



East Lothian and Midlothian
Public Protection Committee



Annual Report 2024-2025



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Foreword from the Chair

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) Annual Report for 2024/25.

This report as with previous years outlines and summarises our main and key activities carried out by our multi agency partnership over the past year and the achievements and outcomes that have come from this.

The last year has been an incredibly busy year for the staff across our wide public protection partnership and the annual report is a celebration of the hard work and achievements gained. I think that it describes the journey that the committee is on with identifying key actions for our Business Plan and whilst ensuring we achieve these targets we are also targeting learning and development and how as a collective we have listened, reviewed and appraised all elements of our business to better ourselves and our outcomes.

The continued evolution of our sub group structure has in my opinion strengthened our ability to deliver on public protection and I can see our progress from the work of the Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection Sub Groups on mapping how we record and use the voice and lived experience of both children and vulnerable adults as well as staff. This will shape our process, procedures and policies going forward. It is a fundamental component on our ongoing performance for both outcomes for those we serve but also increasing the support we give to staff.

Our new EMPPC website is a great positive outcome from the last year and hopefully as we work on better communication with the communities and staff we serve, this website will further enhance the service we offer across the broad spectrum of public protection.

As always I would like to thank all the members of the Committee and associated subgroups for their continuing support and commitment going forward to the coming year and wish to highlight our appreciation to all the staff across all agencies who so diligently and professionally work towards protecting the people in and across our communities in East Lothian and Midlothian.

I look forward to another successful year ahead.

Keith Mackay
Independent Chair, East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee

Introduction

An annual report of the work of East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee has been produced since it was first established in 2014. Although we are required under national guidance to only prepare an annual report for Child Protection¹ and under national legislation a biennial report for Adult Support and Protection² we believe that it is important to bring all the elements of our areas of activity into one report on an annual basis. By providing a high-level overview of all the areas of our business we aim to illustrate their connectivity within the context of a lifespan approach.

This report provides the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of our partnership working in East Lothian and Midlothian and celebrate our achievements in the year. We also use this opportunity to reflect on the challenges and operating context in this complex area of service delivery, and how we have worked together to respond to, and overcome these.

This report covers the period between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025.

The report is set out as follows:

Section 1 sets out our Public Protection partnership structure and arrangements in the year.

Section 2 reports on our work in the year, detailing how we fulfilled our responsibilities as a Committee, under the themes and priorities of our Business Plan.

Section 3 provides an overview of data and performance information. Please note that some of the data presented refers to reported crimes involving gender-based violence, which may be distressing; readers are encouraged to take care of their emotional well-being while engaging with this material.

Section 4 looks forward to our priorities in the coming year.

¹ [Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

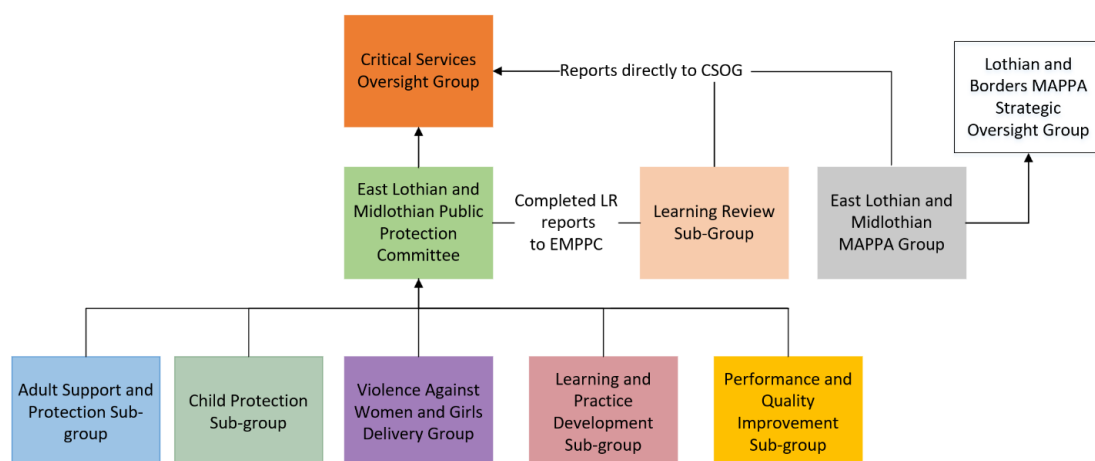
² [The Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007: Guidance For Adult Protection Committees \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Section 1 - Strategic arrangements for Public Protection in East Lothian and Midlothian

1.1 Governance Arrangements

Through the **Critical Services Oversight Group (CSOG)**, the Chief Officers of our core partners (Councils, NHS and Police) provide strategic leadership, scrutiny, governance and direction to EMPPC. In the year, CSOG continued to be co-chaired by Monica Patterson, (now retired) Chief Executive of East Lothian Council and Grace Vickers, Chief Executive of Midlothian Council.

The **East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) ('the Committee')** is the local strategic partnership that is responsible for the overview of policy and practice in relation to Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls. The primary aim of the Committee is to provide leadership and strategic oversight of Public Protection activity and performance across East Lothian and Midlothian. The reporting arrangements are shown below. The Committee is chaired by Keith Mackay who works independently.



In the year, it discharged its functions through the following Sub-groups, all of which are chaired by Committee members:

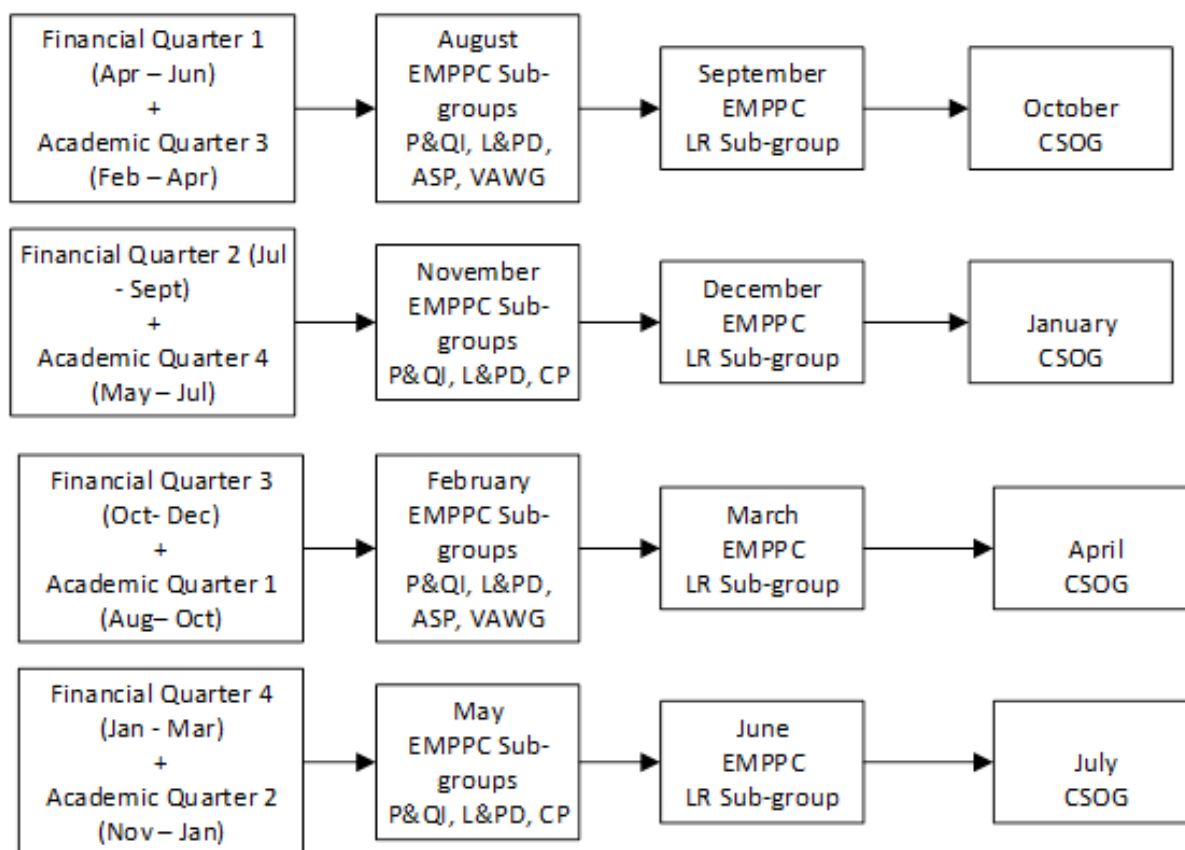
- Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group (P&QI Sub-group) - responsible for the oversight and governance of the performance framework and quality assurance arrangements. This Sub-group met quarterly. It was chaired by Joan Tranent, Chief Officer, Children's Services, Communities and Partnerships/Chief Social Work Officer, Midlothian Council, until her retirement in September 2024. The November 2024 meeting was chaired by Keith Mackay and February 2025 by Lindsey Byrne, Head of Children's Services/Chief Social Work Officer, East Lothian Council.
- Learning and Development Sub-group (L&PD Sub-group) - responsible for the development and delivery of the EMPPC Multi-agency Learning and Development Strategy. This Sub-group met quarterly. Fiona Stratton, Chief Nurse, Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership chaired this Sub-group.

- Learning Review Sub-group (LR Sub-group) - responsible for the oversight of progress of Learning Reviews undertaken in relation to Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection, development and review of the progress of action plans arising from Learning Reviews and oversight of local Learning Review arrangements. This Sub-group met quarterly. Keith Mackay chaired this Sub-group.
- Adult Support and Protection Sub-group (ASP Sub-group) - supporting the consideration of specific topics and emerging issues relevant to Adult Support and Protection and consider their relevance for local practice and policy. This Sub-group met twice in the year. Keith Mackay chaired this Sub-group.
- Child Protection Sub-group (CP Sub-group) - supporting the consideration of specific topics and emerging issues relevant to Child Protection and consider their relevance for local practice and policy. This Sub-group met twice in the year. Keith Mackay chaired this Sub-group.
- Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group (VAWG DG) - responsible for supporting the delivery of the Equally Safe Strategy and overview of local delivery of services. This Sub-group met twice in the year. Brian Sutherland, Detective Chief Inspector, Police Scotland chaired this Sub-group.
- East Lothian and Midlothian MAPPA Group (EMMG) - responsible for ensuring that the statutory responsibilities placed on local partner agencies for the assessment and management of risk posed by offenders subject to MAPPA are discharged effectively. This Group is not a Sub-group of EMPPC but is an important aspect of our Public Protection partnership arrangements and reports directly to CSOG. It met twice in the year. Lindsey Byrne, Head of Children's Services/Chief Social Work Officer, East Lothian Council chaired this Sub-group.

In the year all our Committee and Sub-group meetings took place online.

1.2 Reporting Cycle of EMPPC

Our Committee structure runs on the basis of quarterly reporting cycles, which for the reporting year was as shown below. The reporting of data and performance follows financial quarters other than for Child Protection which follows academic quarters. We believe that we manage the lag in time between the reporting period of the Child Protection Minimum Dataset and the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group well. We have a well-established multi-agency Child Protection Minimum Dataset Sub-group which meets in advance of the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group to review the data in depth, identify and plan for any improvement or further activity needed, which can progress at the earliest opportunity.



1.3 EMPPC Vision

Everyone has a right to be safe and protected from harm and abuse. We will protect our babies, children, young people and adults in East Lothian and Midlothian by working together and upholding our values.

Our core values of respect, integrity and commitment underpin our work in supporting and protecting all people who may be at risk of harm in our communities.

1.4 Our Values

Respect	Integrity	Commitment
<p>For anyone who needs protection and support in all that we do.</p> <p>The contribution that the representative brings to the partnership on behalf of their agency/organisation.</p> <p>The fact that the partners have different responsibilities</p>	<p>Being honest and trustworthy in our partnership working.</p> <p>Having strong moral principles and doing ‘the right thing’.</p> <p>Following through on agreed commitments and being accountable and responsible for the actions.</p>	<p>To improvement in our work with anyone who needs protection and support.</p> <p>Being prepared for and proactive in the work of EMPPC.</p> <p>Engaging and participating to drive forward the work of EMPPC.</p>

and constraints within their own organisation.	Encourage and respect challenge in our partnership working.	Listening to and acting on the views of the people we work with.
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1.5 East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Office

The East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Office (EMPPO) supports the delivery of the operational and strategic objectives and priorities of the EMPPC and its Sub-groups.

The EMPPO is jointly funded by East Lothian and Midlothian Councils, Police Scotland and NHS (Health and Social Care Partnerships in East Lothian and Midlothian). Its operational base is the Brunton Hall, Musselburgh. There are eight staff within the EMPPO who work alongside statutory and third sector partners across East Lothian and Midlothian to deliver the core functions of EMPPO as noted above:

- Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer (FTE)
- Business Support Assistant (18 hours per week)
- Child Protection Lead Officer (FTE)
- Co-ordinator for Protecting Women and Girls Against Violence (FTE)
- Learning and Development Officer (16 hours per week)
- Marac Co-ordinator (FTE)
- Public Protection Manager (FTE)
- Senior Business Support Administrator (32 hours per week)

1.6 EMPPC Business Plan

Our Business Plan for the year was structured around five priorities:

- We will continue to strengthen our leadership arrangements in Public Protection.
- We will provide and support the implementation of multi-agency procedures and guidance for staff working in Public Protection.
- We will continue to develop our performance framework and approach to quality improvement.
- We will promote a learning culture by providing staff with multi-agency learning and development opportunities in Public Protection.
- We will raise awareness of Public Protection through communications and engagement with staff and communities.

Section 2 – Report of Progress on the delivery of our Business Plan

2.1 We will continue to strengthen our leadership arrangements in Public Protection – what we achieved

EMPPC Terms of Reference

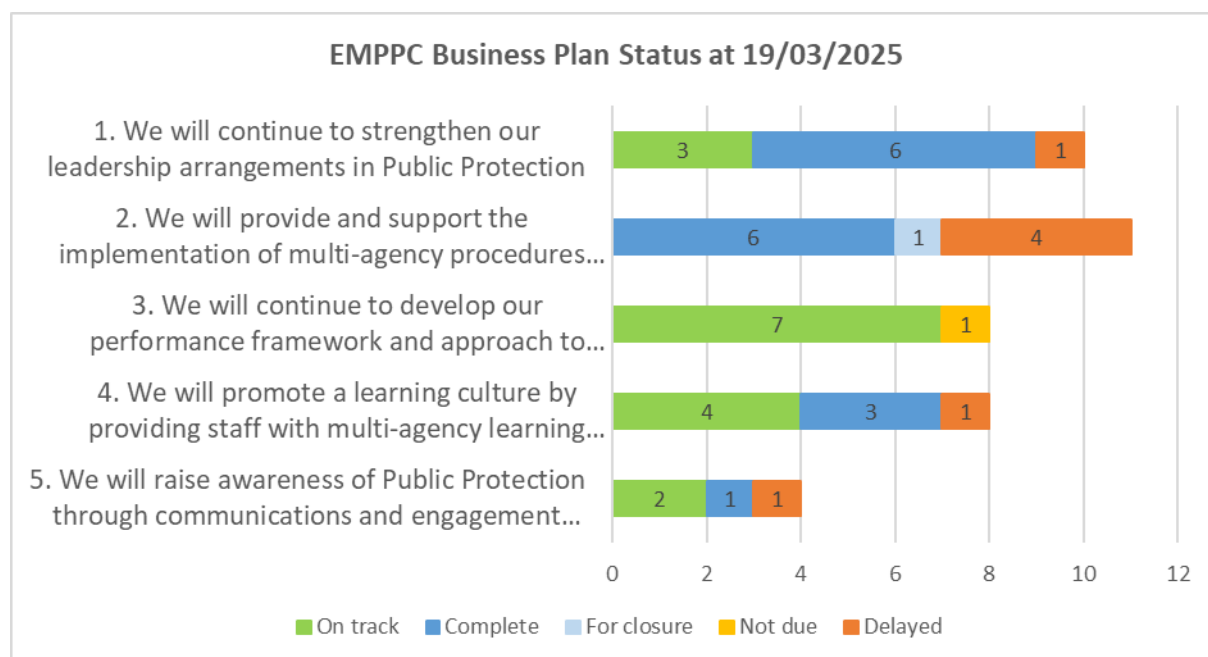
In June 2024, we approved our revised Terms of Reference for EMPPC. This outlines the role, function and areas of responsibility of the Committee, and Committee Members’ responsibilities.

EMPPC Members’ Handbook

Initially developed as a resource for new Committee members, this is also a helpful resource for all members as they participate in the work of the Committee. It brings together all the information they need about the local and national structures for the delivery of Public Protection business, roles, responsibilities and signposts to national reference documents. This is a living document that is updated on a regular basis.

Business planning

We agreed our Annual Business Plan at our Committee meeting in June 2024 and CSOG in August 2024. This had 41 actions across the five themes outlined at 1.6 above. A report by the Lead Officers for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and the Co-ordinator for Protecting Women and Girls Against Violence was presented to each Committee meeting, outlining progress of activities in the Business Plan. We also presented status reports quarterly to EMPPC. Where actions were delayed, reasons for delay and plans to address were considered, and reported on an exception basis to CSOG. At our final EMPPC meeting of the reporting period, we reported the status of actions as follows. There were seven actions which were delayed, and some rolling actions which will be carried forward into the coming year, with revised dates for completion.



EMPPC Development Session

We held a half day development session in November 2024, attended by 15 of our 25 EMPPC members. As our EMPPC meeting continued to take place online, this was a valuable opportunity to come together in person, network, share ideas and learn from each other.

We had two thought-provoking inputs, the first from the Chief Executive Officer from Salveson Mindroom Centre³ on Neurodiversity and Public Protection. One of our Police representatives on the Committee gave a presentation on sextortion which is used in schools by Police Liaison Officers. After both presentations EMPPC members took the opportunity to reflect on the local context of both of these issues and the implications for their services.

This was a productive and positive session, with members enjoying the opportunity to come together on a face-to-face basis and take time from busy EMPPC agendas and work schedules to reflect on some key issues of relevance for our services. We committed to continuing these twice a year.

Development of our EMPPC Sub-group Structure

At our development day in November 2023, we recognised the need to have more space and time to discuss and consider some key issues and emerging themes around Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection. We introduced two new Sub-groups in the year, each meeting twice in the year. Terms of Reference for the Child Protection Sub-group were approved at EMPPC in June 2024, and in September 2024 for the Adult Support and Protection Sub-group.

Our Adult Support and Protection Sub-group met in August 2024 and February 2025. Our Child Protection Sub-group met in May 2024 and November 2024.

The Sub-groups cover the same themes, as follows:

- Provide the opportunity for in-depth, dynamic discussion about specific topics and emerging issues relevant to Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and consider their relevance for local practice and policy.
- Share and promote best practice in Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and consider their relevance for local practice and policy.
- Share issues in relation to the implementation and impact of new legislation, policy and guidance that is relevant to Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and consider their relevance for local practice and policy.
- Maintain an overview of the progress of Improvement Plans for East Lothian and Midlothian and report progress to EMPPC.
- Ensure that feedback from adults involved in Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection is gathered and informs developments in practice and services.
- Ensure that EMPPC's work is informed by the voice and lived experience of children and adults involved in Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection processes (including for example in training, guidance, procedures, learning reviews, quality assurance).

³ <https://www.mindroom.org/>

Through the Adult Support and Protection Sub-group we have been able to include a wider range of agencies with an interest and expertise around the issues faced by adults at risk of harm, than we could within our EMPPC. This enables us to better fulfil our responsibilities in relation to membership as laid out in the national guidance for Adult Protection Committees⁴.

Membership of the Adult Support and Protection Sub-group is multi-agency, including one of our local Advocacy providers (to ensure that our work is informed by the voice of adults) and the Trauma Leads for East Lothian and Midlothian, as well as our core statutory partners and MELDAP (Midlothian & East Lothian Drugs and Alcohol Partnership). Through this group we have also strengthened our links with other agencies such as the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions).

Similarly in the Child Protection Sub-group, we have been able to include a wider range of agencies, including the Promise and Trauma Leads for East Lothian and Midlothian and Third Sector services, as well as core statutory partners and MELDAP (Midlothian & East Lothian Drugs and Alcohol Partnership). Representatives have fed back that the Sub-group supports further development of multi-agency relationships and understanding of roles and responsibilities.

A standard agenda item for each group was to look at how we strengthen our approach to listening to the child and adult involved in key Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection processes and use their feedback to inform and drive service improvements and inform our learning and development offerings. Our focus in the first year was to map out how services are capturing the voice of the child and adult. We were heartened to see the many and different ways that staff do this on a daily basis in their contact with children, families and adults. We have started looking at how we systematically capture what children, families and adults are telling us about the quality of service they receive, to highlight strengths, impact and areas for improvement.

The Child Protection Sub-group undertook some evaluation on how well we listen to children⁵.

We are good at this when it comes to SCIM but improvements are needed in other areas (Police)

I don't think we ask the child/young person's views on (the service they receive) often enough - local audit activity explores this, but we need more of a focus on understanding the quality of service we are providing

There is so much work going on but we need to get better at capturing the voice of the infant and children with additional support needs (Health)

⁴ [National Guidance for Adult Protection Committees](#)

⁵ SCIM is the Scottish Child Interview Model for the joint investigative interviewing for children, which is a key element of Child Protection processes.

Importantly, the Sub-groups provide a more robust governance structure for the Adult Support and Protection Plans and Child Protection Plans developed following inspections, and for the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Plan.

Although we will do a formal review of the new Sub-groups during 2025, initial reflections from the members are that the Sub-groups are bringing value to our partnership as these more in-depth discussion with a wider group of partners than we could in our busy EMPPC meeting itself. Members of the two new Sub-groups have fed back that they appreciate the opportunity to have space and time to discuss some key issues in more depth on a multi-agency basis, being able to share what is happening in each area and learn from each other.

We moved our VAWG Delivery Group from quarterly to six-monthly, to mirror our structure for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection. We therefore met twice in the year, in September 2024 and March 2025. We revised the VAWG Delivery Group Terms of Reference which were approved at our September 2024 EMPPC. This was in recognition of the need to ensure that our VAWG Delivery Group complements and does not duplicate the work of the Leadership Groups in East Lothian and Midlothian to progress, develop and implement local Equally Safe Strategies⁶.

The VAWG Delivery Group continues to be an important group in bringing together our Third Sector partners who work across East Lothian and Midlothian and our statutory services to consider areas of common interest in delivering Equally Safe. We have taken steps to strengthen the governance for Marac⁷ by bringing this into the VAWG Delivery Group. The VAWG Delivery Group has been assured that our Maracs are functioning well within our operating framework, although the people resources to support this fully (Chairs and Single Point of Contact representatives) continually need strengthened.

We will assess the impact of a move to six-monthly meetings, particularly ensuring in the coming year that we maintain momentum of the work of this group, and better attendance of members.

In November 2024, the East Lothian and Midlothian MAPPAs discussed the need to revert to a quarterly meeting to ensure there is more regular review of MAPPAs performance than could be provided by meeting on a six-monthly basis. In the coming year, EMMG will therefore meet quarterly but will continue to report on a twice-yearly basis to CSOG.

Connectivity with wider areas of Public Protection

In the year we built on the development work of CSOG to ensure sufficient connectivity with wider areas of Public Protection, as identified in the Chief Officers Public Protection Induction Resource⁸. In October 2024, MELDAP (Midlothian & East Lothian Drugs and Alcohol Partnership)⁹ provided CSOG with an update in relation to the published Drug

⁶ [Equally Safe in Midlothian Strategy](#)

⁷ Marac is Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences, to share information, assess risk and develop safety plans for victims at the highest level of risk due to domestic abuse. [Safe Lives - Marac in Scotland](#)

⁸ [COSLA Chief Officers Public Protection Induction Resource](#)

⁹ [MELDAP](#)

Misuse Reported Deaths¹⁰ and Alcohol Specific Deaths¹¹ in 2024. In April 2024 CSOG was provided with reports from East Lothian and Midlothian on their respective arrangements for suicide prevention, with further updates provided in October 2024 for Midlothian and January 2025 for East Lothian. Although CSOG is not the governance group for these wider Public Protection matters, they have welcomed taking a wider lens to ensure the connectivity between the different workstreams and strategic responses of those areas of business, in recognition that people may access various different services for a multitude of issues across their lifespan. We will build on this in the coming year by implementing a schedule of reporting of those wider areas of Public Protection at our CSOG meetings.

Equally Safe Strategy in East Lothian

This was in our previous year's Business Plan but did not progress at that time because of a need to agree the structural and governance arrangement. A Leadership Group was established in November 2024, with representation from statutory and Third Sector partners in East Lothian, cross-party support and chaired by an elected member. A mapping exercise of the national Equally Safe Strategy¹² against other East Lothian Council strategies and plans has been completed, to ensure that these are complementary and to support cultural change across all services. The project plan has been developed and work will continue in the coming year, supported by the Improvement Service¹³.

What next?

- We will hold two development days per year for EMPPC members.
- We will review our Sub-group structure (for Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group), including the impact of meeting on a twice-yearly basis.

2.2 We will provide and support the implementation of multi-agency procedures and guidance for staff working in Public Protection – what we achieved

Escalating Concerns Procedure

The Escalating Concerns Procedure was brought in to address the needs of a small number of people involved in Adult Support and Protection processes where the conclusion of an Adult Support and Protection inquiry is that the three-point test is not met, but where the person who made the original referral remains concerned that the adult is still someone at risk. It can also be used when a Case Conference has been held for an adult, all options to manage the risk within the Adult Support and Protection Procedures have been exhausted, but where risk levels remain high.

We reviewed and updated the Escalating Concerns Procedure¹⁴ after a year's implementation, making only minor changes around who would chair an Escalating

¹⁰ [Drug Related Deaths in Scotland in 2023](#)

¹¹ [Alcohol Specific Deaths in 2023](#)

¹² [Equally Safe Strategy](#)

¹³ [Improvement Service](#)

¹⁴ [Escalating Concerns Procedure](#)

Concerns Meeting. The Procedure has been used infrequently in the past year, as expected, as this should apply to a critical few cases. In the coming year we will continue to raise awareness of the Procedure to ensure that Council Officers are advising referrers that it can be considered in certain circumstances.

Guidance to Support Staff – Supporting Effective Participation of the Adult in Case Conferences

We developed good practice guidance to support staff involved in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences¹⁵, in collaboration with our statutory partners and representation from an advocacy provider. This guidance is adapted from ‘Good Practice for Effective Participation by the Adult in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences’ published by IRISS during the year. The guidance was informed by the views of people with lived experience of Adult Support and Protection, practitioners involved in Adult Support and Protection work, and agencies and services who engaged in national work to ensure the implementation of the national Code of Practice is cognisant of user voice.

This guidance offers good practice guidance to effective participation of adults being supported and protected under the Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, particularly in relation to ASP Case Conferences. It provides pointers as to how to facilitate meaningful engagement, taking a holistic view of the perspective and circumstances of the adult, including experience of trauma.

Our Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer will see how well this is being put into practice by shadowing Case Conferences in the coming year.

Guidance to Support Staff - Commercial Sexual Exploitation

In September 2024 EMPPC approved our Good Practice Guidance on Identifying and Responding to Commercial Sexual Exploitation¹⁶. This guidance was informed by the resources on the CSE Aware website and provides an overview of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Scotland, the risks and indicators, as well as some practical steps that practitioners can take to support someone involved in Commercial Sexual Exploitation. EMPPC’s Position Statement is in line with the national Equally Safe Strategy¹⁷ by stating that “We believe that Commercial Sexual Exploitation is a form of gender-based violence caused and perpetuated by gender inequality in society and that this causes harm to the people selling or exchanging sex, to their families and our communities”. In our strategy we commit to providing non-judgemental and trauma informed support around Commercial Sexual Exploitation for anyone whilst involved or when wanting to move on and exit. We placed our Guidance document on our website and promoted it in our February 2025 Newsletter. To support staff awareness of the issue, we ran a briefing on Commercial Sexual Exploitation in December 2024, led by the National Commercial Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator in Scotland, based within the Women’s Support Project in Glasgow¹⁸.

¹⁵ [Supporting Effective Participation of the Adult in Case Conferences](#)

¹⁶ [Good Practice Guidance - Identifying and Responding to Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#)

¹⁷ [Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

¹⁸ [Women’s Support Project](#)

Guidance to Support Staff – Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-agency Under-Age Sexual Activity Guidance

In December 2024, our Committee approved the Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-agency Under-Age Sexual Activity Guidance, which had been developed on a multi-agency basis with colleagues in Edinburgh and West Lothian¹⁹ as a companion document to our Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures. This guidance is helpful in striking a balance between supporting young people to exercise their rights, make decisions and access support at the same time protecting them from activity that could give rise to harm and the need for Child Protection responses.

Child Protection IRD²⁰ Oversight Group Terms of Reference

We have had Oversight Groups in each area for a number of years now, which provide quality assurance in relation to decisions made as part of a Child Protection Inter-agency Referral Discussion. This is the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision making where one or more of the core agencies (Health, Social Work and Police) assess that there is a risk of significant harm to a child up to the age of 18 years. We reviewed and revised the Terms of Reference during the year which were approved by EMPPC in March 2025. A guidance document on e-IRD (the electronic recording system hosted by NHS Lothian and used by IRD participants to record risk assessment, actions, interim safety planning decisions) was developed to support consistency of practice across the core agencies. This is now part of all service inductions when staff are new to the role of carrying out IRDs.

Inter-agency Referral Discussions in Adult Support and Protection

We reviewed our approach to Inter-agency Referral Discussions in Adult Support and Protection. In both Joint Inspections of Adult Support and Protection (East Lothian published in June 2023 and Midlothian published in June 2024) it was recognised that our approach to IRDs did not always add clear value to the planning of the inquiry, as it took place too late in the process. In November 2024, the Adult Support and Protection Sub-group undertook an options appraisal exercise, concluding that there would be more benefit to having an IRD earlier in the process where it is clear that it would add value to the joint risk assessment and planning. The IRD is no longer involved in decision making about the need to progress to a Case Conference, which is the decision of the Local Authority. In both Local Authorities, the involvement of senior nursing staff in IRDs has become a consistent feature of IRDs which has enhanced the multi-agency consideration of the adult's needs and safety planning. We held two IRD workshops to support practice in Adult Support and Protection IRDs, particularly around the effective and efficient recording of information to support risk assessment and safety planning.

Review of our Adult Support and Protection Procedures

After consultation with partners, we revised our multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Procedures²¹, with only minor changes, a year after implementation.

¹⁹ [Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-agency Under-Age Sexual Activity Guidance](#)

²⁰ An Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is the start of the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision making where one or more of the core agencies (Health, Social Work, Police) assess that there is a risk of significant harm to a child up to the age of 18 years.

²¹ [EMPPC Multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Procedures](#)

The change in approach to an overarching inquiry has been embraced by operational staff. The Social Work recording systems have been changed to reflect one inquiry, which has supported the cultural shift from thinking about separate discrete stages of Adult Support and Protection processes to one inquiry. The operational oversight of Adult Support and Protection work by managers, quality assurance processes that are in place in each local area and training provided to Council Officers are strong in supporting Adult Support and Protection practice.

Local embedding of the Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures

We committed to reviewing the Procedures after a year's implementation, and in consultation with Edinburgh and West Lothian agreed there was no revision required. We are confident that we are embedding the Procedures locally well. Staff who attend multi-agency training and learning events have a good knowledge of the Procedures and feed back that training is increasing their knowledge of Child Protection. Through discussion at the Child Protection Sub-group and in our analysis of Child Protection data and performance information we have been able to keep under review any issues associated with the implementation of the revised Procedures.

Through the review of our local Child Protection data, we have seen Child Protection IRDs for 16- and 17-year-olds in both areas and Child Protection Planning Meetings taking place for a small number of 16- and 17-year-olds. There is good liaison between Adult Services and Children's Services when there is an Adult Support and Protection referral for someone under the age of 18, to share information and support a culture of considering Child Protection Procedures as the primary consideration.

We have identified the need to provide further guidance and support for professionals attending Child Protection Planning Meetings. We have promoted the resources for children and families who may become involved in Child Protection processes which were launched in February 2025²².

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to children's experiences of significant harm beyond their family and home. This approach recognises the different relationships children have in their schools, peer groups, online and in their community. As part of a self-evaluation exercise on our local implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023, we identified Contextual Safeguarding as an area for improvement. This is a standing agenda item at our Child Protection Sub-group. In the first two meetings of our Sub-group, we have done some awareness raising of what Contextual Safeguarding is and why it is important. We have undertaken a multi-agency mapping exercise to gain understanding of what is currently happening and identification of the hot-spot areas/spaces. We have also started to explore how we identify and record what is happening. There is recognition that there are pockets

²² [Keeping Children Safe in Scotland Guides](#)

of this type of approach happening across both Local Authorities. Our next steps are to look at how Contextual Safeguarding can be formalised within existing systems and processes.

What next?

- Review and revise a number of existing protocols, including Large Scale Investigations, Financial Harm, Self-neglect and Hoarding, Vulnerable Young Persons and Female Genital Mutilation.
- Develop a number of new guidance documents, including Human Trafficking, Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Professionals Attending Child Protection Planning Meetings.

2.3 We will continue to develop our performance framework and approach to quality improvement – what we achieved

Adult Support and Protection Multi-agency Audits

We began our multi-agency auditing of Adult Support and Protection from June 2024, using the Care Inspectorate tool used in joint inspections. Representatives from Police, Health and Social Work and the Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer reviewed two cases per quarter, one that proceeded to a Case Conference and one that did not. Coming together to jointly review cases at the same time has been challenging due to capacity of partners, and it has taken us time to become familiar with the audit tool. However, this has been a significant and positive step forward, enabling us to jointly critically reflect on each other's individual practice. Across both areas we reviewed twelve cases in the year and were able to report on strengths and areas for improvement to our Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group in February 2025.

We will continue this work in the coming year and strengthen how we feed back to staff about our findings.

In our auditing, we highlighted a number of strengths in practice, including:

- Consistently accurate application of the '3-point test' (ASP criteria).
- Risk assessments visible on file, completed in a timely manner and rated as very good or excellent.
- Risk Management Plans either good or very good.
- The sharing of information between partner agencies.
- Attendance in one Case Conference was noted as "Attendance was good of professionals and adult and carers. Difficult issues were tackled thoroughly and sensitively."
- Evidence of adults being offered advocacy.
- Good evidence of the adult's views being taken into account throughout the Adult Support and Protection process.

Areas for improvement related to the variable quality of chronologies, including:

- The inclusion of the voice of the adult.
- How the chronology informed the risk assessment.

One case stood out particularly as an example of a robust and trauma informed multi-agency response to complex and challenging circumstances and was presented to the Adult Support and Protection Sub-group in February 2025 and Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group in February 2025. We will further share this example at an upcoming Council Officer Forum.

Child Protection Multi-agency Audits

The Vulnerable Young Person's Protocol is the local process for managing risk for young people where Child Protection Procedures are not appropriate. To inform its review and revision, a multi-agency audit of its use in East Lothian and Midlothian was undertaken in December 2024. Key highlights from this audit included the following:

- There was appropriate use of the Protocol with thresholds for its use clearly evidenced.
- The structure is helpful for assessment and planning in relation to children who are at significant risk of harm out with the home and in the local community. Services are managing high levels of risk where in previous years a placement in secure accommodation may have been considered but in line with The Promise, there is a drive and desire to keep young people within their own community.
- There is a need to ensure there is a supporting process (in relation to completion of reports, minutes and timescales) which aligns itself to the existing multi-agency Child Protection Procedures.

Safe & Together Audit

The Safe & Together™ Model²³ is an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help child and adult professionals become domestic abuse informed. In March 2025 there was a multi-agency audit of three case files in Midlothian where domestic abuse was a feature in Child Protection cases. The purpose of the audit was to identify whether there was evidence of the Safe & Together model in practice. Overall, there was good evidence of the use of Safe & Together in practice, more so at the start of involvement of professionals, there was evidence of improvements in engaging perpetrators and the need to avoid service generated risk in any intervention.

Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian

The Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian came to its conclusion with the publication of the report in June 2024²⁴. A lot of the work to prepare for and engage in the inspection had taken place in the previous reported year.

The inspection programme involved the analysis of a Position Statement which was developed on a multi-agency basis, where we identified our strengths and areas for development. Inspectors also reviewed the findings of a staff survey of 77 staff from a range of organisations, including Health, Police, Social Work and Third Sector providers, scrutinised 90 records, held focus groups with staff and engaged in Professional Discussion with strategic leaders.

²³ [The Safe & Together Model](#)

²⁴ [Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection Midlothian Partnership](#)

The Inspection reported on the following areas of strength:

- The partnership had a vision for Adult Support and Protection that was widely communicated and well understood.
- Adult Support and Protection inquiries undertaken by Social Work complied with the refreshed national code of practice.
- Managerial oversight of Council Officer activity was commendably strong. It was well recorded and linked to supervision discussions.
- Risk assessments were supported by effective tools and templates that promoted high quality work in this critical area of practice.
- Strategic leaders deployed a governance framework for Adult Support and Protection. Overall, they oversaw the delivery of competent, effective Adult Support and Protection practice. More work needed to be done to strengthen collaborative practice.

The Inspection highlighted the following priority areas for improvement:

- Quality assurance, self-evaluation and improvement activity was in place. More work needed to be done to ensure this was well embedded and fully linked to improvement activity.
- Interagency referral discussion arrangements were well embedded, but the purpose and process needed to be reviewed to improve their impact on protection planning.
- Where chronologies were completed, they were of a good quality but more needed to be done to improve consistent application in all records.
- Too many adults at risk of harm did not benefit from having a chronology in place.
- Adult Support and Protection Case Conference attendance and information sharing needed to improve. Case Conferences should be more person centred and sensitive to the participatory needs of adults at risk of harm.
- NHS Lothian and Police Scotland needed to strengthen their participation in key elements of practice.
- Adults with lived experience were not engaged in shaping the work of the Public Protection Committee. A plan was needed to address this.

Midlothian was one of the six areas inspected in 2017 and in addition to the single partnership report, in August 2024 the Care Inspectorate published an Overview Report of Progress in partnerships where inspections were undertaken in 2027/18²⁵.

The 2017 joint inspection found that leadership within the partnership had major strengths. The 2024 review of progress found strategic leaders still oversaw the delivery of a competent and effective Adult Support and Protection practice. A Social Work Assurance Group in Midlothian chaired by the Chief Social Work Officer complements the work of EMPPC in this oversight.

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[https://careinspectorate.com/images/documents/7704/ASP%20The%20joint%20inspection%20of%20adult%20support%20and%20protection%20overview%20report%20July%202024%20\(2\).pdf](https://careinspectorate.com/images/documents/7704/ASP%20The%20joint%20inspection%20of%20adult%20support%20and%20protection%20overview%20report%20July%202024%20(2).pdf)

The Overview Report noted that “Strategic leaders’ vision for Adult Support and Protection was strong and well understood by staff. The partnership should ensure it capitalises on its strong leadership foundation to ensure effective change in these areas and other areas we identified in our progress review such as interagency referral discussions and case conferences”.

Development and progress of improvement plans from joint inspections

A multi-agency improvement plan was developed following the Midlothian inspection which will continue to be progressed in the coming year. The improvement plans from both the East Lothian and Midlothian joint inspections have been reviewed at the Adult Support and Protection Sub-group with some of the areas for improvement informing the work of that group.

We have made significant progress to address the areas for improvement identified in both the East Lothian Adult Support and Protection inspection (report published in 2023) and Midlothian inspection and are confident that these are being sufficiently progressed by our Adult Support and Protection Sub-group. The East Lothian Link Inspector from the Care Inspectorate provided critical, positive challenge to support partners to review the progress of the East Lothian plan. The Midlothian improvement plan will be reviewed during the year with our Midlothian Link Inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

National Minimum Dataset for Adult Support and Protection

Following our implementation of the national minimum dataset from quarter two, 2023/24 (July 2023) phase two was introduced from April 2024. This expanded some of the indicators reported on a quarterly basis to the Scottish Government. During the year we met with the Scottish Government Professional Advisor for Adult Support and Protection, National Adult Support and Protection Co-ordinator and attended quarterly drop-in sessions, to support a more consistent local approach to interpretation of the definitions in line with the accompanying guidance. In the year we requested clarity on some key aspects in order to improve the consistency of approach to the definition and counting of referrals and Adult Support and Protection Plans. The Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer has also been involved in the national work to support implementation of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 Code of Practice and minimum dataset. This work should put us in a stronger position for future reporting. We recognise we have further work to do to make good use of data we collect for the national minimum dataset.

To support local performance reporting, we introduced local indicators for Adult Support and Protection work, including a local timescale standard for completing an Adult Support and Protection inquiry. We shall comment on this further later in this report.

Learning Reviews

We continued to embed our practice and processes around Learning Reviews, following the national guidance²⁶ in our approach.

²⁶ [National Guidance for Adult Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews](#) and [National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews](#)

Our Learning Review Sub-group meets quarterly and reports directly to CSOG. Learning Review Reports and Summary Reports when a Consideration Meeting decides not to proceed to a Learning Review are presented to EMPPC for their review.

We had no notifications in relation to Adult Support and Protection Learning Reviews. The EMPPC meeting in June 2024 reviewed reports on two cases that had been considered for a Learning Review, with a decision not to proceed to a Learning Review on the basis that the additional learning was sufficiently drawn out at the Consideration Meeting.

During the year we concluded a Child Protection Learning Review that had started the previous year. The report was considered by EMPPC in September 2024 and CSOG in October 2024, with a decision made to publish this Review. This is known as Family B²⁷ and related to a case of significant neglect in a large family. The voice of the parents was strongly reflected in the Review, and we have taken significant learning from this. We took opportunities to feedback to the staff involved in the Review, and to share the learning from this Review by holding an online Briefing, attended by 143 staff from across East Lothian and Midlothian. 24 Health Visitors in Midlothian joined this session as a group and then took a further opportunity to reflect on this Learning Review from their role and service perspective as part of a wider development session. We worked hard at creating the right conditions to promote a safe space for reflection and learning, and staff involved in the Practitioner and Manager events provided positive feedback about their involvement.

Participated more than I thought I would have done. Both learned and found myself listened to.....felt my presence was valued on the day and going forward.

Good for all professionals to come together and discuss and communicate how we can work together to have better outcomes for the children and young people we work with.

The event felt very safe and genuinely supporting - I learned a lot about the other agencies.

We have also shared learning from our local Learning Reviews through the Child Protection Committee Learning Review 'Knowledge Hub' facilitated by the Care Inspectorate. Attendance is open to Child Protection Lead Officers, Committee Chairs and other invited managers/professionals from local Child Protection/Public Protection Committees (closed group). 30 people attended a session in October 2024 when we presented the learning from a Learning Review we had concluded during 2023-24. 23 people attended a session in March 2025 when we presented the learning from the Family B Learning Review. This has provided the opportunity to share learning on a national basis and both sessions have been very positively received, with requests to present to other Child Protection partnerships.

We undertook a Child Protection Learning Review between October 2024 and March 2025 which reported to EMPPC in March 2025 and CSOG in April 2025. We decided not to publish this report due to potential identification of the family as a result of the difficult circumstances that led to the Review. We will take forward the improvements and learning

²⁷ [Learning Review Family B](#)

from this Review in the coming year. We recognise that it can be more challenging to share the learning widely when a Review is not published but are using examples for other published Reviews across the UK where there are similar themes and messages, in order to protect anonymity. We also benefit from having a shared partnership across two Local Authorities which means we do not need to identify which Local Authority was involved in a local Review. This Review also helpfully informed the development of our local Guidance on Reviews.

We believe that we are implementing the National Guidance for Learning Reviews well. We are always mindful of the key features of Learning Reviews: inclusiveness, collective learning, staff engagement and proportionality. Our Child Protection Lead Officer has worked with partners to ensure that Practitioners and Managers are prepared for their engagement in a Learning Review, recognising the need to provide information about the process and provide reassurance that Learning Reviews are not investigations and take a systems approach. A Briefing for Event participants is now an essential part of this process and has worked well in signposting them to supports to be involved in Learning Reviews. We recognise that Learning Reviews can be challenging for staff who may feel that their individual practice will be under scrutiny, but we seek to promote the cultural conditions for critical reflection without blame and positive learning.

We have taken forward improvement actions and shared learning from Learning Reviews. We have shared the learning via newsletter articles and Briefings and updated our training materials to include key messages from local as well as national learning. At every Learning Review Sub-group, we have reviewed the steps we have taken to share the learning, both locally and nationally, and progress improvement actions.

Equally Safe Quality Standards

We completed the self-assessment tool which was developed by the Improvement Service to support Violence Against Women Partnerships to measure and demonstrate the progress being made to implement Equally Safe at a local level and identify any areas for improvement. We were the only area not to have completed this the previous year, due to capacity issues arising from the retirement of the previous Violence Against Women and Girls Co-ordinator, so we found this to be a useful exercise in highlighting strengths and areas for development. An area for improvement was highlighted in relation to wider engagement and communications in the local communities to increase people's awareness and understanding of the causes and consequences of Violence Against Women and Girls, and the role they can play in tackling it. This will be taken forward through our wider work on communications in the coming year. In February 2025 the Improvement Service published a report on the key learning from the data returns for 2023/24. We were pleased to see the Midlothian Youth 2000 Project and the East Lothian Caledonian Men's Programme highlighted as examples of good practice in this report²⁸.

²⁸ [Equally Safe Quality Standards and Performance Framework Key Learning](#)

What next?

- We will further develop our approach to multi-agency quality assurance of practice in Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Marac, ensuring this is aligned to national Quality Improvement Frameworks.

2.4 We will promote a learning culture by providing staff with multi-agency learning and development opportunities in Public Protection – what we achieved

Multi-agency Learning and Development Strategy

We continued to implement our Multi-agency Strategy for Learning and Development and kept it under review in our Learning and Practice Development Sub-group. At our quarterly Learning and Development Sub-group meetings we reviewed the training we had delivered, reflected on feedback, and attendance/non-attendance.

In March 2025, EMPPC approved our Learning and Development Strategy 2025-27, which is now on our website²⁹. This was developed in collaboration with our Learning and Development Sub-group members and other key partners and identifies our priorities for learning and development in the coming two years. We revised our Multi-agency Training Course Descriptors³⁰ document to more clearly identify the ‘level of training’ and workforce group for the purposes of helping staff and managers determine the suitability of a specific training course to a role. This mirrors the National Child Protection Learning and Development Framework to promote consistency.

EMPPC training calendar

A considerable amount of work goes into the development and co-ordination of our EMPPC training programme. The calendar is developed based on reflections of what has worked well or not so well in the previous year, and the patterns of the last two years. We will tend to avoid peak holiday periods such as school holidays at Easter, the beginning of July and October, and the run up to the Christmas period. We know that Fridays are not popular days for training and Mondays are also generally avoided – this leads to a population across the three middle days of the week to capture more part time workers, leading to a relatively busy schedule of training. Developing our calendar requires a lot of careful juggling of diaries in terms of trainer availability, venue availability and avoiding clashes with other EMPPC commitments and those peak holiday periods. This is a great achievement that was very well managed in the year.

The EMPPC training calendar is on the EMPPC website³¹. Courses are advertised by way of a flyer to a distribution list across a wide range of agencies and services in East Lothian and Midlothian. All training is free to attend for staff and volunteers in the statutory and Third Sectors in East Lothian and Midlothian.

²⁹ [EMPPC Learning and Development Strategy 2025-27](#)

³⁰ [EMPPC Multi-agency Training Course Descriptors](#)

³¹ [EMPPC Training Calendar](#)

What we delivered

We delivered 72 learning and development events in the year. This included 52 courses and events (such as the Child Protection IRD Forum and Adult Support and Protection Council Officer Forum) which was 13 more than the previous year. We delivered 20 Briefings, six fewer than the previous year (in the previous year we held additional Briefings when launching our revised Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection Procedures). 48 of our 52 courses took place online. The half day Public Protection course and every alternate Adult Support and Protection Roles and Responsibilities course take place online.

These are broken down as follows:

	Number of courses	Number of attendees
Quarter 1, Apr - Jun	11	202
Quarter 2, Jul - Sept	10	191
Quarter 3, Oct - Dec	18	321
Quarter 4, Jan - Mar	13	247
Total	52	961

	Number of briefings/events	Number of attendees
Quarter 1, Apr - Jun	2	127
Quarter 2, Jul - Sept	4	227
Quarter 3, Oct - Dec	9	482
Quarter 4, Jan - Mar	5	529
Total	20	1365

A range of partners from both areas co-worked with EMPPO staff to develop and deliver our training, as part of their partnership commitment. This is greatly appreciated, and we believe supports a richer learning experience for participants. This included staff from: Education in East Lothian and Midlothian, MELDAP, Public Protection Team, NHS Lothian Public Protection Unit, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Social Work in East Lothian and Midlothian (both Children's and Adult Services) and Women's Aid East and Midlothian.

Briefings

We continued to deliver a number of one-hour online Briefings on various topics of relevance to staff. These have been developed from Learning Reviews, inspections and our reviews of local data.

Briefing topic	Number of attendees
Commercial Sexual Exploitation	48
Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024	124
Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme Scotland (DSDAS)	26
Domestic Abuse and the Importance of the Safe & Together Model	218 (4 sessions)
Marac	116 (3 sessions)
Human Trafficking	67
Advocacy and ASP	126
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Home Fire Safety Visits	111

In September we introduced a quarterly Briefing on sharing the learning from local and national Learning Reviews, with 271 attending three sessions. These included an overview of our Learning Review in relation to Family B, a case reviewed by Inverclyde Adult Protection Committee (Margaret Fleming, a woman who was murdered by her carers after being missing for a number of years), Dundee Adult Protection Committee (Ms L, who died and who had been the victim of domestic abuse, and who had experienced complex mental and physical health issues and trauma). In each of the sessions we provide an overview of what Learning Reviews are seeking to achieve, to raise awareness with staff about their purpose and focus. We shared key messages from other Reviews for our local learning.

Have to say the tone was good - I never interpreted it as a blame/beating with a stick approach at all - very well presented from that angle too to be fair so all credit to the presenters - hard thing to do.

These things always make you reflect on your practice and focus the mind a bit, so folks were probably thinking about their own cases and thinking yikes.

Evaluation of Training

We were only able to report our quantitative performance indicators on feedback from training for the first three months of the year, due to the loss of licence for our electronic survey tool. We therefore relied on manual methods of collating qualitative feedback during training events, which still enabled us to continue to review feedback at our Learning and Practice Development Sub-group. Staff have consistently provided positive comments on the content and delivery of various courses, themed as follows:

- Group discussions bring different professionals together and provide the opportunity to learn more about each other's roles and perspectives and develop new networks.
- The use of case studies helps to understand how processes work in practice and supports a 'think family' perspective.
- Using a variety of approaches to suit different learning styles works well, with a mix of presentations, case studies, short videos and links to reference materials.

- In-person training provides the opportunity to get away from the workplace/laptop and mix with other staff from across the two areas and in different roles.
- Trainers work well together on a multi-agency basis to deliver well prepared, high-quality courses.

Skills-based Workshops

We benefited from recruiting to our Learning and Development Co-ordinator post (18 hours per week) in May 2024, which has enabled us to take forward some specific areas of work. We introduced 2 ½ hour skills-based workshops on chronologies, professional curiosity, risk assessment and SMART planning, defensible decision making and when services fail to engage. We had identified these themes from Learning Reviews and inspections and recognised the need for staff to have the opportunity to reflect on practice in these areas of work in a group workshop setting. We initially delivered our first three topics (defensible decision making, chronologies and risk assessment and SMART planning) separately to Adult Services and Children’s Services, using the same materials but with different case studies tailored to their sector. Due to low take up from Adult Services, we combined the materials into one workshop suitable for all staff and opened up the training to everyone. Feedback from the workshops has been positive as staff have appreciated being able to take some time out to reflect on practice and share insights using case examples.

Good opportunity to share experiences on chronologies and reflect on own practice.

Liked breaking down the elements of how we make decisions, discussing impact on practice and what helps.

Great learning on assessing risk - good points to take forward when completing reports in regard to assessing risk and the key care planning around this.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour Training

In response to feedback about the need for more in-depth training on responding to Harmful Sexual Behaviour, and under our Harmful Sexual Behaviour improvement plan, we separated our Harmful Sexual Behaviour training into two levels – awareness raising (level 1) and assessment and interventions (level 2). The has been positively received.

This training, along with the level 1 course is one of the most informative and useful courses I have attended during my time at Midlothian. (The trainer) manages to address a very difficult topic in a sensitive and supportive manner.

The discussions and subjects were very thought provoking and the awareness he creates around the language we use has stuck with me since level 1. I have found myself consciously changing my approach to many situations and very aware of the language I use and allow my own children to use.

Safe & Together

We have been committed to embedding the Safe & Together approach in East Lothian and Midlothian since 2018. We continued to receive a grant from the national Delivering Equally Safe Fund to support us to increase the number of practitioners who are trained in the model, enabling them to competently identify domestic abuse and respond effectively to women, children and young people experiencing abuse and hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviours.

In previous annual reports we have recognised the challenges in getting staff through the training, which have been reflected elsewhere across the country. Completing the four-day model on an individual basis has been challenging, with staff finding it difficult to engage in the materials on an individual basis without the benefit of group discussion and peer support, which in turn made it more difficult to prioritise completing this in a short timescale.

We were pleased to gain three local accredited trainers who successfully completed a 12-week training course with the Safe & Together Institute in December 2024.

We delivered our first in-person Safe & Together core training (four-day course) since pre-Covid to 17 staff from both areas in March 2025. We had long recognised the challenges for staff completing the self-directed online learning and therefore this was a significant positive development in the year. Staff who attended the first course were very positive about their experiences of coming together to learn in a supportive group setting.

They give you really tangible, useful resources that I can take in to my practice of working with perpetrators.....The in-person aspect made it particularly engaging as opposed to online or virtual.

Having the training in person opened up so many conversations about domestic abuse and coercive control, something that couldn't be replicated online. Training leaders were so responsive to questions and were very professional, empathetic and calm.

32 staff across both areas completed the four-day core training in the year, with a further 15 staff completing the training by the virtual, self-directed method between April and December 2024.

We held four one-hour briefings on Domestic Abuse and the Importance of the Safe & Together Model (one per quarter) in the year, attended by 218 people. This is a good way of giving an overview of the model for staff and volunteers who need a basic understanding of the key aspects of the model. In the coming year, we will seek to deliver the one-day course to a wider group of practitioners who need some more knowledge of the model for their role, but who do not need to complete the full four-day training.

The Implementation Groups in East Lothian and Midlothian met in the year to support the local embedding of Safe & Together in practice. They developed plans for 70 staff to

complete the 4-day core training in the coming year. The Improvement Service supported a self-evaluation in June 2024 and the development of an improvement plan in East Lothian.

A Practitioners' Forum met in September 2024 but with low attendance, and plans have been put in place to re-invigorate this as a supportive Forum to promote peer support and sharing of learning in the coming year. This Forum will benefit from being supported by the local accredited trainers and there will be a focus on increasing confidence in Children's Services' staff working with and talking to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Workshops for staff involved in key Protection processes

In September 2024, we held our first Marac Development Workshop for Representatives and Chairs who participate in our Marac meetings. This provided a welcome opportunity for shared learning and reflection on an in-person basis out with the online Marac meetings and was positively received. Attended by 18 staff involved in Marac, there was a focus on SMART³² action planning and equipping them with practical tools and strategies to support their participation in Marac. There was an open discussion which enabled participants to share insights and discuss challenges, and the session was well received.

We held two Child Protection IRD workshops in September 2024 and March 2025. These provide an opportunity for multi-agency reflection and learning to support good practice and are informed by themes from the IRD Oversight Group, analysis of our Child Protection data and learning from local Learning Reviews. At the September 2024 workshop, there was a session on technology mediated sexual offending and embedding UNCRC into IRD practice. In March 2025 the session covered cultural issues and domestic abuse, female genital mutilation and the role of a Doula in unassisted/free birth. We introduced case studies to support learning at both sessions and in response to earlier feedback from staff about how they would like the IRD workshops to develop. Feedback from both sessions was overwhelmingly positive and reflects the strengths of our IRD practice in both East Lothian and Midlothian.

Great opportunity to network - Great to speak in person with other agencies around difficult issues/complex case studies.

Case study was excellent - its complexity offered good discussion.

Equally Safe in Practice³³

This is a framework developed by Scottish Women's Aid to equip the Scottish workforce with knowledge, understanding and the tools necessary to improve responses to VAWG and ensure safe and positive outcomes for women, children and young people. A programme of three online, self-directed modules are available for the general workforce (Together for Gender Equality, Understanding Domestic Abuse and Understanding Sexual Violence), which we had previously agreed to implement in East Lothian and Midlothian. This was launched

³² [EMPPC - Spotlight on SMART Planning](#)

³³ [Equally Safe in Practice](#)

in September 2024 in Midlothian Children’s Services and the Health and Social Care Partnership, with an aim to reach 700 staff. By the end of March 2025, just over 300 staff had completed at least one module, with the Understanding Domestic Abuse module being completed most frequently. The East Lothian Council Management Team gave their approval to the roll-out of the three modules for Council staff, and a small number of Children’s Services staff were early adopters of the modules. Staff who have completed the modules have been positive about the style and depth of the training. Work to further promote this training across both areas will continue in the coming year.

A really comprehensive overview to gender-based violence. As 'introductory' training to this area, I was really impressed by the scope of the content, the different ways in which information was presented and really pleased to see featured the experiences of survivors (including children).

Really interesting, but hard to do in parts. [It] helped me think about how domestic abuse affects women and children. And in ways I didn't even think about.

Really well put together training which will be central in ensuring the identification of gender-based violence, and (aspirationally) the eradication of such abuse within future generations via correct and timely support to survivors, whilst at the same time holding perpetrators accountable and tasking them to change.

Council Officer Training (Adult Support and Protection)

We delivered two courses to enable six Social Workers to become Council Officers, which enables them to undertake specific Adult Support and Protection work reserved for that role. This takes a modular approach which is positively evaluated. We have recognised the resource intensive nature of this course for our Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer, who delivers this training, given the small number of staff requiring to undertake this training, and the need to balance the frequency of its delivery to meet operational demands. We reduced the time frame for completing this training to six sessions over two weeks in response to feedback from managers about the challenges of consistent attendance over a longer period of time. We recognise that it is resource intensive to deliver training to such a small cohort of staff and will reflect on how we can do this more efficiently in the coming year.

Council Officer Forums

In the summer of 2024, we consulted with Council Officers to review how their Forums were working. We had previously held a separate Forum in each area on a monthly basis. We implemented the changes agreed in November 2024 – moving to one Council Forum across East Lothian and Midlothian, held in-person with the option of joining online, and with topics agreed by Council Officers, with a more interactive approach. Topics for discussion included hoarding, domestic abuse and financial harm. We have strengthened our Forums

to include the voice and lived experience of adults through videos, reference to research and a presentation from an adult. We have seen improved attendance and the changes we have made have been well received.

I appreciate the flexibility of the new Council Officer format. I particularly enjoy that a variety of formats are used (e.g. case studies, power points, discussion) which make it easier to engage in discussion.

Equally Safe in Midlothian

The Equally Safe in Midlothian had a soft launch early in 2024 and was one of the topics for discussion at the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership Conference in September 2024. Attendees heard a powerful presentation by Julie Watson, Chief Executive Officer of Women's Aid East and Midlothian and an adult survivor of domestic abuse, with some clear messages about what works and what could be better when supporting survivors. This had been informed by a conversation café with adult women survivors as part of the consultation on the strategy. The strategy was welcomed and supported by survivors, but the need for sustainable funding for specialist services and training and awareness raising of the issues were highlighted as areas for improvement. The presentation was followed by small group discussions about how we take some of these issues forward.

A Hackathon event (round table discussions) with 63 young people from S1 to S6 from High Schools across Midlothian took place in early September 2024. Talking about the theme of safety, young people spoke about their experiences and what needs to be done to address some of their concerns about violence against women and girls. The young people shared experiences of everyday sexism, stereotypes about boys and girls and social media pressures. Importantly here were some important messages for services and leaders about how we support the creation of a different culture and response to challenge gender stereotypes, which we will take forward in our work in the coming year. Some of the young people involved in this event have since joined Women's Aid East and Midlothian Young People's Shadow Board.

In the coming year we will support Midlothian partners to further implement the Strategy.

16 days of activism

302 staff attended eight learning events held during 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. This campaign is wrapped around two key dates, 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and 10 December, Human Rights Day. At our online launch event attended by 53 members of staff, David Russell, Manager with the Third Sector organisation Thriving Survivors³⁴ spoke about 'Why do we need to reframe masculinity?' He spoke about the influence of pornography and presented initial findings on research he had been jointly undertaking, looking at how we can better understand incel behaviour to reduce extreme violence against women and girls, and the ways in which

³⁴ [Thriving Survivors](#)

young men can become ‘tipped’ into more dangerous online forums through generic searches.

At our VAWG Delivery Group in March 2025, we reflected on our programme for 2024 which we will use to inform how we plan and develop our programme for the coming year.

Adult Support and Protection Day

We held another successful and well received event to recognise Adult Support and Protection Day on 20th February 2025. 114 staff attended our online 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 Consultancy³⁵. He spoke powerfully about his experience of trauma, how that impacted on him and how he learned to cope and move forward with his life. The learning leads from Penumbra gave an overview of The Self Harm Network Scotland³⁶ and an interesting taster training session on self-harm.

Development of 7-minute Briefings

In January 2025 we introduced a monthly 7-minute briefing which we share on our website. Our first three in the year covered the topics of Assessing Decision Making Capacity, Family B Learning Review and Marac. These are a quick way for staff to learn about a key topic, with reference to relevant resources. These are being well received by staff.

This is fantastic - love the idea and this new series.

These briefings are an excellent idea....the format and topic are both really useful.

Multi-agency Reflection of Complex Cases – Child Protection

In one of our Learning Reviews staff identified that they would welcome the opportunity to have a reflection session in complex cases. The Child Protection Lead Officer facilitated three such sessions in the year (with cross-authority support to co-facilitate one) where staff came together for multi-agency reflection on some particularly complex cases (around complex health needs, parental substance use and cumulative neglect/disability). Staff involved in these sessions fed back that they welcomed the opportunity to talk through the challenges and dilemmas in practice on a multi-agency basis, in a safe and supportive environment. A lot of the learning from those sessions reflected the challenges staff face in their day-to-day practice and tools to support their work, including:

- How the voice of the infant is captured in assessment and analysis.
- Understanding legislation within Child Protection.
- The use of chronologies and Neglect Toolkit.
- Early information sharing of concerns, involving the family early and providing them with accessible information.
- Co-ordination of health professionals and identification of a Lead Professional when there are complex medical issues.

³⁵ [Epione](#)

³⁶ <https://selfharmnetworkscotland.org.uk/>

Attendance at Training

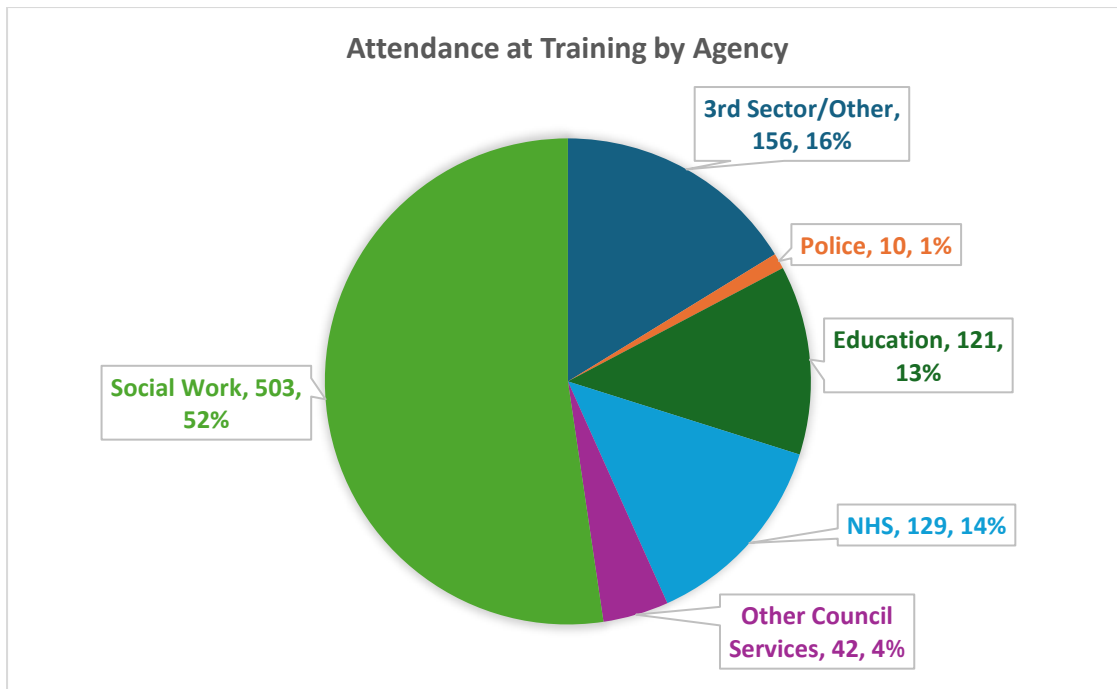
68.5% of available spaces on courses (1283 available spaces) were used – across all courses we could have offered another 400 spaces to staff. Demand exceeded supply for only one course, the Child Protection Risk Assessment and Processes course, and we delivered two further courses in response.

347 staff signed up for training courses and withdrew from the training or did not attend. Of those, 49.6% (172) did not turn up on the day and did not provide any notice that they were not going to be attending. 23% (80) provided less than five days' notice, and 27.4% (95) pulled out with more than five days' notice.

Interestingly the rate of use of available spaces was around the same as the previous two years (regardless of the number of courses and people attending); in 2023-24 we filled 67.9% of spaces, and 67.0% the year before. We recognise that there will always be some staff who need to withdraw from training at short notice, but we will seek to promote a message that staff should only sign up for training if they can commit to attend, and it is important for senior managers and leaders to support their operational managers to find ways to release staff to attend training. We also need to acknowledge the administrative burden of processing training applications for staff who withdraw or do not turn up, in addition to the risk of cancelling a course when staff withdraw.

Follow up was made with all staff who did not attend on the day of the training, with the most common reason for non-attendance being short notice operational demands or staff absence. We maintain an overview of attendance at our Learning and Practice Development Sub-group and have recognised the need for a higher-level overview about the patterns of non-attendance. In the coming year, we will review the themes and patterns about which services are withdrawing from training. Whilst there may be some staff who sign up for training and feel they need to pull out because they are too busy, it is important for senior managers and leaders to support their operational managers to find ways to release staff to attend training.

The profile of attendees by agency is shown in the chart below. We have recognised the low take up of training by Police and are working with our Police partners to find ways to increase this take up in the coming year.



What next?

- We will implement our Strategy for Learning and Practice Development 2025-27.
- We will strengthen our approach to maximising attendance at training and reviewing non-attendance at training.
- We will work with partners to ensure that staff who attend training provide feedback.

2.5 Raising awareness of Public Protection through communications and engagement with staff and communities – what we achieved

EMPPC Website and Branding

We were delighted to launch our new website in October 2024. Our new website was developed by the Communications Team in the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration, who will maintain this for us going forward.

We had been without a dedicated website for the Committee since October 2023 and recognised that our previous website was out of date and not accessible. In the interim period, partner agencies temporarily hosted Procedures and Guidance which were therefore still accessible to staff.

Our website is fresh and vibrant with a new logo and branding for EMPPC, which we now use across various documents, templates and Microsoft Teams Backgrounds for the EMPPC Chair and Public Protection Office staff. The website has accessibility and translation tools which assist us to meet our requirements for accessibility.

The EMPPC website serves two purposes. It is for staff, volunteers and decision makers who work in East Lothian and Midlothian and who need to know more about Public Protection and access resources and information for their work. The website is also for members of the public who want to know what to do if they are concerned that a child or adult might be at

risk of harm. If someone does an internet search that they are concerned or worried about a child or adult in East Lothian or Midlothian, our website appears in the top three searches. There is a dedicated page 'Concerned about a child or adult' which easily and quickly signposts to the relevant area with contact details.

We have dedicated pages for Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection, Violence Against Women and Girls and MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) with frequently asked questions about those topics. On our Learning and Development page staff can access our training calendar, information about how to book on training, and course descriptors. Our Resources page includes all our latest resources and publications, including Procedures, Guidance, 7-minute briefings and newsletters. The website has also enabled us to communicate information about the Committee, including who we are, what we do and our vision.

We have received positive feedback from staff about our website.

Our early analytics indicate that the home page had nearly 1500 hits in the first six months of going live, with people accessing the training pages most often, followed by the resources section. We have further work to do to promote the dedicated pages for Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection, Violence Against Women and Girls and MAPPA. 86% of users have visited our website via their desktop and 14% via a mobile phone or tablet. Going forward we will place our relevant guidance documents and Procedures on the website and direct staff to the website rather than sending documents by email.

EMPPC Newsletter

We continued our commitment to develop and disseminate a quarterly newsletter to staff across East Lothian and Midlothian, with a distribution to over 500 named individuals and teams³⁷. Whilst our exact reach is not known, we know it is shared widely across networks, and we have received positive feedback from staff about its style and content. We now place the newsletter on our website so the latest and back-copies can be accessed by staff.

Our newsletter provides the opportunity to raise awareness of the work of the Committee, with a regular feature on a Committee member, about their role and contribution to the work of the Committee. We include articles on Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls. The newsletter provides a good opportunity to highlight connecting themes with Spotlight articles on Sextortion (May 2024) Information Sharing in Child and Adult Support and Protection (August 2024) Defensible Decision Making (November 2024), Working with People who services find hard to engage (February 2025).

We disseminate resource materials to support awareness raising of key issues to staff and advertise free external training opportunities, which we have collated into one regular bulletin, in response to feedback about the amount of free training that is available to staff both locally and nationally.

³⁷ [EMPPC Resources - Newsletters](#)

What next?

- We will develop and implement a communications strategy and plan for EMPPC.

Section 3 – Data and Performance Information

Adult Support and Protection

Adult Support and Protection performance information and data are discussed and reviewed by the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group, with pre-discussion with relevant operational staff involved in Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian and Midlothian.

Whilst we benefit from coming together as two areas to share learning and expertise, we recognise the differing structures in the delivery of Adult Support and Protection work and are therefore cautious about making direct comparisons between the two areas. In East Lothian Council Officers are located across a number of teams, and Council Officers undertake a mixture of short- and longer-term work. In Midlothian there is a dedicated Adult Support and Protection Team which deals with the majority of the longer-term work, although there is a wider group of Council Officers located in other teams within Adult Services who primarily undertake duty work.

Adult Support and Protection Processes

When a referral is made to the Council Contact Centre in East Lothian or Midlothian, the referral is screened to determine if it should be dealt with under Adult Support and Protection, within a local timescale standard of one day. If it is, an inquiry will be undertaken by a Council Officer, who is a Social Worker with specialist training to undertake Adult Support and Protection work. In each area there is a local standard of completing an inquiry within 21 days. At the current time there are no targets attached to either timescales, as it is still early days in terms of data collation.

An Adult Support and Protection inquiry will be undertaken either without the use of investigatory powers or with the use of investigatory powers. An inquiry without the use of investigatory powers is essentially a desktop exercise (which can include records checks and contact with other professionals for information). Powers include a visit to the adult, any interview in private with the adult, medical examination, examination of records (where a formal request to do so has been made) or the use of a Protection Order.

Phase two of the national Adult Support and Protection National Minimum Dataset was introduced from Quarter 1, 2024/25 (from April 2024). To support the implementation of Phase two, it has been necessary to make some changes to the local Social Work recording systems and data reporting systems.

The data that follows includes the number of referrals received in the year. Information about Adult Support and Protection inquires relates to the number started in the year.

East Lothian

Referrals

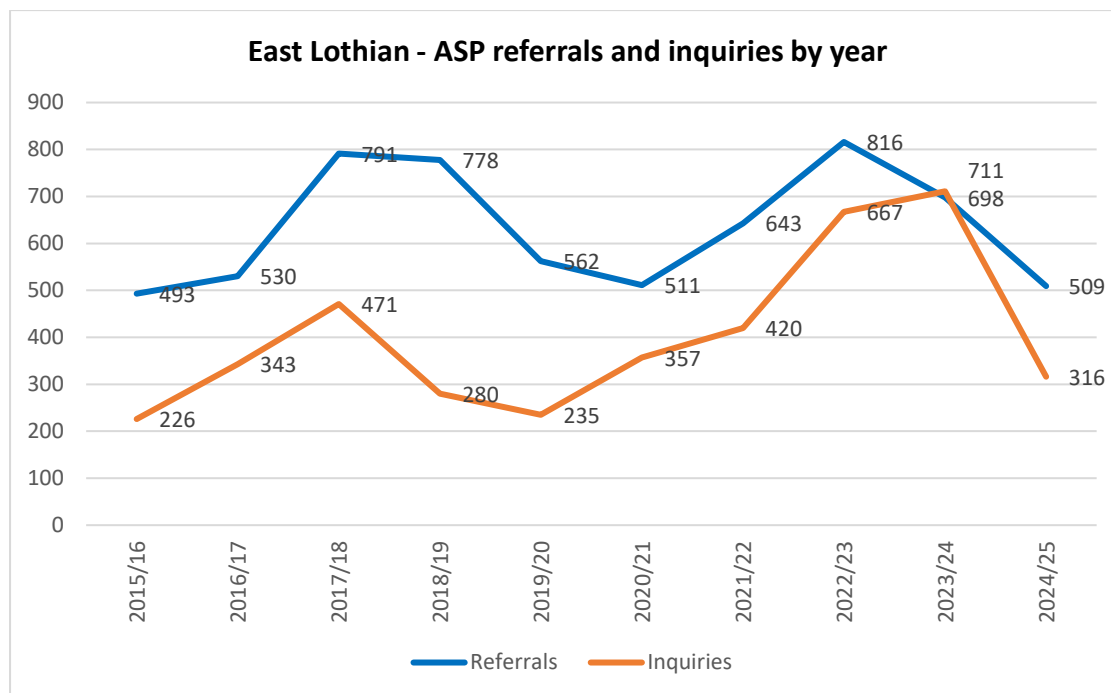


Figure 1 East Lothian - number of Adult Support and Protection referrals and inquiries by year

The breakdown of referrals by source is shown below. There are now 33 different source categories, but for ease of reading, we have combined some of these for 'other' where there were fewer than six referrals per category and different NHS services have also been combined. In common with other years, Social Work, Police and NHS are the three most frequent referrers, but referrals were received from across 25 of the 33 source categories in the year.

During 2023-24 a change in the way in which Adult Support and Protection referrals were counted in East Lothian has impacted on the 2024/25 reporting and contributed to the drop in referrals.

There was a reduction by 189 in the number of referrals badged as Adult Support and Protection received by East Lothian Council. 47% of the reduction in Adult Support and Protection referrals derived from a reduction in referrals made by the Third Sector, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Adult Social Work and family, friends and neighbours. The remaining reduction was in the number of Police referrals received. As part of our continuing work on developing our approach to communications, we will engage with partner agencies and local communities in the coming year to promote Adult Support and Protection as everyone's responsibility.

During the year there was a change in the way in which Police referrals were counted, with all previously having been marked as an Adult Support and Protection referral regardless of whether badged as that by Police. In 2024/25 the referral counting more accurately

recorded the referral as that badged by the sender (as noted in the national minimum dataset).

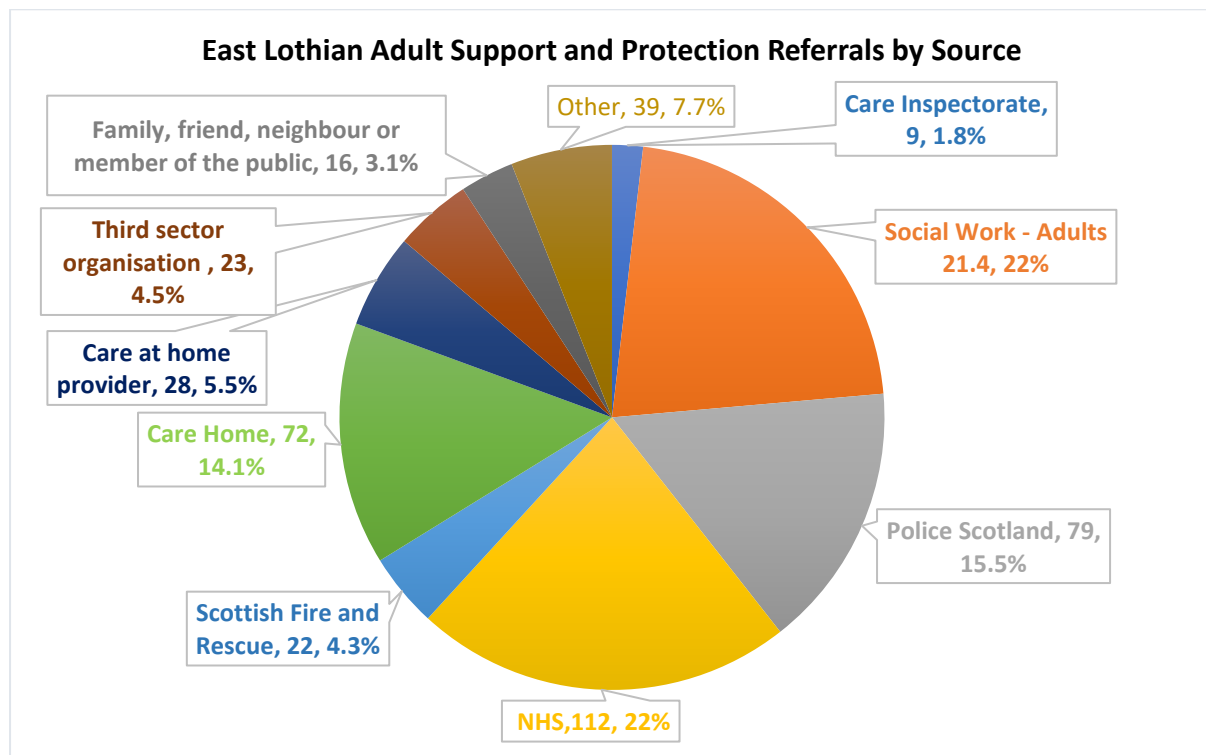


Figure 2 East Lothian - Adult Support and Protection referrals received in 2024/25 by source

Note: source other includes referrals received from 9 other organisation types where there were fewer than 6 referrals per organisation

During the year there was a routing of more Adult Support and Protection referrals to general Adult Social Work duty rather than an Adult Support and Protection inquiry, which we can see in both the reduction in inquiries and conversion rate returning to the levels seen in 2020-21 and 2021-22. Managerial oversight provided assurance that assessment and support needs were addressed although not progressed under Adult Support and Protection.

There has been a considerable amount of work undertaken in East Lothian during the year to develop robust systems in line with the changing requirements of the national minimum dataset. This has included interrogating data reporting processes, documenting reporting and counting rules and seeking clarification from the national Adult Support and Protection leads. East Lothian has benefited from the introduction of dedicated Quality Assurance Lead roles for Adult Support and Protection who have laid down the foundation for future reporting that is bringing consistency of approach and will support reporting requirements. East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership has robust internal quality assurance arrangements, with a quarterly Oversight Group meeting to review performance, audit findings, and emerging themes across Adult Social Work Services.

Inquiries

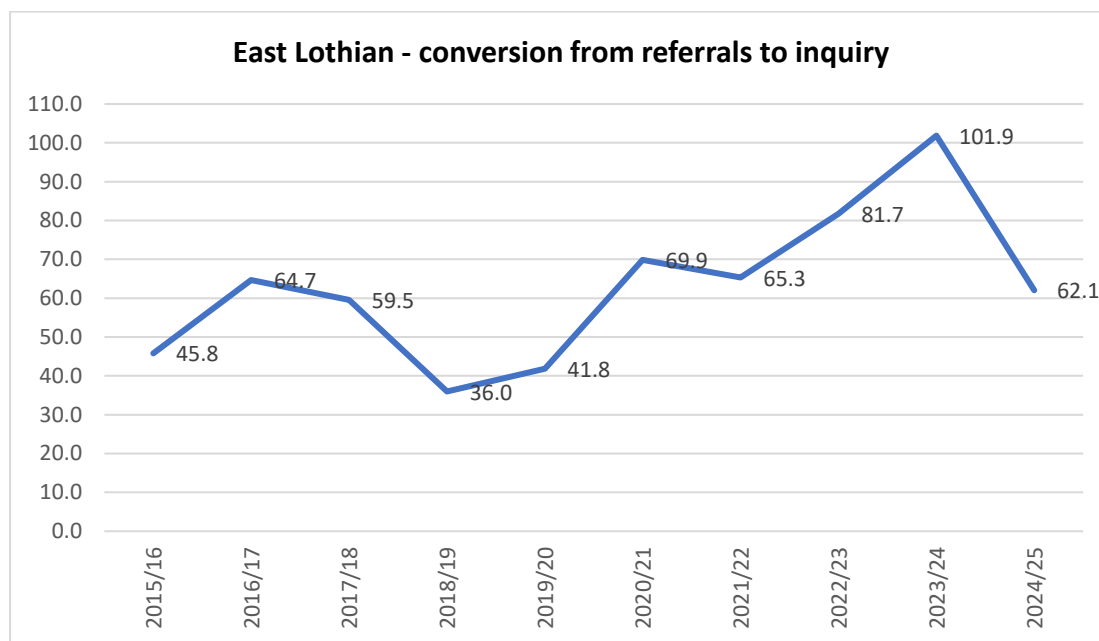


Figure 3 East Lothian - conversion from Adult Support and Protection referrals to inquiries

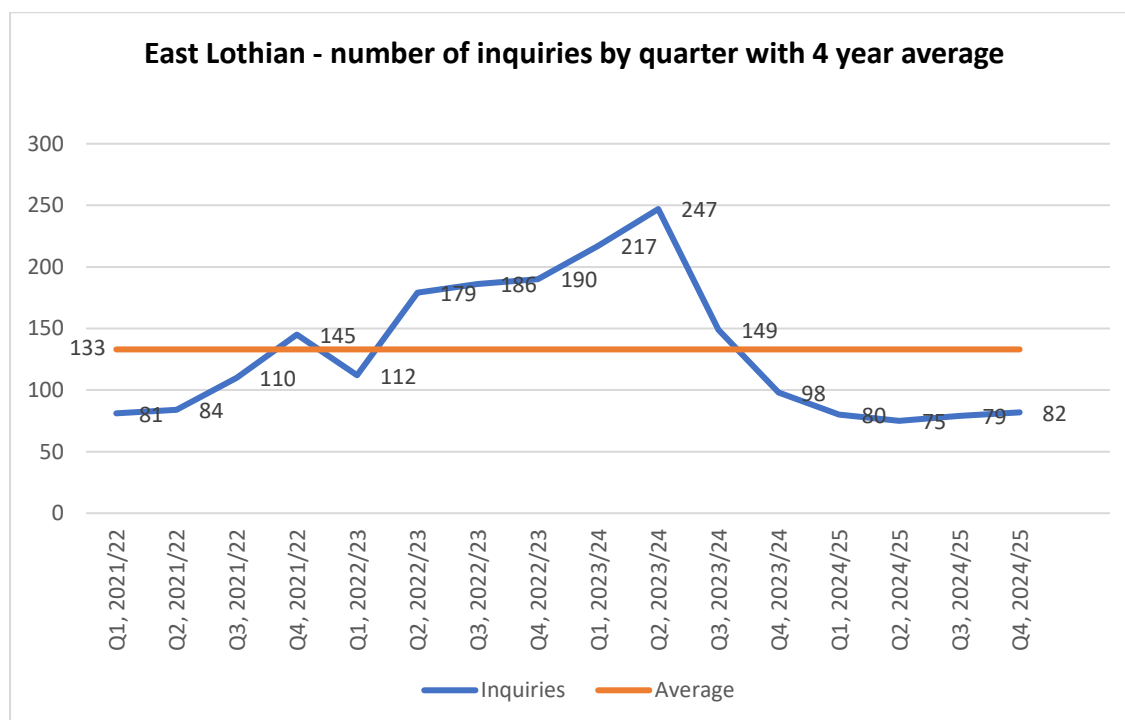


Figure 4 East Lothian - number of Adult Support and Protection inquiries by quarter with 4-year average

The breakdown of Adult Support and Protection inquiries by use of powers or no use of powers is shown in the following two graphs. Whilst there has been a reduction in the number of Adult Support and Protection inquiries, there has been a sustained shift in the majority of those involving the use of at least one power. This gives good assurance that in the majority of inquiries, the Council Officer is visiting the adult and therefore the adult is being given the opportunity to express their views.

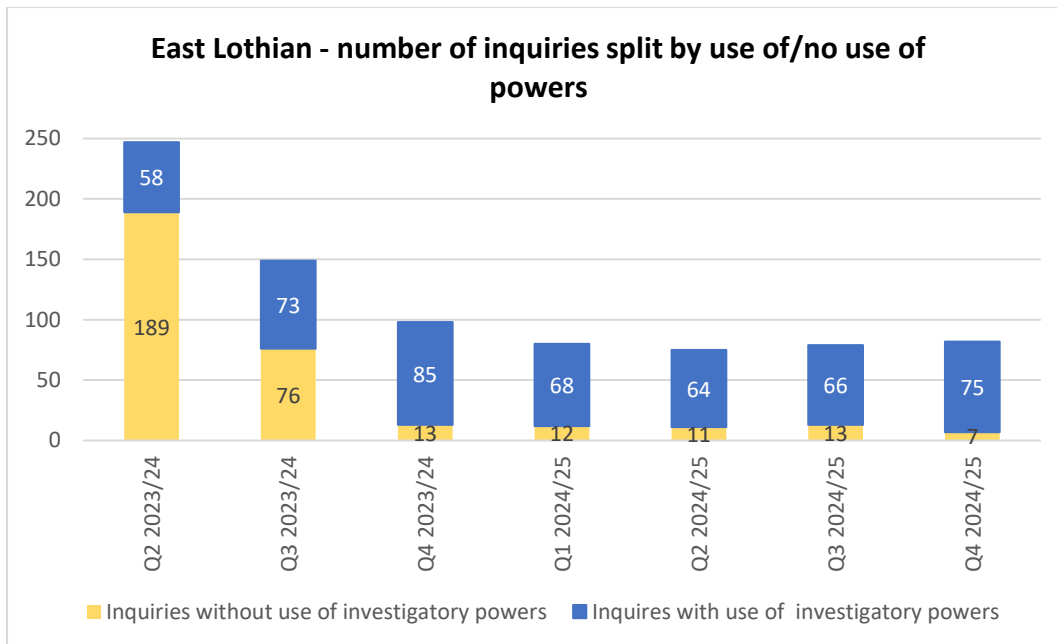


Figure 5 East Lothian - Adult Support and Protection inquiries broken down by use of powers or no use of powers

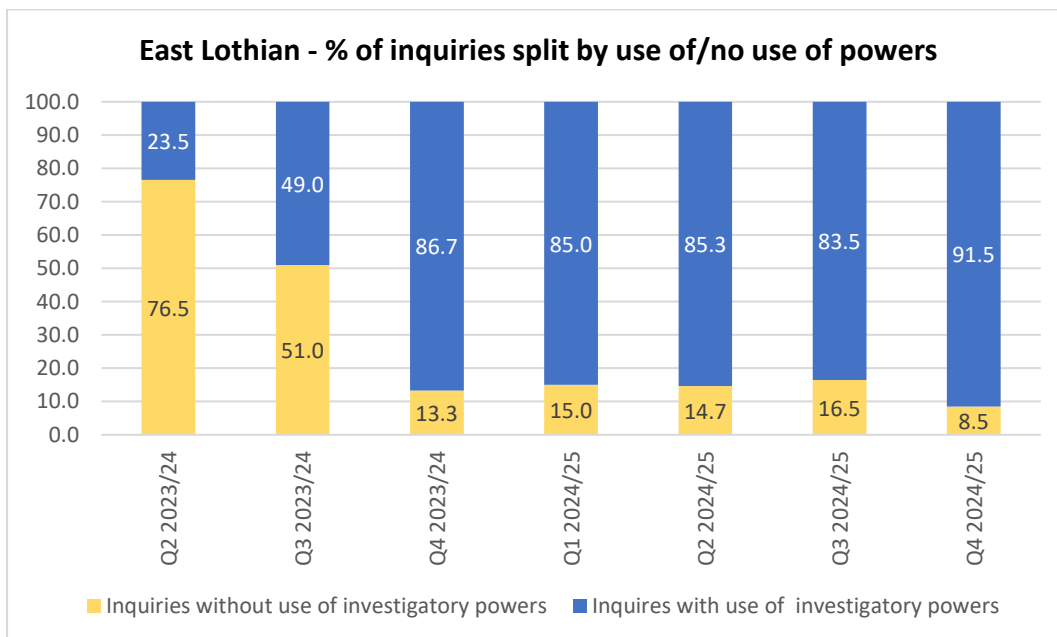


Figure 6 East Lothian - % of Adult Support and Protection inquiries split by use of and no use of powers

Performance in meeting local timescale standards

East Lothian has consistently achieved high performance in relation to the local standard of screening over 95% of Adult Support and Protection referrals within one day of receipt. Performance in relation to completing an inquiry within 21 calendar days from screening has been monitored every quarter and there is confidence that timely and proportionate action has been taken to support the adult.

East Lothian - % of Adult Support and Protection inquiries completed within 21 days			
Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
88%	94%	89%	78%

Figure 7 East Lothian - % of Adult Support and Protection inquiries completed within 21 days of screening

Characteristics of inquiries

In 42.4% of Adult Support and Protection inquiries (134) the adult was male, and in 57.0% (180) the adult was female. In two cases the adult identified as non-binary or trans. In 97.8% of inquiries, the adult's ethnic group was white. In 21.2% (67) of the inquiries, the adult was 80 years of age or over, and in three cases the inquiry was for someone aged 16 or 17. In those cases there was evidence of good communication with Children's Services and appropriate consideration of whether the use of Child Protection Procedures (which apply to anyone under the age of 18) or Adult Support and Protection Procedures (which apply to anyone from the age of 16), in line with our local Procedures.

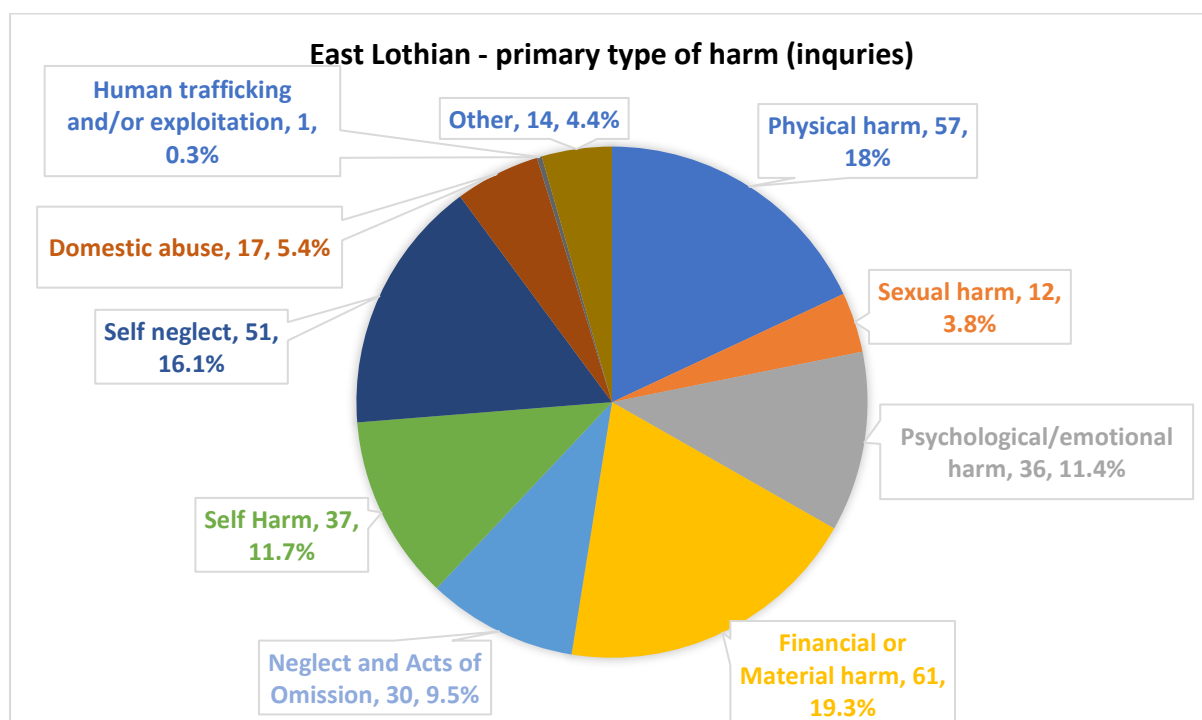


Figure 8 East Lothian - primary type of harm identified in Adult Support and Protection inquiries in 2024/25

Outcome of inquiries

Outcome of inquiries	Number	%
Does not meet 3-point test	192	60.8%
Meets 3-point test	99	31.3%
Pending ³⁸	25	7.9%

Figure 9 East Lothian - outcome of ASP inquiries in 2024/25

Case Conferences

There were 108 Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences in the year, 43 of which were initial Case Conferences and 65 were review Case Conferences. An adult may have had more than one review Case Conference in the year. 66 adults were invited to attend the 108 Case Conferences, with 37 adults attending. In the coming year, we will strengthen our approach to how we monitor the offer and take up of independent advocacy and how well the adult's views and wishes are being heard and taken into account in Case Conferences.

Midlothian

Referrals and Inquiries

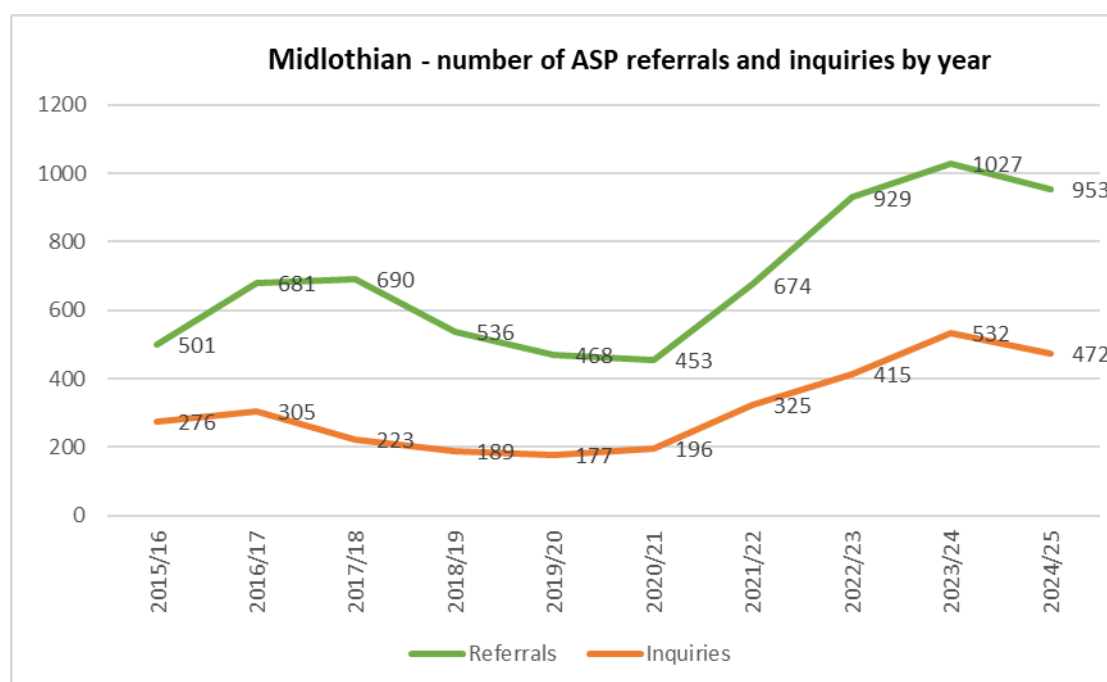


Figure 9 Midlothian number of ASP referrals and inquiries by year

The breakdown of referrals by source is shown below.

³⁸ At quarter end when the data was collated

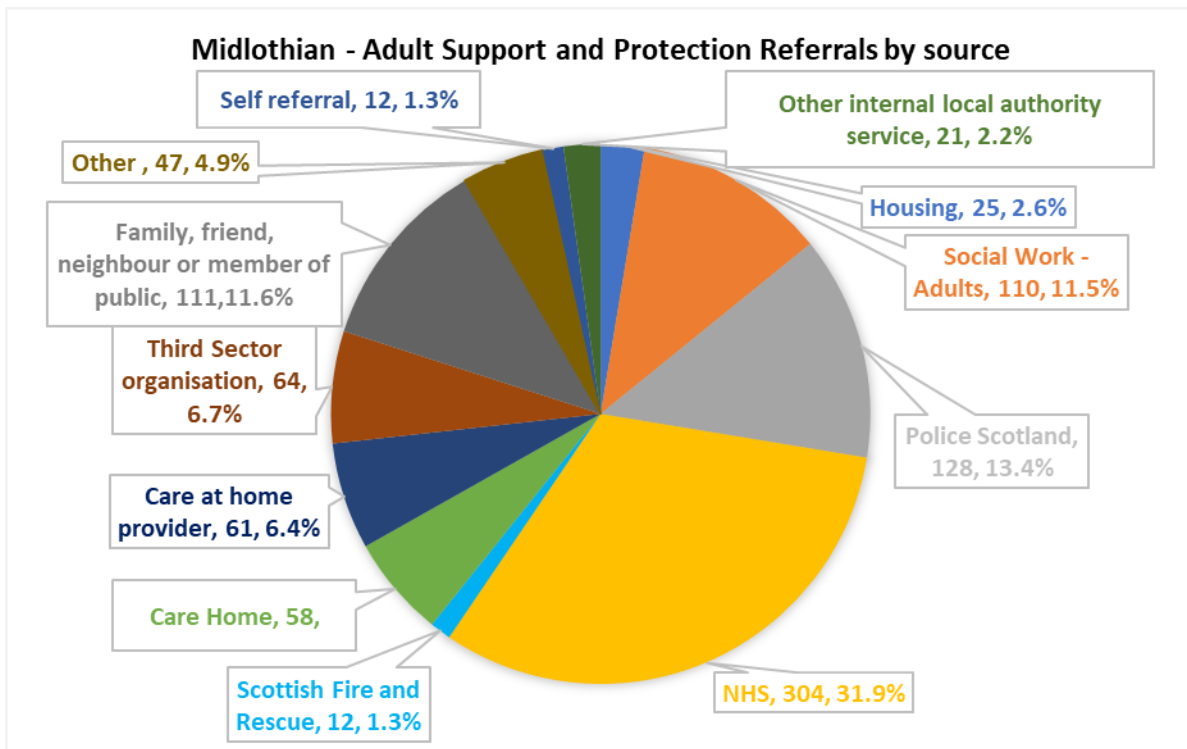


Figure 10 Midlothian - Adult Support and Protection referrals broken down by referral source in 2025-25

Referrals were received from 28 of the 33 source categories. The 'other' category in the figure above includes referrals that were not identified as fitting one of the identified categories, or one or two referrals per source. The national minimum dataset breaks down NHS into different category types, but for ease of reporting, we have combined these. The number of referrals received from people known to the adult or a member of the public suggests a good level of awareness within the local community of the need to raise an Adult Support and Protection referral. In addition, the Midlothian Council Contact Centre proactively checks out at referral stage if the referrer is seeking for the concern to be dealt with as an Adult Support and Protection referral. 57% of referrals were from Police, Social Work or NHS, which is in common with other years.

The processes for the screening and routing of referrals to the appropriate team within Midlothian are robust, with the dedicated Adult Support and Protection team screening over 95% of referrals within 24 hours of receipt.

Inquiries

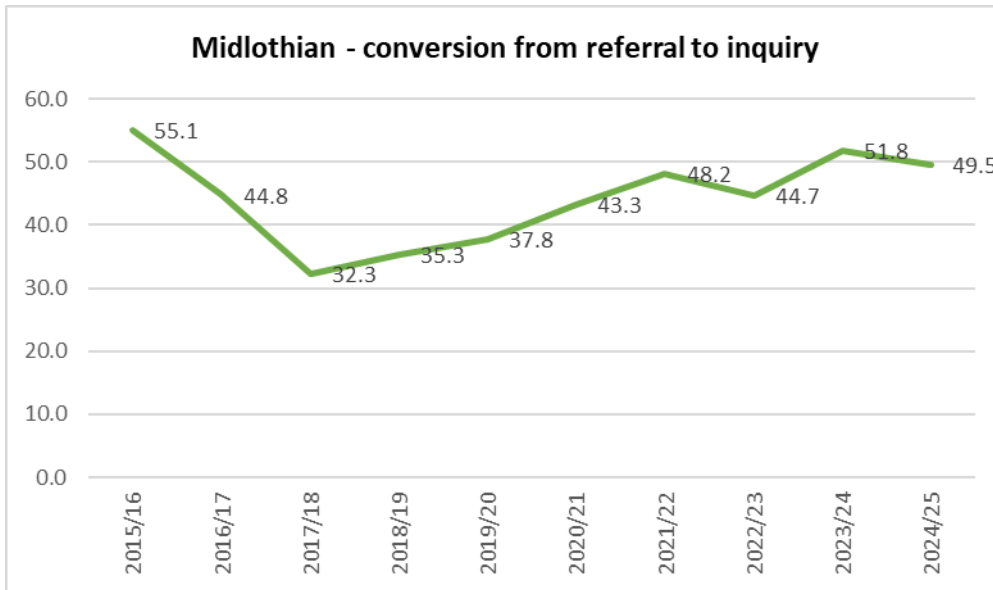


Figure 11 Midlothian - conversion from Adult Support and Protection referral to inquiry

The proportion of referrals that lead to an inquiry in Midlothian has remained stable over a number of years now. Where a referral is assessed as not requiring to be dealt with under Adult Support and Protection, but further assessment and support are required, it is appropriately routed to one of the other teams within the Health and Social Care Partnership.

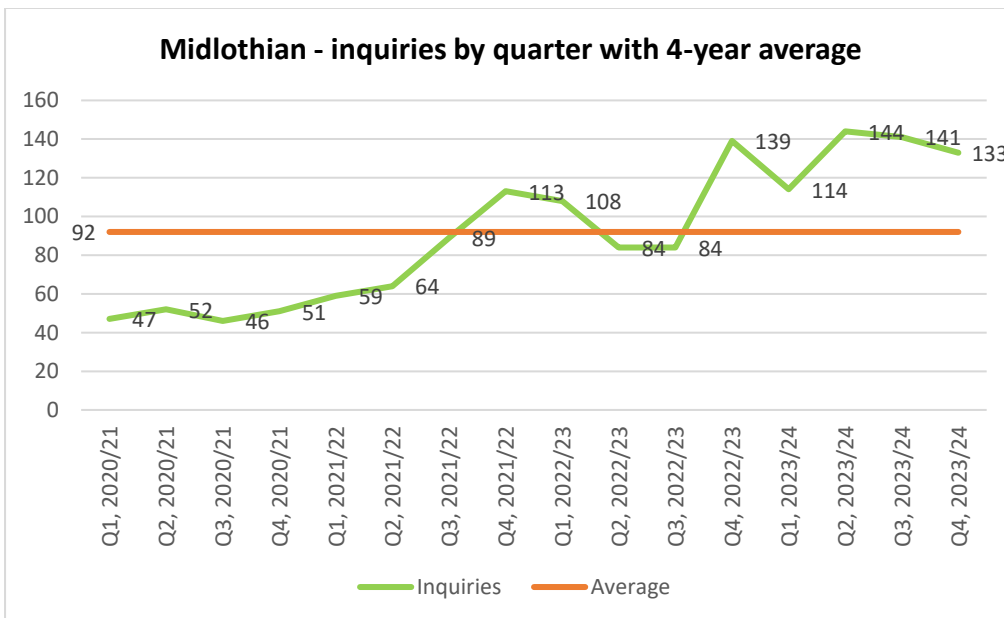


Figure 12 Midlothian – number of Adult Support and Protection inquiries by quarter with 4-year average

The breakdown of Adult Support and Protection inquiries by use of powers or no use of powers is shown in the following two graphs. There has been a sustained shift in the majority of those involving the use of at least one power. The breakdown of type of power used has been reviewed and reported on a quarterly basis to the Performance and Quality

Improvement Sub-group. There is good assurance that in the majority of inquiries, the adult is being visited by the Council Officer and private interviews with the adult are taking place when required, and the adult is being given the opportunity to express their views. We have confidence that Council Officers are appropriately using powers in their Adult Support and Protection work.

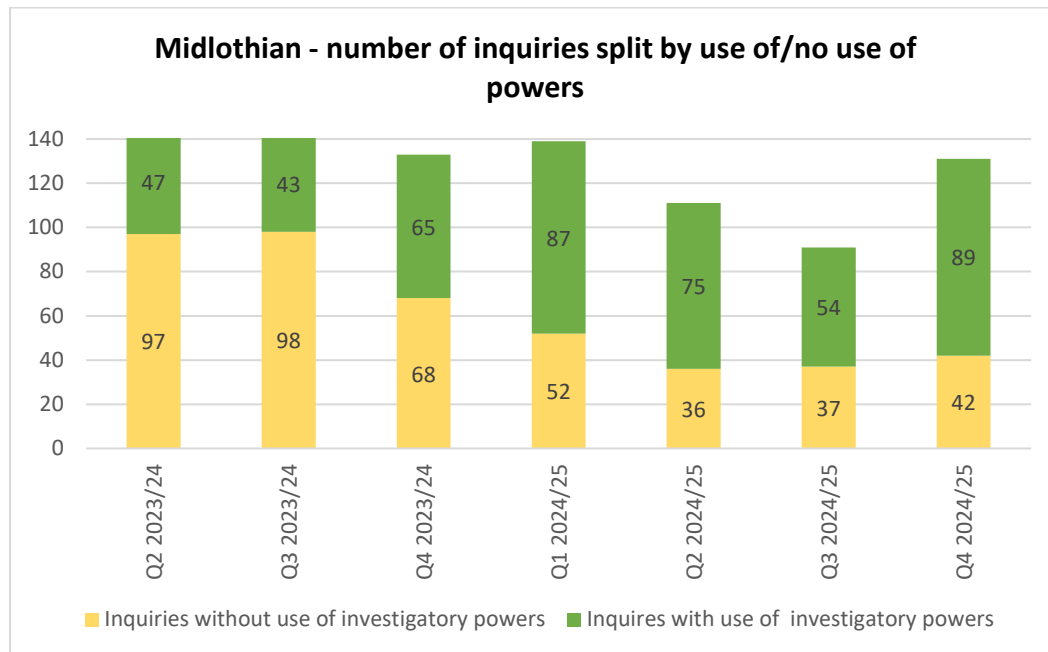


Figure 13 Midlothian – number of Adult Support and Protection inquiries split by use of powers/no use of powers

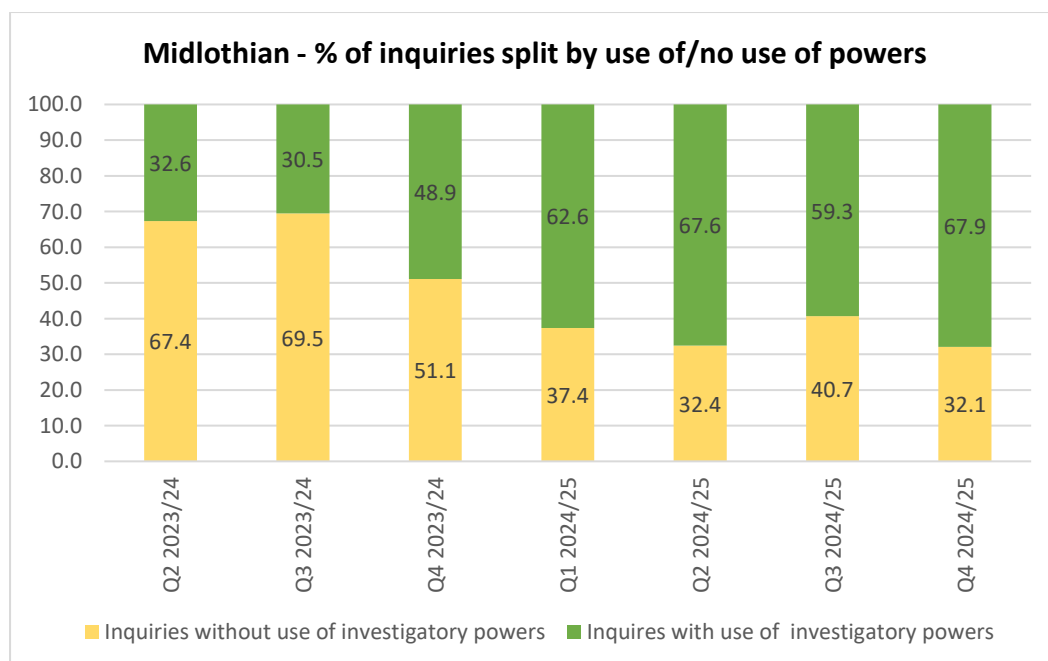


Figure 14 Midlothian - % of Adult Support and Protection inquiries split by use/no use of powers

Midlothian has consistently achieved high performance in relation to the local standard of screening over 95% of Adult Support and Protection referrals within one day of receipt.

Performance in relation to completing an inquiry within 21 calendar days from receipt has been monitored every quarter and there is confidence that timely and proportionate action has been taken to support the adult. For those inquiries that have exceeded the standard, assurance has been provided that the adult has been kept safe, with reasons usually being related to gathering information, particularly around financial harm and formal requests to banks for access to records.

Midlothian - % of Adult Support and Protection inquiries completed within 21 days			
Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
82%	86%	67%	72%

Figure 15 Midlothian - % of Adult Support and Protection inquiries completed within 21 days

Characteristics of inquiries

In 38.1% of Adult Support and Protection inquiries (180) the adult was male, and in 61.9% (292) the adult was female. Where the adult’s ethnicity was recorded, almost all were white, but in 36.9% of inquiries, the adult’s ethnic group was recorded as not known; this is an aspect of recording that requires improvement.

In 22.7% (107) of the inquiries, the adult was 80 years of age or over, and in 13 cases the adult was aged 16 or 17. In those cases there was evidence of good communication with Children’s Services and appropriate consideration of whether the use of Child Protection Procedures (which apply to anyone under the age of 18) or Adult Support and Protection Procedures (which apply to anyone from the age of 16), in line with our local Procedures.

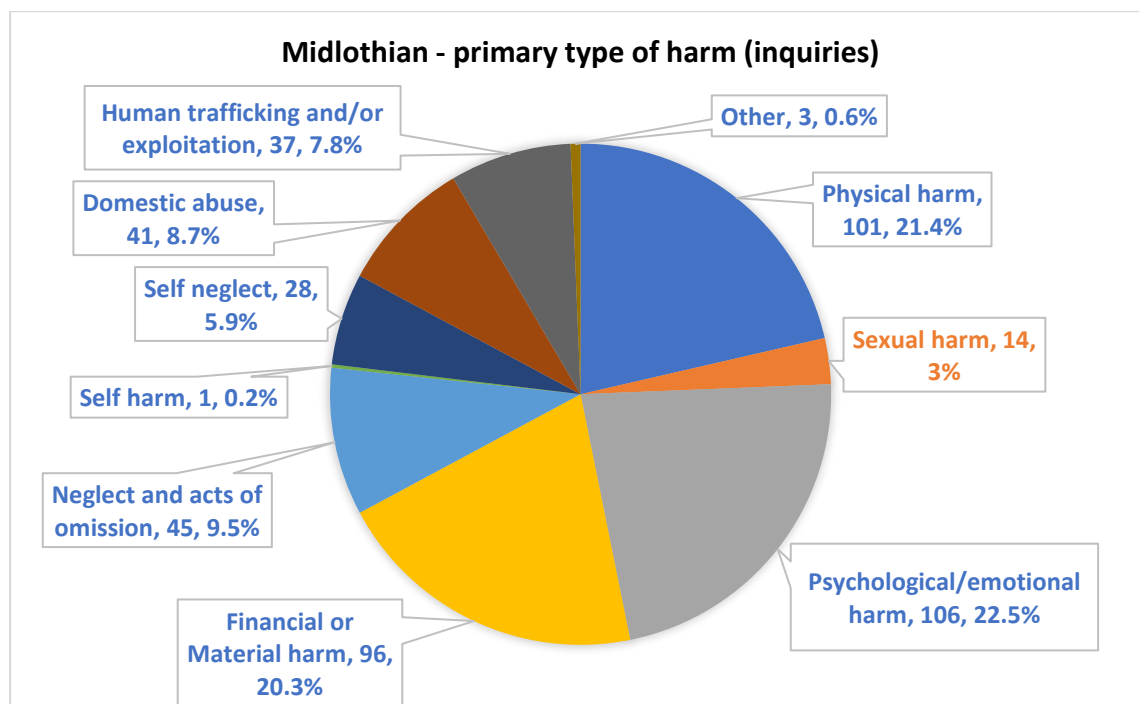


Figure 16 – Midlothian - primary type of harm identified in Adult Support and Protection inquiries in 2024/25

Outcome of inquiries

Outcome of inquiries	Number	%
Does not meet 3-point test	367	77.8%
Meets 3-point test	90	19.1%
Pending ³⁹	15	3.2%

Figure 17 Midlothian - outcome of Adult Support and Protection inquiries in 2024/25

Case Conferences

There were 46 Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences in the year, 20 of which were initial Case Conferences and 26 were review Case Conferences. An adult may have had more than one review Case Conference in the year. In 44 of the 46 Case Conferences, the adult was invited to attend the Case Conference, and in 30 cases, the adult attended. In the coming year, we will strengthen our approach to how we monitor the offer and take up of independent advocacy and how well the adult's views and wishes are being heard and taken into account in Case Conferences.

Child Protection

Child Protection performance information and data are discussed and reviewed by the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group. In advance of this, a multi-agency group comes together to scrutinise the information in greater detail and produce a comprehensive report for consideration at the Sub-group. This has continued to work well for us as this supports us to manage the time-lag between academic quarterly reporting of Child Protection data and financial quarterly meetings, by identifying any issues and themes that need further exploring or addressing. We use our data to consider the implications for improvement work, learning and development and further quality assurance activity. For example, the workshops for IRD participants are shaped by what we are learning from the data and IRD Oversight Group.

The Scottish Government published the annual Children's Social Work Statistics 2023-24 – Child Protection on 25th March 2025⁴⁰. This covers data on children subject to Child Protection between 1st August 2023 and 31st July 2024. We reviewed this data at our Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group to give us a national and local comparator.

The data that follows includes a combination of the annual statistics published by the Scottish Government and the quarterly data reviewed by the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group. For ease of reference, this is shown below.

³⁹ At quarter end when the data was collated

⁴⁰ [Children's Social Work Statistics 2023-24 – Child Protection](#)

Annual reporting to Scottish Government (statistics published in March 2025) (year ending 31 st July 2024)	EMPPC Annual Reporting (year ending 31 st March 2025)
Quarter 4, May to July 2024 Quarter 3, February to April 2024 Quarter 2, November 2023 to January 2024 Quarter 1, August to October 2023	Quarter 2, November 2024 to January 2025 Quarter 1, August to October 2024 Quarter 4, May to July 2024 Quarter 3, February to April 2024

Figure 18 Quarterly dates of reporting of Child Protection data

Child Protection Processes

An Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is the start of the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision making where one or more of the core agencies (Health, Police and Social Work) assess that there is a risk of significant harm to a child up to the age of 18 years. The next two figures below show the number and rate of IRDs per 1,000 children.

We are confident that our IRD processes are robust, with an IRD Oversight Group meeting taking place fortnightly in each area, attended by the core partners. These Groups review all IRDs to quality assure decision making and interim safety planning. Any themes from IRDs are fed back to individual services and are used to inform learning and development and improvement activities, in particular IRD participant developmental workshops.

A Child Protection Planning Meeting (CPPM) is a formal multi-disciplinary meeting to decide whether the child is at risk of significant harm and devise a plan to reduce the risk. If a child is considered to be at risk of significant harm, their name may be placed on the Child Protection Register (CPR) which is a register of all children who are the subject of an inter-agency Child Protection Plan. It has no legal status but provides an administrative system to alert practitioners that the child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm.

Inter-agency Referral Discussions – Scottish Government Annual Reporting

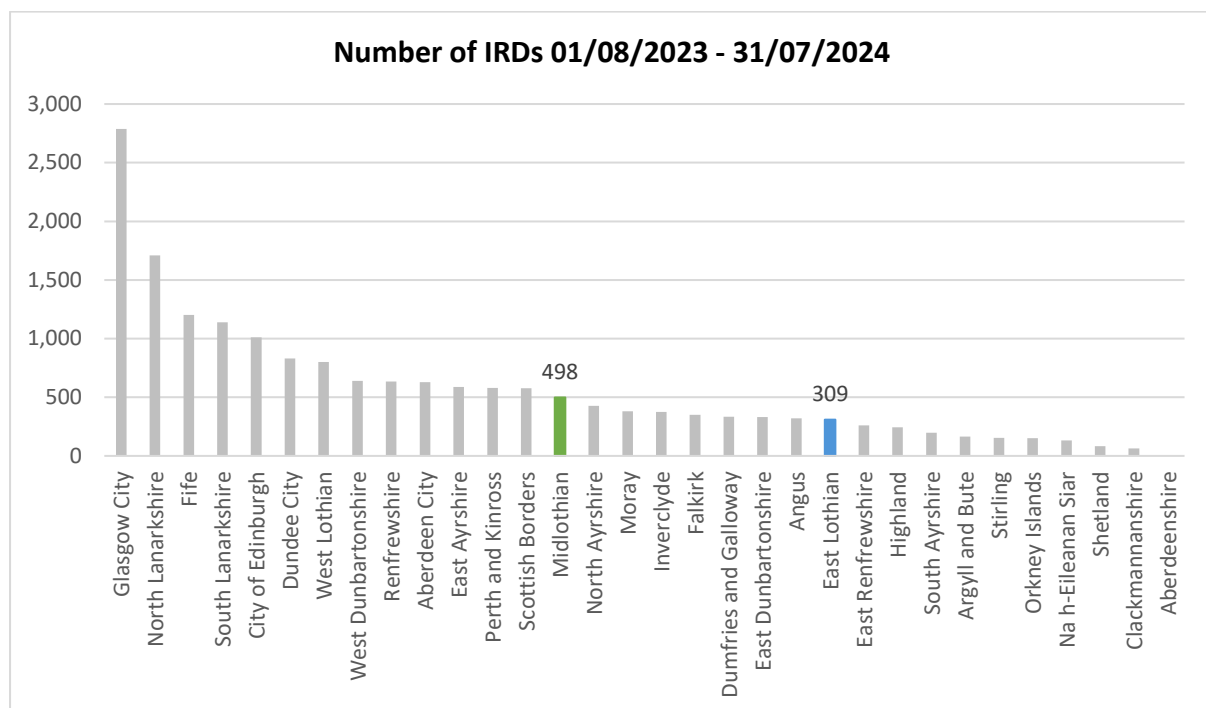


Figure 19 Number of Child Protection IRDs, year ending 31st July 2024

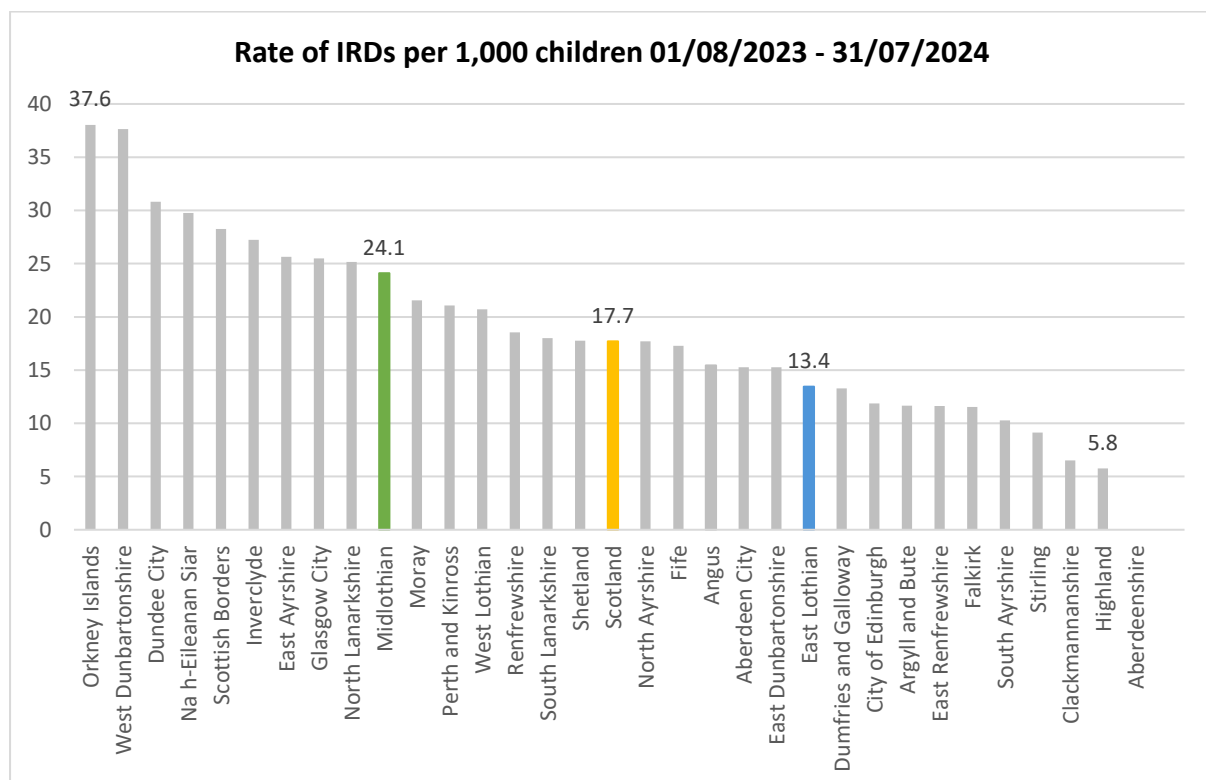


Figure 20 Rate of IRDs per 1,000 children, year ending 31st July 2024

Between 2022-23 and 2023-24 East Lothian had a decrease of 37 in the number of IRDs, which equated to a 4.1% decrease in the rate per 1,000 children. Midlothian had a decrease of 6 in the number of IRDs, which equated to a 3.5% decrease in the rate per 1,000 children.

We did not expect to see any significant change in either of our areas between the two years, having reviewed this every quarter and having well-established practice in place.

Whilst we cannot comment on any change in practice in other individual Local Authority areas around the country, we can clearly see the shift in position of East Lothian and Midlothian in comparison to other areas, as 22 Local Authorities saw an increase in the number of IRDs from the previous year. East Lothian shifted from having the 9th highest rate of IRDs per 1,000 children of all 32 Local Authority areas in 2023-24 to having the 23rd highest rate in 2023-24. Midlothian shifted from having the 2nd highest rate to having the 10th highest rate. We know from previous discussions locally and nationally that some other Local Authority areas were at an earlier journey in IRD practice in comparison to Edinburgh and the Lothians. We have continually recognised that our IRD processes are well aligned with the National Guidance for Child Protection 2021 and IRD practice has been well embedded for a number of years now, so we were not surprised to see this shift in other Local Authorities between the two years.

IRDs – EMPPC Annual Reporting

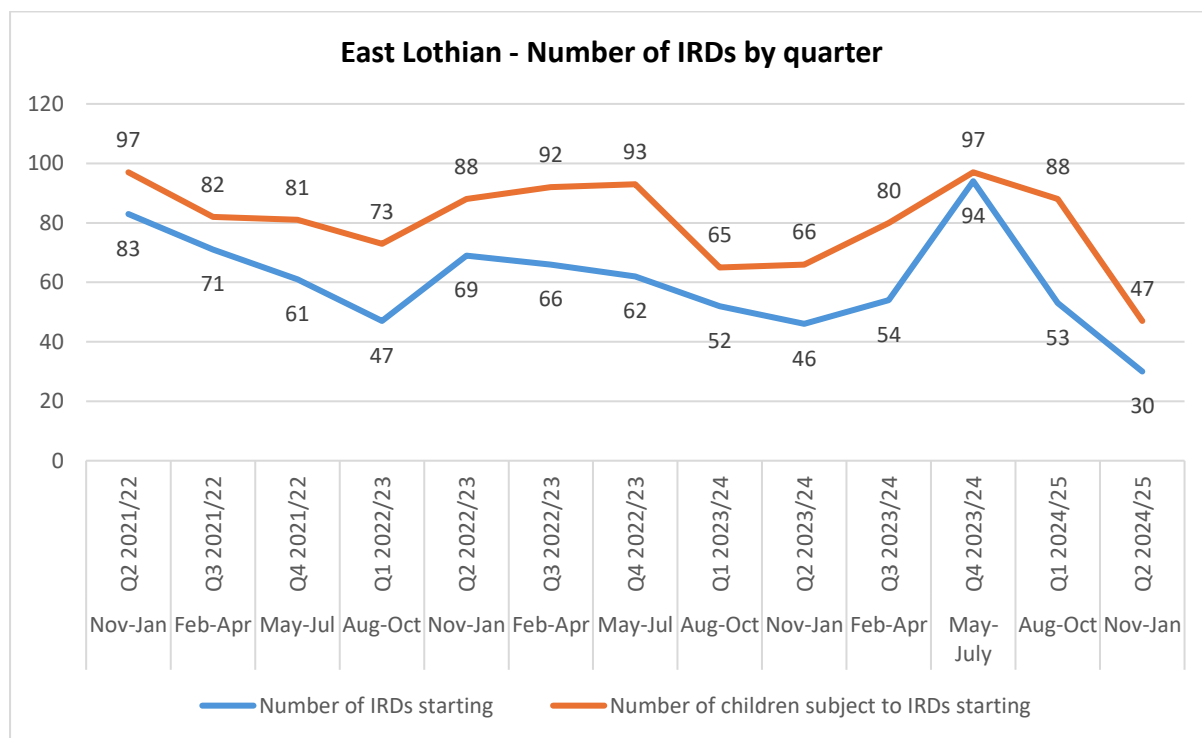


Figure 21 East Lothian - number of IRDs by quarter, year ending 31st January 2025

Figure 21 shows the number of IRDs by quarter (the number of IRDs relate to family groups). In the last quarter covered by this report (quarter 2, November 2024 to January 2025) we saw the lowest number of IRDs recorded since 2015. We know there can be fluctuations from one quarter to the next, so it is important to not draw any conclusions quickly based on one quarter. We will keep a watching brief on this but as we already know we will see an increase in the next reporting quarter, there have been no changes to process or practice, and IRDs are demand-led, therefore we are not concerned at the low number in the last quarter reported here.

Midlothian has traditionally had a high number of IRDs every quarter. We are confident that IRD practice is robust. The larger numbers are often associated with larger families, which is a recurring theme in Midlothian.

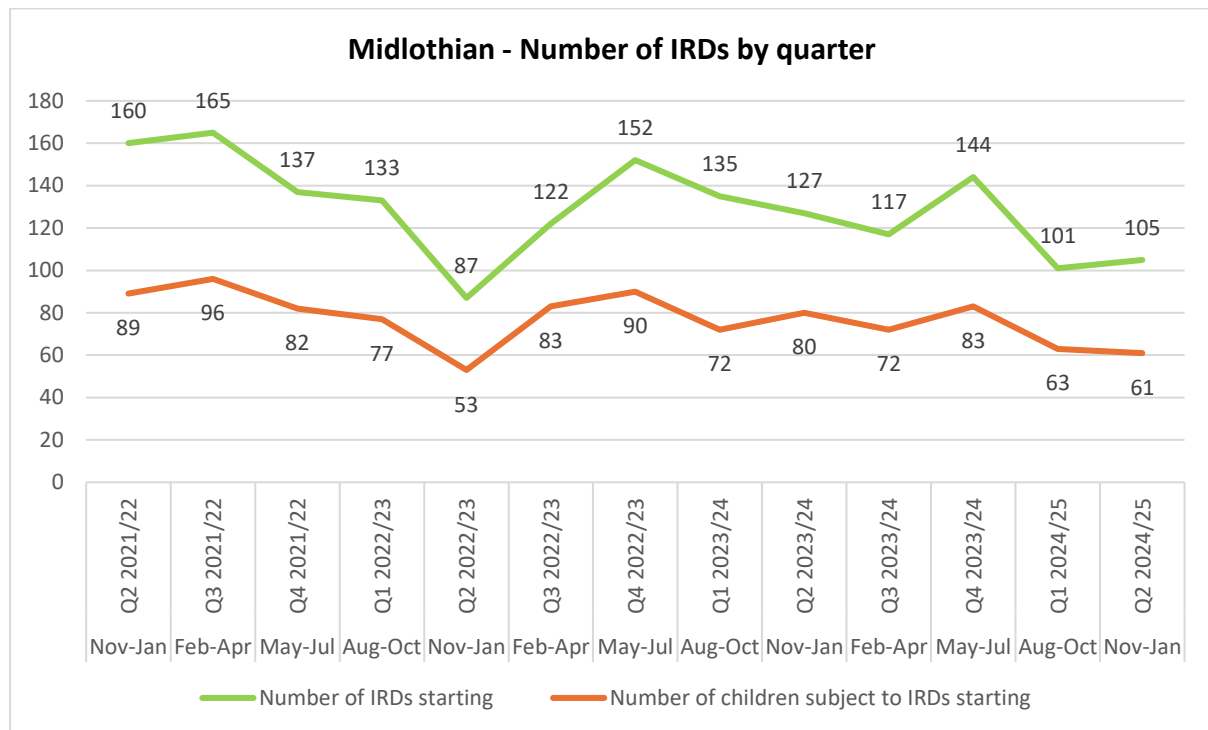


Figure 22 Midlothian - IRDs by quarter, year ending 31st January 2025

Child Protection Planning Meetings – Scottish Government Annual Reporting

In East Lothian there were 43 CPPMs in the year ending 31st July 2024. As a rate per 1,000 children, this is significantly below the national average. In discussion with partners, we have associated this reduction with robust Interim Safety Planning (resulting in risk being reduced and CPPMs no longer being required), the Signs of Safety approach being well embedded and early intervention/preventative resources being more established. There is also association with increased use of other structured child protection responses such as use of the Vulnerable Young Person’s Protocol.

In Midlothian there were 112 CPPMs. As a rate per 1,000 children, this is above the national average. As noted above, Midlothian traditionally sees larger family groups with IRDs and CPPMs, reflecting the higher number and rate.

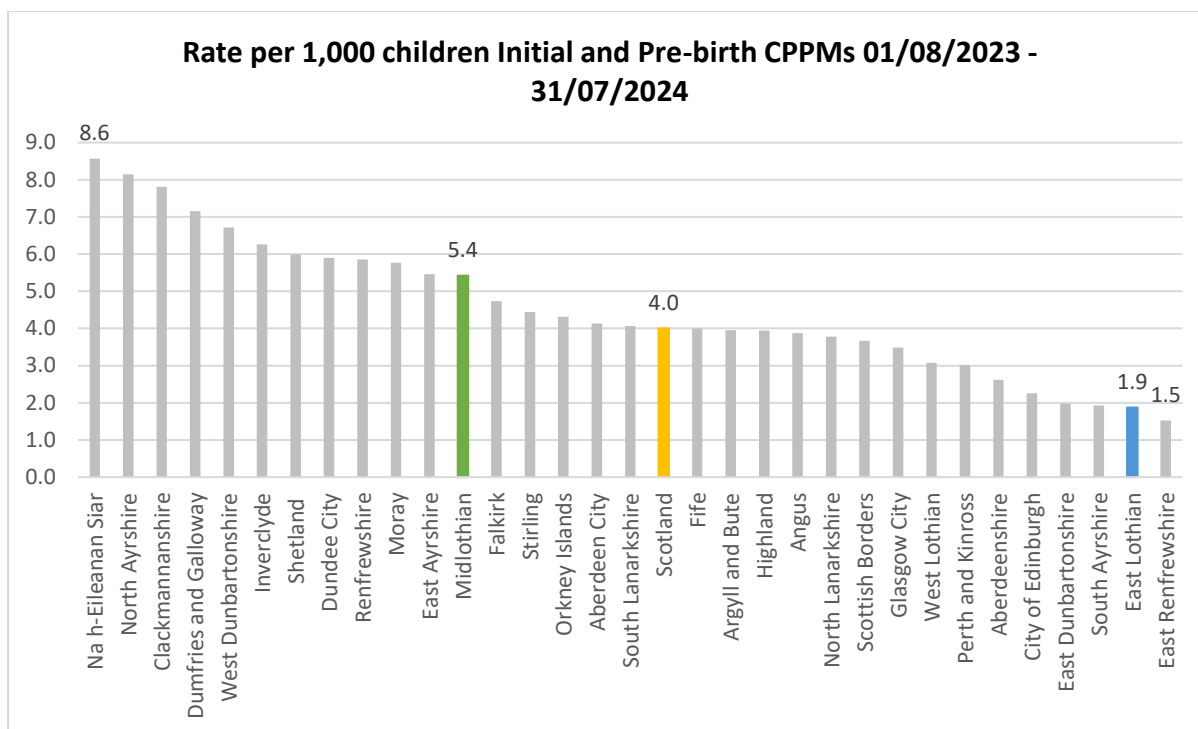


Figure 23 Rate per 1,000 children with Initial and Pre-birth CPPMs, year ending 31st July 2024

In comparison to the national data published in March 2025, our performance in relation to meeting the timescale standard for holding a CPPM has been very good in both areas. 31 of the 43 (72.1%) Initial and Pre-birth CPPMs in East Lothian took place within 28 days of the CPPM. 79 of the 112 (70.5%) Initial and Pre-birth CPPMs in Midlothian took place within 28 days of the IRD. Nationally, performance was 38.2%.

Locally, on a quarterly basis we review the reasons for the 28-day timescale not being met and are satisfied that the child's needs continue to be met by robust interim safety planning which is well embedded locally. The most common reason for not holding a CPPM within the timescale standard has been around ensuring that we have the right people at the meeting, with any delay being a small number of days.

Nationally, the most common concerns identified at CPPMs for children registered during the year were domestic abuse (45% of children registered), neglect (42% of children registered), parental substance use (39% of children registered), parental mental ill health (37% of children registered), and emotional abuse (33% of children registered).

In East Lothian, the most common concerns identified at CPPMs were domestic abuse, emotional abuse, parental drug misuse, parental mental health problems and physical abuse. In Midlothian, the most common concerns identified at CPPMs were domestic abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and parental mental health problems.

Child Protection Planning Meetings – EMPPC Annual Reporting

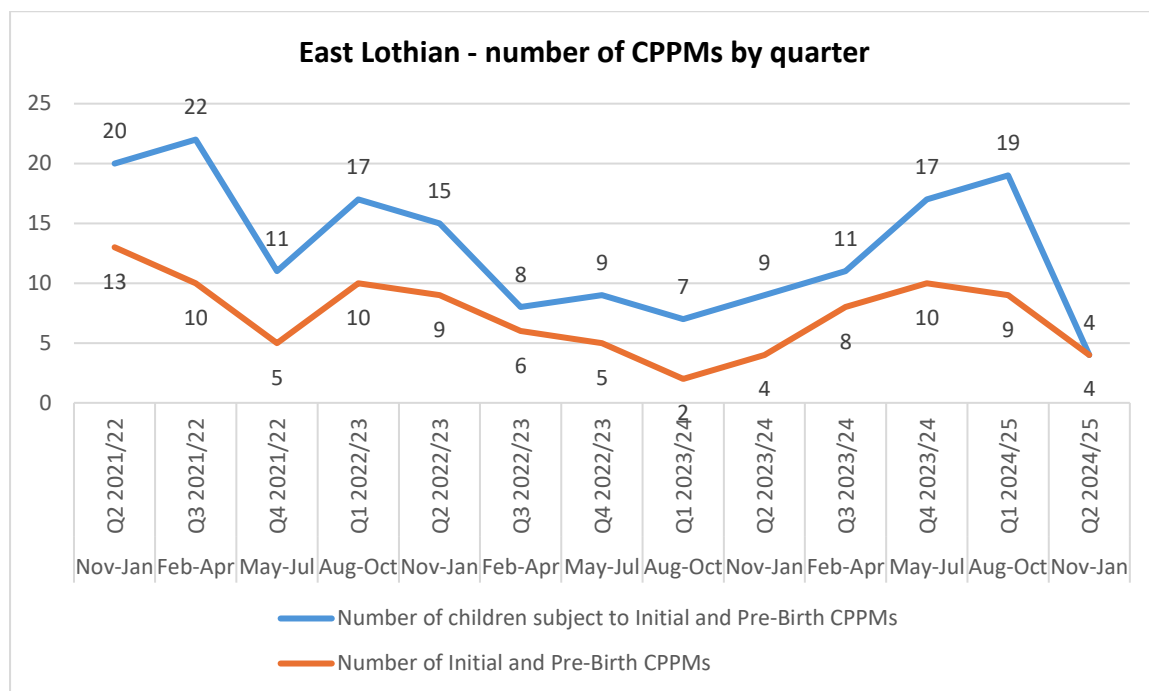


Figure 24 East Lothian - number of CPPMs by quarter, year ending 31st January 2025

The following diagram illustrates the flow from IRD to CPPM to CPR in the period covered by EMPPC’s reporting period (1st February 2024 to 31st January 2025). The conversion rate from IRD to CPPM was 22.1% and from CPPM to CPR was 76.5%. The reasons for non-registration were either because there had been a change in the circumstances in the period between the IRD and the CPPM (either a positive change as a result in the intervention and support, whereby the cause for concern had been appropriately addressed) or there was a change in the family circumstances (leading to a reduction in risk to the child).

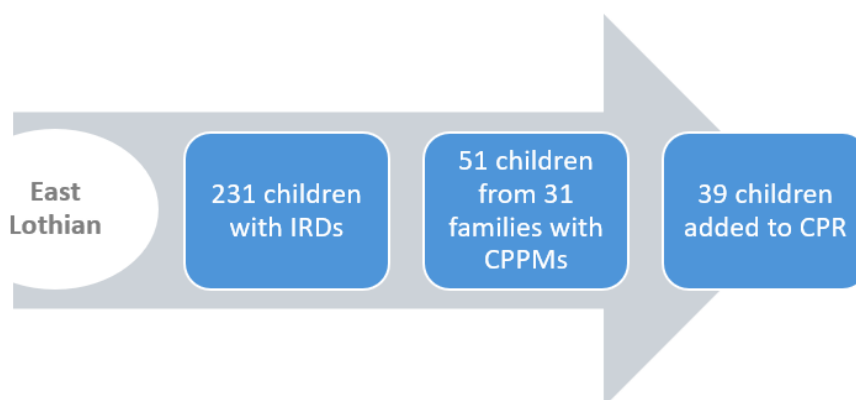


Figure 25 East Lothian - number of children with IRDs, CPPMs and added to Child Protection Register year ending 31st January 2025

The culture of involving families in Child Protection processes is well-embedded in East Lothian. Of the 31 families with a CPPM in the reporting period, at least one parent attended every Initial CPPM.

The figure below illustrates the concerns noted at Child Protection Registration in East Lothian for the year ending 31st January 2025. This reflects the multi-faceted nature and complexity of Child Protection work that professionals are involved in on a day-to-day basis.

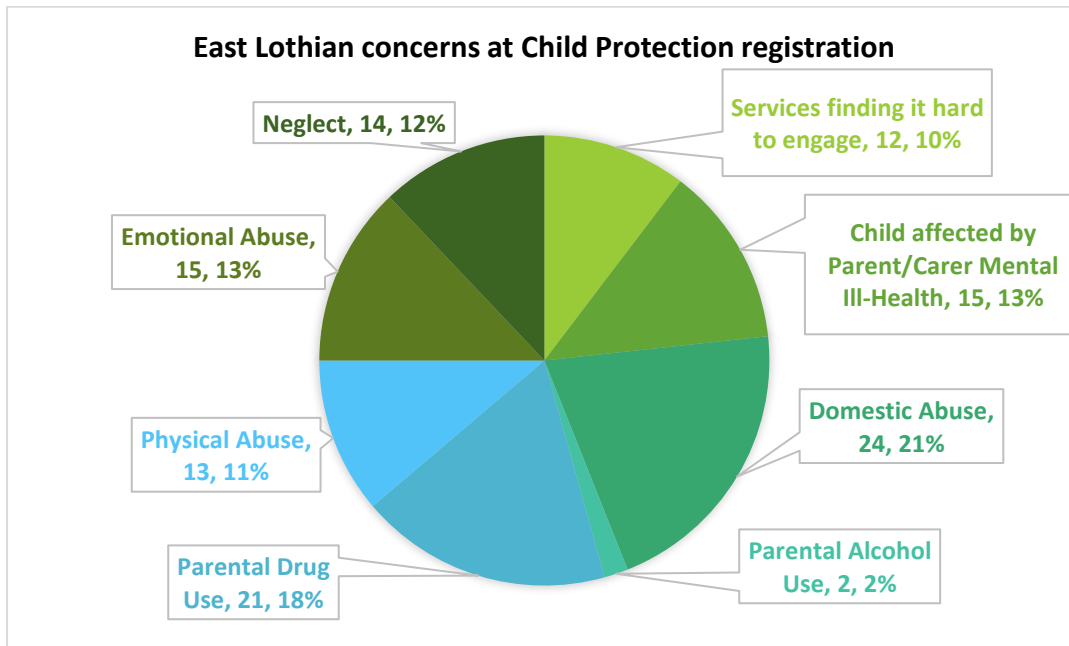


Figure 26 East Lothian - concerns at Child Protection Registration, year ending 31st January 2025

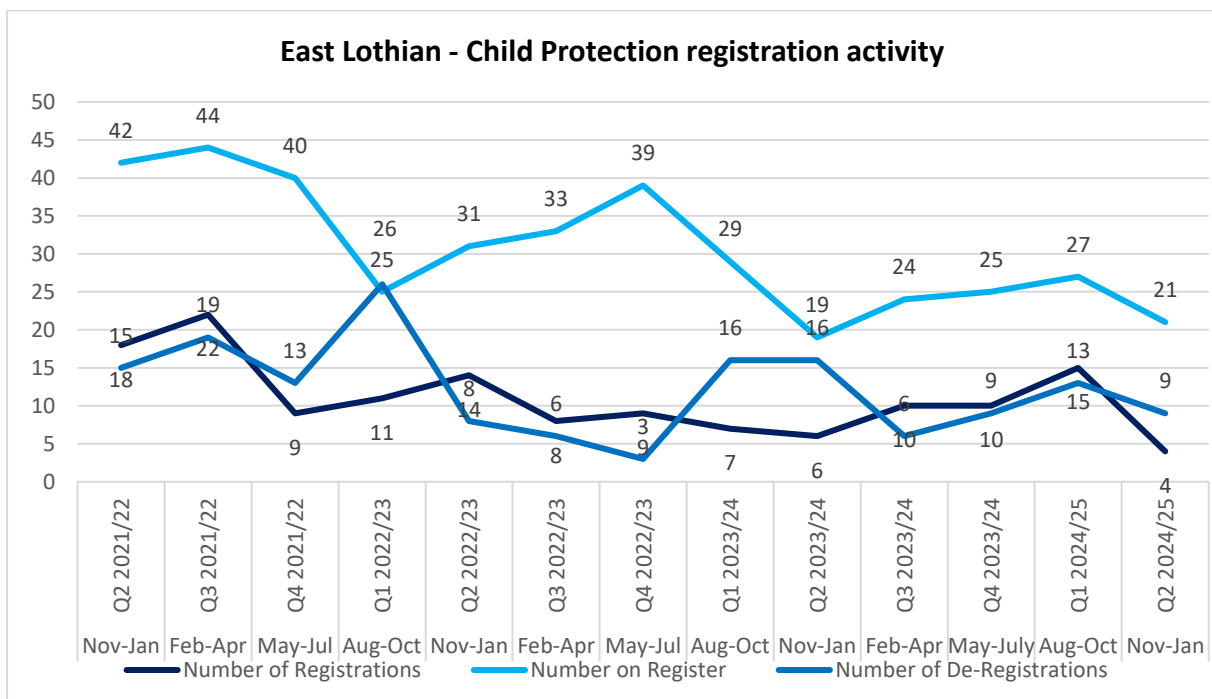


Figure 27 East Lothian – Child Protection registration activity, year ending 31st January 2025

In Midlothian, quarter 4 (May to July 2024) saw the highest number of CPPMs in any quarter over the past ten years since EMPPC’s inception. This aligned with an increase in IRDs in that quarter. The number of IRDs and CPPMs were associated with a high number of large families. Whilst this increased volume of work placed significant demands particularly on Children’s Services, this area of work continued to be prioritised with no detrimental impact on meeting local performance or service quality standards.

There is a very low number of children who are re-registered in Midlothian. This is reviewed quarterly, and audits are completed by Children’s Services’ Managers three months after a child’s name is removed from the Child Protection Register. These provide assurance about the impact of supports and intervention for children who are involved in Child Protection processes.

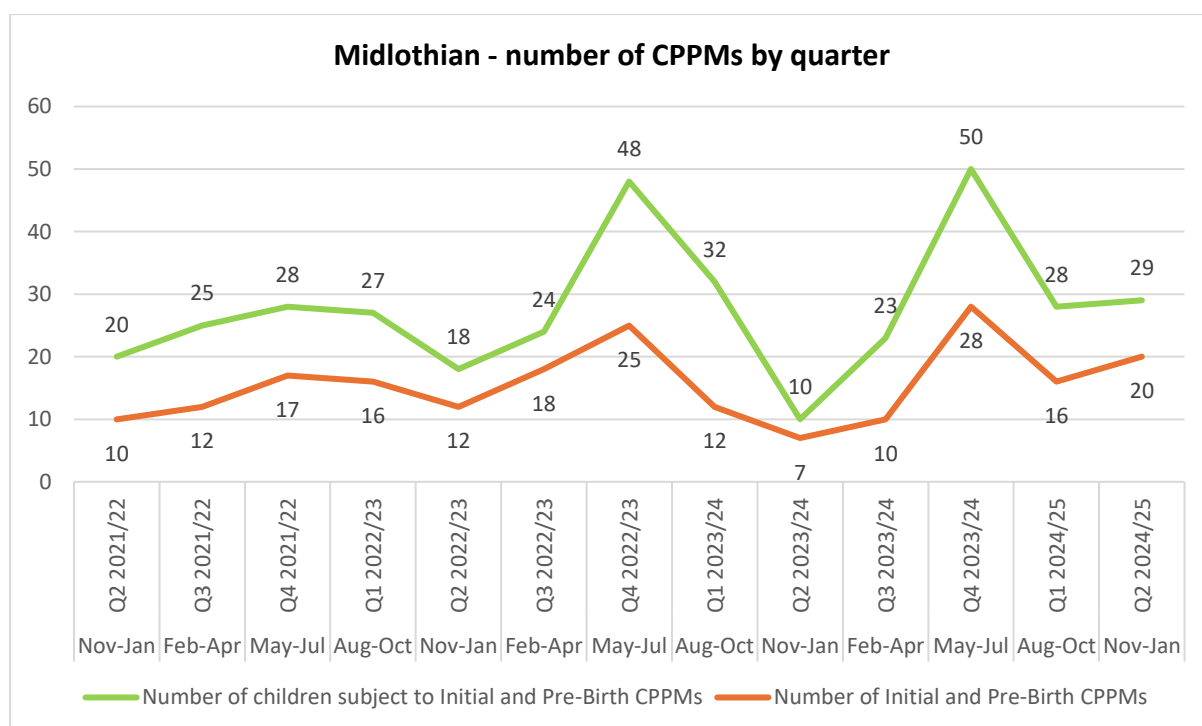


Figure 28 Midlothian - number of CPPMs by quarter, year ending 31st January 2025

The following diagram illustrates the flow from IRD to CPPM to CPR in the period covered by EMPPC’s Child Protection reporting period (1st February 2024 to 31st January 2025). The conversion rate from IRD to CPPM was 27.3% and from CPPM to CPR was 73.8%. The reasons for non-registration were either because there had been a change in the circumstances in the period between the IRD and the CPPM (either a positive change as a result in the intervention and support, whereby the cause for concern had been appropriately addressed) or there was a change in the family circumstances (leading to a reduction in risk to the child).

The culture of involving families in Child Protection processes is well-embedded in Midlothian. Of the 74 families with a CPPM in the reporting period, at least one parent attended every Initial CPPM but one.

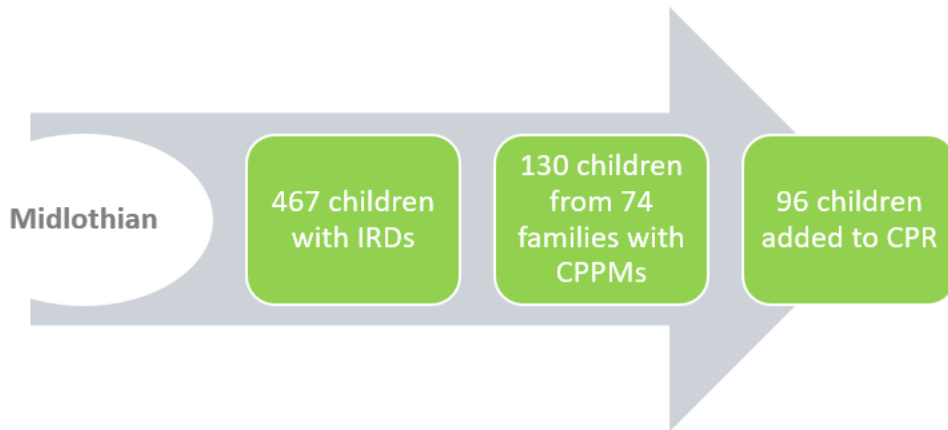


Figure 29 Midlothian - number of IRDs, CPPMs and children added to Child Protection Register year ending 31st January 2025

The figure below illustrates the concerns noted at CPR in Midlothian for the year ending 31st January 2025. This reflects the multi-faceted nature and complexity of Child Protection work that professionals are involved in on a day-to-day basis.

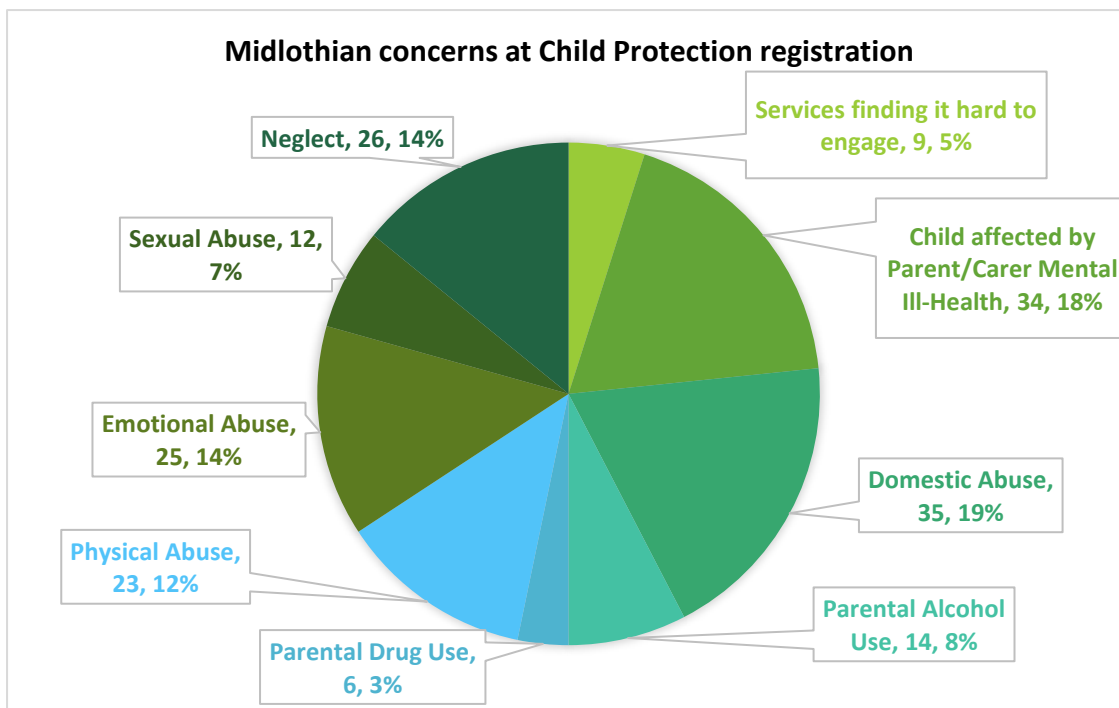


Figure 30 Midlothian - concerns at CP registration, year ending 31st January 2025

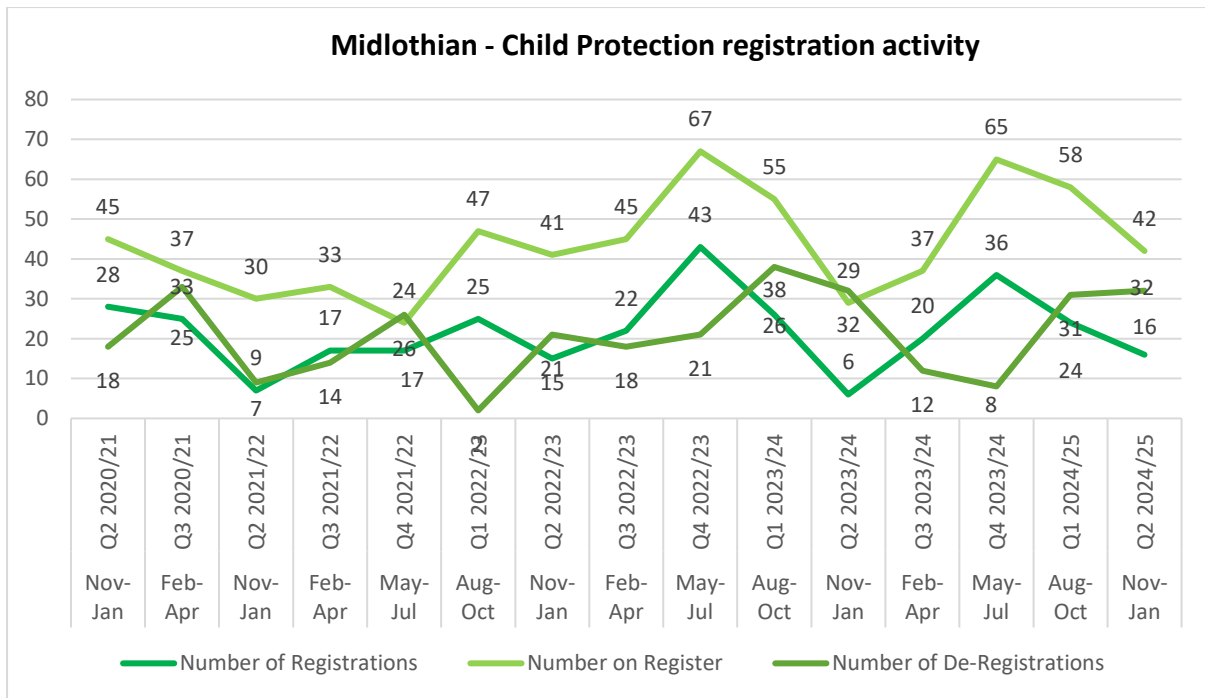


Figure 31 Midlothian - CP registration activity, year ending 31st January 2025

Violence Against Women and Girls

There is no national dataset for gender-based violence, but we have a locally developed dataset that is reported quarterly to the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group, which enables us to keep an overview of service demand in relation to Violence Against Women and Girls.

Statistics on recorded crimes and offences provide a measure of the volume of criminal activity being handled by the Police. This does not reveal the incidence of all crime committed as not all crimes are reported to the Police.

Domestic Abuse Referrals

We benefit from having dedicated Domestic Abuse Risk Assessor (DARA) posts within the Police who make contact with a victim following a report of domestic abuse to the Police. Where the victim consents to a referral for support, the DARA will make contact with the relevant specialist agency.

The Third Sector provide the specialist services supporting victims and survivors of gender-based violence in East Lothian and Midlothian. In common with other Local Authority areas, our Third Sector partners are reliant on grant funding to deliver their services, the very nature of which is short term and does not support sustainable, longer-term service delivery models. Increased demand for services and reduced funding have impacted on our two key local partners, Women’s Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML) and Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre (ERCC). Through our Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group and Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group, we have kept under review the data on the number of women supported by WAEML and ERCC and those awaiting a service. WAEML have three specialist workers who directly support victims referred to Marac and attend our local Maracs in East Lothian and Midlothian.

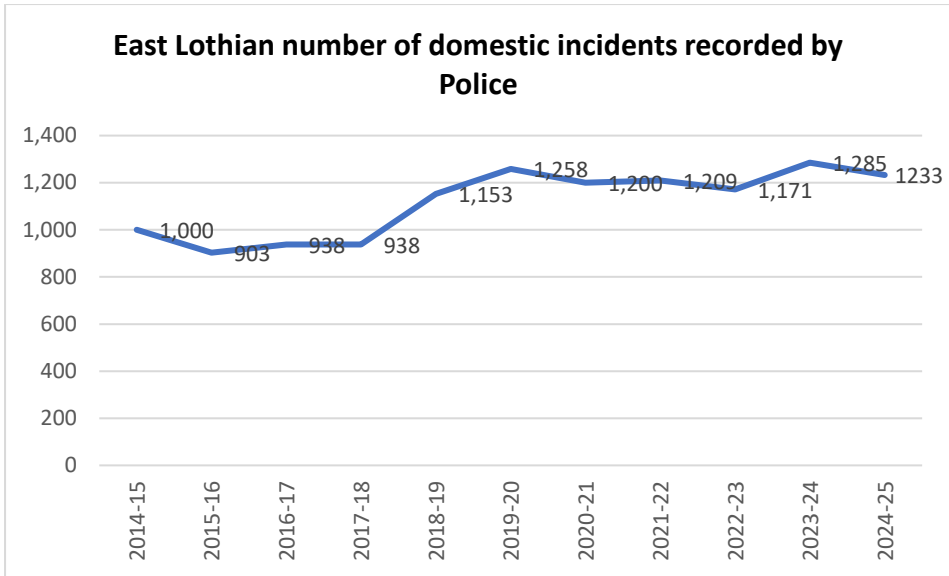


Figure 32 East Lothian - number of domestic incidents recorded by Police

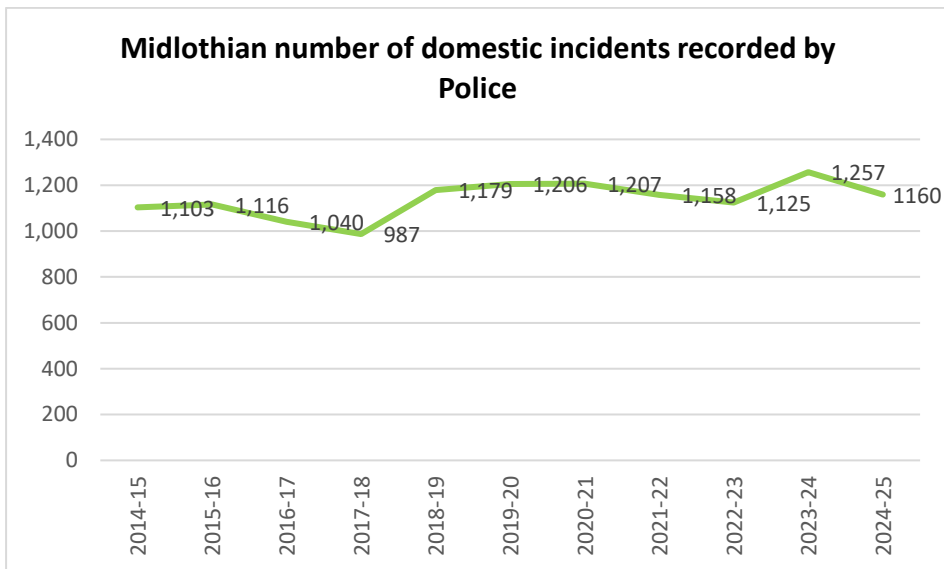


Figure 33 Midlothian - number of domestic incidents recorded by Police

Note - the data between 2014-15 and 2023-24 is taken from the Scottish Government data published on 19/11/2024. The figure for 2024/25 is provisional, extracted from Police Scotland internal systems and should be treated as management information. This figure will be updated when the data is published by the Scottish Government later in 2025.

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force on 1st April 2019. This law focuses on the behaviour of the perpetrator, requiring a course of behaviour rather than a discrete incident. An increased use of this legislation is welcomed as it recognises the complexity of domestic abuse. The number of cases recorded by Police under this legislation increased from 30 to 40 between 2023 and 2024⁴¹ in East Lothian, and from 35 to 51 in Midlothian.

⁴¹ Calendar years

We know from local discussions that there has been a significant increase in the use of the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS). This Police led initiative gives people the right to ask about the background of their partner and the Police the power to tell someone that they may be at risk⁴². In the coming year we will review this data more closely to ensure that we are continuing to raise awareness of this important scheme. Our local partners support the regular Police led local Decision-Making Meetings (referred to as DMF) to share information, consider risks and use of the powers under the scheme.

Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (Marac)

Our Public Protection Partnership has been committed to Marac (Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences) for a number of years now, as a key response to supporting the highest risk victims of domestic abuse. Marac is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse. The meeting provides a safe environment for agencies to share relevant and proportionate information about current risk, after which the Chair will summarise risks and ask agencies to volunteer actions to reduce risk and increase safety. The primary focus is to safeguard the adult victim, however links with other agencies will be made to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator.

We hold a Marac every four weeks for each area, with additional meetings as required. Routinely a Marac meeting will last up to around four hours, with a maximum of ten cases per meeting. We have 14 partner services/agencies invited to attend Marac and have a dedicated Marac Co-ordinator who works across East Lothian and Midlothian.

Marac Chairs are drawn from the partner agencies with a rota for chairing Marac meetings. Throughout the year we continued to experience a shortage of Marac Chairs, partly due to staff moving posts, and a need for a larger pool of Chairs to build resilience in our arrangements for delivering Marac. We will continue to review this at EMPPC meetings in the coming year.

All Marac referrals with a child associated to the case are referred to Children's Services to enable an assessment of the need for Child Protection processes to be instigated. In East Lothian, there was a reduction in the number of Maracs held in East Lothian after a spike the previous year. As Marac is demand-driven, with no change to referral criteria in the year, there is nothing standing out about this. There were 15 Marac meetings in the year, including two additional meetings being held to deal with demand.

⁴² [DSDAS - Police Scotland](#)

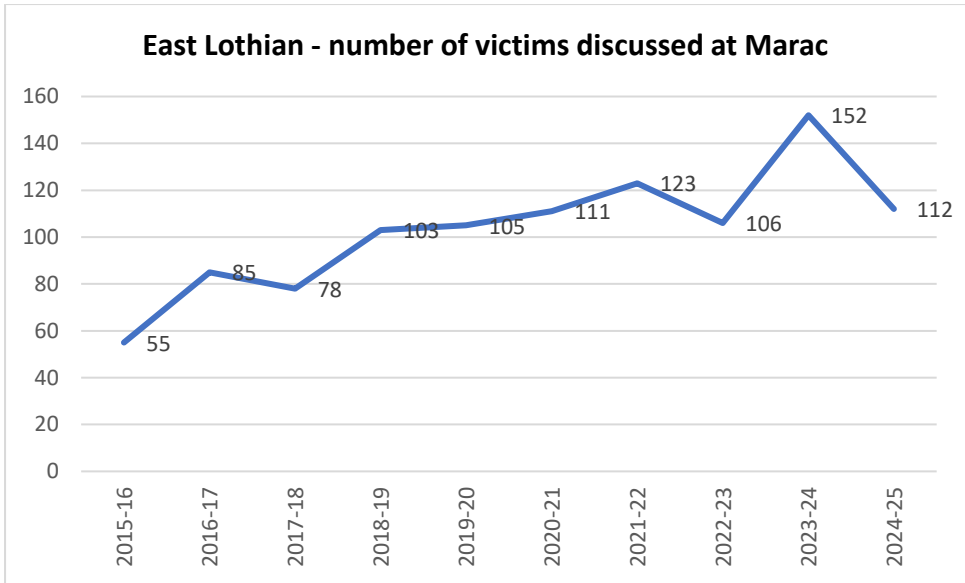


Figure 34 East Lothian - number of victims discussed at Marac 2024/25

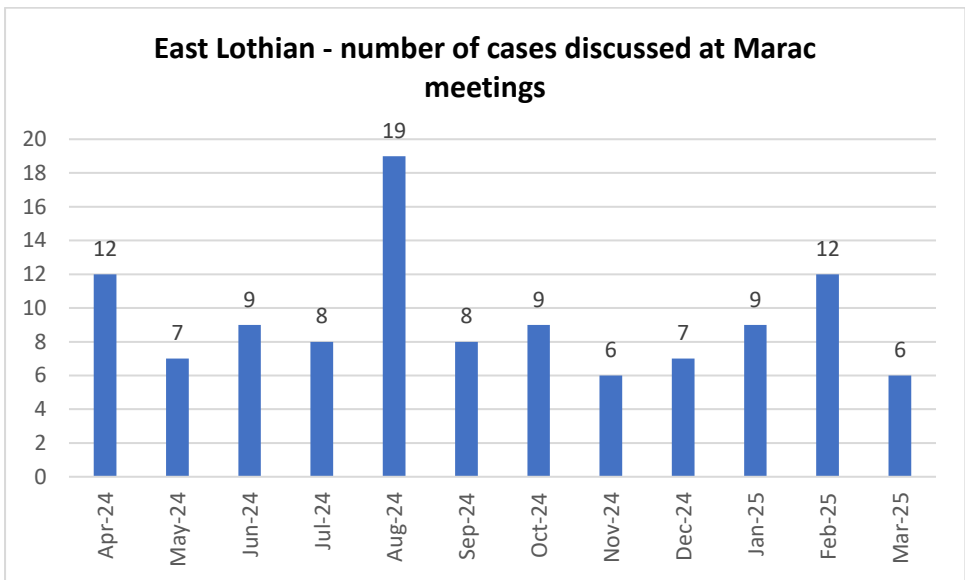


Figure 35 East Lothian - number of cases discussed at Marac meetings every month

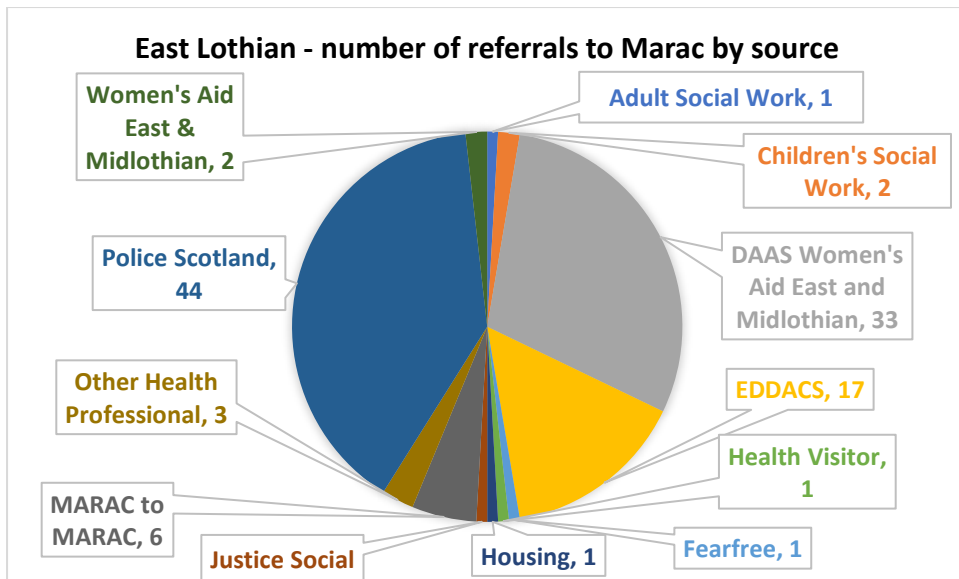


Figure 36 East Lothian - source of referrals to Marac 2024/25

Note: Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service – three specialist workers who provide advocacy and support to the highest risk victims of domestic abuse and who attend Marac. Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Court Service is run by Edinburgh Women’s Aid and provide advocacy to victims who are involved in court proceedings in relation to the perpetrator.

In East Lothian, 108 of the 112 victims referred to Marac were female, and four were male. One victim was known to be pregnant at the date of the Marac meeting. We can see from the graph below that there is an under-representation of older people referred to Marac. This is in common with the national picture, and there is further work to do to raise awareness of domestic abuse affecting the older population, and to promote the use of Marac as a response to supporting and protecting this age group. Similarly, we see an under-representation of Marac in relation to disability, with 28 victims in East Lothian known to have a disability.

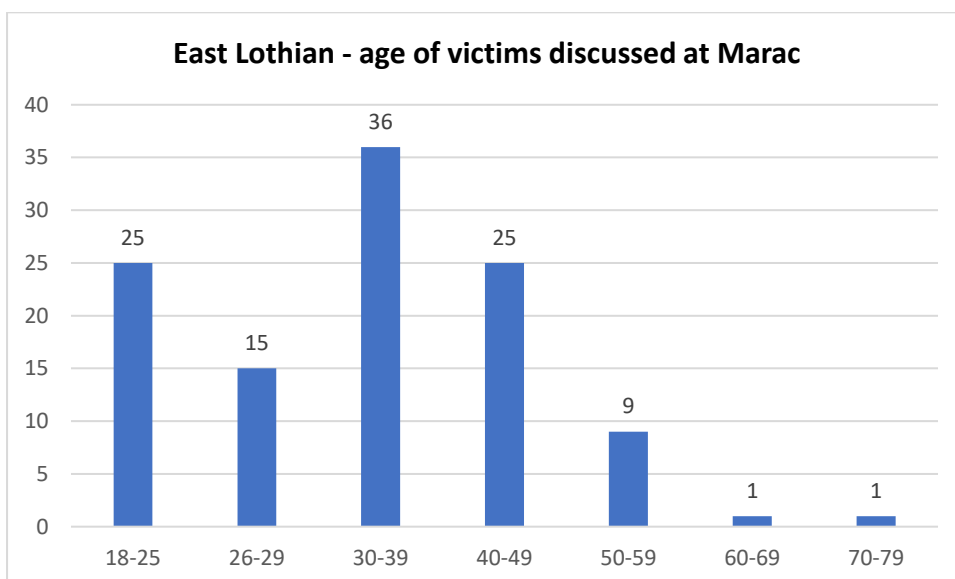


Figure 37 East Lothian - number of victims discussed at Marac 2024/25 broken down by age

There is a high proportion of cases in East Lothian with children associated with the victim. Although Children’s Services are a key partner representative at Marac, we also ensure that the referral to Marac is also provided to Children’s Services at the earliest opportunity, to enable any child’s needs for support and protection to be assessed.

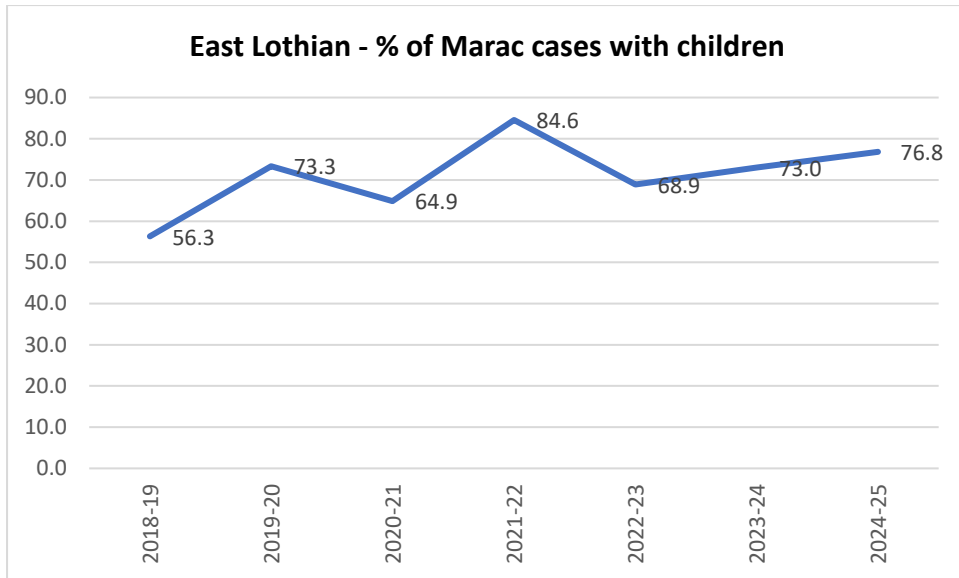


Figure 38 East Lothian - % of Marac cases with children

In Midlothian, the number of victims referred to Marac was similar to the previous year. There were 15 Marac meetings in the year, including two additional to deal with demand.

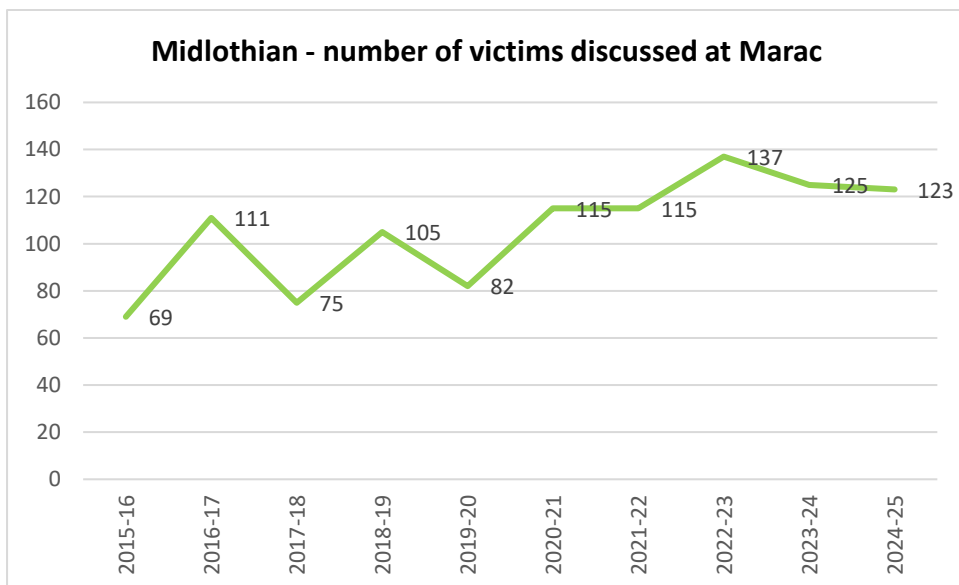


Figure 39 Midlothian - number of victims discussed at Marac

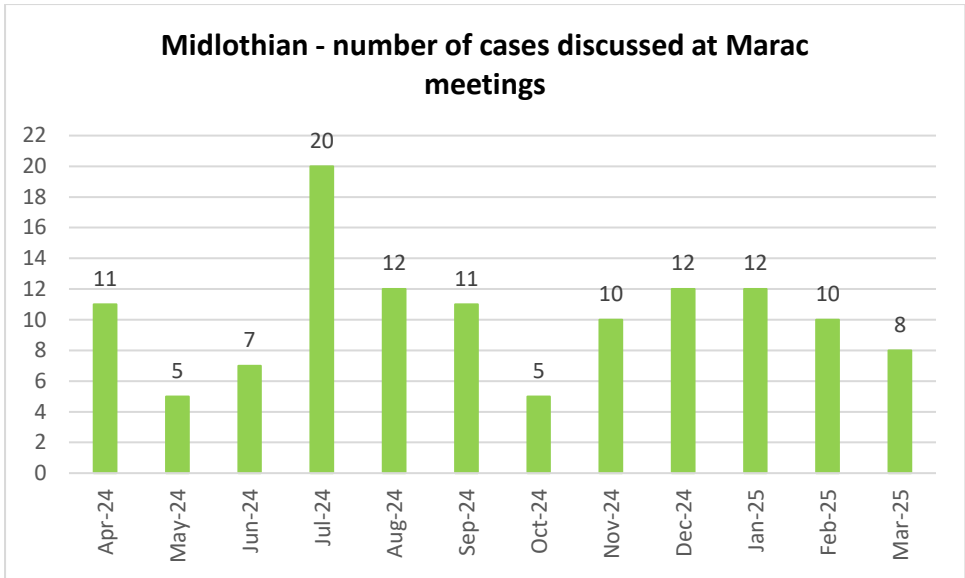


Figure 40 Midlothian - number of cases discussed at Marac meetings every month

In common with East Lothian, the majority of referrals come from Police and Women’s Aid East and Midlothian.

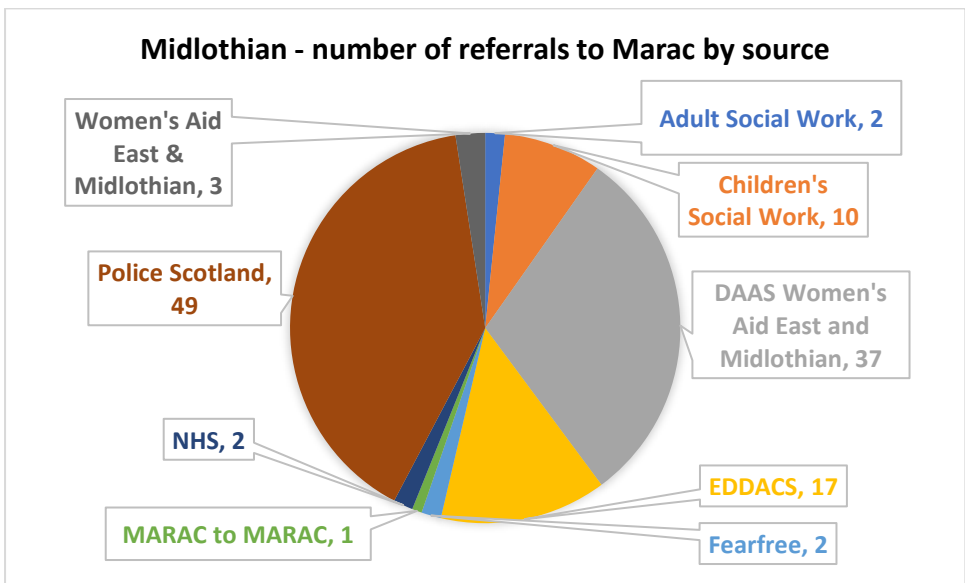


Figure 41 Midlothian - source of referrals to Marac 2024/25

Note: Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service – three specialist workers who provide advocacy and support to the highest risk victims of domestic abuse and who attend Marac. Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Court Service is run by Edinburgh Women’s Aid and provide advocacy to victims who are involved in court proceedings in relation to the perpetrator.

The characteristics of cases in Midlothian are similar to East Lothian. In Midlothian, 120 of the 123 victims referred to Marac were female, and three were male. Three victims were known to be pregnant at the date of the Marac meeting. There is a similar under-representation of older victims referred to Marac. In Midlothian 39 victims were known to have a disability.

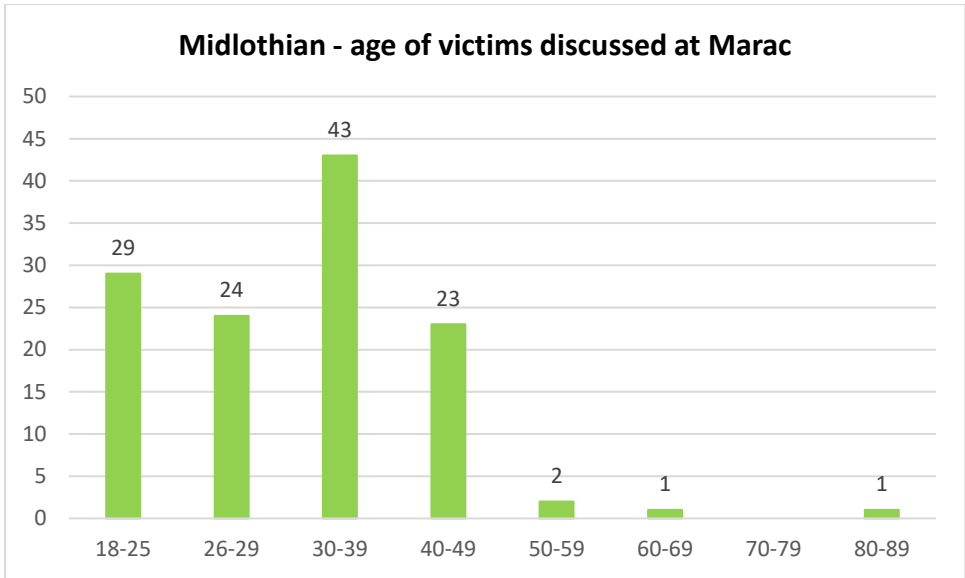


Figure 42 number of victims discussed at Marac 2024/25 broken down by age

There is a high proportion of cases in Midlothian with children associated with the victim. Although Children’s Services are a key partner representative at Marac, we also ensure that the referral to Marac is also provided to Children’s Services at the earliest opportunity, to enable any child’s needs for support and protection to be assessed.

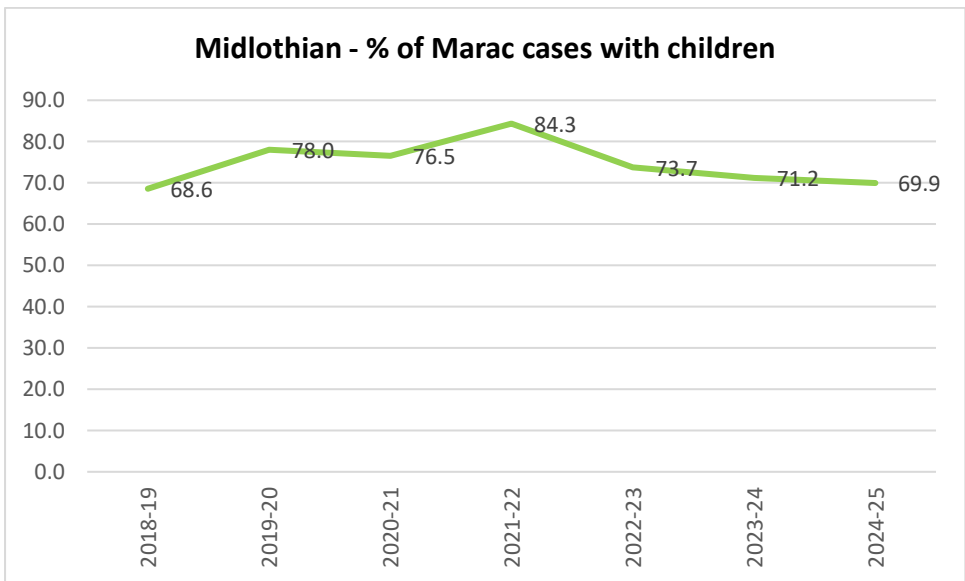


Figure 43 Midlothian % of Marac cases with children

Sexual crimes

Nationally sexual crimes accounted for 5% of all recorded crime. Nationally in 2024 there was an increase by 3% in the number of sexual crimes, and a 45% increase in the last ten years⁴³. A number of legislative and procedural changes should be kept in mind when reviewing trends in sexual crimes over the longer term. It should also be noted that the data that follows is a count of crimes, not persons. The issue of historical reporting of sexual

⁴³ Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2024/25

crime plays a role in the reported statistics, with 25% of sexual crimes recorded at least one year after they occurred.

We can see from the figures that follow that the rate of sexual crimes per 10,000 population in East Lothian has remained below the national rate for the past ten years. In Midlothian, the rate has been higher than the national rate for the second year in a row, with an increase in the number of rapes and attempted rapes recorded⁴⁴. This data corresponds with local discussions at the Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group where Police reported that a significant proportion of the increase in recorded sexual crime across the division, and Midlothian in particular, related to non-recent sexual crimes. A rise in recorded sexual crime can also partly be attributed to an increased confidence in reporting such offences, with Police Officers in the Public Protection Unit working closely in partnership on a daily basis to support victims through the criminal justice processes.

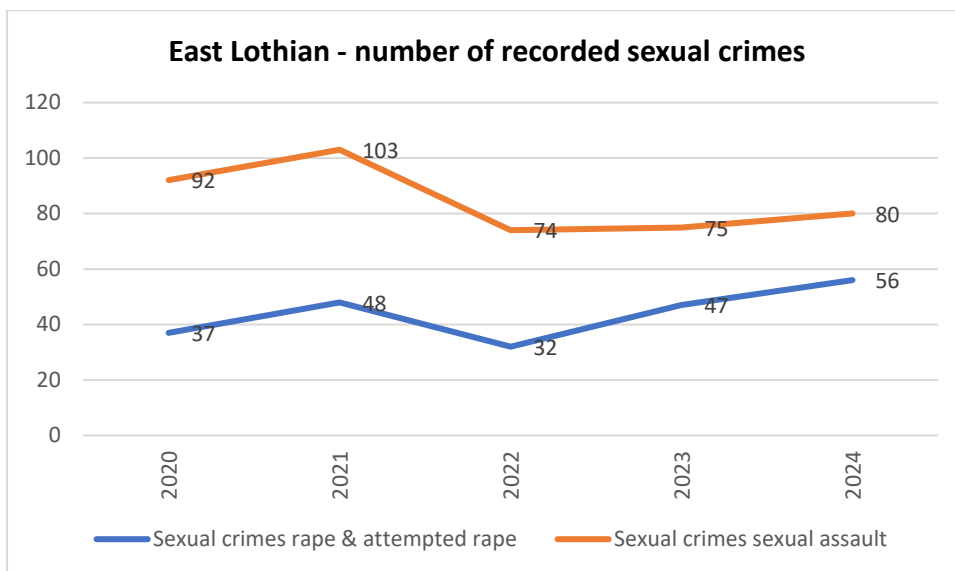


Figure 44 East Lothian - number of recorded sexual crimes – calendar year

⁴⁴ Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2024/25

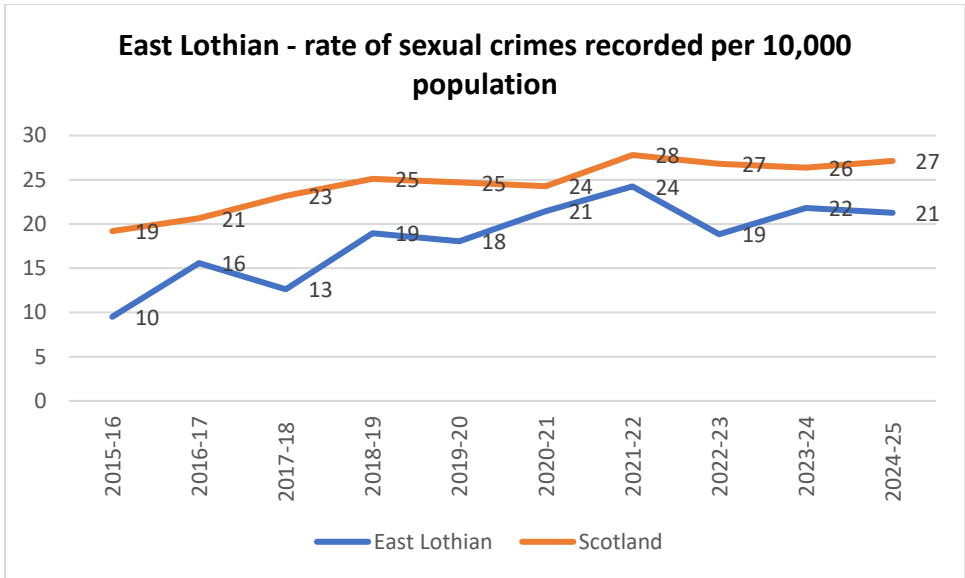


Figure 45 East Lothian - rate of sexual crimes per 10,000 population

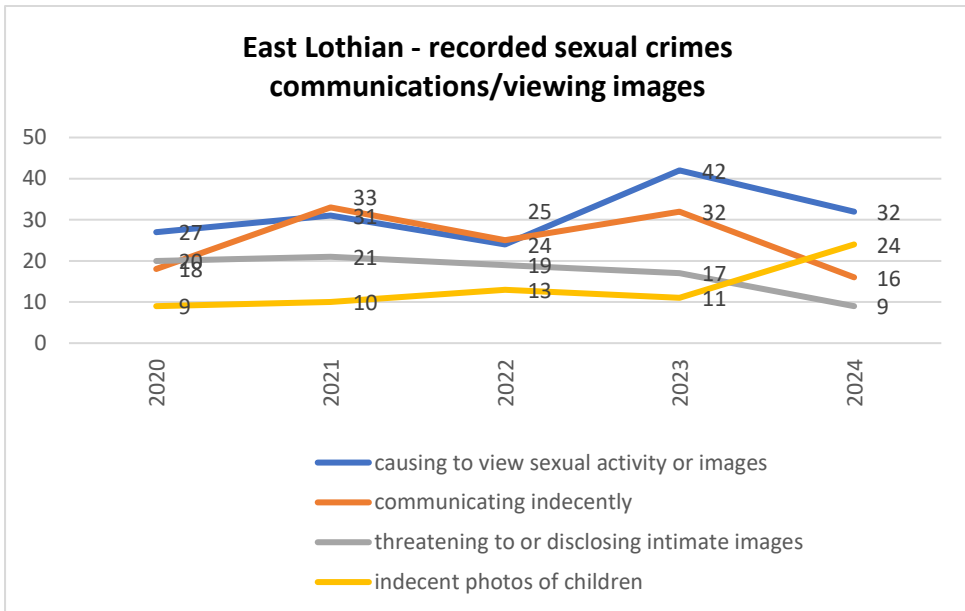


Figure 46 East Lothian – recorded sexual crimes relating to communications and viewing images – calendar year

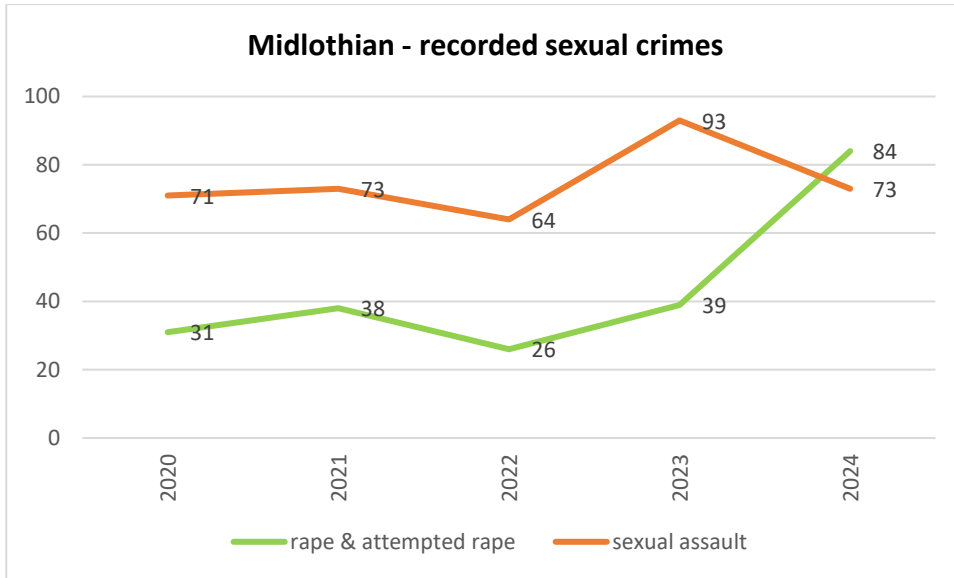


Figure 47 Midlothian - recorded sexual crimes – calendar year

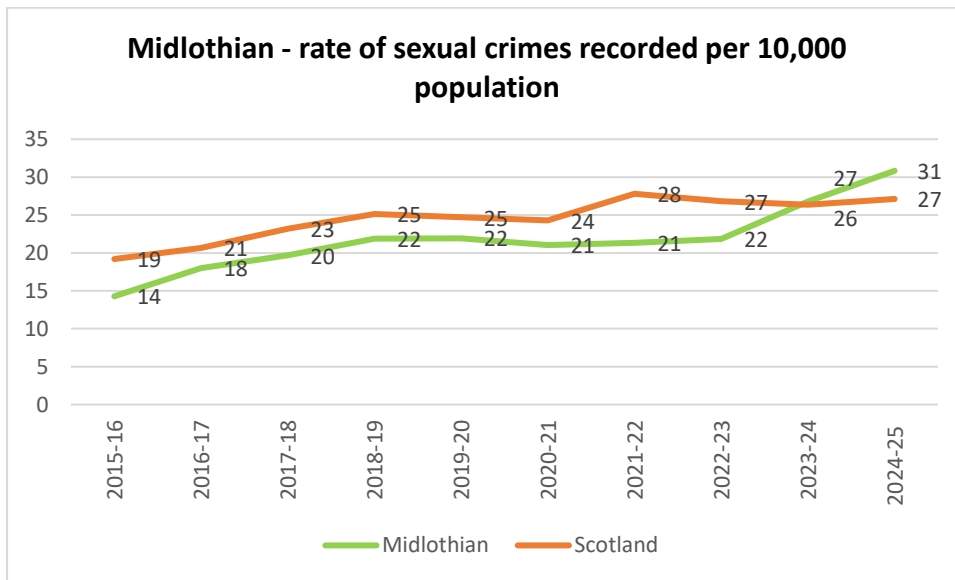


Figure 48 Midlothian - rate per 10,000 population of sexual crimes recorded – calendar year

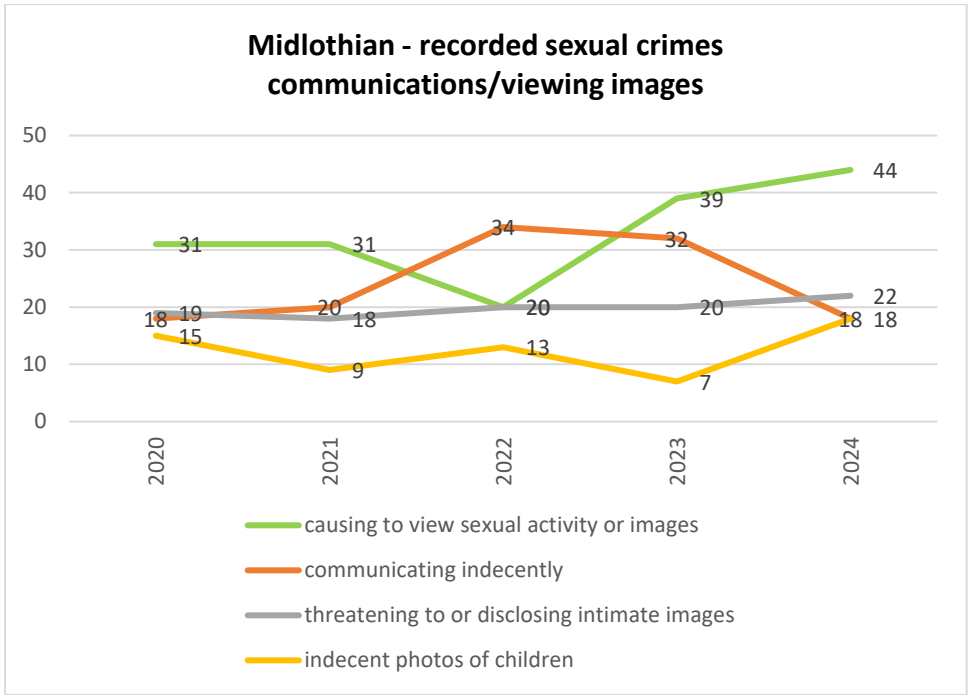


Figure 49 Midlothian - number of recorded sexual crimes involving communications and viewing images – calendar year

Section 4 – Looking Forward

In the coming year, we will continue to bring together our skills, knowledge and experience as a partnership to deliver improved outcomes for children and adults in East Lothian and Midlothian. Through the work of our Sub-groups, we will continue to support staff to fulfil their roles in protecting children and adults by providing training, guidance, procedures and communications.

Our 2025-26 Business Plan will continue to focus on the five priorities outlined at the beginning of this report. We will also include a further priority where we will ensure that our improvement work is informed by the lived experience voice of children and adults who are involved in Public Protection processes. This will enable us to build on some of the foundation work we began in 2024/25. We look forward to working collaboratively with organisations and services across East Lothian and Midlothian and continuing to build on our strengths as a Public Protection Partnership in the coming year.