



East Lothian and Midlothian  
Public Protection Committee



# Staff Newsletter

## May 2025



Welcome to East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee's latest staff newsletter. Our articles contain hyperlinks to connect you to online resources.

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## Message from Keith Mackay, Chair of EMPPC

“The daffodils have come and gone which can only mean that we are well on the way towards the summer months. A bit of sunshine is always good for the soul and raises our spirits.

I can't help but be worried at times when I see the messages that stream into the threads of our lives from a multitude of online and media sources, with so much blame and suspicion leading to negativity and separation. It made me think about how we as a public protection collective, strive to ensure inclusivity and work so hard to ensure a level of kindness in everything we do.

As we move forward into the year, we need to continue to consider this in our aims and targets, to continue to foster a more positive and caring approach, incorporating kindness into our policies, agency responses and the support we offer the most vulnerable individuals in our communities as well as the care of our staff. This is as important a quality for us to deliver on as fairness and equality.



We already do this so well through a number of avenues and work streams such as GIRFEC, The Promise, Safe & Together and our use of the frameworks within the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act. It is however always good to reset from time to time and review our own personal approaches and make sure we are always doing the best we can.

Thank you as always for all the hard work you do across our network. Let us all continue to deliver what I can only describe as a five star service to our communities. Please take the time to read though this newsletter and cascade the information, guidance and learning to staff and colleagues and feedback to us where possible on areas where we can improve or assist further”.

# Public Protection

## National Awareness Days – do they matter?

Hardly a week can go by without an awareness raising day being advertised – if you look hard enough you can find a day for almost anything, including National Lost Sock Day (9<sup>th</sup> May) and Star Wars Day (4<sup>th</sup> May)! However, if we think about national awareness days within a Public Protection context, they do matter as they give an opportunity to bring attention to a specific cause, issue or movement. They can focus on promoting greater education and understanding about topics that can often be misunderstood or overlooked and can help raise awareness of the supports and services that are available for any of us affected by the issue that is being highlighted. Observing an awareness day can also show support and acknowledgement, to enable someone affected by the issue to share experiences and feel heard. At the same time, we need to be careful that we do not bombard people with so much information that we risk losing the messages we are trying to make.

EMPPC is holding a development session later in May when we are going to look at the important messages we want to give – the most obvious one you will often hear from us is that Public Protection is everyone's responsibility and business, as we all have a right to be safe and protected from harm and abuse. Take a look at our [vision and values](#), which say more about how we work together to meet that shared responsibility.

An important date for your calendar this month is National Hoarding Awareness Week – look out for more information about this and read our Spotlight on Hoarding at the end of this newsletter.



# Public Protection

## Supreme Court Ruling – what is it all about?

We have all heard about the Supreme Court ruling last month from the [media](#), and the extreme and opposing views expressed by the campaigners. But do you know what it is about? This was an appeal in response to the definition of the term ‘woman’ in the Scottish legislation and statutory guidance that was created to increase the representation of women on public boards in Scotland. The Supreme Court unanimously held that the terms ‘man’, ‘woman’ and ‘sex’ in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex. Read this [summary](#) to learn more about the Court’s decision, and the [full judgement here](#).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is Britain’s regulator which enforces the Human Rights Act 2010 to safeguard everyone’s right to fairness, dignity and respect. Following the judgement they said “Our submission to the Court highlighted significant problems with the practical application of a definition of ‘sex’ which allowed those who have acquired a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) to be treated as their certified sex in the Equality Act. These inconsistencies impaired the proper functioning of the Act and risked jeopardising the rights and interests of women and same-sex attracted people”.

“This judgment resolves the difficulties we highlighted in our submission to the court and in our advice to the former Minister for Women and Equalities more than two years ago. These include the challenges faced by those seeking to maintain single-sex spaces, and the rights of same-sex attracted persons to form associations”

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued an [interim update](#) on the practical implications of the judgement, which highlights the main consequences of the judgement. Organisations are now looking at how they put the law into practice in relation to their use and provision of spaces and membership of associations.

Everyone in the UK is protected from discrimination, harassment and victimisation under the Equality Act 2010. We will all have at least one of the following protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Watch this [brief video](#) from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to learn more about what the Act does.

## Hello to Laurence Rockey, Chief Executive of East Lothian Council



Welcome to Laurence Rockey, who joined East Lothian as Chief Executive in April. He will co-chair the Critical Services Oversight Group along with Grace Vickers, his counterpart in Midlothian.

CSOG, as it is known, provides the strategic leadership, scrutiny, governance and direction to EMPPC and meets every three months. It also keeps an overview of the work taking place locally in relation to wider public protection matters - (drug and alcohol related harm, suicide prevention and MAPPA (Multi agency Public Protection Arrangements)).

Laurence attended his first CSOG two days into post. Reflecting on this, Laurence said “I was impressed to hear about the breadth and quality of work that staff and volunteers do every day in their work to protect and support vulnerable children and young people in East Lothian. I am aware of the challenging environment of this work – with an increasingly challenging financial climate, increased demand for services and the complex nature of this work.

At my first CSOG meeting I was struck by the collaboration of different agencies and shared leadership with Midlothian colleagues, and I look forward to contributing to that from an East Lothian perspective.

I will also work with my CSOG colleagues to make sure that we share our experiences and concerns in national agendas and debates about the future of health and social care services.

I will be relying on my colleagues as I learn more about our business around Public Protection, from a leadership perspective through the work of CSOG and EMPPC. I will also look forward to hearing from staff about their work when I am out and about in different settings across East Lothian”.

Laurence was Director of the Scotland Office from November 2020. Prior to this, Laurence was the Head of Strategy and Communications at the City of Edinburgh Council. There, he had responsibilities for corporate strategy, council wide change and performance, and communications. He has also held a number of senior civil service roles in the UK Government particularly around the devolution agenda.

# Training update

Our training is free for staff and volunteers who work in East Lothian or Midlothian. You can find information about what we offer on our Learning and Development page of our [website](#).

## **New Learning and Development Strategy now published!**

At our EMPPC meeting in May we approved our new Learning and Practice Development Strategy for 2025-27. You can read more about our key priorities [here](#).

## **Why do our training courses have a Level attached to them and what does this mean?**



When we send out a flyer advertising a training course, you will see that we are now describing the course as either level 1, 2, 3 or 4. This describes the workforce type that the course is aimed at – level 1 is the wider workforce, where everyone has a responsibility to have a basic level awareness of Child Protection, Adult Support and Protection and Gender- Based Violence. Level 2 courses are for the General Workforce, Level 3 for the Specific Workforce and Level 4 for the Intensive Workforce. Do you know how your role would be described?

**Everyone has a responsibility** to find out what Level their role comes under, including your manager, so use our [ready reckoner](#) to check this out easily and quickly. If you are not sure, speak to your line manager.

# Training update



Look out for our new **External Training Events Bulletin** that we will issue every three weeks – the bulletin includes a brief overview of the event and links to register to attend. All events that we advertise are free to attend.



## Online Briefing on Neglect – 10am

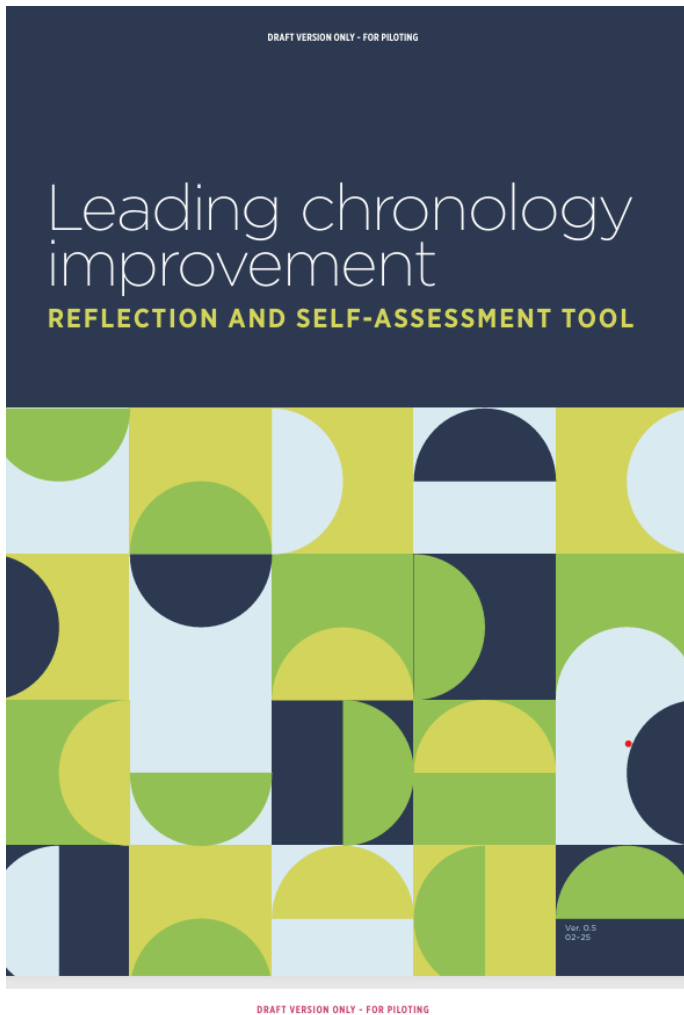
This is a must! Carla Thomas brings 40 years of Social Work experience and research knowledge to life in two hours when she will speak about neglect, including the definition, the impact on a child in terms of their development, needs and lived experience – with some useful insights into what works and what we should think about when supporting a family where neglect features. Also check out our [Risk of Neglect Toolkit](#).



And another for your calendar – come along to our **Online Briefing on Commercial Sexual Exploitation** at **15:30** for an hour. Everyone needs to hear Linda Thomson, National Co-ordinator of the Women's Support Project, as there are so many myths and assumptions about this issue to debunk. Also check out our [Good Practice Guidance on Identifying and Responding to Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#).

If you need the MS Teams link to join either of these events, contact [emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk)

# Adult Support and Protection



## Chronologies and The Voice of the Adult

A chronology is useful timeline of events that any service can use to better inform their assessments. It helps to establish patterns of worsening or improving risk, and the analysis informs assessments which helps us decide how to manage risks. Research and inspections indicate that involving the person whose life events are captured in the chronology is always an area for improvement.

The Care Inspectorate's [Practice guide to chronologies](#) states that a chronology is not in end in itself but a working tool which promotes engagement with people who use services. One of the key elements in compiling a chronology is "taking account of the perspective of the child or adult at the centre – that is, understanding the significance of events for them." Building a chronology can involve the adult reflecting on the impact of life events, both positive and negative, and needs to happen in a trauma-informed way. Getting the perspective of the person better informs the plan for support (so if the person does not know how to prevent harm, and is getting harmed repeatedly, we know the likelihood of harm is greater than for someone who can prevent harm).

The [Pan Lothian Partnership templates and guides](#) can be used by anyone to better support their recording of chronologies and are important in our Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection work.

IRISS has developed a [reflection and self-assessment tool](#) to help improve chronology practice. It poses questions and prompts and can be used in supervision to help reflect on the quality of chronologies.

Take a read of our [Spotlight on Chronologies](#) which featured in a previous newsletter.

# Adult Support and Protection



## ASpire 2025: Financial harm affecting older adults (webinar)

You can catch up on the [latest ASpire webinar](#) which focused on what is known about and how to prevent the financial harm of older adults.

The most cited definition of financial abuse is from the World Health Organization which describes it as ‘The illegal or improper exploitation or use of funds or other resources of the older person.’ This can include:

- scams (such as cold callers charging for work never done).
- Powers of attorney using access to money for their and not the older adult’s benefit.
- [Predatory marriage.](#)

Scams and financial abuse targeting older adults are common and [vastly under-reported](#). An older adult's vulnerability to financial scams can stem from social, emotional, and cognitive problems.

Go to 6 minutes to hear about a review in Highland about the abuse of Power of Attorney position relating to three brothers. You can also read the [report of the McCulloch Review](#).

At 26 minutes you can hear Dr Melanie Durowse from Dundee University speak about ‘Financial harm, Adult Protection and decision-making’.

At 1 hour 52 minutes Fiona Brown, Public Guardian, speaks about the role of the Office of the Public Guardian in relation to financial harm affecting older adults.

[Trading Standards Scotland](#) has some useful information about the most common types of scams, how to avoid them and what to do if you think you or someone you know has been a victim.

Check out our [7-minute briefing on protecting adults from financial harm](#).

# Adult Support and Protection

## Independent

**advocacy** in Adult Support and Protection is a service which seeks to magnify the voice of the adult. Independent advocacy is about speaking up for, and standing alongside individuals or groups, and not being influenced by the views of others.



Iriss (The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services) has produced '[Best Practice for Effective Access and Involvement of Independent Advocacy for an Adult in Adult Support and Protection Processes](#)' guidance.

This will be helpful for any professional involved in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences. It explains the different types of advocacy and how it can promote a trauma informed way of working by having someone who can help the adult feel safer and give choices about how to participate.

Supporting Effective Participation of the Adult in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences

East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee

 [www.emppc.co.uk](http://www.emppc.co.uk)

We have produced guidance on [Supporting Effective Participation of the Adult in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences](#) which we adapted from national guidance. The national guidance was informed by the views of people with lived experience of Adult Support and Protection, and helps you think about how you can support an adult's participation before, during and after a Case Conference.

## National Adult Support and Protection Day 2025 – Focus on Self-Harm

We held another successful and well received learning event to recognise Adult Support and Protection Day on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025. 114 staff attended our on-line learning event entitled ‘Adult Support and Protection and Self-harm’. We were keen to bring the voice of lived experience to this event, and we heard a moving input from Gregor Johnstone, Learning Lead in Epione Training and Consultancy. He spoke powerfully about his experience of trauma, how that impacted on him and how he learned to move forward with his life.

Gregor introduced us to the [compass of shame](#), a concept developed over 30 years ago, where it identifies four different types of human responses in an attempt to cope with shame. He also told us about [Paul Gilbert’s model of systems to manage emotions](#), and how trauma survivors can sometimes turn to drugs or alcohol in an attempt to create a ‘soothing system’ and deal with emotional threats of rejection, humiliation and harm. High levels of shame are associated with a number of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety and self-harm. Gregor spoke about the power of healing through having a trusted person who showed compassion, and who could spend time doing ordinary things “I don’t remember specific interventions, I felt listened to, heard and she came along side me.....the simple act of cooking with me, we were two humans collaborating....that one worker’s care and compassion made a difference”. He further said, “the antidote to shame is self-compassion”. Read more about the value of [trusting relationships here](#).

We also had an overview of the services provided by Self Harm Network Scotland and an interesting taster session on self-harm awareness from Darren Boyd and Frankee Fouin from the Self Harm Network Scotland. Watch this [three-minute video](#) which talks about self-harm and the functions it serves. The Self-Harm Network also shares some [powerful recovery stories](#), recognising that sharing can be an important part of the recovery and is an empowering part of their work.

# Child Protection

## Keeping children safe in Scotland

Guides for younger children, young people and parents and carers

The Scottish Government has created a new website to provide information about keeping younger children and young people safe in Scotland. Developed with the help of children and young people it uses straightforward language, with animations and audio bites, to explain what Child Protection is. It includes separate sections for children, young people and parents or carers who are involved in Child Protection processes – please use these in your work:

[Child Protection Resources](#)



Younger Children



Young People



Parents and Carers



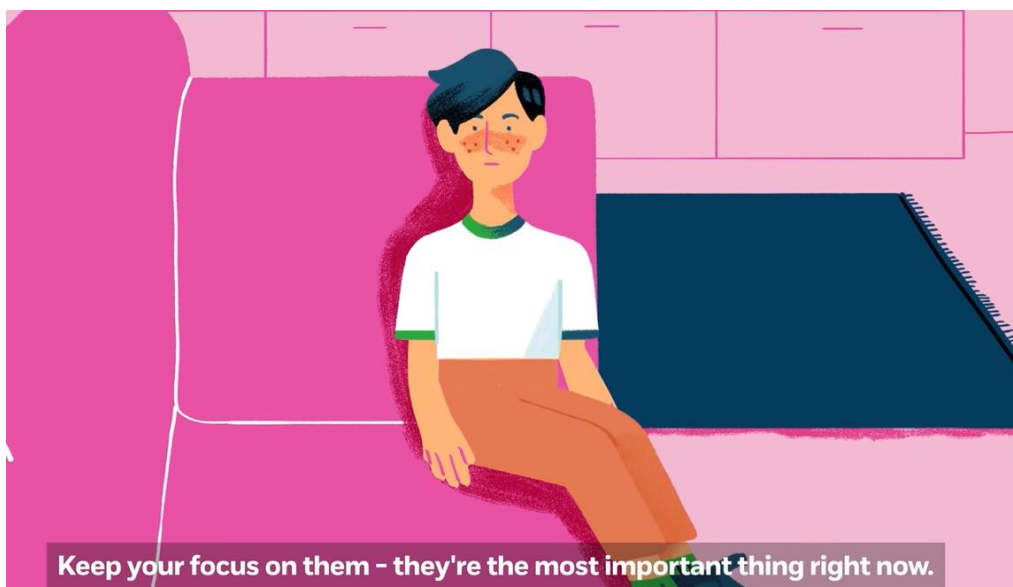
The charity Future Men has released a podcast looking at how to engage fathers in safeguarding practice and involve them in support for children and young people. The episode explores current research, engagement strategies and the impact this can have on children, families and communities.

## NSPCC 'Learning'

The NSPCC has published a news story to help parents and carers learn more about **artificial intelligence** (AI) content and tools. We are all increasingly coming across and using AI, whether it is a chat bot to get support and advice quickly or AI tools such as ChatGPT to make creative content. Along with that increased use is increased risks of inappropriate content, bullying and sexual abuse through the misuse of content generators to create lifelike images.

[Read more](#) about the top tips to support children to use AI safely:

- Talk about where AI is being used.
- Remind young people not everything online is real.
- Discuss misuse of generative AI including how to [report and remove](#) a sexual image or video that has been created.
- Remind them to check their sources are reliable.
- Signpost them to safe sources of health and wellbeing advice [Healthy Respect](#) and [Childline](#).
- Make sure they know where to go for help.



Watch this [short video](#) from NSPCC Learning on Responding to a Child's Disclosure of Abuse – it is never easy knowing what to do but this has key hints and tips. A must watch for everyone.

# Child Protection



## Parental Ill Mental Health and Child Protection

Mental health is a broad term that covers many complex diagnoses and symptoms. Parental mental health problems are not in themselves a child safeguarding concern. However, a parent with poor mental health can sometimes struggle with providing safe and loving care for their children without the right support. The NSPCC briefing [Parents with a mental health problem: learning from case reviews](#) summarises key issues and learning from improved practice around parental mental health and child protection.

Key issues included:

- Lack of understanding about mental health and diagnosis.
- Responding to disclosures of thoughts or threats to harm.
- Not considering mental health in the context of other issues.
- Lack of understanding of the impact of parental behaviour on the child.

Learning points for improving practice emphasises the need for:

- Services to recognise how mental health affects parenting capacity.
- Engaging with the family's support network to gain a fuller picture.
- Understanding the lived experiences of the child. A child should not be seen as a “protective factor” in the treatment of a parent with a mental health problem, as this does not sufficiently recognise the child's needs or safety.
- Explore parental history and background and have the confidence to ask mental health professionals about diagnosis, medication, behaviour and chances of recovery.
- Professional question and challenge. Working with a family with complex and emotional issues may impact the decisions and judgments made by professionals. Professionals should be supported by, and be able to discuss the case with, supervisors.
- Assessment and visits – viewing an assessment as a shared task between children's social workers and adult mental health practitioners.
- Information recording and sharing - Adult services should apply a “think family” approach and check whether the person they are supporting has children.

# Child Protection

The logo for the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse features a colorful, abstract geometric pattern in shades of blue, purple, and green. The text "Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse" is written in white, sans-serif font over the pattern.

Centre of  
expertise  
on child  
sexual abuse



We conservatively estimate that **one in 10 children** experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16 in England and Wales.

*(Karsna and Kelly, 2021)*

The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse (CSA Centre) has published a report [on child sexual abuse in the UK](#). This report is essential reading for all of us, as it says “Most children do not tell anyone about sexual abuse at the time. All adults need be alert and responsive to concerns. Anyone working with children must be confident in spotting the signs and indicators of child sexual abuse.”

The report summarises key research and statistics about child sexual abuse along with some helpful resources to support parents and professionals working with children. Key messages include:

- Child sexual abuse is more common than most people think.
- More children are sexually abused than are ever identified or responded to.
- Children are most often sexually abused by someone they know and trust. People who abuse come from all walks of life, are not readily distinguishable and sometimes are still children themselves.
- Any child can be sexually abused, but some children are more vulnerable to this abuse than others. Read more about the increased risks for children who have been neglected and who experience other forms of childhood abuse, and children with disabilities.
- The experience and impacts of sexual abuse are different for every child.

You can learn more here about [protecting children from sexual abuse](#).

# Violence Against Women and Girls



**Exposed** is a joint campaign between Amina and the Revenge Porn Helpline focused on intimate image abuse. Intimate image abuse is the public sharing of intimate images (including nude, partially nude or sexual) without consent. The campaign aims to educate people about how this abuse affects Muslim and Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) women, whose experiences may differ from the general understanding of intimate image abuse.

**Exposed** looks to advocate for legal reform as the current law in Scotland only considers intimate image abuse to be images or videos of a sexual nature. This does not include pictures of women without hijab, or with uncovered arms or legs. These images may seem harmless or make you wonder, 'what is the big deal?' However, sharing them without consent can have serious consequences for these women, often leading to honour-based abuse or even forced marriage.

Watch this short [animation](#) and read the [stories](#) of three Muslim/BME women who have been victims of intimate image abuse – through the case studies you can learn about how intimate image abuse is linked to forced marriage, honour-based abuse and victim blaming, all not addressed by current legislation.

[How to report intimate image abuse](#)

## Choose Love, Not Coercion: Feel Truly Valued

Read the [latest blog](#) from the Safe & Together Institute which focuses on perpetrator behaviour in a coercively controlling relationship – Ruth Reymundo Mandel, the co-owner of the Safe & Together Institute talks about the self-defeating cycle of control and its impact on long-term relationships.

# Violence Against Women and Girls



**Action against stalking** has published a report called [Stalking as a Public health Issue: Healthcare Professionals Spotting the Signs of Stalking](#).

They made Freedom of Information Requests to all NHS Boards to find out if there are any policies or protocols for staff if any patient discloses they are a victim or perpetrator of stalking. You can read NHS Lothian's response [here](#). The report highlighted the need for NHS Scotland to establish a standalone anti-stalking policy to better protect staff, patients, volunteers and visitors which can then be embedded by all NHS Boards.

Action against stalking report that 11% of adults in Scotland have experienced stalking behaviours, with women and people under the age of 25 most likely to experience stalking. Stalking can have serious effects on mental and emotional health.

Stalking behaviours can be identified by FOUR characteristics – **F**ixated, **O**bsessive, **U**nwanted and **R**epeated Behaviours, which can take place online, in person, or both. As a course of conduct designed to elicit fear and alarm, stalking is a criminal offence.

Action against stalking provides [throughcare support](#) through the creation and implementation of the Victim Impact Box which allows their Throughcare Support Team to support victims through workbooks designed to stop the stalker and help victims take back control of their lives.

Have you watched **Netflix's Adolescence** yet? It is one of the most talked about programmes this year so far, generating a lot of debate when there were calls for this to become part of school curriculums. Read this short article from Alicia Drummond, Therapist and Founder of The Wellbeing Hub who asks [What can we as parents and educators learn from the series and how do we better support our young people?](#)

# Violence Against Women and Girls

**WATCH  
THIS!**

A new chapter

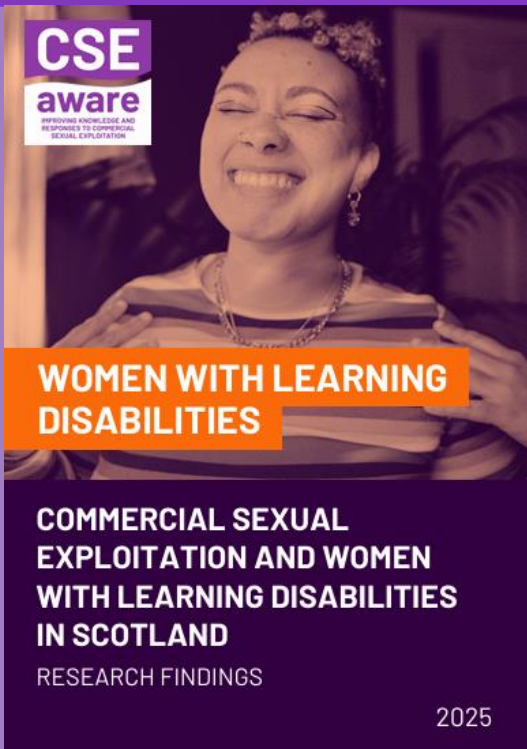


A quick watch lasting just over three minutes, this [new animation](#) from One Parent Families Scotland highlights the diverse paths to single parenthood, celebrates the resilience and pride of single parents, and addresses the misconceptions many lone parents face. There are some strong messages for all of us to help write a ‘new chapter’ for single parents by developing policies and approaches that better support single parent societies, including fairer social security, affordable childcare, secure housing, financial stability and greater respect. We know that women are disproportionately affected as single parent families make up 25% of all families in Scotland, and 92% are headed by women. [One Parent Families Scotland](#) has lots of support and advice for all one parent families, including when [separating](#).

## UK Government Emergency Alerts Guidance

Think back to the alerts we all got on our mobile phones in January warning us about Storm Éowyn – a loud, siren-like sound with a screen message and vibration. There are potential safety risks to people who are experiencing domestic or other forms of abuse, and where they have a device that they keep hidden from a perpetrator. The UK government has updated its [online guidance](#) on how to opt out of emergency alerts and occasional operator tests. <sup>17</sup>

# Violence Against Women and Girls



Women with learning disabilities are at increased risk of being pushed into selling or exchanging sex. [This report from CSE aware](#) presents findings from small scale research undertaken involving staff working in services supporting women with learning disabilities, and women who are involved in commercial sexual exploitation.

The report identified that risk factors are closely linked to the systematic exclusion, structural barriers and vulnerabilities that women face throughout their lifetime because of their learning disability. A lack of education and information on sexual wellbeing and relationships means women with a learning disability may not understand what constitutes a healthy relationship, what exploitation can look like and how to express and withdraw consent. Stereotypes about women with learning disabilities can create risks and lead to exploitation cases being minimised or left unaddressed. The report talks about the ‘push factors’ that can include a search for affection and company, a response to social isolation. The flip side of this can then be perpetrators targeting women because of their perceived isolation and vulnerability.

There are some very strong messages for all of us about the challenges women face when coming forward about their experiences of selling sex and getting support. The report identifies nine barriers, some of which are specific to the context of selling or exchanging sex, while others are applicable to the disclosure of any form of abuse.

“Workers expressed their own challenges and concerns when providing support and hinted at missed opportunities for collaboration between Learning Disability and Gender Based Violence services. Without better joint efforts, women will continue falling between the cracks. These findings are also an urgent call to action for frontline services to increase their staff’s skills and confidence in working with individuals with learning disabilities as well as improving their understanding and practice around Commercial Sexual Exploitation”

## What is Hoarding?

Hoarding is a recognised mental illness but has only been classified as a medical condition since 2017. It is when someone “acquires an excessive number of items and stores them in a chaotic manner, usually resulting in unmanageable amounts of clutter. The items can be of little or no monetary value” (NHS definition). It is distinct from collecting and from general clutter or mess. It becomes a significant problem when it interferes with everyday living and affects the quality of life of the person or their family. Historically, hoarding has been viewed as a ‘lifestyle choice’. However, it is important to recognise that hoarding is a diagnosable mental condition in its own right.

The most common type of hoarding can involve a single type of object like newspapers or a mixture of items such as clothes, food, containers and tools.

## How common is it?

Research indicates that between 2% and 5% of the UK population show significant levels of hoarding, making hoarding behaviours more common than people might think - up to 7.3 million people. There could be over 2,500 people in East Lothian and 2,000 people in Midlothian with a hoarding problem.

Hoarding is found across all ages, ethnicities, genders and religions, challenging stereotypes that it is generally associated with older people.

## Why is Hoarding a Public Protection issue?

Hoarding has a significant impact on the people living with and around the person, not just the person themselves, making it a Public Protection issue. There can be increased risk of house fire, self-care and health issues due to the unsanitary, infested environment and risk of trips and falls.

Inside hoarding homes, cultural norms of family life are squeezed out as parents become entrenched in the flow and placement of objects. Where severe hoarding exists, families rarely have space for shared activities, or they are forced to combine spaces inappropriately - such as when an older child has to sleep in the same bed as a parent. Sometimes children are forced to live in one space that serves multiple functions. A vacant spot on a couch is used for sleeping, doing homework, watching television, and eating.

Children may think that if they talk about their family situation, they could lose their parents and homes. Early in life, children of hoarders are confused by their parents' behaviour. Parents can show clear signs of devotion, especially in areas that do not compromise hoarding. However, it can reduce their access to a functioning physical home where they can play, learn and relax. And they internalise the message that their parent's objects are more important than they are.

“As objects invade spaces in homes, they block usual pathways to intimacy. Relationships occur in a vacant spot on a couch and the remaining edge of a table. In cases where only one parent is a hoarder, the non-hoarding parent runs the risk of eventually becoming disabled in one way or another” ([Chabaud, 2011](#))

### Why do people hoard?

The backstory of someone who hoards can be complex and not fully known. Whilst the adult might be able to link the start of their hoarding to a traumatic period in their life, including abuse or bullying, loss, stress or isolation, it does not follow that someone who has such experiences will go on to become a hoarder. Research identifies that people growing up in a chaotic and cluttered environment might experience hoarding tendencies at a later stage. Lack of financial security in childhood may lead to someone feeling an increased need to accumulate items in later life. Some studies suggest there are some genetic factors, but there is a complex interaction of different factors that may come into play.

## What is the impact of hoarding?

Feelings of fear, shame and embarrassment can prevent someone from seeking and accepting help. It is important to understand the perspective of the individual and the importance they place on the items they hoard – to us, the items hoarded might look like ‘rubbish’ but they will be significant to the person.

The impact of hoarding can be far reaching. Loneliness can be further exacerbated by keeping a distance from others to prevent someone knowing about the situation. Money problems and housing problems can develop if someone cannot keep on top of letters and bills, or get repairs done to the home. In extreme cases, someone can physically be at risk if they cannot get out of the home quickly in a fire.

However, only about 5% of people who have a hoarding problem come to the attention of professionals.

## What is the Clutter Image Rating Scale?

People have very different ideas about what it means to have a cluttered home, and no two homes look exactly alike. The [Clutter Image Rating Scale](#) is a rising pictorial scale of nine photos showing clutter in three rooms: the living room, bedroom and kitchen, and is an internationally recognised assessment tool.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

### How can we help someone who hoards?

- Learn more about the stories behind hoarding directly from those who hoard – to help your understanding which in turn can help your response.
- Be aware of how the person may react – listen to what the person says and understand the emotions that might be behind their words and behaviours.
- Understand how much insight the adult has about their hoarding – they may not share your concerns.
- Assess the level of severity – identifying and classifying hoarding behaviour can be subjective and what it means may vary from person to person. The layout of each home is different, and items may be stored at different levels within a room. Use the Clutter Image Rating Scale to measure the level of clutter in the home.
- Recognise that responding to hoarding is not a quick fix – someone who has developed a hoarding problem has built this up and sustained this over time. Doing a deep clean will not fix the issue, rather can make things worse. Whilst the person needs to be safe in their home, which involves the need to support removal of some of the clutter to do so, this needs to be done sensitively and involving the adult.
- Focus on relationship-based practice. Building a relationship over time, going at the adult's pace, and being prepared to provide longer-term support are key elements.
- Remember that Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection frameworks exist to protect children and adults who are at risk of harm. Hoarding is a type of harm that can lead to the need to use those frameworks to support and protect the most vulnerable in our communities.

## Where can I learn more?

### Hear the stories of people who have lived experience of hoarding

[I'm a hoarder - it's my mess and it's who I am](#)

[Clare shares her experience of hoarding disorder to help raise awareness](#)

[Keith's story - a personal and touching film about hoarding](#)

### Learn more about the impact on children

[The significance of growing up in a hoarded home](#)

[The hidden lives of children of hoarders](#)

[I just didn't see mess](#)

[Hoarding and Families - the stuff was more important than me](#)

### Useful websites

<https://hoardinguk.org/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/hoarding-disorder/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/hoarding/about-hoarding/>

<https://hoarding.support/>

### Procedures

If you are concerned that a child or adult is at risk as a result of hoarding, refer to the relevant Child Protection or Adult Support and Protection Procedures.

[Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures](#)

[EMPPC Multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Procedures](#)

# Contact us

Our Lead Officers support the work of EMPPC and you can contact them for more information about anything in this newsletter, or about their role:

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What would you like to see in a future newsletter?

Please get in touch with us at

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Find out more about us at

[emppc.gov.uk](http://emppc.gov.uk)