



Protecting Adults In  
EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

## East Dunbartonshire Adult Protection Committee

### Biennial Report 2018-20

#### Introduction

This report contains an account of the work of East Dunbartonshire Adult Protection Committee and multi-agency activity to support and protect adults at risk of harm in the East Dunbartonshire area during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020. It summarises information about emerging trends, harm, practice and service issues; the progress made over the past two years in areas identified for strategic attention and improvement by the Committee in 2018; and outlines plans for the next two years.

#### Management and performance information for 2018-20, including Data

##### Analysis of Harm

All management and performance information presented in this report is derived from East Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Social Work service databases and records.

##### **Referrals**

Figures in **Appendix 1, section 1** show that ASP referrals numbers have increased by 33% in the two years to 31 March 2020. This continues the upwards trend seen over the past few years which has led to a doubling of the referral rates since 2012. Other key trends include:

- Police referrals have increased by 28% (42% of total)
- Care home referrals have risen by 46% (37% of total)
- There have been modest increases in referrals from carers/Powers Of Attorney, Care Inspectorate and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service.

##### **Inquiries and outcomes**

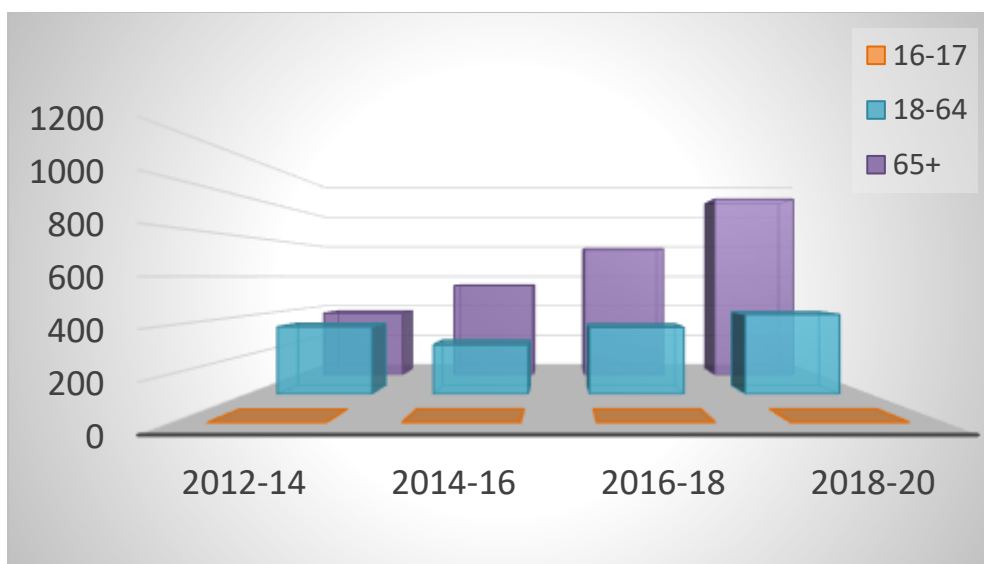
Inquiry numbers have dropped compared with 2016-18. This is attributable to revised Social Work referral management processes, which are now able to mark and screen out adult concern reports and so prevent inquiries being undertaken unnecessarily.

In terms of outcomes, the number of inquiries where the “3 point test” was met remains relatively stable over time (**Appendix 1, section 2**), as do the number of investigations, multi-agency meetings and protection orders. (**Appendix 1, section 3**). The number of protection plans put in place fell compared to 2016-18.

### Adults at risk

The doubling of referral numbers in the past 8 years has been driven by a progressive rise in **referrals for older adults (Chart 1)**. People **living with dementia** comprise **56%** of adults who were the subject of an ASP inquiry. Taken together, these figures reflect the significant demographic trend within East Dunbartonshire in terms of an “aging population” which is having an increasingly influential impact on local services. The Committee’s concern to ensure that services are “getting it right” for older adults who are at risk of harm, particularly those who have dementia, led to the initiation of the Older Adults & ASP Project in 2018.

**Chart 1: Number of referrals by age band, 2012-20.**



The number of 16 and 17 year olds referred to Adult Social Work remains extremely low. The proposals to extend the remit of the Children’s Hearing system to cover this age group should result in all concerns about young people being referred to Children’s Services from late 2020. The issues faced by many young adults subject of an ASP referral, including mental health and addiction, are associated with the long-term impact of childhood trauma and adversity. The Committee is also concerned to “get it right” for young adults affected by such circumstances, and agreed to adopt a specific workstream focussing on these issues to complement the Older Adults & ASP project.

**Physical harm** (including neglect) continued to predominate inquiries (**44%**). The second largest category of “other” (19%) included the perpetrator of “resident on resident” incidents, and incidents where the adult was found absent or missing from home. Self harm and neglect made up the third most prevalent type of harm (16%). Financial harm remained at relatively low levels. East Dunbartonshire mounted a special project to reduce the risk of financial harm to older and vulnerable citizens in the 2011-13 period, including promoting uptake of Power of Attorney and the establishment of a local Bogus Caller alert network. The Committee believes that these initiatives have contributed to the lower levels of financial harm which have been reported in recent years

## Performance

Information about the performance of ASP duties and activities is generated from Social Work's Carefirst client database, and has historically concentrated on the timeliness of action to support and protect adults by Social Work. The main indicator used is *"the percentage of ASP activities carried out within the timescales set out in local procedures"*. This was established by the Council in 2011 and has provided a useful measure of the impact of new processes and structures, as well as service pressures, on the service's capacity to carry out its functions. Where a downward trend is established through this measure, it prompts analysis of potential causes and remedial action.

The figures in **Appendix 1, Section 5** show a sharp decline in performance between 2015 and 2016, which was subsequently linked to a significant increase in demand in relation to Police referrals. In 2018, we reported that a disproportionate amount of ASP referrals made by the police involved adults who were not assessed as adults at risk of harm, i.e. "false positives". G Division's Public Protection Unit reviewed its screening processes and staff training, so as to ensure that the "three point test" was being properly taken into account when an adult concern report was marked as an ASP referral. In a parallel move, Social Work also reviewed their screening processes to distinguish between ASP referrals and general adult concern reports made by the Police, so as to ensure that their staff were not carrying out unnecessary ASP inquiries. Taken together these twin actions have reduced the demands placed on Social Work in the 2016-18 period due to "false positive" ASP referrals, allowing the focus of ASP work to be better directed where it is most required.

The Committee also heard that services experienced particular pressures which affected performance levels during 2018-19. These pressures included industrial action and a Large Scale Investigation. Managers reviewed how services responded to these pressures and agreed measures to improve the effectiveness of responses in the event of any recurrences. The revised arrangements were evidently successful as, despite a further Large Scale Investigation, Social Work's performance in 2019-20 approached the levels last seen in 2015.

It is very clear to the Committee that ASP is a whole systems activity, and that change or pressure in one part of the system will affect the whole. Service pressures have limited the partnership's capacity to progress planned work to analyse and respond to the global downturn in promptness of reporting ASP incidents to Social Work, reported at **Appendix 1, section 5**. Although this remains on the agenda for partnership action, the Committee is realistic about the impact of the ongoing pandemic response on planned improvement activity in this as well as in other areas, which are discussed in the rest of the report.

## **Improvement activity in 2018-20: Outcomes, Strengths & Challenges**

East Dunbartonshire's previous Biennial Report used various sources of evidence to evaluate local ASP activity and identify particular strategic priorities for the 2018-20 period. The Committee agreed and monitored actions to be taken to address these areas for improvement using an annual business improvement plan model (**Appendix 2**). This section summarises the progress made and evidence of the impact of improvement activity in the five key areas.

## **1. The Adult Protection Committee is able to carry out its statutory functions effectively.**

The Committee's structure and working arrangements are affected by organisational changes in partner agencies and changes in partnership structures, and so need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose. A major feature of the past two years has been the rollout of public protection governance structures in East Dunbartonshire, which has influenced the re-development of the Committee's sub-group structure and strategic planning cycle.

2018-20 saw the introduction of three new sub-groups to support the Committee fulfil its functions:

- The **Continuous Improvement Sub-group** was given a remit to manage and monitor learning from audits, consultation with service users and carers, and case reviews, and develop and oversee the progress of the Committee's business and improvement plans.
- The **Joint Learning & Development Sub-group** was established in partnership with East Dunbartonshire's Child Protection Committee to develop and provide a cross-sector protection training programme.
- The **Joint Public Information & Communication Sub-group** was established in partnership with East Dunbartonshire's Child Protection Committee to plan and coordinate a joint approach to developing and delivering information about child and adult protection issues to the public.

Up until 2018, the Committee was operating a two year strategic planning cycle to coincide with the Biennial report. In order to maximise the synergies between local ASP improvement activity and the new national improvement plan on the one hand; and East Dunbartonshire Child Protection Committee's new business improvement cycle on the other, the Committee decided to adopt a three year strategic improvement plan from 2019 (**Appendix 6**).

The Continuous Improvement Sub-group's membership and activity was affected by organisational changes from early 2020, and subsequent Covid-19 business continuity arrangements have prevented the group from being reconvened. This has had an impact on a number of areas of activity. One notable example not covered elsewhere is the delay in finalising the Committee's Business Improvement Plan for 2020-21.

## **2. Services meet the support & protection needs of people with protected characteristics**

Demographic pressures on existing services have received increasing levels of attention in recent years. Issues such as going missing, gender-based violence, alcohol and drug misuse, and causing harm to self and others, are increasingly affecting older adults, whilst general service responses remain geared towards meeting the needs of working age adults. At the other end of the age-scale, young people and young adults who are at risk of harm tend to be affected by childhood trauma and adversity which influences their engagement with general services. The Committee therefore established workstreams to advance partnership approaches to supporting older adults, and young adults in transition between services.

### **The Older Adults & ASP Project**

The project is designed to shine a light on specific issues which are growing in significance for older adults, and support partners to identify how services could and should develop to meet the needs of

older adults in these respects. Initial scoping revealed that the existing ASP dataset lacked crucial information about key issues such as people absent or missing from home; and the age of the person causing the harm. Social Work's ASP inquiry forms were amended by July 2018 to enable this information to be gathered and a baseline to be established. The project encompasses six workstreams covering such as going missing, gender-based violence and alcohol & drug misuse. The project outline and updates on each active workstream are at **Appendix 3**.

### **Supporting young adults in transition**

A joint working approach to supporting people in transition between Children's & Adult Services was established with the Child Protection Committee. Originally focussing on a joint protocol to manage the support & protection needs of young people caught between the Child and Adult Protection systems, attention shifted to the issues underlying those needs. As a result, the focus of the Committee's workstream was amended in 2019 to **supporting adults who have experienced abuse in care, trafficking & exploitation, and trauma in childhood**.

The ongoing work of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and other strands of the Survivor Scotland strategy highlight the profound and disabling impact of childhood abuse, including in-care abuse, on the individual and their relationships into adulthood. Care experienced people often find that accessing their care records enables them to get a clearer picture of what they experienced when they were children living with their families, in residential units or schools, or in foster care, and can be a key part of their recovery process. East Dunbartonshire's Access to Care Records policy was updated in 2019 with input from care-experienced adults: a further learning input was planned for an event in 2020 but this was affected by the pandemic response.

Equally important is support from services that is trauma-informed. The Committee has a long-standing interest in the links between trauma and self-harm, which was the focus of its conference in 2015. This gave impetus to efforts to develop a trauma-informed workforce across adult mental health and alcohol & drug recovery services in East Dunbartonshire. National policy on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) reinforced the impact of childhood experiences on adult health and wellbeing. Public protection partners established a Trauma & Adverse Childhood Experiences Collaborative in 2019 with the aim of creating a seamless culture across the divide between Children's and Adult Services which will better support people in transition between the services.

Another issue which does not respect the boundary between Children's and Adult services is trafficking and exploitation. The Committees have set up a joint working group to develop robust local responses to all forms of exploitation and trafficking, including child sexual exploitation. A multi-agency seminar on Human Trafficking & Exploitation, including input from people with lived experience, was scheduled to launch this strategy strand in March this year but was cancelled because of the onset of the pandemic.

### **3. Audit and Inspection findings are used to drive improvement.**

In order to strengthen its ability to deliver on this outcome, the Committee established the Continuous Improvement sub-group in 2018, giving it the specific remit of overseeing all self-evaluation and improvement activity.

Following East Dunbartonshire's participation in the national thematic ASP inspection in 2017-18, the partnership was awarded a grade of "Good" across all three areas of scrutiny, with one recommendation: "The partnership should make sure that social workers prepare well-balanced, valid

chronologies for all adults at risk of harm who require them”. The Committee agreed a three year improvement plan in respect of the recommendation in September 2018. The main areas for action include ensuring governance and oversight by the Committee, improving recording tools and systems provided by the Council, and improving completion and quality of case chronologies by social workers. A notable feature of the improvement project is the leadership role taken by a practitioner task group in respect of revising the recording tool and developing and delivering a training programme. Regular reports have been submitted to the Committee. As **Appendix 4a** details, relevant project milestones were reached prior to the onset of the pandemic, but further progress has since been delayed.

The Committee undertook two multi-agency casefile audits during this Biennial Report period, in March 2019 and March 2020. The report and completed action plan for the 2019 audit are at **Appendix 4b**. The overall grading for inter-agency practice in Evaluation Area 1 “Is the at-risk adult safer as a result of our activity?” was 5 (very good); and for Evaluation Area 5 “How good is our service delivery for at-risk adults and their families?” was 4 (good). Key recommendations concerned the quality of information available about outcomes, case allocation practice, case conferences, and supervision, and how these were implemented and progressed is detailed in the action plan. Substantial elements of the action plan have been impeded by capacity issues as well as the onset of the pandemic. One example is the planned multi-agency consultation to inform the review of local risk assessment and management (RAMP) procedures. Another involves the reflective supervision tool which was developed by the Quality & Development Partnership sub-group. This multi-disciplinary instrument incorporates a self-assessment tool to assist workers to identify their ASP learning and development needs according to their role. Although it was launched on a Test of Change basis in December 2019, monitoring and evaluation of its’ utility and effectiveness was interrupted by the onset of the pandemic and will restart when conditions permit.

The preliminary results of the 2020 audit gave the Committee assurance that inter-agency practice and service delivery continued to be of a high standard, in that the overall grade was 5 (very good). Owing to COVID-19 business priorities, the formal report and action plan have yet to be approved by Committee and so are not included with this report.

#### **4. Adults at risk of harm and carers are involved in the full range of ASP activity.**

Following the decision to stand down the ASP Service User and Carer Consultation sub-group in 2017, the HSCP’s Patient, Service User & Carer (PSUC) Forum was identified as a key vehicle for the Committee to formally consult with service users and carers about strategic issues. The PSUC Forum decides for itself on the topics which are a priority for its consideration, and unfortunately other local issues and developments, such as the introduction of a Fair Access to Community Care framework and Carers Act provisions, took precedence for the Forum in 2018 and 2019.

The Committee has an ongoing commitment to support opportunities for people with lived experience to co-produce training for care professionals. 2019’s joint public protection conference saw inputs from older adults about their views on safety and vulnerability in the later stages of life; and from care experienced adults about their views on the content and accessibility of records that professionals kept on them (**Appendix 5b**). The 2019 conference delivered a strong message to both the Adult and Child Protection Committees that further efforts must be made to improve and sustain participation. This resulted in the decision to make participation the theme of the 2020 joint conference. A range of stakeholders had been brought together to deliver the conference programme

before the pandemic forced its cancellation, as well as two other co-produced events on human trafficking and care records.

The 2019 conference had also called for a stronger online public protection presence. In response, the Committee established the Joint Public Information & Communication Sub-group with the Child Protection Committee and tasked it with developing online methods of engaging and consulting with adults and communities. When the pandemic started in March 2020, the joint approach enabled swift messaging to local communities via social media about the need to share concerns about vulnerable children and adults, which undoubtedly contributed to the increased referral rate as the pandemic progressed.

Consultation with stakeholders in 2019 indicated positive levels of satisfaction with adults' involvement in ASP decision-making (**Appendix 5b**). Feedback on the specific outcomes of ASP activity is collected from adults at risk of harm through completion of "Have Your Say" forms at ASP case conferences or reviews. The 2019 casefile audit highlighted low attendance levels for adults/their representatives at such multi-agency meetings, and a lack of completed "Have Your Say" forms in the adult's records. One improvement action agreed was to strengthen prompts for case conference chairs to request formal feedback from adults, and this was achieved through the development of a new case conference minute template which will also enable better monitoring of adult and multi-agency partner attendance levels.

A further objective for the Committee is to adopt a more systematic approach to measuring outcomes for adults at risk of harm than is in place at present. The Continuous Improvement Sub-group commissioned a scoping exercise on outcome measures and methods used elsewhere in the UK. Since the exercise also established that the national data group had a similar agenda, it was agreed to develop a local model in tandem with the national project rather than act independently.

## **5. All partners participate effectively in ASP activity.**

Inter-agency practice and policies require to be fit for purpose if they are to support effective partner involvement at different phases of the ASP process. The partnership formed an ambitious plan to introduce an Initial Referral Discussion (IRD) model in East Dunbartonshire, and refresh other procedures to support effective inter-agency practice. The Committee identified a parallel strand of activity involving the consolidation of a shared approach to training and learning, and establishing joint structures to support a cross-sector approach to public protection learning and development.

Police (G Division) and Social Work colleagues collaborated to design and pilot a local Interagency Referral Discussion (IRD) model in 2018-19. An IRD is triggered by an incident involving risk of serious harm, and involves a tripartite tele- or video-conference between Police, Social Work and Health to agree joint investigation/risk management activity. The direct role of health colleagues in the process was expanded in 2019-20, and G Division subsequently developed an equivalent IRD model with East Renfrewshire HSCP. The model has proven beneficial in practice, particularly in reducing any delay in decision-making or putting necessary protection measures in place, and helped partners adjust to the virtual multi-agency meeting environment introduced by the pandemic.

East Dunbartonshire has continued to improve its Large Scale Investigation (LSI) model and methodology to maximise the partnership approach to both the investigation and the learning to be gained. A multi-disciplinary approach is viewed as essential if there are to be positive outcomes for the adults at risk of harm. If partners have access to relevant information, they can take effective

action within their own sphere of responsibility which makes a difference to the adults involved. For example, information shared during LSIs has contributed to the Care Inspectorate's improvement plan for the service provider, and to criminal investigations undertaken by the police. Within the HSCP, a reflective review of inter-agency involvement in one LSI process led to the initiation of a virtual care home liaison team. This virtual team involves Social Work, Community Nursing and other services, and aims to support service providers, promote information-sharing and develop a joined-up approach to responding to service concerns at an early stage. Partner agencies were more widely consulted on East Dunbartonshire's LSI procedures at the Partners in Protection event in February 2019 (**Appendix 5a**).

The Joint Learning & Development Sub-group was established in 2019, and delivered East Dunbartonshire's first joint annual conference, as well as a new multi-agency public protection training programme from 2019-20. The joint annual conference was evaluated very positively by stakeholders (**Appendix 5b**) and both Committees agreed to make this an annual event. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, the conference planned for 2020 was another casualty of the pandemic.

The Committee's multi-agency training strategy for 2017-20 included the objective to increase shared training opportunities. As the table in **Appendix 1, Section 7** shows, whilst figures reported for 2016-18 indicated this objective was being met, the number of shared training places provided in 2018-20 decreased significantly. The Committee has been advised of the factors which have influenced this result. Firstly, ASP training capacity issues led to a more restricted range of courses being offered and delivered in 2018-20, as available capacity was deployed to ensure partners could meet statutory duties and regulatory requirements. Secondly, the integrated public protection training programme was designed to free up more training resource and increase capacity to support multi-agency courses and events. It was, however, affected by the onset of the pandemic and the enforced cancellation of at least one key event contributed to the reported fall in shared training places.











## **Future plans**

Consultation with stakeholders at the 2019 joint conference indicated a strong consensus and approval for the Committee's planned development and improvement activity for 2019-22. This is summarised within the action plan at **Appendix 6**, and maps out the direction of travel for 2020-22. This will be subject to review and amendment as partners seek to incorporate both the learning and new demands arising from the pandemic. Some important issues have assumed even more significance and urgency in recent months, for example completing the rollout of the Herbert protocol for older adults at risk of going missing, and developing service user and carer consultation pathways using social media.

The Committee is under no illusions about the challenges partners will face over the next two years, and difficult decisions will no doubt continue to have to be made about what has to take priority and what can be achieved in the current circumstances. Despite the size of the task ahead, the Committee is motivated and well-placed to deal with it. Collaborative working is embedded within East Dunbartonshire's culture, so much so that the partnership has been likened to acting like one organisation. The strength of the local partnership and partners' willingness to support, challenge and learn from each other laid the foundations for the way that organisations needed to be able to work in order to continue to deliver services and keep people safe during the pandemic. This approach and way of working has resulted in good outcomes for adults at risk of harm, and offers much by way of learning to other areas.



## Appendices

Appendix 1	Statistical Information for 2018-20	 Appendix 1.pdf	
Appendix 2	Annual Business Improvement Plans	 ASP Action Plan 2018-19 - Final.xlsx	 APC action plan 2019-20 - Final.xlsx
Appendix 3	Older Adults & ASP Project	 ASP & Older Adults Programme Structur	
Appendix 4	a. ASP Thematic Inspection Improvement Plan 2018-21	 Improvement Action Plan -update	
	b. Multi-agency casefile audit and action plan 2019	 EDAPC Multi-agency audit ?	 2019 audit action plan - final.docx
Appendix 5	a. Consultation with partner agencies	 Partners in Protection Report 20	
	b. Consultation with stakeholders	 Joint Conference and consultation re	
Appendix 6	Strategic Improvement Plan 2019-22	 APC 3 year plan.docx	