

Falkirk Child Protection Committee - Business and Improvement Plan 2023-26

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

Welcome to the Falkirk Child Protection Committee (CPC) Business and Improvement Plan for 2023 – 2026. This Plan builds on previous Improvement Plans and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement through single and multi-agency quality assurance and self-evaluation. Falkirk CPC aspires to improve in all aspects of our inter-agency work to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect within Falkirk and across Forth Valley.

# National Context

This Plan sits within a national context shaped by the legacy of Covid 19, cost of living crisis and a workforce recruitment and retention crisis. The Plan is informed by national legislative and policy drivers including [Getting it right for every child](https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/) (GIRFEC), findings from the [Independent Care Review - The Promise](https://www.carereview.scot/) [(2020)](https://www.carereview.scot/) , Whole Family Well-being and a commitment to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention) (UNCRC) and Children’s Rights.

GIRFEC promotes action to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people across eight [wellbeing indicators](https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/wellbeing-indicators-shanarri/) which are designed to guide the workforce to ensure children and families are as safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, ,respected, responsible and included.

Falkirk CPC acknowledges [The Plan 2021-2024](https://thepromise.scot/what-must-change/plan-21-24) which sets out the five priority areas and key milestones – the right to a childhood; whole family support; supporting the workforce; planning and building capacity.

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (updated 2023) highlights that a trauma-informed approach is necessary across the workforce involved in child protection. The Plan acknowledges the importance of workers being able to recognise and respond to the needs of children and adults who are affected by trauma. We seek to deliver trauma-informed and responsive services which minimise distress and support recovery from traumatic experiences.

# Falkirk Context

On a local level, our CPC Business and Improvement Plan aligns with our [Falkirk's Integrated Children's Services Plan](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/children-families/policies-strategies/docs/girfec/02%20Integrated%20Children%27s%20Services%20Plan%202023-2026.pdf?v=202401090920&%3A~%3Atext=Our%20Integrated%20Children%27s%20Services%20Plan%2Csafe%2C%20loved%20and%20respected%20to) (ICSP) for 2023-2026 and is shaped by self-evaluation and quality assurance activity undertaken with partner agencies across Forth Valley; including previous improvement plans, learning reviewing findings, inter-agency audits and self-evaluation of the implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland.

Falkirk’s ICSP sets out our collective vision, aims and ambitions across the Falkirk Children’s Services Planning Partnership, to ensure our children and young people have the best possible start in life, and grow up feeling safe, loved, and respected so they can realise their full potential. In considering the Care Inspectorate Framework Quality Indicator 1.1, the Partnership has agreed an outcomes focused plan with our commitment to delivering on the priorities identified within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Falkirk JSNA, 2023); Domestic abuse; Poverty & Inequality; Substance & Alcohol use; Mental Health & Wellbeing.

This shared, partnership commitment to continuous improvement is also demonstrated through our wider Community Planning Partnership governance structure and through the work of our inter-agency CPC Improvement and Quality Assurance Group (which reviews Minimum Dataset Reports), CPC Annual Development Days and our CPC Annual Report.

# Continuous Improvement

The CPC has an overview of the quality of work being carried out to protect children in our area. It uses data, self-evaluation, and scrutiny to identify any trends, patterns and practice that impact on keeping children safe. Our approach to self-evaluation and improvement focuses broadly on the answers to three key questions; underpinned by the Care Inspectorate’s Quality Improvement Framework (November 2022): How good are we now? How do we know? What we plan to do next?

Our model of improvement is based on the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycle and is overseen by our inter-agency Improvement and Quality Assurance Group. We know that continuous improvement must be meaningful and make a difference to keeping children safe. We therefore take a collaborative approach and endeavor to involve families, children and young people, partner agencies and staff.

We utilise the Care Inspectorate Quality Framework for audit purposes and the National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews in Scotland (2021) to guide and inform our inter-agency Learning Review activity. Our work is underpinned by legislation and guidance including the new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2021, updated 2023).

To ensure children are safe and needs are met, Falkirk CPC remains focused on our six strategic priorities for improvement work, structured around the following themes:

* Risk and Need - Assessment and planning of risk and need is timely, proportionate, and integrated within the GIRFEC continuum
* Development - Staff groups in children and adult services have appropriate knowledge, skills and learning opportunities underpinned by the GIRFEC.
* Resource - The Child Protection system is effectively resourced, and pressures are recognised and mitigated
* Involvement - Children and their families are involved in decision making and service design and their expectations met
* Self-evaluation - The Child Protection system is continuously evaluated, and quality improvement approaches make an impact
* Policy and Guidance - Multi-agency policy and guidance is reviewed and implemented to deliver best practice

This Plan is a working document which will be developed by our Improvement and Quality Assurance Group to ensure actions are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timeous and that the plan is evaluated and reviewed.

**PRIORITY 1**

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| **Assessment and planning of risk and need is timely, proportionate, and integrated within the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach.** | |
| **Our contribution to making this happen** | **How we will measure our progress** |

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| 1. **Assessment and planning of risk and need** to be strengthened across the partnership.   Develop use of **Integrated Assessment Framework**, **Lead Professional assessment** & **Child’s Plan** (pilots in secondary/primary/early years).   1. Consolidate and build on the work of Falkirk’s **Initial Response Team** in improving initial referral responses to children at risk of abuse and neglect. 2. Continue to align our child protection work with the values and ambitions of other policy streams; **GIRFEC, Promise** and **Children’s Rights**. 3. Review **inter-agency information sharing protocols** across agencies to ensure necessary, relevant, and proportionate approaches to enable effective decision making. 4. Promote knowledge and understanding of **National Practice Model,** including best practice in use of inter-agency chronologies & 5 GIRFEC Questions. 5. Across Forth Valley we have changed inter-agency practice to align with the updated **timescales for stages in child protection processes** so children and families know what will happen and when. 6. Strengthen partnership working with Children’s Reporter to ensure | * Improved quality of integrated assessments and Child’s Plans will be evidenced through multi-agency audits; utilising Care Inspectorate audit tool. * Partnership data will indicate % adherence to revised timescales for IRDs, CPPMs and Pre-Birth CPPMs (implemented Forth Valley wide). * Dip sampling of IRD records will evidence improvements in out of hours IRD recording. * Reduced numbers of children subject to repeat periods of child protection registration (re-registrations). * Collection and analysis of data from child interviews and investigations (SCIM data measures are being developed). * Children involved in child protection investigations will experience a reduced number of investigative interviews; reducing the need to repeatedly tell their story. * Children will report that they feel supported through Forth Valley’s Child Interview Model process. * Increased evidence of Child Protection Planning Meetings considering appropriate legal measures and referrals to SCRA; via NMDS. |

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| appropriate, proportionate, and timely **referrals to SCRA** and that every opportunity is taken to get it right for the children and young people.   1. Develop **Scottish Child Interview Model** in Forth Valley utilizing a joint investigative interview approach which is trauma informed and seeks best evidence through improved planning/interview. 2. Explore inter-agency capacity and potential to develop a Forth Valley approach to **Bairns’ Hoose** to support assessments and interventions for children in need of care and protection**.** 3. **Support and supervision** will be provided for all practitioners across CPC partner agencies who are involved in child protection work; including opportunities for **peer support and reflection**. 4. Raise awareness of **Closer to Home strategy** within the workforce, increase opportunities for children to remain at home and in their local community where safe to do so. 5. Falkirk’s **intensive family support** referral pathway is now in place and mapping activity underway. Data measures are being developed to capture baseline and distance travelled. | * Increase % of SCRA decisions made within expected timescales. * Parents/carers accessing holistic family support report improvement in wellbeing after intervention (increase); evaluation before and after intervention. * Reduction in numbers of children subject to external residential placements through effective multi-agency work to manage and reduce future risk within families. |

**PRORITY 2**

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| **Staff groups in children and adult services have appropriate knowledge, skills and learning opportunities underpinned by the GIRFEC approach.** | |
| **Our contribution to making this happen** | **How we will measure our progress** |
| 1. Embed Falkirk’s **Multi-Agency L&D Strategy and Framework** (launched in June 2023) to support our workforce to be confident and competent in practice; development of training programmes at **informed, skilled and enhanced** levels.   Roll out multi-agency **Child Protection Key Processes** training and re- Launch of **Child Protection Practitioner Forums** to create opportunities to build on relationship-based practice and to strengthen professional connections.  Facilitate increased knowledge and confidence of the workforce in understanding and practicing using **trauma informed** approaches.   1. Strengthen the application of **child development** and **attachment theory**   within multi-agency assessments and interventions.   1. Enhance the capacity of the workforce to effectively undertake assessments which include the **assessment of males** and considers their involvement in multi-agency assessment and decision-making forums. 2. Use learning from **Learning Reviews** to improve practice and identify gaps in systems. 3. Strengthen **interface of Child and Adult Support and Protection** through **j**oint work with Adult Protection Committee to consider **responses to 16+ age group** at risk of significant harm to self/others; including learning and development needs of our workforce, transition planning. | * Training will be continually evaluated and assessed, including how this will impact on staff knowledge, skills and confidence over time. * Integrated assessments will evidence consideration and analysis of the children and young people’s lived experience through assessment and planning (\*). * An increased % of staff will report they feel safe, supported and competent in their work (via staff survey). * Increase % of male parents/carers participating in multi-agency meetings (CPPMs) and / or increase % of male carer’s views included in multi- agency assessments. * Multi-agency audits\* will evidence effective multi-agency responses to manage and reduce the risk of harm to young people and adults aged 16   + who are at risk of significant harm to themselves or others.   * Audits will evidence effective multi-agency responses to identify, manage and reduce risk of significant harm to self/others for 16+ age group; informed by National Transitions guidance, local practice guidance will be made available on Practitioner Pages setting out inter-agency roles, responsibilities and processes. * Evidence of joint working between adult and children’s services to ensure parents/carers access the right support at the right time; in relation to access to parental mental health supports and problematic substance use; |

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| 1. Improve **quality of ‘analysis’** within inter-agency assessments through enhanced practitioner knowledge and understanding of **National Practice Model &** use of **assessment tools** to inform interventions. 2. Improve practitioner knowledge, understanding and competence in relation to **CARM processes**; including understanding of dissent / escalation processes. 3. Inter-agency training to enhance knowledge and understanding **of children in legislative context**, use of legal measures / framework for decision making; consider SCRA role in delivering inter-agency Key Processes training. 4. Support the workforce to identify, respond and support children and families in multi-agency processes ‘**when services find it hard to engage’**. | partnership events/multi-agency case file audits\*.   * Enhanced workforce knowledge and understanding of roles and remit of partner agencies evidenced through feedback from GIRFEC sessions and Practitioner Forums. * GIRFEC re-fresh and CP Key Processes training will promote interface of children’s and adult services and impact on practice (evidence via training attendance and follow up evaluation). * Increased participation of adult services in multi-agency planning for children at risk of harm (evidence via audit of IRDs and CPPMs) where adult concerns are identified. * The availability of ‘reflective spaces’ for professionals when ‘stuck’ (note this is an action point from a previous Learning Review); via staff survey. * Staff feedback from training sessions will indicate increased awareness and confidence in using National Practice Model and range of assessment tools to inform assessments and interventions; including: * Pan Lothian approach to chronologies * Recognising & managing risk training; including risk of harmful sexual behaviour. * Assessing males. * Disguised compliance/Families with whom services find it hard to engage * Impact of Parental Substance Use |

**PRORITY 3**

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| **The Child Protection system is effectively resourced, and pressures are recognised and mitigated** | |
| **Our contribution to making this happen** | **How we will measure our progress** |
| 1. Falkirk’s CPC will continue to utilize single agency **Workforce Reports** and **Risk Register** to review workforce pressures, escalation processes and contingency planning and escalate to Chief Officers Group as necessary. 2. Falkirk’s workforce will be appropriately staffed and skilled using a robust   **recruitment and retention strategy**.   1. Ensure support for **staff wellbeing**, building confidence and competence across a valued workforce are prioritised, alongside an understanding of what works, particularly in challenging times. 2. The CPC will engage with relevant services and agencies (including **third sector, independent sector and faith organisations**) to make clear the need for them to have a **designated lead role for child protection** and up to date and readily accessible **child protection guidance** which is widely understood, disseminated and embedded within their organisations. 3. Review effectiveness of existing **Forth Valley Inter-Agency Escalation process** in relation to children in need of care and protection. 4. Develop a service option within Forth Valley for undertaking medicals of child victims, aged 13-15 years, of sexual offences. | * Workforce report(s) will indicate effective supports are in place and risks are mitigated to a level that will not impact service delivery; via scoring of risk in single agency reports and multi-agency risk register. * Practitioners involved in child protection work indicate that they feel supported and safe in their work; via staff survey. * Third sector, independent sector and faith organisations will have a designated lead role for child protection and up to date and readily accessible child protection guidance which is widely understood, disseminated and embedded within their organisations; evidence via SLA/contracts and participation in multi-agency training opportunities. * Staff have knowledge and confidence of how to escalate concerns where significant disagreement occurs between partners in relation to children in need of care and protection; evidence via staff survey. * Reduced % of children requiring to travel unnecessary distances to services in Glasow for medical examination/support. |

**PRIORITY 4**

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| **We will involve children and their families in decision making and service design.** | |
| **Our contribution to making this happen** | **How we will measure our progress** |
| 1. Enhance the participation and **engagement** of children, young people and families in **decision making** and ensure views are included in **design** of child protection services. 2. Ensure **children are listened to and their views included** in decisions which affect their lives. Review how we obtain feedback on child protection processes, how we structure reviews, increase participation, and write children’s plans. 3. Ensure **views of parents/carers** are included in decision making processes and they are provided with opportunities to contribute to developing inter-agency child protection processes. 4. Develop **child-friendly materials** that explain key child protection processes and ensure children are given **information about the planning and decisions** made in a manner appropriate to their age, stage and understanding. 5. Parents/Carers will feel empowered and supported to access the right supports at the right time; including access to **advice, guidance and support** in relation to reduce the impact of **substance use** and **mental health problems.** 6. **Public information and engagement** activity will be undertaken to help raise awareness of how to identify and report child abuse and neglect concerns (in partnership with CPCs Scotland). 7. When services find it hard to engage with families, this will be identified | * Children and parents/carers will report increased satisfaction with levels of engagement (how well they have been listened to and included) in Child Protection Planning Meetings; capture via parent focus groups and multi- agency CPPM records. * Children and parents’/carers’ attendance and views will be clearly recorded within case records and multi-agency meetings. * Evidence of children being offered support to understand processes and advocacy options; via CPPM records/audit/use of viewpoint. * Increased % of parents/carers will report that they were supported to understand key child care and protection processes; via parent/carer survey/CPPM records. * Multi-agency audits will indicate increased effectiveness of work being undertaken to identify, report, manage and reduce risks to children associated with non-engagement/disguised compliance. Reduction in ‘non-engagement’ utilised as a category for child protection registration. * Public information and awareness raising activity will be monitored by the Public Information and Engagement subgroup and evidenced via campaign promotions and engagement via respective media platforms; local and national data via CPCs Scotland. |

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| and a multi-agency plan developed to address and actions/impact recorded. |  |

**PRIORITY 5**

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| **The Child Protection system is continuously evaluated, and quality improvement approaches make an impact** | |
| **Our contribution to making this happen** | **How we will measure our progress** |
| 1. Review our **Self-Evaluation** of the implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection; subject to further scrutiny by Scottish Government, CELCIS and the Care Inspectorate. 2. **Learning Review subgroup** will consider any relevant learning from Learning Reviews in Falkirk and from national findings / external learning reviews undertaken that may present additional learning for inter-agency child protection practice locally. 3. Promote **rights and strength based approaches** to care and risk management through continuous improvement work and public information and engagement activity; via Children’s Rights/UNCRC working group. 4. Improvement and Quality Assurance group will develop a **planned programme of self-evaluation**, utilising the Quality Improvement Framework, including:    * A review of our Safe and Together approach in Falkirk.    * Inter-agency assessment and planning for children subject to child protection registration over 12 months.    * Review of children’s cases subject to CP investigation but name not placed on CP register.    * Improvement work in relation to management and recording of Core | * Improvement and Quality Assurance Group will analyse our child protection data, review the National Minimum Dataset and identify any patterns requiring further scrutiny or improvement work. * Local IT data systems (Liquid Logic) will be updated (as necessary) to enable updated 2023/24 annual Child Protection Statistical Return to Scottish Government, including recording of new areas of child protection registration and sibling data. * Learning from Learning Reviews will be shared across the partnership agencies to embed any necessary changes in practice and to promote good practice identified; evidenced via subgroup records (L&D and Learning Review) and records of workforce participation in, and feedback from, CP Practitioner Forums. * Feedback from agencies and staff involved in audits will indicate our multi- agency systems of self-evaluation are effective; strengthening our continuous improvement work (capture via post audit feedback sessions). * Audits will evidence use of Safe and Together approach in assessment and decision making where domestic abuse is identified as a risk factor. * Increased % of Core Groups held within 4 weeks, levels of attendance by partner agencies and recording of outcomes. |

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| Groups. | * Increased % of de-registration Core groups held following a child’s name being removed from the child protection register. |

**PRIORITY 6**

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| **Multi-agency policy and guidance is reviewed and implemented to deliver best practice** | |
| **Our contribution to making this happen** | **How we will measure our progress** |
| 1. Review and update our **local child protection processes / guidance** to ensure alignment with the National CP Guidance (2021/23) and accessibility via Practitioner Pages. Policy reviews to include: 2. Guidance relating to multi-agency support for disabled children, migrant families, unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficked children 3. Introduce and embed over time a **contextual safeguarding approach** within key inter-agency processes that complements and supports the existing frameworks and guidance. 4. Delivery of a multi-agency **GIRFEC Refresh** of policy and practice across Children’s Services Partnership. 5. Review use of Forth Valley **Inter-Agency Referral Discussion** Guidance and any amendments required to enhance impact. 6. Develop and launch staff guidance to assist knowledge and understanding of the **Scottish Child Interview Model** approach to joint investigative interviewing. 7. Develop and embed **RESPECT programme**; aim to reduce unnecessary criminalization of care experienced children via introduction of ‘Not At Home’ reporting method and alternative child centred responses to low level incidents. | * Our policies and procedures subgroup will review all multi-agency policies and procedures on Practitioner Pages and ensure they are up to date and fit for practice. Scrutiny work will indicate multi-agency responses are effective in protecting children from harm in these circumstances (\*). * Regular multi-agency self-evaluation via Improvement and Quality Assurance group; scrutinising National Minimum Dataset, workforce feedback, learning reviews and findings from self-evaluation exercises. * Falkirk’s has a well-established IRD multi-agency practitioners’ forum, a space for the workforce to discuss what works well and what needs strengthened; evidenced via IRD steering group records. * Records from Falkirk’s IRD steering group will indicate national policy changes are considered and adapted to meet local needs. * Increased availability of IRD records, quality of recordings, agreed actions and clear Interim Safety Planning; measured via IRD Review Group which will indicate areas of good practice and areas that require strengthening. * The introduction of eIRD and Police Scotland national interim vulnerable person’s database allow IT and technologies to harvest data and provide statistics*.* * Reduced % of children reported as ‘missing’ and increased appropriate |

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| 1. Develop and launch the Forth Valley inter-agency **Missing Persons Guidance** and embed this approach in practice across partnership. 2. Re-fresh of existing guidance in relation to **inter-agency response to 16+ age group** at risk of harm and transition planning. 3. Forth Valley **Child Death Review group** will ensure the death of every child and young person is reviewed to an agreed minimum standard in line with National Hub for Reviewing and Learning from Deaths of Children & Young People. | use of ‘not at home’ recording.   * Reduced % of children subject to unnecessary criminalization; via Police Scotland concern reports and attendance by staff at Respect programme. * Self-evaluation will indicate effective multi-agency efforts to assess, manage and reduce risks to young people/adults who pose risk of significant harm to self/others; an Inter-Agency Young Person Support and Protection Pathway / Vulnerable Young Person’s Protocol will be accessible to the workforce. * Child Death Reviews will be required into the life and death of any live born infant aged 22 weeks gestation or more, child or young person up to aged 18, or up to the age of 26 for those who are accommodated or in care. |

# Acronyms:

CPC = Child Protection Committee

IRD = Inter-Agency Referral Discussion GIRFEC = Getting It Right for Every Child CPPM = Child Protection Planning Meeting

CARM = Care Assessment and Risk Management