Agenda Item	9
Report No	HCW/09/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	**Health, Social Care and Wellbeing**
Date:	**18 May 2023**
Report Title:	**Child Protection Minimum Dataset**
Report By:	**Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   This report provides Members with a background to the need for and development of the child protection minimum dataset. It also articulates the purpose of the minimum dataset.

1.2   The report highlights that the data will demonstrate where we are making improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people and demonstrate that joint working is leading to those improved outcomes as well as identifying our areas for improvement.

1.3   The report provides the latest data for each of the measures contained within the minimum dataset with some analysis of this data to support understanding.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to **NOTE** and comment on the purpose and background to the development of the minimum dataset and;

2.2 NOTE and comment on the range of data contained within the report.

3. Implications

3.1   **Resource** – There will be ongoing resource implications as the partnership restructures to meet the broader outcomes outlined within the plan.

3.2   **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – The plan centres on improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable young people within the Highland community.

3.3   **Risk** – The risks are met within both the service and Child Protection Committee risk registers

3.4   **Legal, Climate Change / Carbon Clever, Gaelic** – There are no implications arising directly from this report.

4.   Background

4.1   The Scottish Government's vision is that 'We live in the best place for children to grow up'. Many policy areas contribute to this vision, including Getting it Right for Every Child, the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, the Child Protection Improvement Programme and corporate parenting, but underpinning each of these is the ambition to improve outcomes for children and young people.

4.2   It is in this context that the Scottish Government asked CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland) to support the development of a minimum core dataset for Child Protection Committees (CPCs).

5.   Purpose of the Dataset

5.1   The aims of the shared dataset for Community Planning Partnerships, Child Protection Committees, Corporate Parenting groups, Chief Officer Groups and individual agencies are that it provides a set of meaningful indicators that:

- Enable CPCs to assess what difference systems and services are making to the lives and wellbeing of children and young people, within the context of integrated children's services planning.

- Provide clarity to child protection committees on what indicators they should (as a minimum) collect, noting that CPCs and Corporate Parenting groups can also collect additional measures that respond to locally important issues.

- Support the self-evaluation, continuous improvement and service planning activities of CPCs.

- Improve the consistency of data collection and reporting across CPCs, so helping the Scottish Government and national partners to assess more effectively how well Scotland's child protection systems are working.

- Enable individual partners to interrogate their own data and consider learning for their individual agencies as well as contributing to the shared approach of using the dataset.

5.2   The Child Protection Committee and partners have collated the dataset to analyse and respond where necessary to the data around our key processes and outcomes. The data will demonstrate where we are making improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people and provide some reassurance that joint working is leading to those improved outcomes as well as identifying our areas for improvement. From August 2023, this dataset will be expanded in line with the National Minimum Dataset V2 to include additional Police and Health data.

5.3   The Indicators provide a context for partners to better understand our systems alongside outcome and process measures, although some analysis has been provided the understanding around why some of the data has increased or decreased is required.

5.4   Several datasets reported in this paper display a spike during the initial phases of the pandemic. This is consistent with reports from practitioners who described that they were more cautious around deregistering children and young people with increased isolation and less support available to them. This cautionary approach also had a similar impact on referrals.

6.   Child Protection Minimum Dataset Report

6.1   Key Insights
- Number of children registered on the Child Protection (CP) Register is currently 84. This demonstrates a continued decrease since Q1 21/22. The strengthening of whole family approaches and effective early support should lead to a further reduction in the number of children being placed on the child protection register in coming years.
- The rate per 1,000 children registered on the Child Protection Register places Highland Council 17 out of 32 LAs.
- 0–4-year-olds make up majority of those registered at 50%.
- The average age of children on the CP Register is 5.1.
- The number of re-registrations is 7 for the latest quarter, with just one re-registration within 12 months.
- The number of concerns recorded is the lowest since Q3 21/22 at 64. Neglect is the most common concern in the quarter.
- Overall number of children referred to Children's Reporter has been stable in the quarter, although the most recent annual number is decreasing following a sharp increase in 2016/17.
- At a national level, for 2021/22 Highland Council ranked 24 out of 32 LAs for Rate per 1,000 Children Referred.

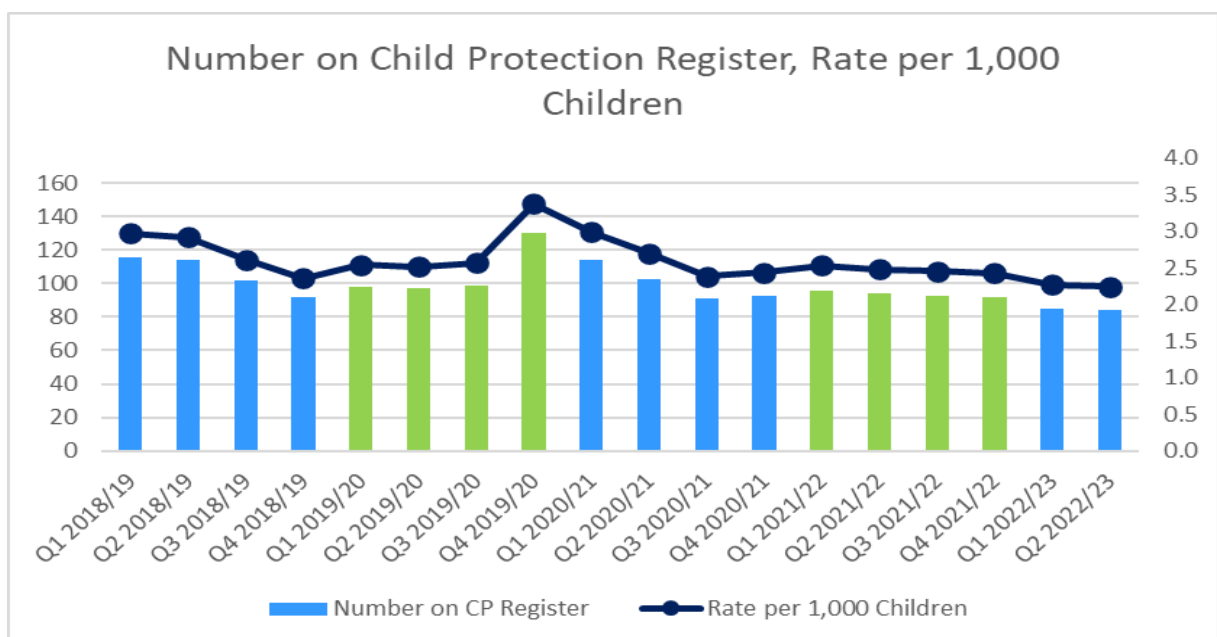6.2   **Child Protection Register – Numbers and Rates**

Chart 1: Number of Children on the Child Protection Register and Rate per 1,000 Children Registered.

By Q2 2022/23, Chart 1 above shows there were 84 children on the child protection register. This represents a decline from a high of 130 in Q4 2019/20 – and represents an ongoing decline since Q1 2021/22. Members should note that the 130 occurred during the initial phases of the pandemic, where practitioners were likely to have been more reluctant to deregister children with increased isolation and less support available to them. Large sibling groups being registered or de-registered can also impact on overall figures. As overall numbers of children registered has decreased, so too has the Rate per 1,000 Children (0-15) registered.
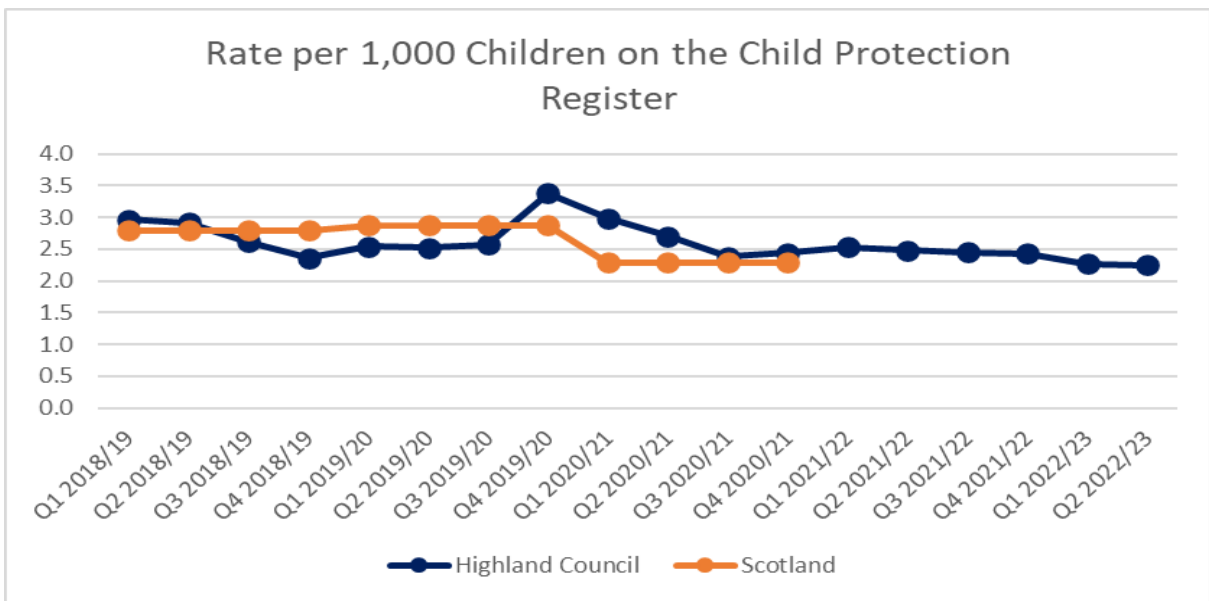
Chart 2: Rate per 1,000 Children on the Child Protection Register – Highland Council v Scotland
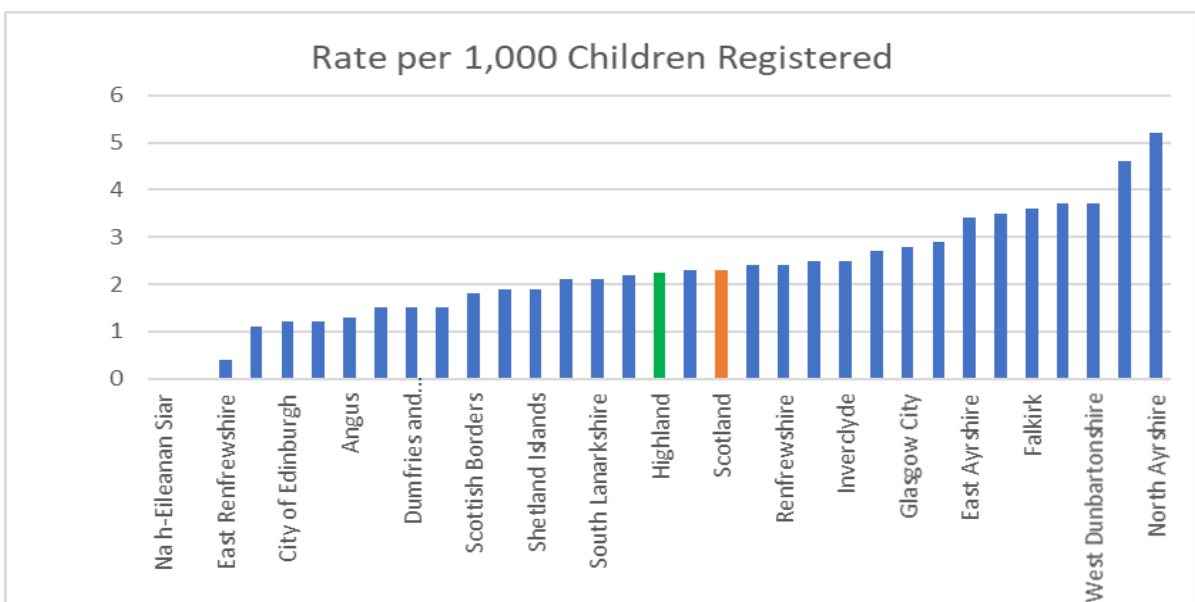

Chart 3: Rate per 1,000 Children on the Child Protection Register – Highland Council in comparison with other Local Authorities

Chart 2 above shows the Rate per 1,000 Children Registered on the Child Protection Register and benchmarks it against the national statistics. The national statistics are updated annually while the Highland Council collate quarterly data and so the most recent update to the Scottish figures relates up to Q4 2020/21. An update for Q4 2021/22 is expected Early-to-Mid 2023.

Chart 3 shows the Rate per 1,000 Children Registered on the Child Protection Register across all Local Authorities with the last updated data. For Highland Council, that will be Q2 2022/23, for all other Councils this will be Q4 2020/21. Rate per 1,000 in Highland is in line with the national average.
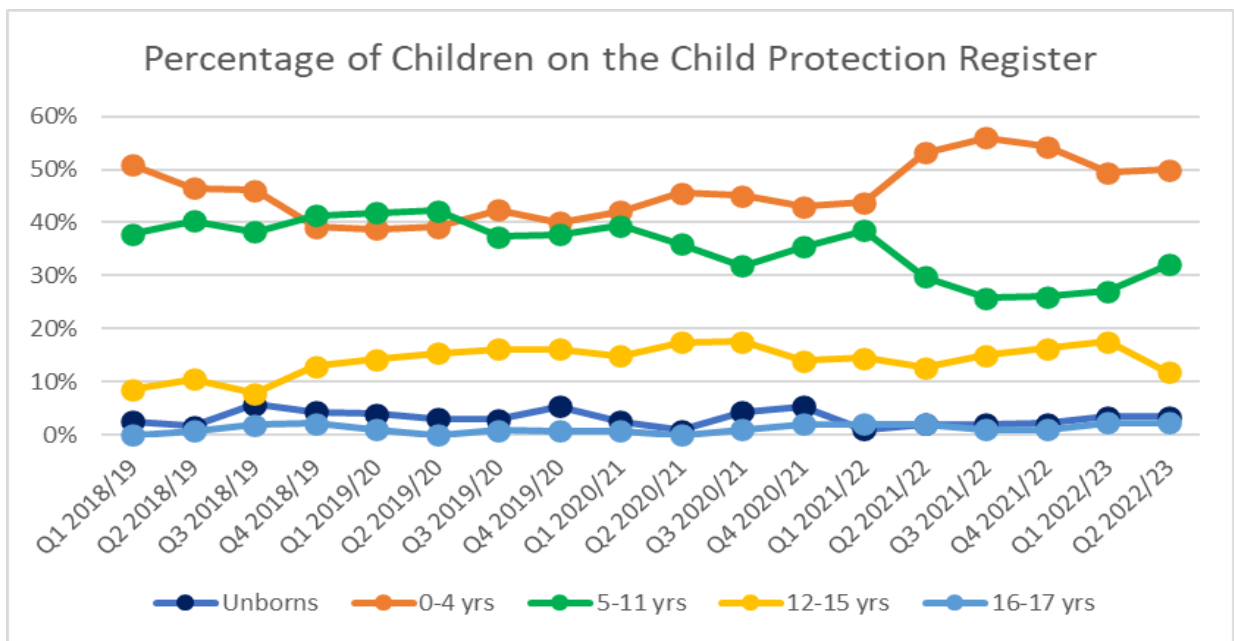

Chart 4: Percentage of Children in Age Bracket on the Child Protection Register

Chart 4 above shows the proportion of children registered on the Child Protection Register at the end of each quarter by age. As can be seen, 0–4-year-olds make up the highest proportion of those registered since Q3 2019/20. From Q1 2018/19 there has been little overall change (making up 50% of children registered) but there has been large variation quarter-to-quarter. 12-15-year-olds, 16-17-year-olds and unborn proportions tend to be showing little variation. The CPC will be monitoring this data carefully as the new National Child Protection Guidance is implemented.
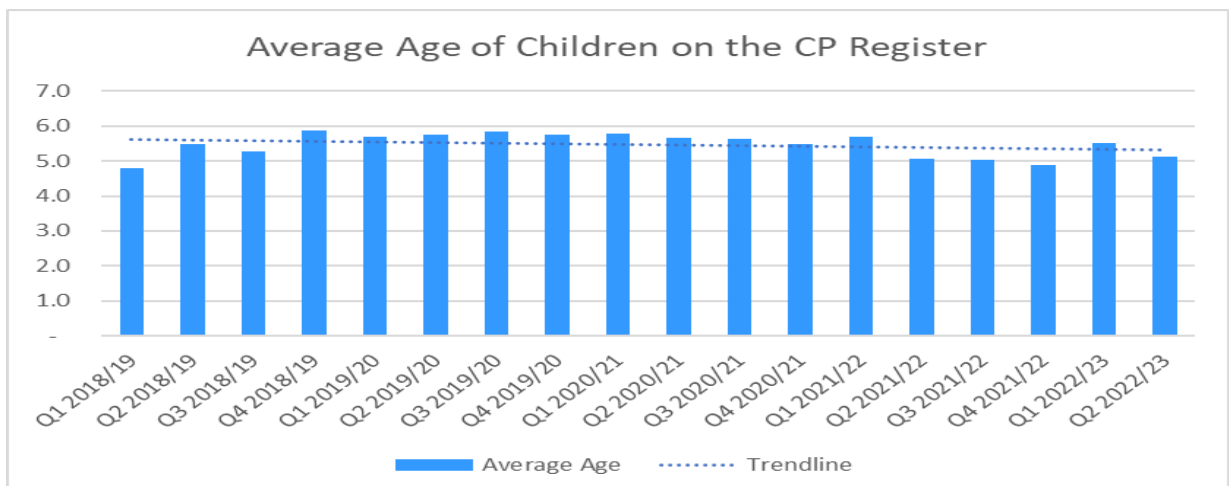
Chart 5: Average Age of Children Registered on the Child Protection Register

Chart 5 above shows the average age of all children registered on the Child Protection Register – including those unborn. There has been a gradual decline in the age of children that are registered since Q4 2018/19 to Q2 2022/23, with the average age reducing from 5.9 to 5.1 in this period.

6.3   **Child Protection Register – Registrations and De-Registrations**
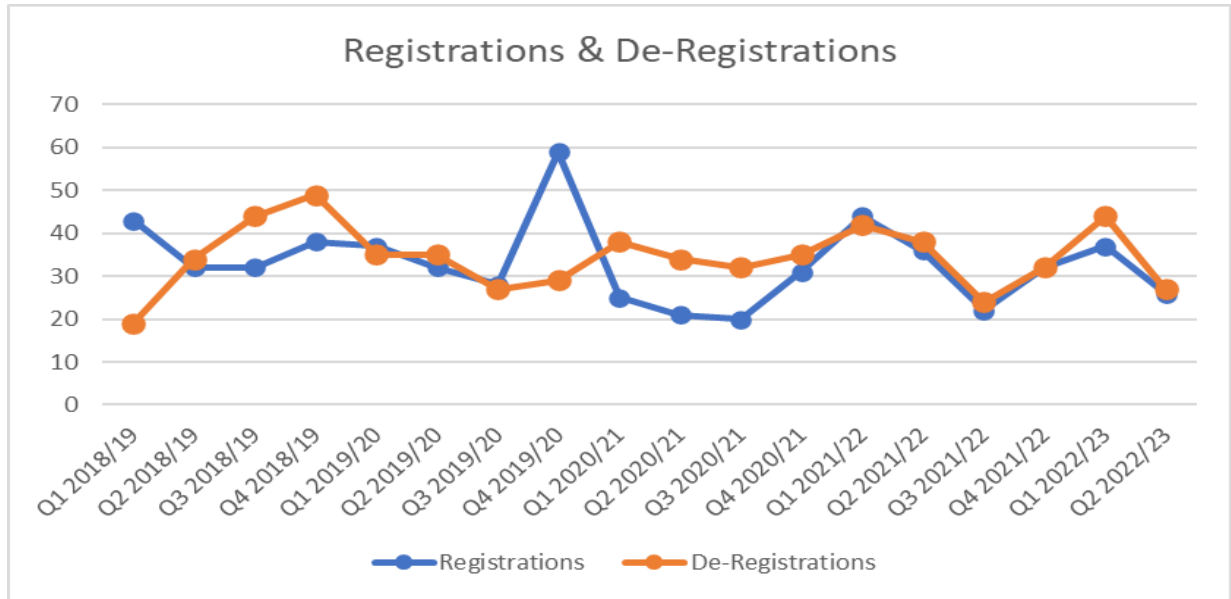

Chart 6: Registrations & De-Registrations of Children on the Child Protection Register

Chart 6 above shows the number of quarterly registrations and de-registrations from the Child Protection Register in the period. Overall numbers tend to follow each other closely, with a slight increase in the number of de-registrations in recent quarters. Not a great deal of variation in the absolute numbers, with an average of 33 registrations and 34 de-registrations in the period. This accounts for the relatively low variation in total numbers of children on the register at any one time. Again, it should be noted that large sibling groups being registered or de-registered in any quarter can impact on the overall figures significantly.
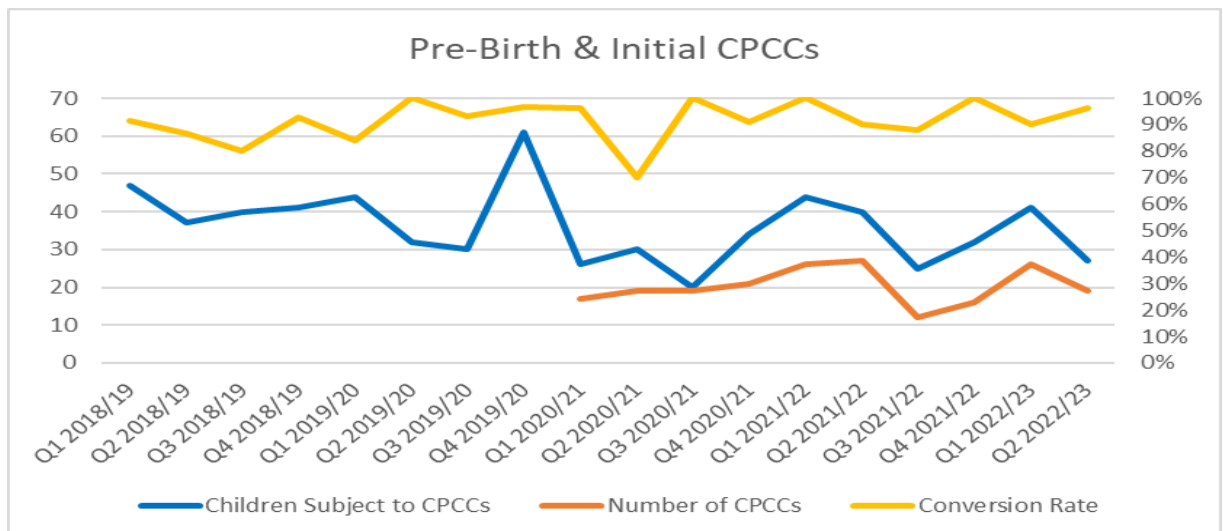
Chart 7: Pre-Birth & Initial ICPPM Conversion Rates

Chart 7 shows the number of children subject to an Initial Child Protection Planning Meeting (ICPPM), the total number of ICPPMs, and the conversion rate of ICPPM for each quarter. Please note, these meetings were previously referred to as Child Protection Case Conferences (CPCCs). This data provides an indicator of the type or level of cases being taken forward to ICPPM. A low percentage (conversion rate) potentially indicates that greater focus ought to be placed on the Investigation, Assessment, and Interagency Referral Discussion stages. The conversion rate in Highland averages 92% over the period, which is being negatively affected by Q2 2020/21, where there was only a 70% conversion (during the pandemic period). The conversion rate has not fallen below 90% since Q3 2021/22. This suggests that thresholds for proceeding to ICPPM in Highland are good.

There is some variation in the number of children subject to ICPPMs, as well as the total number of ICPPMs– however this relationship tends to follow closely due to family connections. There is an overall downward trend in the total number of children subject to ICPPMs, reducing from 47 in Q1 2018/19 to 27 in Q2 2022/23.
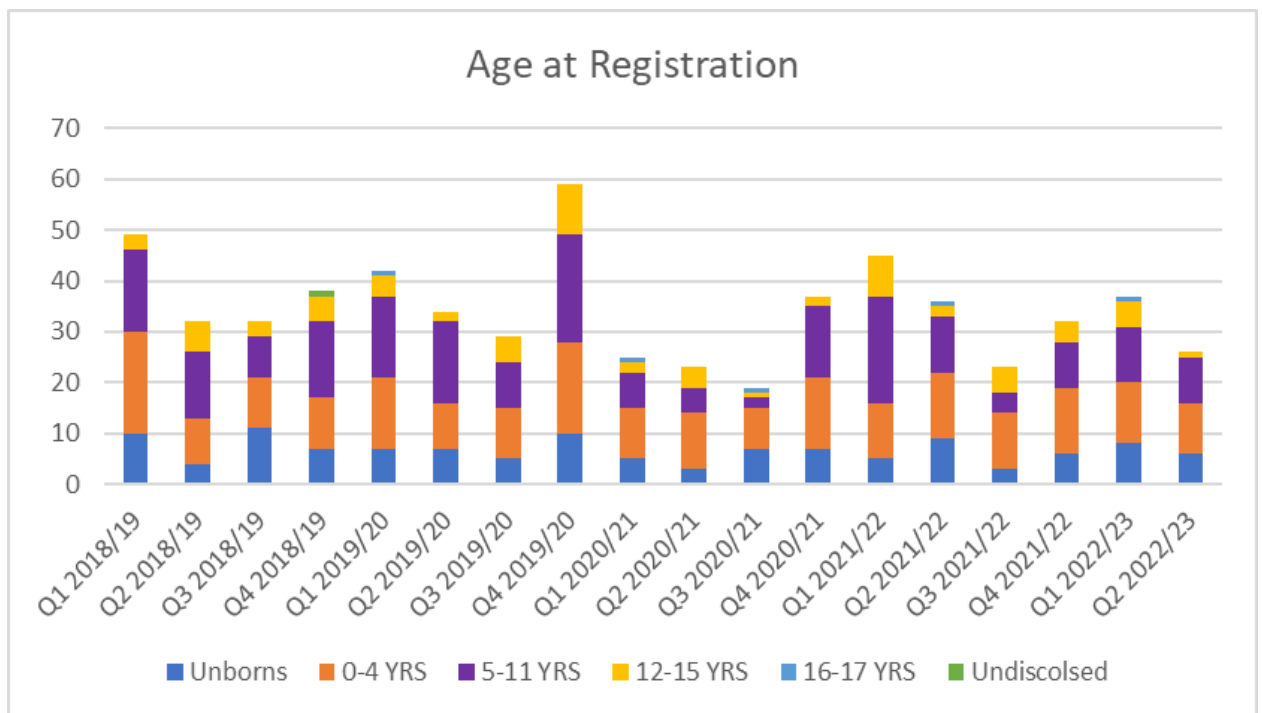

Chart 8: Age of Child at Registration

The above shows the trend in the age of children registered on the Child Protection Register in that quarter. While there is variation in the overall figure, it would appear to indicate a decrease in the number of 5–11-year-olds; this ties in with Chart 4 showing the percentage of children in each age bracket on the Child Protection Register.
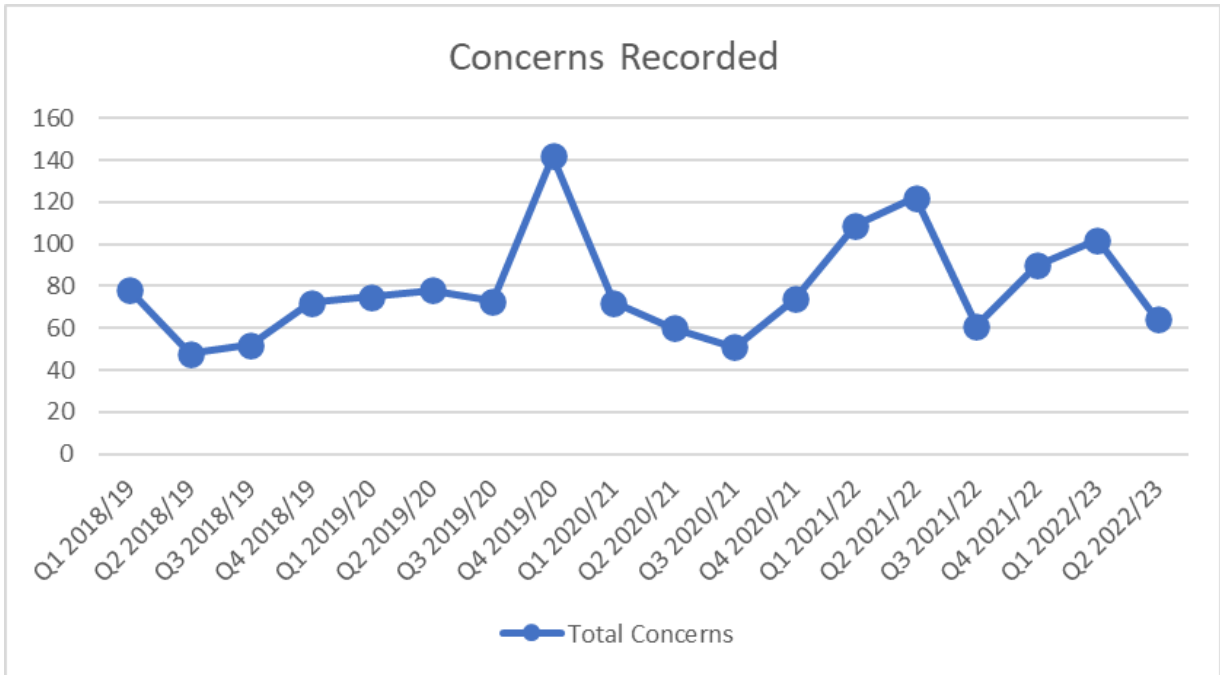
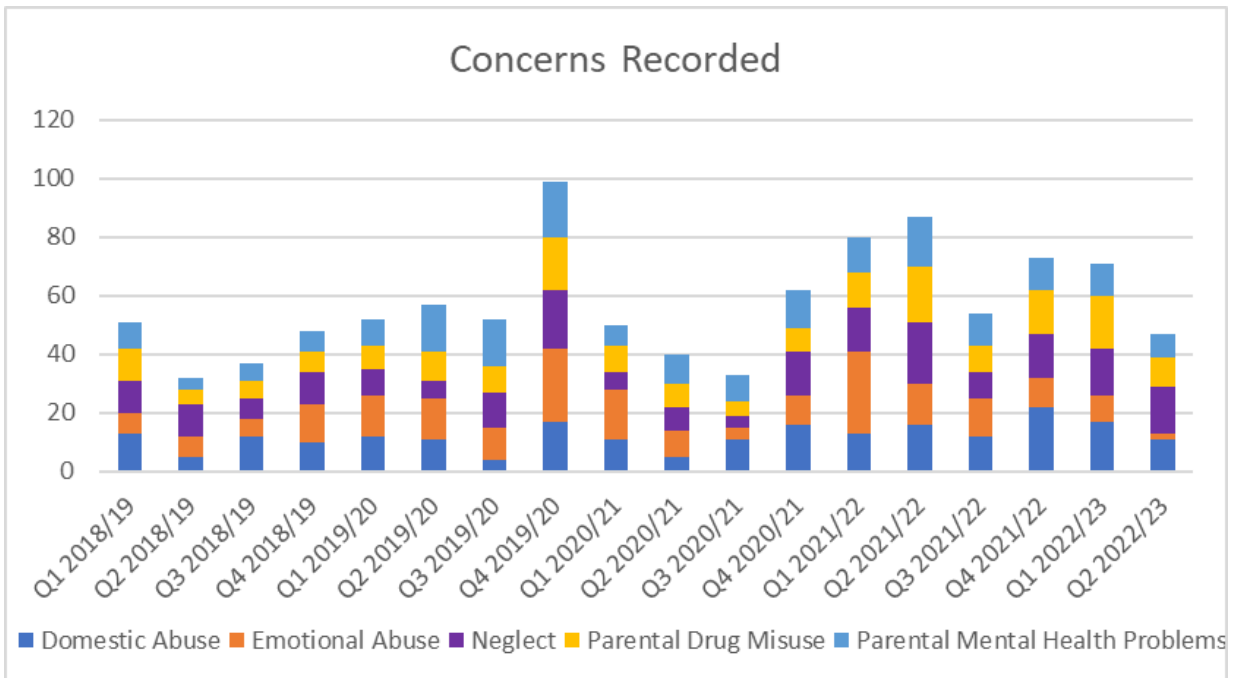Chart 9: Concerns Recorded Children Registered on the Child Protection Register

Chart 10: Top 5 Concerns Recorded at ICPPM

Chart 9 highlights the rise in the number of concerns that have been recorded for children registered on the Child Protection Register. In Q2 2022/23, there were 64 concerns recorded, the lowest level since Q3 2021/22. Neglect was the most common concern recorded across Highland in the quarter.

Chart 10 shows the movement in these five concerns. While the overall number of children registered has decreased in the time period, the number of concerns has risen. This would suggest the complexity of cases has increased with families experiencing a number of risks and vulnerabilities. The five largest concerns registered in descending order since Q1 2018/19 are: Domestic Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Parental

Mental Health Problems, and Parental Drug Misuse (as seen in Chart 10). This is useful data in terms of service planning and development and working with partners within the Alcohol and Drugs/Violence Against Women Partnerships. However, it is important to note that other types of abuse can have significantly higher risks for a smaller number of children e.g. criminal exploitation. These children and young people, and their families, will often require intensive support and therefore should not be lost in overall planning.
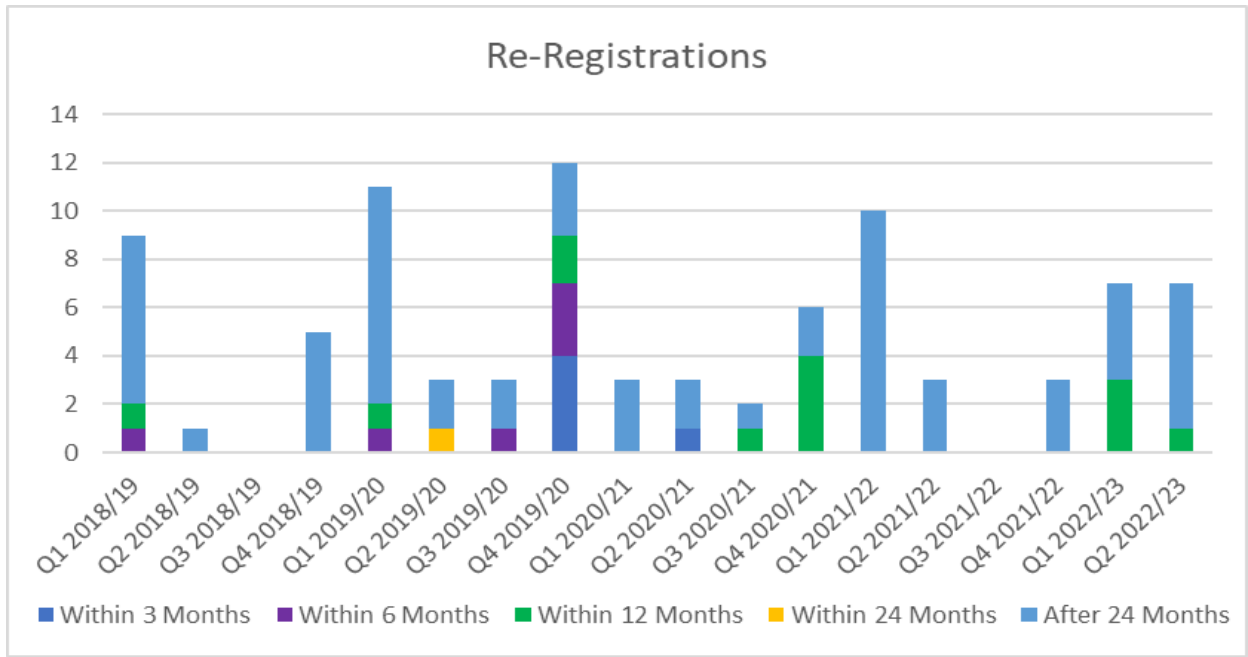

Chart 11: Re-Registrations

Chart 11 above shows the number of re-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register in each quarter. Re-registrations can provide an indicator of the quality of assessment, decision making and planning for children. For example, if there were a high number of children re-registered within 3-6 months, planning and decision making in relation to de-registration may be questioned. Where risk may have been reduced significantly and families are receiving support, children may be de-registered from the child protection register. However, at a later stage the family may experience further crises which puts a child/children at risk of harm. This is particularly the case where substance use, domestic abuse and/or parental mental health is a vulnerability.

The absolute numbers tend to remain under 10 for each quarter since Q1 2018/19. There has been only one re-registration of a child within 6 months of de-registration since Q4 2019/20. The majority tend to be after 24 months of de-registration, with a small number in recent quarters being within 12 months. Re-registrations provide an indication The Quality Assurance Sub-Committee will consider re-registrations within the Audit Cycle and findings reported to the Child Protection Committee.
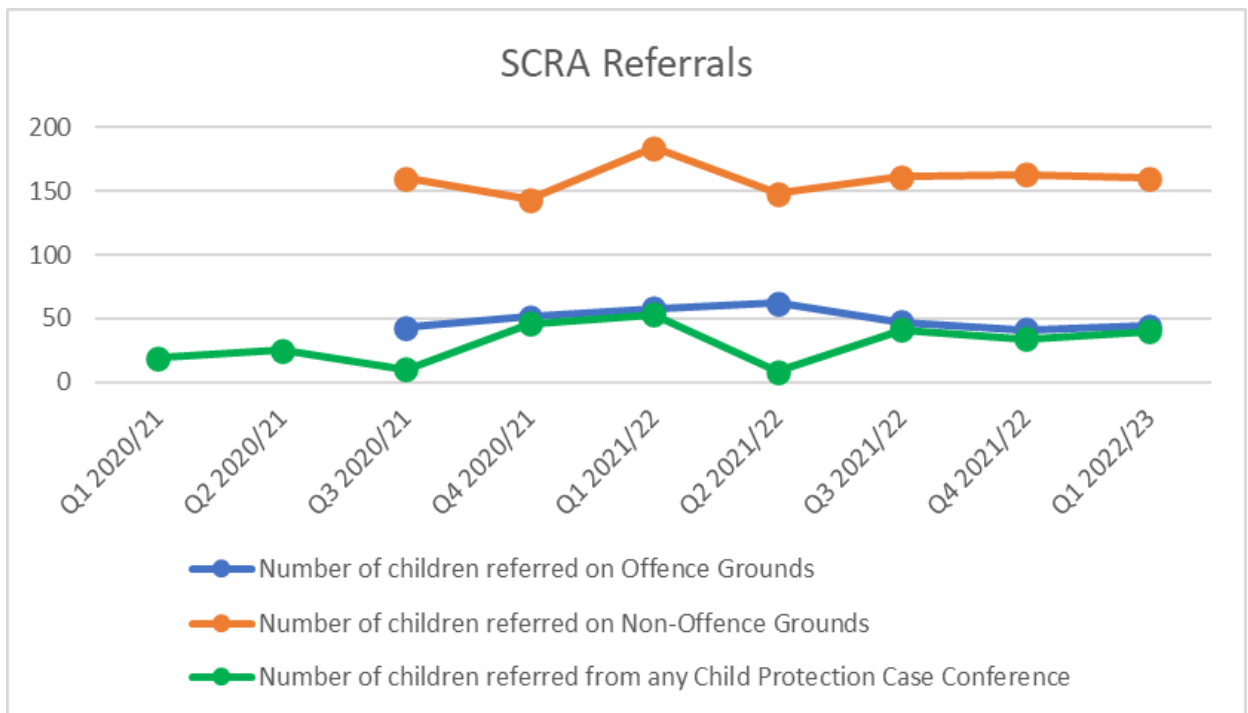
6.4 Child Protection – SCRA

Chart 12: SCRA Quarterly Referrals

Chart 12 shows the number of children referred to the Children's Reporter on Offence Grounds, Non-Offence Grounds and from any CPPM. The quarterly figures are primarily available from Q3 2020/21. As can be seen, there tends to be little variation in the figures since reporting started.
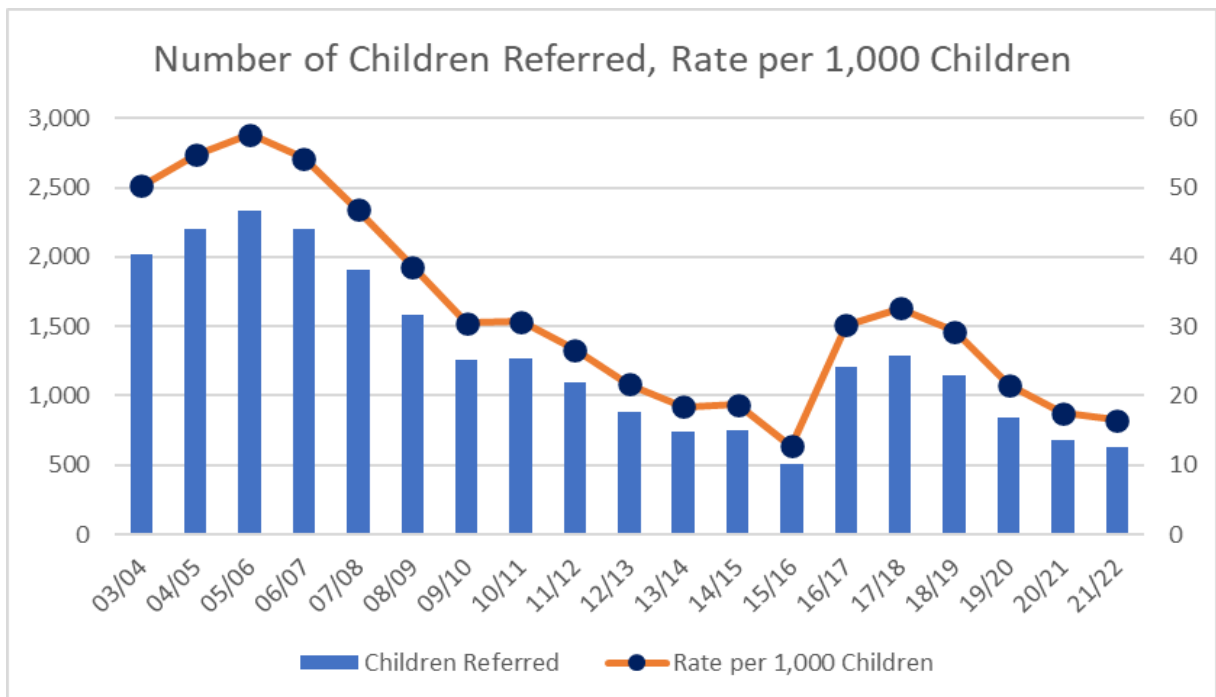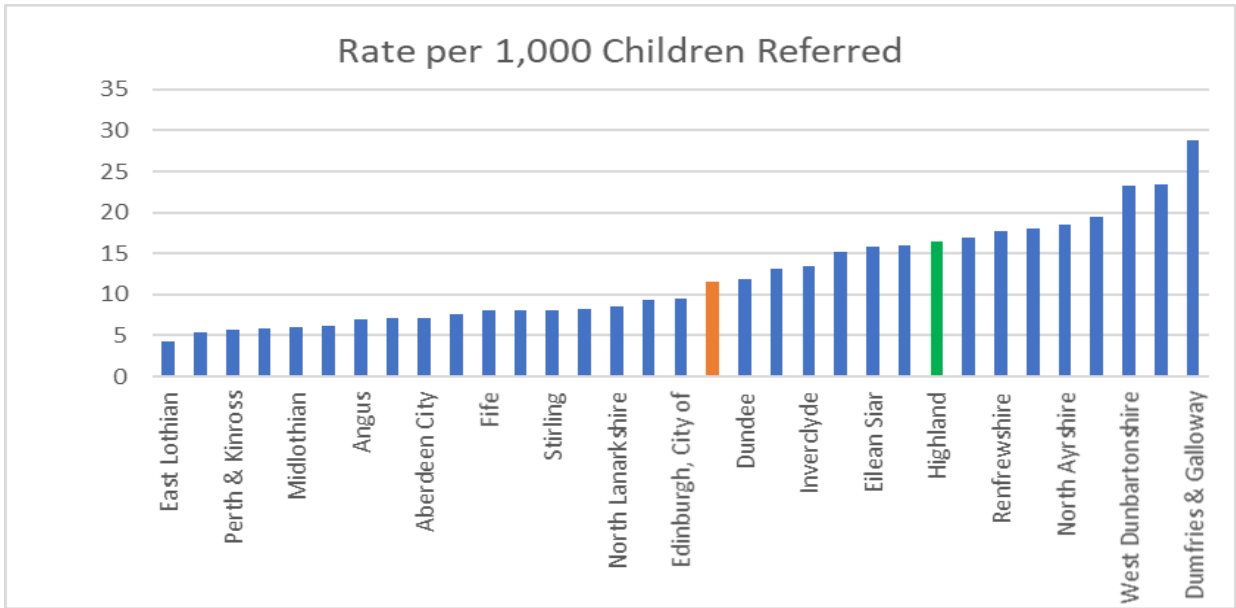

Chart 13: SCRA Annual Referrals

Chart 14: SCRA Annual Referrals – Rate per 1,000 Children – Highland v National

Chart 13 shows the total number of children referred and the Rate per 1,000 Children Referred over an almost two-decade period. There has been a significant drop in the number being referred, although the current 21/22 figure of 630 children, or 16.5 children per 1,000 children, is above the 15/16 figure of 506 children, or 12.7 children per 1,000 children. Progress however is being made and the most recent figure shows the fourth consecutive year of decreasing numbers.

Chart 14 above shows the Rate per 1,000 Children Referred at a national level for the most recent update in 21/22. Highland Council's position of 24 out of 32 can be seen in green, with a rate of 16.5 Children Referred per 1,000 Children, while the national average is highlighted in orange, a rate of 11.5 Children Referred per 1,000 Children.

6.5 **Child Protection Planning Meetings – Initial Timescales and Attendance**
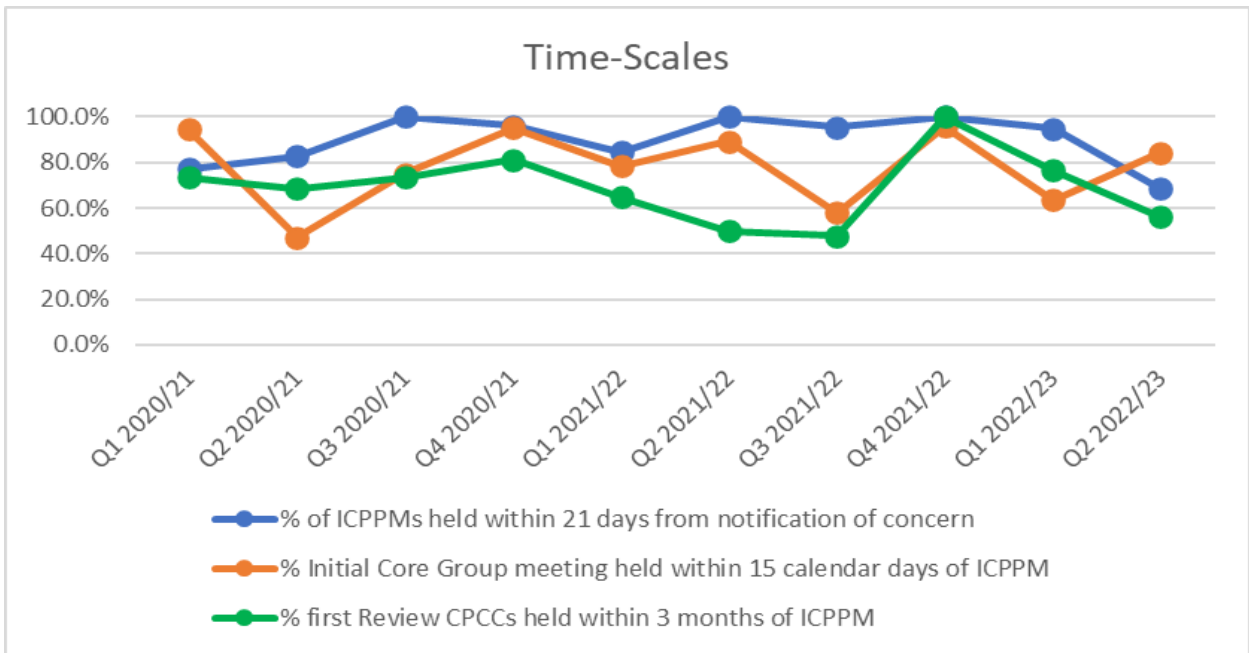
Chart 15: Percentage of Meetings held within timescales

Chart 15 above shows the timescales for Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings being held from notification of concern, followed by the Initial Core Group and Review dates. This figure tends to remain relatively high and consistent, although there has been a slight drop-off in the last quarter. The CPC will monitor timescales closely and raise any concerns regarding trends in this area with appropriate agencies. Please note, timescales in Highland are currently tighter than those outlined nationally. In line with the National Child Protection Guidance, Highland will be moving to national timescales from September 2023.
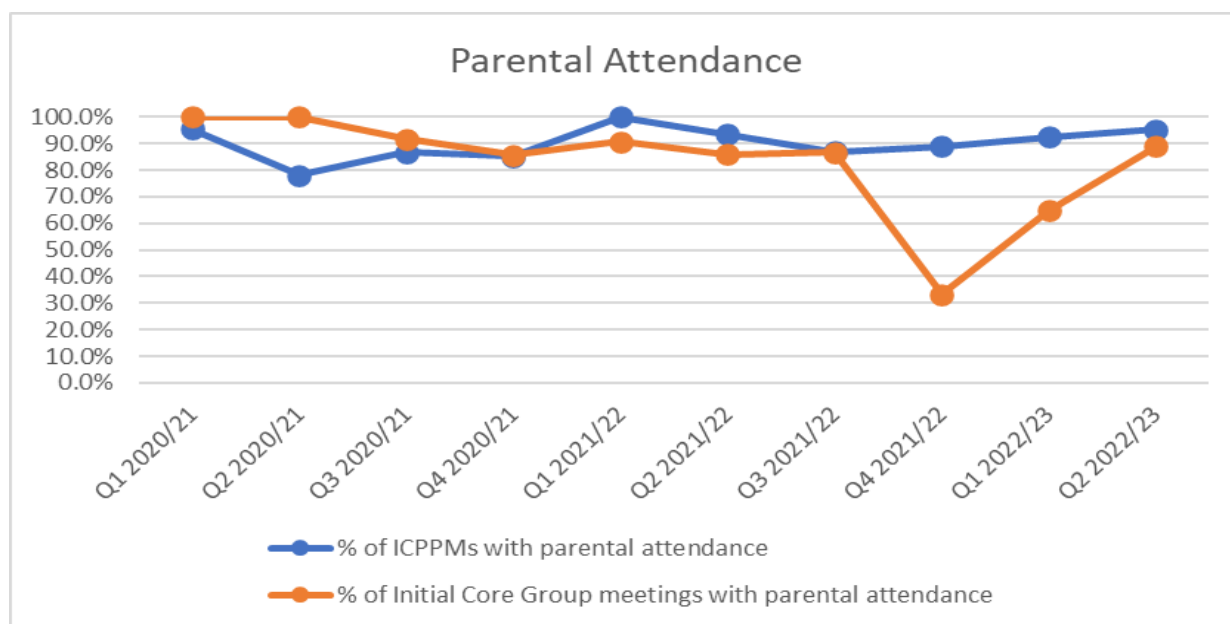

Chart 16: Percentage of Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings where at least one person who usually has care of the child attends

Chart 16 above shows the percentage of attendance from parents at an Initial Child Protection Planning Meetings and the percentage of attendance from parents at an Initial Core Group Meeting. The figures for both tend to be consistently high across the periods – apart from a large drop in Q4 2021/22 in the percentage of parental attendance at Initial Core Group Meetings. This appears to be an anomaly and the figures have since returned to expected levels.

7. Further Quality Assurance Activity

7.1 This data report aims to provide an overview of current data available to the Child Protection Committee. The development of Minimum Dataset V2 will enable further scrutiny in relation to wider child protection processes and issues. This will include data on Interagency Referral Discussions, Child Concerns, Joint Investigative Interviews, Medical Examinations and Missing Children.

7.2 The Quality Assurance Sub-Committee will continue to use the dataset to identify key patterns and trends, and areas of consideration for audit purposes. Data raises questions but does not provide all the answers in terms of quality assurance. Effective audit work and self-evaluation is crucial to ensure the data is interrogated, tested, and analysed within services. Feedback from children, young people, families, and practitioners also contributes to the overall Quality Assurance Strategy.

7.3   Work is currently ongoing to enable the Health and Social Care Service to view this report and dashboard at a Family Team level. The current report extract that drives the interactive dashboard drops the Family Team associated with the Child upon de-registration and so historical comparisons at Family Team level cannot be accurately made. It is expected this should soon be resolved and more detailed comparisons and analysis can be carried out. This will help inform service planning and development.

7.4   The Child Protection Committee Quality Assurance Sub-Committee meets regularly (monthly at present) and reports regularly to the Child Protection Committee. Data is collated quarterly and reported to CPC every six months. Update reports for the Public Protection Chief Officer Group are requested quarterly.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

Date: 25 April 2023

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