service design and delivery.



What have we achieved?

The subgroup supported national and local campaigns, including the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence and Police Scotland's Fearless Sextortion Campaign. A Short life working group was set up to tackle online sexual extortion ("sexortion") across Forth Valley. We worked with Police Scotland, education, health, and social work partners to protect communities and support victims.

Key achievements of the short life working group included:

Delivering awareness sessions in schools, colleges, youth settings, inputs for foster carers and care establishments.

Supported national campaigns and shared consistent messaging across agencies.

Developed leaflets for children and parents, planned social media awareness adverts, and promoted mental health support services.

Alongside this important work, Barnardo's led engagement with young people to understand their awareness of sexual exploitation. Findings revealed gaps among children not regularly attending school, highlighting how reduced school contact limits their exposure to key safeguarding information, and prompting plans to ensure safety messages reach these vulnerable groups. Work also progressed on developing e-learning modules for practitioners on sextortion and child sexual abuse.

Progress was made on developing an animated information video for Children attending Child Protection Planning Meetings. Consultation with Falkirk Champs is ongoing to ensure the resource is child-friendly and accessible.

The subgroup streamlined the Practitioner Pages, an online resource bank used by professionals in Forth Valley by updating our A-Z resource links and improved functionality for easier navigation. New sections were added, including guidance on Missing Persons and a "Latest News" feature now highlights current campaigns and newly uploaded documents.

Children First, on behalf of the Forth Valley Bairns' Hoose Project, has undertaken a consultation with young people and their families who have lived experience of child protection investigations. The approach to this has been child led, meeting children in pre-existing groups, creating new group sessions and offering individual 1:1 sessions for children who opted to share their experiences out with a group setting. Their feedback on child protection processes will continue to shape future improvements.

Continuous Improvement

This year has marked significant progress in child protection across Forth Valley. The Child Protection Committee (CPC) continued to drive improvement by monitoring the quality of practice through data, audits, and Learning reviews. This approach helps identify trends early and ensures timely action to keep children safe. The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law in July 2024 is central to the CPC's work. Children's Rights sit at the heart of the legislative and procedural systems that shape how child protection is understood and delivered across Scotland, influencing practice from national strategy to day-to-day local decision making.

Initial Referral Discussions (IRDs) are a cornerstone of child protection processes, forming the crucial first stage of multiagency decision making when concerns about a child's safety are raised. They ensure that key partners, Social Work, Police Scotland, Health and Education come together quickly to share relevant information, assess risks and agree immediate protective actions. The IRD Steering Group provides joint strategic oversight of IRD practice across Forth Valley and ensures that multiagency guidance and information sharing arrangements remain current and effective. We continue to review a sample of IRDs within the Falkirk area on a multi-agency basis and have developed a consistent performance reporting tool to support this. The IRD audit tool sets clear expectations for reviewing IRDs, with a stronger focus on contingency planning and ensuring the child's voice is evident. It also provides consistent data and structured feedback to help improve the quality and outcomes of IRDs and, crucially, in the safety and outcomes experienced by children across the partnership.

One of the most significant achievements this year was embedding the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM), with our Forth Valley Child Interview Team. Around 90% of interviews now follow this trauma-informed approach, giving children a voice in a safe and supportive way. Between August 2024 and July 2025, 148 interviews were completed, with Falkirk recording the highest demand across Forth Valley. Although seasonal and capacity pressures caused some delays, outcomes were strong: disclosure rates rose and a high percentage of interviews led to criminal charges, reflecting the quality of evidence and professionalism of our teams. Feedback from children and families was overwhelmingly positive. This success was recognised nationally when the Forth Valley Child Interview Team received the Police Scotland Divisional Commander's Award for Greatest Contribution to Policing. The team made up of four Advanced Practitioner Social Workers and four Detective Constables was commended for its

outstanding work in implementing SCIM and delivering trauma-informed interviews for children who have been victims or witnesses of harm.



Work also progressed significantly on the development of Bairns' Hoose. Bairns' Hoose is Scotland's version of the Icelandic *Barnahus* model, bringing together child protection, health, justice, and recovery services in one child centred, trauma informed setting. The Forth Valley Partnership led by NHS Forth Valley with Police Scotland and Local authorities across Forth Valley secured national funding in 2024-2025 to explore how this model could be developed locally.

However, the annual funding model created challenges for long-term planning and sustainability, a concern echoed nationally. Despite short funding cycles, partners remain committed to progressing this ambitious change for children in Forth Valley. Our Engagement work led by Children 1st showed strong support from children, families and professionals, alongside recognition that therapeutic recovery and cross agency practice need strengthening.

Next steps include taking forward tests for change including recruiting a Clinical Psychologist, a Speech & Language Therapist, and creating a Changemaker's Group to ensure children's voices shape the service. Our approach to this development has been rooted in methodology allowing us to make immediate practical improvements to the current Child Protection and Justice journey.

These developments show what collaboration can achieve. By embedding trauma-informed practice and planning innovative services like Bairns' Hoose, we are building a future where every child feels safe, supported, and heard.

Falkirk Council commissions Who Cares? Scotland and Quarriers to deliver children's rights and advocacy services for children and young people who normally live in the Falkirk Council area. This support is available up to age 26 for those with care experience. During this reporting period, Quarriers received 98 new referrals, while Who Cares? Scotland accepted 76 new referrals, alongside their ongoing work with existing cases.

We anticipate that with awareness of children's rights and the demand for advocacy support will continue to rise. Maintaining strong local advocacy

provision is therefore essential. Quarriers and Who Cares? Scotland work closely together, ensuring that the rights of Looked After children are upheld and that all children and young people can access advocacy from either service whenever they need it.

The Forth Valley Child Death Review Group brings together partners from across agencies to examine the circumstances surrounding a wide range of child deaths, including unexpected deaths, those linked to life limiting conditions, suicides, and the deaths of children who were Looked After or receiving Aftercare or Continuing Care. Reviews are undertaken for all liveborn children from birth to 17, and for care experienced young people up to age 26.

Although this work is emotionally demanding, it plays a crucial role in strengthening learning and improving services. The group's approach is guided by national frameworks and feeds directly into the National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from the Deaths of Children and Young People. The National Hub published its first [Annual Data Release](#) in May 2025.



Forth Valley Policies, Procedures and Protocols Subgroup

The Policies, Procedures and Protocols Subgroup is a Forth Valley wide group, with membership drawn from Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling CPCs. Its core purpose is to systematically develop, review, publish and disseminate inter-agency child protection policies, protocols and guidance to ensure consistency of practice across the region.

The group work to a clear workplan and programme of activity. Over the past year, its focus has been on updating existing procedures to ensure full alignment with the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, refreshed 2023) and reflecting the evolving national landscape, including developments in IRD practice, Bairns' Hoose and the Scottish Child Interview Model. With every review or revision of guidance and policy we are routinely adding child friendly front covers, using child friendly front covers helps ensure that children can recognise, understand and feel included in the materials that relate to their rights and safety.

The subgroup continues to support practitioner awareness and confidence by coordinating timely dissemination of updates and ensuring that all partner agencies embed revised guidance within their local operational frameworks.

What have we achieved?

During the reporting year, the subgroup collaborated with the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) partnership to streamline policies and procedures related to GBV. We identified multiple separate documents and developed a single overarching policy to support all practitioners, not just those working with children. The new guidance addresses a broad range of harms, such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, exploitation, harmful traditional practices, and technology-facilitated abuse, providing a comprehensive resource. It incorporates intersectionality, recognising overlapping inequalities like race, disability, and poverty, and emphasizes trauma-informed principles and human rights to ensure safe, respectful, and empowering responses. This policy will be subject to approval through the appropriate governance structures and launched thereafter.

Alongside the GBV update we have revised Forth Valley Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Guidance which now provides a comprehensive framework for practitioners to recognise, prevent, and respond to CSE as a form of child sexual abuse. It outlines key principles of trauma-informed and rights-based practice, emphasising early intervention, multi-agency collaboration, and consistent language that avoids blame. The guidance details patterns of exploitation including online, peer-related, and organised

networks. It also includes practical steps for safety planning, recovery support, and practitioner wellbeing, ensuring alignment with national child protection guidance and GIRFEC principles. This updated guidance strengthens clarity, promotes shared responsibility and supports effective safeguarding across all sectors. This guidance will be launched in early 2026.

In addition to the GBV and CSE guidance revisions, the Policies, Procedures and Protocols Subgroup has updated the Multi-Agency Child's Plan Transfer Guidance and updated guidance for managing transitions where Adult Support and Protection (ASP) and Child Protection (CP) concerns affect young people aged 16-18. Looking ahead, plans for the coming year include progressing the revision of the Unseen Child Guidance and responding to emerging national and local developments to maintain consistency with legislative changes and evolving safeguarding priorities.

Falkirk Improvement and Quality Assurance Subgroup

The Falkirk multi agency Improvement and Quality Assurance (IQA) Subgroup undertakes regular and systematic self-evaluation activity on behalf of the CPC. This work is central to understanding the quality of local child protection practice, identifying strengths and identifying where improvement is required. Through the scrutiny of performance data, qualitative information and multi-agency audit findings, the subgroup can identify emerging themes early and support the partnership to respond proactively. Insights from this activity directly inform learning and development priorities, revisions to local policy and guidance, and wider organisational improvement plans.

The Improvement and Quality Assurance (IQA) Subgroup considers key child protection performance data on a quarterly basis using Version 2 of the National Minimum Dataset (NMD) for Child Protection Committees in Scotland. This data is then further scrutinised by the CPC and Public Protection Chief Officers Group to ensure appropriate oversight, challenge and assurance.

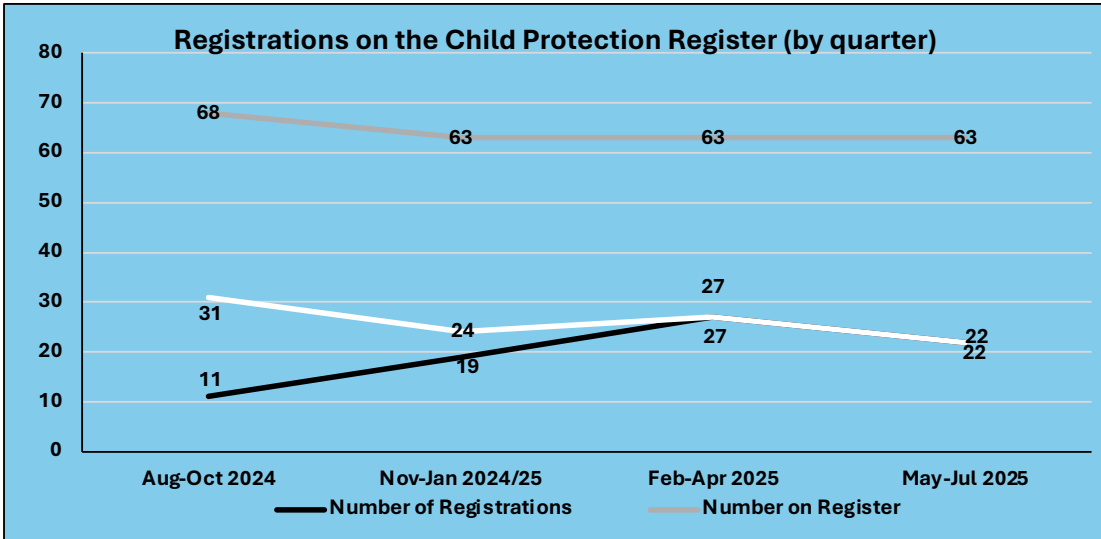
Data Quality and Scrutiny

Throughout 2024, the CPC has experienced persistent challenges in ensuring that quarterly data from the National Minimum Dataset is available in sufficient time to enable meaningful scrutiny by the Improvement and Quality Assurance Subgroup prior to scheduled reporting to the full CPC. Despite adjustments to the 2025 timetable for IQA, CPC and Public Protection Chief Officers Group (COG) meetings, the lead-in time remained too limited to support robust analysis, reflection and multi-agency interpretation of the data.

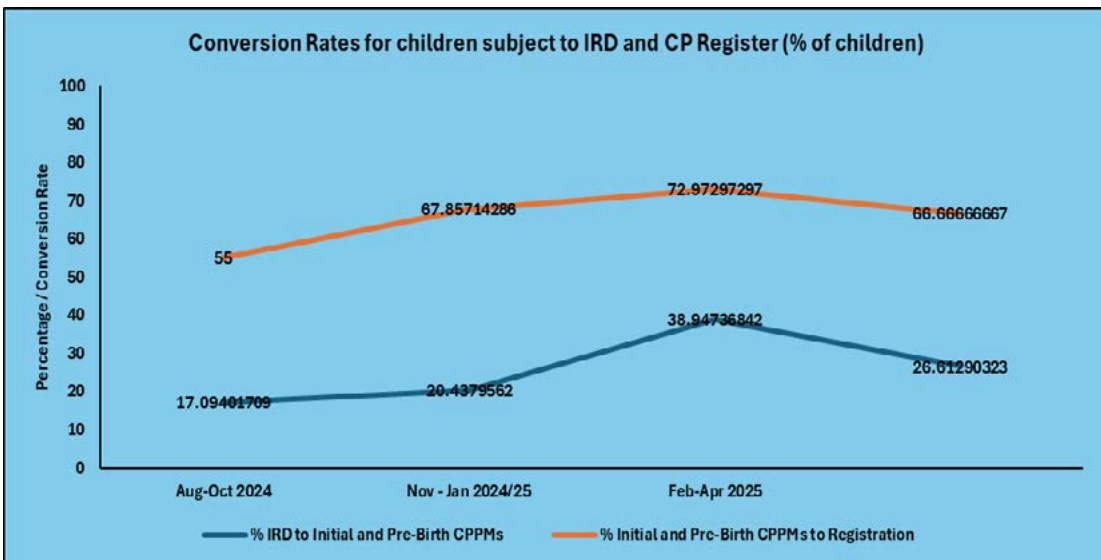
As a result, several CPC reports during the year have required the presentation of raw data with minimal narrative, reducing the Committee's ability to engage in informed scrutiny or strategic discussion.

To explore potential solutions, the Lead Officer engaged with other CPCs across Scotland. Several reported similar difficulties, with some providing a notable example where this has been managed more efficiently by moving to biannual CPC reporting, enabling deeper analysis and significantly enhancing the quality of scrutiny, discussion and learning within its partnership.

The CPC agreed to adopt a six-monthly reporting cycle for the full Minimum Dataset, recognising that this will enhance the quality of analysis and support improved scrutiny. Quarterly updates, supported by qualitative insight from the IQA Subgroup, will continue to provide assurance between reporting periods.



Between August 2024 and July 2025, there were a total of 78 Child Protection registrations recorded. During the reporting year our total number of children on the Child Protection register was generally stable. Our data also provides insight into the primary categories of harm or risk leading to registration. Domestic abuse concerns account for 63% of all registrations, 53% for parental mental ill-health, and parental substance misuse, drug and alcohol account for a total of 70% of new registrations during this 12-month reporting period.



Most registrations include multiple overlapping parental vulnerabilities, therefore despite our numbers being stable the needs and risks of children are complex due to multiple areas of harm. We have been curious about the number of children who have Neglect recorded as a concern and that considering the overlapping parental vulnerabilities we anticipate that this indicator would show higher percentages, in response to this we plan to re-launch learning and development sessions on Working and Assessing neglect.

In 2024/25, Falkirk's Improvement and Quality Assurance (IQA) Subgroup continued to play a vital role in making sure our child protection work is effective and improving. The group focuses on checking how well services are working together, learning from experience, and using that learning to make things better for children and families.

What have we achieved?

- Improved data reporting using the latest national dataset, alongside local analysis.
- Carried out two in-depth reviews:
 - Children on the Child Protection Register for more than 12 months (June 2024).
 - How the Safe & Together approach is used in cases involving domestic abuse (October 2024).
- Monitored progress on actions in our three-year Business and Improvement Plan.
- Shared learning from audits through local multi-agency training sessions.

What the audits told us

Children on the Child Protection Register over 12 months - Our June 2024 review looked at cases where children were registered (subject to a CP plan) for over a year. We found that concerns were shared quickly and agencies worked well together to make decisions. Initial responses were strong, and professionals attended planning meetings regularly. However, only a quarter of initial meetings happened within the expected timescales, majority of the cases reviewed were outwith timescales by a few days with one outlier of 12 days. While plans and assessments were generally good, we need to do more to capture children's and parents' views and make sure interventions reduce risk effectively. These areas are already part of our improvement plan.

Safe & Together approach: The Safe & Together™ model is a domestic abuse-informed framework that helps practitioners keep children safe by keeping them with the non-abusive parent, partnering with that parent, and holding the abusive parent accountable for the impact of their behaviour on the child. In October 2024, we undertook an audit of cases where children were placed on the CP register, with concerns relating to domestic abuse. The review focused on how we use the Safe & Together model, which helps keep children with their non-abusing parent and holds perpetrators accountable. We saw examples of excellent practice, but use of the model was inconsistent. Information sharing and attendance at meetings were positive, but some assessments lacked depth, especially around domestic abuse and perpetrator behaviour. In nearly half of cases, fathers or partners who posed risk were not engaged and language sometimes minimised their responsibility. Where practice was strongest, children's experiences were central and agencies worked closely with the non-abusing parent.

By working alongside Women's Unite, a group of domestic abuse survivors, we ensured that lived experience directly informed and shaped our improvements, grounding our actions in the real voices, challenges, and strengths of those most affected.

“I want professionals to understand that not all abuse leaves bruises and a child's behaviour is their voice when they don't yet have words”

Women told us that when practitioners used the Safe & Together model, it felt like “validation” and “having support”, highlighting why strengthening and embedding this approach remains a key priority within our planned improvements.

Our plan includes:

- Increasing attendance at Safe & Together training for Multi Agency practitioners with the aim of strengthening domestic-abuse-informed practice and improving consistency in how agencies respond to perpetrators' behaviour and support non-abusive parents.
- Sharing good practice examples to help practitioners keep children's experiences at the heart of planning.
- Strengthening links with the Gender-Based Violence Partnership to align policies and guidance with Safe & Together principles.

Learning Review Subgroup

When something serious happens to a child or young person, it's vital that we learn from it. The Child Protection Committee on behalf of the Chief Officers Group, is responsible for carrying out Learning Reviews when national criteria are met. These reviews are guided by the *National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews* and, locally, the process is overseen by our Learning Review Subgroup.

The purpose of a Learning Review is to bring together agencies, practitioners, and families to reflect on what happened, understand why, and identify strategies that will help improve how we work in the future. This shared learning approach strengthens systems and practice, ensuring children and young people are better protected. The subgroup also supports the wider dissemination of key learning across the partnership to ensure that lessons influence practice beyond the individual case and lead to sustained improvements across the wider workforce.

To make this process clearer and more consistent, Falkirk CPC and the Adult Protection Committee (APC) will develop a joint operational procedure for Learning Reviews.

By formalising this process, we aim to make Learning Reviews more efficient and effective, ensuring that learning translates into evidence-based improvements across both child and adult protection systems.

Learning and Development Subgroup

Falkirk's Multiagency Learning and Development Group is primarily responsible for the implementation, review and update of Falkirk's Multi-Agency Learning & Development Strategy, Framework and multi-agency annual, learning and development programme.

The work of the group is focused upon translating the priorities of Falkirk's Children and Young People's Strategic Leadership Group and Falkirk Child Protection Committee into the context of learning.

- [Falkirk Multi Agency Learning & Development STRATEGY - June 2025 - Forth Valley Practitioner Pages](#)
- [Learning and Development FRAMEWORK - June 2025 - Forth Valley Practitioner Pages](#)

This approach is designed to support our workforce to gain and maintain confidence and competence in their practice, with a particular emphasis placed on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

We prioritise in-person learning aimed at fostering and forging professional relationships that strengthens confidence, competence, knowledge and skills across our multi-agency workforce. The provision of effective joint learning opportunities early in the careers of our workforce and for new members of the workforce creates the best conditions to go on to engage in effective joint working. This approach contributes to improved outcomes for the communities we serve and responds to findings from our Learning Reviews regarding strengthening information sharing and partnership working.

What have we achieved?

Investment from Whole Family Wellbeing Fund has been used to fund our Interagency Training Co-ordinator post until March 2027. This has provided predictable resource for a four-year period.

[Whole Family Wellbeing Funding - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot](#)

This post has enabled the development of a comprehensive programme of multi-training that reflected the priorities drawn from a Training Needs Analysis undertaken in July 2024. The programme also takes account of recommendations identified within local and national Learning Reviews.

Multi-agency workforce development benefited from collaborative investment funding from Housing, Education, Police Scotland, NHS Forth Valley, Children & Families Social Work and Health and Social Care Partnership Adult services for an Interagency Training Officer full time two-

year post until February 2026. This additional investment was required to build capacity in the delivery of core learning across the range of child and adult services.

Learning and Development activity:

Child Protection Key Processes training was re-established in February 2024 and has since been attended by 184 multi-agency staff. This one-day training session includes subject expert leads from NHS, Police and Social Work, describing their roles and responsibilities in relation to Child Protection systems and practice.

Overall, feedback from participants was very positive, especially regarding clarity, relevance and multi-agency delivery. Participants described in post-course evaluation having greater confidence; better understanding of child protection processes, and clear intentions to adapt or change their practice particularly in relation to producing child-centred recording, improving communication, prioritising multi-agency collaboration, and developing professional curiosity.

Clearer Understanding of Complex Issues
"Big issue that was simply explained."
Family Support – Third Sector
Training helped break down complex safeguarding concerns into clear, practical guidance.

Improved Access to Support and Guidance
"I feel much more confident and know where to access support and guidance."
Primary Education
Greater confidence in knowing **who to contact**, **what support** is available, and **when** to seek advice.

Stronger Multi-Agency Insight
"Good to hear in-depth information on the roles and responsibilities of other services."
Early Years Education
Better understanding of different **professional roles** and collaboration.

Increased Confidence in Responding to Disclosures
"More confidence in exploring the what, where and when questions..."
Children & Families Social Work
Responding in a **child-centred** and **legally sound** way.

Inevitably, and purposefully, various learning and development activities connect with each other; there are cross over themes that provide opportunities to reinforce professional practice development. At the core of each learning activity are the rights of children and young people. In delivering learning sessions, facilitators make reference to the UNCRC (Scotland) Act 2024 and challenge the workforce to consider how they can consider and uphold these in the context of their job role.



Our achievements are encouraging and support the shared commitment towards our ambition to be recognised as multi-agency learning organisations. However, we continue to face a number of challenges. Take up and attendance at training can often be impacted by competing demands and operational pressures arising from vacancies, absence levels and long-term recruitment challenges. Training delivery has adapted to take account of some of these challenges through the provision of just in time learning and reflective sessions. There is resistance to dilute learning through relying on briefings and online self-serve learning which cannot be substituted for quality joint learning across services.

Longer term sustainability of the delivery of comprehensive learning and development activity remains a concern, with key learning and development positions being temporary and due to end in 2026 and 2027.

Looking ahead, our priorities include updating Child Protection Key Processes for 2026, encouraging leaders to support the workforce to prioritise essential training through allocation of learning time, and securing long-term investment to grow multi-agency workforce development using evidence gained to date.

Embedding a continuous learning cycle, including feedback loops, will be critical to sustaining improvements, embedding practice change and ensuring better outcomes for children and families.



Strategic planning and connections

Child Protection is a core priority within Falkirk's integrated children's services planning framework. The Children and Young People's Strategic Leadership Group oversee Falkirk's Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-26, including delivery of the GIRFEC agenda. This group holds strategic responsibility for inter-agency work across childcare and early years, corporate parenting, child health, and children's rights and participation. Continuous improvement and learning and development groups ensure that children and young people's needs remain central across the full spectrum of wellbeing and protection. The Lead Officer for Child Protection as well as other members of the CPC are active members of this group, strengthening connections and aligning shared priorities.

Public Protection Chief Officers Group

The Public Protection Lead Officers Group (PPLLOG) was formally established in August 2024 by Falkirk Chief Officers to strengthen collaboration across the public protection landscape. Its purpose is to create a whole-system approach that recognises children, young people, and adults live within families and communities, requiring protection across the lifespan.

Key Developments in 2025

- **Learning Passport & Framework:** Early work underway to design a digital resource mapping mandatory and core learning requirements across public protection roles. This aims to simplify navigation for practitioners and align with national developments from IRISS.
- **Public Protection Website:** This will provide clear public-facing information on how to raise concerns and access help, alongside practitioner resources. Funding and governance arrangements are being explored.
- **Webinar Programme:** Three webinars delivered in 24/25, including sessions on financial harm and hardship and racially aggravated crime. These are recorded and available online as learning resources.
- **Pooling Resources for Self-Evaluation:** Lead Officers are exploring collaborative approaches to quality assurance and self-evaluation, aiming to reduce duplication and strengthen cross-partnership learning.

National Groups

The CPC also maintains strong links with national forums, including Child Protection Committee Scotland, the Central and North Scotland CPC Consortium, and the National CPC Lead Officers Group.

In 2025, CPC Scotland agreed in principle to introduce mandatory reporting of child abuse, covering all forms of abuse and PVG roles, alongside plans for training, better data, and therapeutic support. The network also advanced work on domestic abuse, promoting the Safe & Together approach and improved links between civil and criminal courts. Key initiatives included the ICON programme to prevent abusive head trauma and Scotland's Criminal Exploitation Framework, shifting practice from criminalisation to child protection. These actions reflect a strong commitment to collaboration and trauma-informed practice, which align closely with Falkirk CPC's local priorities for continuous improvement and workforce development.

Our engagement with National groups enables Falkirk CPC to influence and respond to emerging issues and priorities and ensuring local improvements reflect national standards and best practice.

Conclusion

The reporting period from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 has been marked by significant progress in strengthening child protection practice across Falkirk and the wider Forth Valley partnership. This annual report demonstrates the commitment of all agencies to working collaboratively, embedding trauma-informed approaches, and ensuring that children's voices remain central to decision-making.

Despite these successes, challenges remain. Sustainability of key initiatives, including multi-agency training posts and long-term funding for Bairns' Hoose, requires continued focus. We also need to address variability in training attendance and ensure that improvements identified through audits and learning reviews translate into consistent practice across all agencies.

Looking ahead, priorities for 2025-2026 include:

- Embedding the six-monthly data reporting cycle to strengthen scrutiny and learning.
- Enhancing participation and advocacy for children and their families and building on work around Child Centred Recording.
- Sustaining the delivery of the Scottish Child Interview Model with our Forth Valley Child Interview Team and evaluating outcomes.
- Progressing feasibility and design work for Bairns' Hoose, ensuring alignment with national timelines and standards.
- Updating our CPC Business and Improvement Plan for 2026-2029, reflecting emerging priorities and lessons learned

By building on these achievements and addressing challenges, we will continue to strengthen child protection systems and make Falkirk a place where every child is safe, supported, and heard.

For further information regarding the Child Protection Committee, you can contact the Lead Officer for Child Protection.

Contact: 01324 506070

If you are concerned about the safety of a child in Falkirk, call

**Social Work Services -
Initial Response Team (office hours)**

01324 506070

Police

101

Out of Hours Social Work Emergency Duty Team

01786 470 500

FALKIRK COUNCIL

