

Report

Report to:	Social Work Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 May 2020
Report by:	Director, Health and Social Care

Subject:	South Lanarkshire Public Protection Team
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise the Committee of current activity related to Child Protection, Adult Protection, Gender Based Violence Partnership and MAPPA in South Lanarkshire in response to COVID-19

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) to note that the Chief Officers Group (COG) Public Protection has increased oversight of public protection issues during the coronavirus pandemic;
- (2) to note that the South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee (SLCPC) implements all recent recommendations by the Scottish Government in relation to responses to child protection during the pandemic;
- (3) to note that the SLCPC continue to meet at an increased level to ensure children and young people are safe and have their wellbeing needs met;
- (4) to note that the South Lanarkshire Adult Protection Committee (SLAPC) implements all recent recommendations by the Scottish Government in relation to responses to adult protection during the pandemic;
- (5) to note that the SLAPC continue to meet at an increased level to ensure adults and older adults are safe and have their wellbeing needs met;
- (6) to note that the Gender-Based Violence Partnership work together to respond to domestic abuse and its impact on children and families during the crisis and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) continues to operate; and
- (7) to note that MAPPA maintains its current processes and prepares for the release of short-term prisoners as part of coronavirus contingencies on 30 April 2020.

3. Background

3.1. The Chief Officers Group (COG) Public Protection has moved from quarterly to weekly meetings to ensure enhanced oversight of the impact and responses to the crisis by its services. Advice from the Government and NHS shapes the measures being taken. From 22 April 2020 Pan-Lanarkshire weekly meetings chaired by the South Lanarkshire Chief Executive have been taking place. From 20 May 2020 the format of the meeting will move to a Pan-Lanarkshire meeting, followed by a South Lanarkshire COG. The aim is to offer assurance and ensure a coordinated response

across Lanarkshire to the Chief Officers Group and the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO). A COG Risk Register has been created to identify and mitigate risks as they occur. Weekly data and updates are shared in relation to adult and child protection.

4. Child Protection

- 4.1. On 31 March 2020 the Scottish Government published [Covid-19 Supplementary National Child Protection Guidance](#). Further revised on 16 April 2020 the guidance sets out a number of recommendations and expectations in its coordinated response to protecting children. It acknowledges the impact for child protection concerns occurring at a time when children will be less visible to a range of professionals who are normally engaged with them, and when services and practitioners working with children are under acute pressure. The new COVID-19 Multi-Agency Escalation Guidance (2020) has now been circulated as requested. The SLCPC have also worked with services to provide an '*Interim Coronavirus Contingency Briefing – High Risk Situations & Children at Risk of Harm*'. This is updated as required.
- 4.2. The South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee has established a core membership who meet weekly by conference call to consider the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. It seeks assurances across services that children and young people known to services are regularly seen and supported and that investigative and protective services remain intact. For those children not known to service we acknowledged reduced opportunity to seek help in the absence of usual services. Heightened media campaigns are encouraging self-reporting and raised community awareness at local and national level is now underway.

5. Adult Protection

- 5.1. On 20 April 2020 the CSWO received draft ASP National Guidance in relation to COVID-19. Comments have been provided to the Scottish Government. Once received we will review and implement all required actions. South Lanarkshire Adult Protection Committee have also worked with services to provide '*Interim Coronavirus Contingency Briefing – High Risk Situations & Adults at Risk of Harm*'. The briefing offers advice to front line managers and practitioners about how we ensure we effectively manage high risk situations including: Adult Protection Inquiries, Adult Protection Investigations/Home Visits, and Adult Protection Case Conferences during this time.
- 5.2. The Scottish Government has made amendments to [Adults with Incapacity Guidance](#) to reflect the current pandemic. It reflects the requirements of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and removes the requirement of the local authority to take into account the past and present wishes of the adult, and the views of any interested party when taking any steps to help an adult lacking capacity benefit from a community care service. [Covid-19 Changes to Social Care Assessments \(2020\)](#) Sections 16 and 17 of the 2020 Act allows for an easing of social care assessment duties in relation to adult social care, carer support and children's services. They allow local authorities to dispense with particular assessment duties where complying would not be practical or would cause unnecessary delay in providing support to any person. All changes have been made at local level.
- 5.3. The South Lanarkshire Adult Protection Committee has established a core membership who meet regularly by conference call to consider the safety and wellbeing of adults and older people. It seeks assurances across services that adults and older people at risk of harm known to services are regularly seen and

supported and that investigative and protective services remain intact. For those adults not known to service we acknowledged reduced opportunity to seek help in the absence of usual services. Heightened media campaigns are encouraging self-reporting and raised community awareness at local and national level is being taken forward.

6. Gender Based Violence

6.1. It has been widely recognised at a national level that the current restrictions in place as a result of the lockdown mean increased opportunity for perpetrators to carry-out domestic abuse, with decreased opportunity for victim/survivors to access help and support. The Scottish Government have relaunched a national social media campaign which is being supported by the South Lanarkshire Gender-Based Violence Partnership.

6.2. As a result of the Covid-19 crisis a multi-agency meeting took place on 23 April 2020 with key stakeholders in order to gain an oversight of the current picture in South Lanarkshire. There has been a noted increase, of around 14%, in reports to Police of a domestic abuse nature, however referrals to support services and to the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) remain unaltered at present. Police report there have been spikes where, compared with the same time period last year, domestic incidents have increased by up to 40%. Support services such as Women's Aid, Rape Crisis and Assist continue to work to support victim/survivors, albeit with some alterations to the way in which they provide their service in some areas. MARAC continues to run remotely via conference call, and it is intended that this will continue throughout the period of restrictions. There is a decrease in numbers of women seeking refuge. In the last four weeks Social Work Resources report a three-fold increase in the amount of domestic abuse referrals being received involving children compared to the four weeks prior to lockdown. Due process has been followed and appropriate supports have been put in place.

6.3. GBVP have issued national and local guidance and support to partner organisations and have issued guidance to front line health and social care workers who would not normally come into contact with domestic abuse and may not have had any training. This guidance has provided advice on recognising the signs of abuse, how best to support victim/survivors and what and how support services can be accessed. Gender-Based Violence e-learning courses continue to be available on SLC intranet. An increase in domestic incidents in relation to child contact is being monitored by services.

7. MAPPA

7.1. Resources remain unaltered. Staff still have access to the relevant information pertaining to offenders and this is shared electronically wherever possible. From the outset of the lockdown a contingency plan has been in operation that accounted for no face-to-face meetings but still allowed information to be shared and 'virtual' meetings to be conducted using secure platform.

7.2. Referral rates at each Level in MAPPA remain consistent meantime. This is partly due to prison releases being dependent upon prisoners 'earliest date of liberation' and therefore unaltered by the coronavirus. The slowing down of daily judicial/court business will, in time, slow the number of new cases being prosecuted, sentenced and convicted which will result in a slowing of the growth of new MAPPA offenders.

7.3. Recently announced changes to the release of short-term prisoners with effect from 30 April 2020 at a national level will increase the number of offenders being liberated into the community and therefore have an impact on all the partner agencies, including MAPPA itself. Early indications suggest that across South Lanarkshire this could be approx. 28 prisoners being liberated during the first 4 weeks with any additional releases dependent upon further direction by the Scottish Government. This situation is being monitored closely for any adverse impact on the responsible authorities and will be reported/addressed accordingly.

8. Employee Implications

8.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.

9. Financial Implications

9.1. The Public Protection Team (Child, Adult, GBV & MAPPA) anticipate any costs will be met within current budgets.

10. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

10.1. There are no climate change, sustainability or environmental implications associated with this report.

11. Other Implications

11.1. There are no additional risk implications associated with this report.

11.2. There are no other issues associated with this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

12.1. Arrangements are considered in terms of relevance for the activities described by the public protection team.

Val de Souza
Director, Health and Social Care

29 April 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults

Previous References

- none

List of Background Papers

- none

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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