



East Lothian and Midlothian  
Public Protection Committee



# Staff Newsletter

## February 2025



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

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[emppc.co.uk](https://emppc.co.uk)

**Dates for your calendar!**

**11<sup>th</sup> February is Safer Internet Day**  
**20<sup>th</sup> February is National Adult Support and Protection Day**

## Message from Keith Mackay, Chair of EMPPC

“As we move towards Springtime I reflect back on the winter months and just what a difficult period this can be for people with vulnerabilities. This made me think about the upcoming National Adult Support and Protection Day on 20<sup>th</sup> February and what this should mean to all of us working in the public protection arena.



This annual awareness raising campaign is a reminder to all of us whether in our working capacity or as a member of our community, urging everyone to act on any concerns they may have about vulnerable adults who may be at risk of harm, as well as who to contact.

We have all heard of physical, psychological, financial or sexual when we focus on harm but we perhaps don't naturally consider neglect or self-neglect in the same manner. Harm by its very nature can be near invisible so it takes us all to pause and think a little harder about what we are seeing around us. Neglect is where someone is not cared for properly either by themselves or by someone tasked to do so. Self-neglect is when a person is unable to look after themselves or perhaps has lost the motivation to do so. If we take the time there will be signs, it may be hoarding, build up of dirt or waste or a person's ability to maintain daily life. If we all make a slight adjustment in our thought processes then perhaps we can be better at identifying risks of harm and if we take the time to talk about the issues then perhaps we can increase the knowledge and learning of those around us whether that is friends, family or colleagues. If we all push out the message then hopefully we can make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable in our communities.

I saw the slogan recently; **‘Seen Something? Say Something!’** and I thought that was a really good banner headline. Remember to spread the word about our [EMPPC website](#) as this gives everyone no matter their background the information they need on who to contact if they have concerns for a vulnerable adult or child.”

# Public Protection



As East Lothian Council gets ready to say farewell to Monica Patterson, Chief Executive, who retires this month, we take the opportunity to thank Monica for her guidance, leadership and support to our Public Protection Partnership.

The Critical Services Oversight Group (known as CSOG) provides the strategic leadership, scrutiny, governance and direction to EMPPC and meets every three months. It also keeps an overview of the work taking place locally in relation to wider public protection matters in relation to drug and alcohol related harm, suicide prevention and MAPPA (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements). CSOG is co-chaired by Monica and her counterpart in Midlothian Council, Grace Vickers. They are the core decision makers along with Alison MacDonald (Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals, NHS Lothian) and Gregg Banks (Divisional Commander, J Division, Police Scotland).

Monica has spent most of her professional career working in local government, with senior roles in housing and community services, and has always brought this wide experience into her role as co-chair.

Monica attended and chaired her first CSOG as Chief Executive only five days after the country went into lockdown in March 2020. In those challenging times for everyone, when there were concerns about heightened risks for vulnerable children and adults, CSOG met fortnightly to keep oversight over the arrangements for Child Protection, Adult Support Protection, MAPPA and responding to Violence Against Women and Girls.



# Public Protection

Reflecting on her time as co-chair, Monica said “Relentless focus on keeping people safe in East Lothian has always been one of my priorities”, and this was no more evident during the pandemic. Monica has always recognised the important governance role that CSOG has – “Working in partnership with Midlothian, CSOG is important to ensure senior oversight of child and adult protection, and violence against women and girls. We must always have a focus on this area ensuring processes are reviewed and updated regularly, training is ongoing and that we continuously learn from any cases locally and nationally”.

Grace Vickers said “It has been a pleasure to work with Monica. Midlothian and East Lothian share a Public Protection Office and our collective focus on keeping people safe is our top priority. The wealth of experience that Monica has brought to the Critical Services Oversight Group has made us an even stronger and a much more effective partnership. On a personal note, I will also miss Monica as Chief Executive given we share a number of services across Midlothian and East Lothian and I wish Monica a long and very happy retirement”.



## MAPPA

We mentioned in the last article that CSOG has a role in providing oversight of the MAPPA arrangements in East Lothian and Midlothian. But do you know what MAPPA is? It stands for **Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements**. This is the legal framework for managing the risk posed by certain categories of offenders and sets out how agencies work together. You can learn more about MAPPA on our website, which has some frequently asked questions about MAPPA – click on the + sign next to the question to learn more. [MAPPA | emppc.co.uk](https://emppc.co.uk)

You can also read the MAPPA Annual Report 2023/24 [here](#).

## Meet the Committee - in this edition we meet Claire Douglas, Housing Services Manager in Midlothian Council



“Housing Services plays a vital role in safeguarding individuals and families in our communities. I am proud to bring over a decade of experience to Housing Services in Midlothian Council. My journey has shaped my passion for protecting and supporting those most in need, and so it is essential to have the support of the public protection committee.

My career in housing began as a Housing Officer, working closely with tenants and managing challenges such as anti-social behaviour and tenancy issues. I gained firsthand experience of how complex people’s lives can be, some with significant personal difficulties. The role taught me the importance of listening, understanding and tailoring support need whilst adhering to housing legislation.

Over the years, I have progressed into leadership roles, gaining extensive knowledge in homelessness and housing services. This included working closely with the Justice Team to support individuals leaving custody, ensuring they have a safe and stable home to reduce the risk of reoffending.

I’ve also worked alongside multi agency teams to safeguard vulnerable adults and children, prioritising early intervention and tailored support.

The Housing service continually develops, an example is the transformation of homelessness in Midlothian, eliminating the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation. Our new build programme, provides a variety of house types to meet the needs of all members of our community. From accessible housing, to designing low-carbon and PassivHaus homes, we ensure the homes support long term safety and sustainability. I am particularly mindful of the needs of neurodiverse individuals ensuring our homes are designed to provide calm, functional and inclusive environment.

## More from Claire

My approach is rooted in trauma informed practices, recognising the impact of past experiences to ensure our service delivers with care. This includes our staff's commitment to tackling issues like domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG). I am proud that our staff are early adopters of Equally Safe in Practice training, delivered by Women's Aid.

Housing is more than a roof over someone's head, it's the foundation for safety, stability and opportunity. By representing housing on the Public Protection Committee, I aim to ensure that housing continues to play a key role in keeping our communities safe. Working together, we can make a real difference in people's lives".

For more information about Housing Services in Midlothian, you can read Midlothian's Local Housing Strategy 2021-26 [here](#).

For general information about Housing in Midlothian go to [Housing | Midlothian Council](#)

East Lothian and Midlothian  
Public Protection Committee  
Website



We have added some new documents to our website so please have a look at them and tell your colleagues about them!

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

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

[EMPPC Annual Report 2023-24](#)

[Adult Support and Protection Biennial Report 2022-24](#)

# Public Protection

Home  
Safer Internet Day 2025

SAFER INTERNET DAY 2025

## Too good to be true? Protecting yourself and others from scams online



Safer Internet Day

11th February 2025

This year **Safer Internet Day is on 11<sup>th</sup> February**. It gives an opportunity to raise awareness and learn more about how to reduce and respond to the risks of online harm and the supports available. Read this short article [here](#) from Jess McBeath, Online Safety Consultant, who looks at how online life can expose vulnerable groups to a range of risks, highlighting the importance for professionals to quickly identify and manage them effectively. The [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) has lots of guides and resources to educate and raise awareness about keeping our children and adults safe online. In addition, check out these resources:

### For adults:

[How to Stay Safe Online - Guidance for Adults and Young People with Learning Disabilities - Digital Safeguarding - Ann Craft Trust](#)

[How to stay safe online as an older person | Age UK](#)

[iThrive | Staying safe online](#)

[SWGfL](#) support services and helplines that offer free advice, support and guidance to victims of online harm, including



#### Revenge Porn Helpline

The UK's only service dedicated to supporting adults who have been victims of intimate image abuse



#### Report Harmful Content

An online platform for guidance around reporting harmful online content



#### Professionals Online Safety Helpline

Online Safety helpline for professionals who work with children and young people in the UK.



#### StopNCII.org

StopNCII.org is a groundbreaking tool that allows adults to protect themselves against intimate image abuse

### For children:

[Education resources - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

[Safer Internet Day 2025: Teaching resources - BBC Teach](#)

### For parents and carers:

[Tips for Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

[Safer Internet Day 2025 Top Tips - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

# Training update

Our training is free for staff and volunteers who work in East Lothian or Midlothian. You can find information about what we offer on our Learning and Development page of our [website](#). This includes our Training Calendar which details upcoming courses, and our course descriptors. We are in the process of updating our course descriptors which will accompany our Learning and Development Strategy for 2025-27 which is currently being developed.

Recently we have had a few people turning up to training without having booked onto courses in advance – one of the courses was cancelled and we had notified everyone who had been allocated a space, but others turned up where they had not booked. It is easy to apply for our training and for almost all of our courses we will allocate spaces on a ‘first come first offered’ basis. You can find out how to book on our training courses [here](#) – please note that applications open when you receive our flyer advertising a course approximately 12 weeks before the date.



## National Adult Support and Protection Day Learning Event

This year our learning event focuses on self-harm which can be an Adult Support and Protection concern. You will learn more about the latest research and thinking about self-harm, and how to strengthen our practice in preventing and managing the risk of self-harm. We will hear directly from adults with lived experience of self-harm who will help us to identify what works when supporting someone who is self-harming.



Our presenters for the session will be: Gregor Johnstone, Learning Lead in Epione [Trauma Training Scotland - Epione Training & Consultancy](#) and Darren Boyd, Network Manager of the Scottish Self-Harm Network (Penumbra) [Home - Self-Harm Network Scotland Penumbra](#).

Contact [emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk) if you have not received the link to join.



# Training update

## CONGRATULATIONS

We are committed to supporting staff working across East Lothian and Midlothian to become domestically abuse informed in their practice. The Safe & Together model is designed to do just that. We have struggled to implement this fully because of a lack of local trainers and the costs of external training. Until now we have only been able to offer the four-day training on a self-directed basis using online materials.

We are delighted to now have three accredited trainers who recently successfully completed a 12-week course run by the Safe & Together Institute. Congratulations to (from left to right) Donna McArthur (Learning & Development Practitioner, Midlothian Council), Jenny Mair (Co-ordinator for Protecting Women and Girls against Violence) and Denise Malone (Team Leader, Children's Services, East Lothian Council). They will work together to deliver a programme of Safe & Together training courses in person and briefings over the coming year.



Our next one-hour online briefing on Domestic Abuse and the Safe & Together model will take place on **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 10am**. This is a great introduction to the model and how it is used in practice. Contact [emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:emppo@eastlothian.gov.uk) if you have not received the link to join.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

## Working together for a safer Scotland



SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

### OUR PURPOSE

“...to work in partnership with communities and with others in the public, private and third sectors, on prevention, protection and response, to improve the safety and wellbeing of people throughout Scotland.”

Brian Aitchison, our Local Area Liaison Officer provides the following update on how the process for professionals making a referral for a Home Fire Safety Visit is changing.

“A Home Fire Safety Visit is a person-centred home visit carried out by SFRS staff to those most vulnerable and high risk from fire within the community with the overall aim to ensure people live safely in their homes, not only reducing the risk of fire, but other incidents of unintentional injury.

During the visit we carry out a fire risk survey of the property and completion of a questionnaire with the occupier to include wider safety and welfare considerations as well as provide advice, testing and where eligible installation of smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide alarms.

Our recommended method of referral is either by self-referral or partner referral (registered partners) though the portal on the SFRS website or self-referring via telephone where the caller has no access to the internet”.

There is a new process for professionals making referrals for a HFSV effective from 12<sup>th</sup> February. This requires each agency/organisation to first sign up to a Data Sharing Agreement with the SFRS before professionals can then make referrals using the new system. Your organisation will share more information with you about the new process once they have signed up to the Data Sharing Agreement. For more information about booking a Home Fire Safety Visit, go to the SFRS website at [www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)”

# Adult Support and Protection

## Domestic Abuse - Victim Survivors Views on Adult Support and Protection

Domestic abuse can be an Adult Support and Protection issue. Sometimes trauma, a learning disability or other health issue makes the adult unable to protect themselves from the harms that domestic abuse can cause - including physical, emotional, and financial. Disabled women for instance are twice as likely to experience domestic abuse compared to non-disabled women. The voice of adults who have experienced our services is vital in gaining insight into how well we are doing and in fact how to do well. Council Officers have a forum where they discuss areas of interest. In January an adult with lived experience of domestic abuse and Julie Watson, Chief Executive of Women's Aid East and Midlothian spoke with Council Officers. They shared the statistics on domestic abuse and what victim survivors thought of how well services do generally specifically with regards to domestic abuse. This included what worked:

- Implementing person-centred approaches.
- Multi-agency collaboration.

What needs to change:

- Consistent application of guidance.
- Training and awareness.

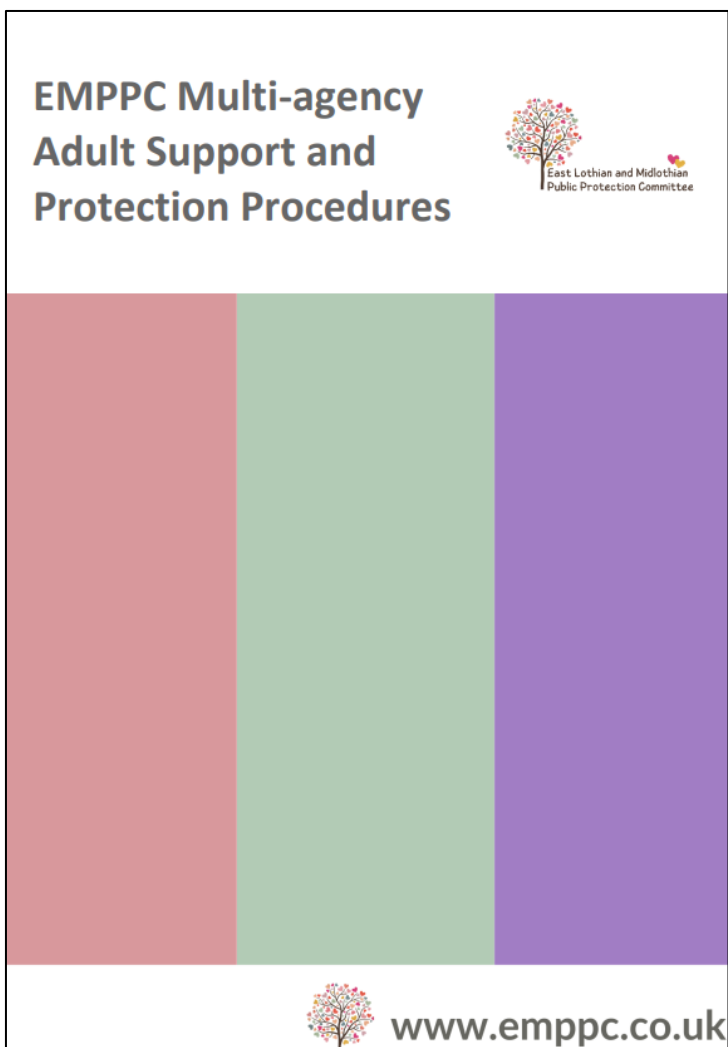
They also told us that sometimes agencies do not agree who was responsible for what before meeting with the adult. Also, that it is important in our recording to be specific about what form the harm took (for example, instead of just stating there is coercive control, describe what the perpetrator did). This makes for better evidence in supporting a prosecution.

Strengthening our practice in domestic abuse through learning and development can only help to provide better risk management under Adult Support and Protection. Check out our [EMPPC Training Calendar](#) for upcoming training on domestic abuse and look out for the flyers advertising specific courses.

You can read more about the hidden abuse faced by Scotland by women with disabilities [here](#) – this article was written in collaboration with Pillow Talk Scotland, a charity dedicated to promoting sex and relationships education through community events and journalism.

## The Duty to Co-operate with Adult Support and Protection Inquiries

Several bodies have a legal duty to co-operate with Social Work making inquiries under the Section 5 of the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 (for example, Health Boards and Healthcare Improvement Scotland, Police and Councils). Their responsibilities are unequivocal. The Code of Practice also states that other organisations who are not named should also co-operate with Adult Support and Protection processes where requested, to achieve the best outcome for the individual at risk of harm. In practice, this includes sharing information and/or participating in Adult Support and Protection Case Conferences. Ultimately, we all want vulnerable adults at risk of harm to get the support and protection they need. Social Work needs everyone's co-operation to empower them to do so.



We have updated our Adult Support and Protection Procedures, one year on. One of the key updates is greater clarity about the role of Inter-agency Referral Discussions (IRDs) in Adult Support and Protection, which you can read more about at page 14. An IRD in Adult Support and Protection is a tripartite discussion between Police, Social Work and Health, the purpose of which is to share and analyse information and agree a plan for risk management. This can complement the Inquiry undertaken by a Council Officer.

You can find these Procedures on our website [here](http://www.emppc.co.uk).

# Adult Support and Protection

## Struggling to get an adult at risk of harm to engage?

Have you ever been frustrated when you struggle to get adults in need of support and protection to engage with your service? Trauma may be part of the reason. Trauma-informed practice is essential to Adult Support and Protection. It is grounded in, and directed by, an understanding of how trauma affects someone's neurological, biological, psychological, and social development. Renfrewshire Council have produced a 7-page briefing that considers 'non-engagement' through a trauma-informed lens in relation to Adult Support and Protection work. It works with the idea that behaviour, such as non-engagement with services, is a form of communication. The briefing supports professionals to use curiosity and empathy to build connection and create safety in their work. It guides you through why you need to adopt a trauma informed approach, and how to do so, making your practice more defensible. This means doing the opposite of what occurs when trauma is experienced and building a relationship based on the five trauma informed principles shown below.



You can read the briefing from Renfrewshire on [here](#). Read on for our Spotlight article on working with people who services find it difficult to engage. You can also go to website to read our [Spotlight on Trauma Informed Practice](#) which featured in an earlier Newsletter.

# Child Protection

## NSPCC Learning

### How can we hear and facilitate the voice of the child?

The term "voice of the child" refers to the real involvement of children in expressing their views, opinions, and experiences. It includes both verbal and nonverbal communication and goes beyond simply seeking their views to actively including them in decision-making processes.

Case reviews analysed by the NSPCC identified that children were not seen frequently enough or asked their views and feelings, and that professionals did not always challenge the barriers to seeing the child and hearing their voice. Challenges often arise from the working environments impacted by rising demand and tightening budgets, but we know that good work goes on locally to listen to what children tell us. NSPCC Learning has published a suite of resources exploring the importance of hearing and facilitating the **voice of the child**. These resources are helpful for enhancing practice and include:

- An [evidence snapshot](#) summarising findings from research published between 2016 and 2023 about the voice of the child in social work practice.
- [Nine practice points](#) designed to help Social Workers identify and facilitate the child's voice – these are really good practical points relevant for **everyone** working with children.
- [Short videos on voice of the child](#).

NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government have published a range of **Safer Sleep Resources** for Parents and Professionals.

[A Guide for Parents and Carers](#)

[A Guide for Parents and Carers – Easy Read](#)

[Quick Reference Cards](#)

[A Guide for Professionals](#)



# Child Protection

## Effective Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing

NSPCC Learning has published a suite of resources exploring how safeguarding professionals can successfully work together and share information within and between agencies. The resources include:

- An [evidence snapshot](#) summarising findings from research published between 2014 and 2023 about multi-agency working and information sharing in children's social work – this short read identifies the things that facilitate effective multi-agency working.
- [Three short expert insight films](#) on successfully sharing information.
- A series of [practice points](#) designed to help workers focus on the actions that support good multi-agency working and information sharing. These have good practical prompts for workers.

**1. Actively seek and share information**

**2. Make sure you are clear when seeking or sharing information**

**3. Keep effective and good quality records**

**4. Understanding processes and pathways**

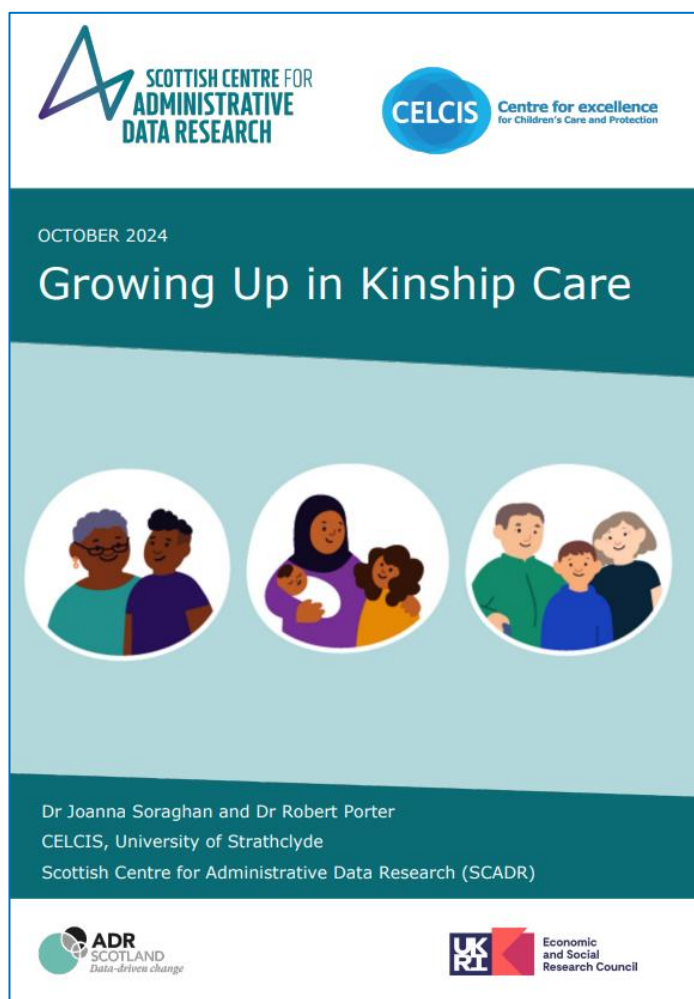
**5. Make good use of meetings**

**6. Build strong multi-agency relationships**

**7. Focus on your common goals**

**8. Involve the right people at the right times**

## Growing up in Kinship Care



### Growing up in Kinship

**Care** reports on the findings of a study of 19,000 children and young people who had lived in kinship care over an 11-year period. In 2023, 12,206 of Scotland's children and young people were 'looked after'. Kinship care has become the most common type of care arrangement for 'looked after' children and young people to live in in Scotland – with more than a third of these children now living with kinship carers.

The researchers found that:

- Kinship carers are often supporting children with complex needs, and it is important that tailored support is in place for the children and their carers.
- Educational outcomes remains an area where many children and families would benefit from additional support.
- There is substantial regional variation in terms of how likely children are to live with kinship families.
- There are many children in Scotland living with kinship families who are not 'looked after' by their local authority.

The researchers conclude that “As the proportion of 'looked after' children living in kinship care continues to increase, we hope that the enhanced understanding of children's experiences offered by this research provides the opportunity to reflect on how best Scotland can support its kinship families”.

Watch the [Webinar](#) to hear directly from those involved in the study.



# Child Protection



The NSPCC has published a new statistics briefing on online abuse and harm. This briefing looks at the available data and statistics about online abuse and harm to help professionals, and the organisations they work for, make evidence-based decisions.

Some key findings include:

- The latest research from Ofcom (2024) estimates that 84% of 3- to 4-year-olds in the UK are going online. The proportion rises to 100% for children aged 12-years-old and over.
- In 2023, 275,652 webpages were identified as containing child sexual abuse imagery.
- 19% of children aged 10-15 years old had exchanged messages with someone online who they never met offline in the past year.
- Children who game online say they chat with strangers while gaming, however they will not always see someone they only know online as a stranger.
- Over 9,000 child sexual abuse offences involved an online element in 2022/23.
- Under 18-year-olds were the subject of around a quarter of reported offences of online blackmail in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **New AI child sexual abuse laws announced following International Watch Foundation campaign**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced a raft of new legislation designed to curb the rise of life-like child sexual abuse material generated by Artificial Intelligence. The new rules will outlaw the possession and distribution of AI models that have been optimised to create child sexual abuse imagery, and will also criminalise the possession of manuals which provide instructions on how offenders can use AI to generate child sexual abuse imagery. Read more [here](#).

# Child Protection

NSPCC  
Learning

## What professionals know, think, and do to prevent child abuse – and how we can support them

A report from Together for Childhood

Dr Claire White, Dr Thea Shahrokh, Alex Burgess, Alice Dutton, Ava Hodson, Annischa Main, Prajapa Seneviratne and Brittany Timms

December 2024



This [report](#) from an NSPCC project called [Together for Childhood](#) details findings from research which aimed to understand the support needs of those working with children and families to prevent child abuse and neglect.

### Key findings:

There is a belief that the prevention of child abuse is possible, but a lack of understanding about what preventing child abuse looks like in practice - professionals often describe prevention in terms of their responses to abuse after it has occurred, rather than in terms of stopping abuse before it happens.

**“A knowledgeable and well-supported workforce is key to preventing child abuse and building safer, more resilient communities”.**

Professionals are already displaying behaviours that they do not recognise as the primary prevention of abuse - members of the workforce are taking action to stop child abuse before it happens without recognising those actions as preventative. These include understanding their community context and employing practices that are poverty-aware, trauma-informed and sensitive to the wider issues that affect the daily lives of children and families.

There are systemic barriers to professionals engaging in prevention activity. Systemic barriers, such as complex referral pathways and lack of early help services, make it difficult for professionals to know where to turn to for help. There is also a lack of support for professionals affected by the stress and trauma of their work in preventing child abuse.

The report makes recommendations about the need to prioritise staff wellbeing and safe spaces for learning, where organisations offer continuous trauma-informed support to their workforce in undertaking their responsibility to prevent child abuse.

# Violence Against Women and Girls

## The Goal Is Thriving, Not Just Surviving: redefining Our Approach to Domestic Abuse

David Mandel, Chief Executive and Founder of the Safe & Together Institute challenges us to think about redefining success and what really matters when providing support in a domestic abuse situation. He says “physical safety is one of the more basic needs but doesn’t represent the full spectrum of what survivors need, and more importantly, deserve. If we limit our concept of success to physical safety, we are not paying attention to emotional connection, self-esteem and achievement of personal goals”. Read his blog [here](#).



Publishing this [report](#) in November 2024, Zero Tolerance said “Most of us agree that equality between boys and girls is a good thing and want all children to live freely and feel safe. But extreme misogynists are targeting young men with content designed to promote a hatred of women, leading to increased violence against girls in schools. These messages also encourage boys to adopt attitudes which damage their mental health and ability to form healthy relationships”. You can also read a summary [here](#).

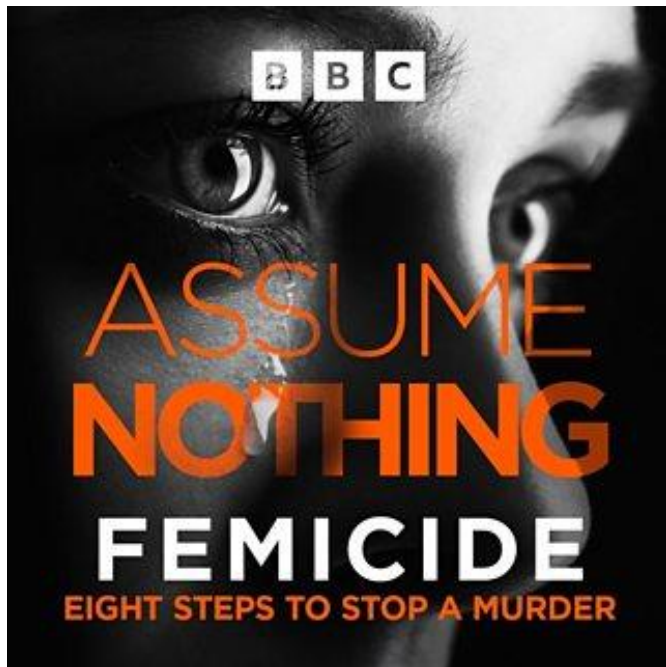
The report makes seven key recommendations for youth workers, schools and the Scottish Government. These key messages include the need to:

- Talk to young people explicitly about gender inequality and online misogyny and racism, using safe, fun, creative and non-judgemental approaches.
- Be attentive to the gender-specific experiences and needs of your young people.
- Embed gender-equal cultures in the everyday practice of your setting.
- Role-model diverse and positive masculinities and femininities in your everyday behaviour.

# Violence Against Women and Girls

**B B C**

**SOUNDS**



Go to BBC Sounds to listen to this eight-part series of podcasts which investigates why women continue to be murdered and what could have been done to prevent it. Professor Jane Monkton Smith talks through ‘the homicide timeline’, the patterns of behaviour she has identified in domestic homicides that, if spotted early enough, could help vulnerable and at-risk women keep themselves safe. Each episode is around 20 minutes long and examines a real-life case of murder and asks whether recognising a pattern of behaviour could save lives. Click [here](#) for episode one.

**Still not Safe -  
Critical Issue  
Briefing on Child  
Contact in Scotland**

 scottish  
women's  
aid

Published in December 2024, this [briefing](#) is drawn from research and feedback about decisions made by courts and the Children’s Hearings System about children’s contact with their parents in cases of domestic abuse. The research “consistently demonstrates that these decisions often cause fear, harm and trauma to child and adult survivors when unsafe contact is granted to the abusive parent. Women separate from their abusers, but the abuse continues through child contact”. There are some 19 strong messages about the actions needed for professionals in the legal system to better understand and respond to the dynamics of domestic abuse and the impact on children.

# Violence Against Women and Girls



Women still face significant barriers in the workplace, including access to equal pay, flexible working and learning and development opportunities. There is also a clear link between violence against women and gender inequality in the workplace.

Equally Safe at Work is an employer accreditation programme where employers from the public and third sector in Scotland can be supported to advance gender equality and prevent violence against women. Through a structured framework with targeted actions and activities for employers to undertake, the programme provides tools for creating inclusive, supportive and safe workplaces for women working in Scotland. There are [18 accredited employers in Scotland, including Midlothian Council](#), and [15 new employers working towards accreditation](#).

If you would like to become an Equally Safe at Work accredited employer, find out more [here](#).

## East Lothian Equally Safe Leadership Partnership

This newly established group of multi-agency partners from the third sector and statutory agencies has begun working with the Improvement Service to develop an Equally Safe strategy for East Lothian. This will give a local lens to the national [Equally Safe Strategy](#) and help shape the priorities for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls in East Lothian. We will keep you updated on this important work!



### What do we mean by 'working with people who services find hard to engage'?

Services may find it challenging to engage certain people with whom they are working. This may be evident in a number of ways, including:

- Where the person/family avoids contact with professionals.
- Repeated cancelling and rescheduling of appointments.
- Where professionals have difficulty seeing the child or adult at risk alone.
- Where the person/family tells workers what they want to hear by agreeing that changes are needed, but then does then there is limited effort to make the agreed changes.
- Where the person/family does 'just enough' to keep professionals at bay.
- Where attention is deflected from the person/family by criticising workers or making complaints.
- Where the family or carers control discussions by ensuring the focus is on them rather than the needs of the child or adult at risk.
- Sporadic compliance – for example, attending appointments and engaging with professionals for a limited period of time.

### What other terms might this be referred to as and why has the language changed?

Historically, these types of behaviour may have been described as '*disguised compliance,*' '*hard to reach,*' '*evasive,*' '*non-engaging*' '*not participating,*' '*aggressive*' or '*resistant.*'

This is because there is not an agreed language to describe situations where a person does not want a service or intervention. However, there are issues with these types of labels as they do not explore the reasons behind these types of behaviours.

Although 'disguised compliance' appeared to be a useful term for professionals to express concerns about families' behaviour, families found it increased their worry and anxiety and made them feel like they were being set up to fail. If families appeared to comply with plans they will be treated with suspicion, and if they resist, then they will also be treated

with suspicion. Instead of labelling lack of engagement, there are other factors that professionals should consider when assessing the situation. Case Reviews analysed by the NSPCC have identified a range of people who experience issues around accessing and engaging with services:

- Teenagers.
- first generation immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees
- fathers and male carers.
- deaf and disabled children.
- people whose first language is not English.

However, lack of engagement is likely to have more to do with the accessibility of services, rather than the people who need their help. Describing people as 'hard to reach' risks blaming individuals for not taking up the offer of services and ignores the complexities behind why someone may struggle to accept services being offered. It can also lead practitioners to assume that someone is 'too hard' to work with.

### **Why might people be reluctant to engage with services?**

There may be a number of reasons why a person may be reluctant to engage with services, including:

- resentment of outside interference.
- fear of authority figures.
- feeling dis-empowered.
- lacking motivation.
- cultural differences.
- not believing there is a problem or disagrees with professional opinion
- not knowing what is expected of them.
- poor previous experiences of interaction with services.
- having something to hide, for example, child abuse.
- stigma within a community or among family and friends around asking for help.
- fear of consequences of asking for help, for example in domestic abuse situations.
- geographical or environmental barriers, such as no disabled access
- issues around availability of services, such as long waiting lists or inconvenient opening hours.
- communication differences, such as language barriers.

### How can I respond?

When working with people with whom services are struggling to engage, professionals in all agencies can improve the chances of a positive outcome for the child or adult at risk by:

- keeping the child or adult at risk at the forefront of focus – see them, talk to them alone, explain concerns and plans to them where appropriate, avoid being overly distracted by family members' or carers' needs.
- being professionally curious and keeping an open mind.
- viewing through a trauma informed lens – people may be behaving in a certain way as a coping mechanism for anxiety that service involvement may provoke, based on previous distressing incidents in their lives.
- establishing the facts by gathering information about what is actually happening – e.g., observing what is said, non-verbal cues.
- critically evaluating information provided and checking for evidence in support of the family's explanation of events.
- Use chronologies to help identify patterns of behaviour and help better understand a person's ability or motivation to change.
- communicating regularly with multi-agency colleagues to share information and work together in a planned approach.
- seeking advice from multi-agency partners to ensure progress with the family or carers is appropriate.
- ensuring plans are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound) in addressing concerns in order to identify if any positive changes are being made.
- keeping the relationship with the family or carers formal though supportive by giving clear indications that the aim of the work is to achieve the best for the child or adult at risk.
- using supervision to talk through concerns and reflect on the situation with a manager.
- being alert to underlying complete resistance despite every effort being made to understand and engage the family or carers and being willing, in such cases to take appropriate action to protect the child or adult at risk.



## Spotlight on working with people who services find hard to engage

### Where can I learn more?

[Why language matters: reframing responsibility for accessing services | NSPCC Learning](#)

[We need to rethink our approach to disguised compliance - Community Care](#)

[TCAFINALDisguised compliance or undisguised nonsense .pdf](#)

[Summary of the National review into child sexual abuse within the family environment: CASPAR briefing](#)

[Working with families where engagement is challenging | Research in Practice](#)

**“At the heart of any support work with parents/carers and their families is the need for a positive and empowering relationship between all those involved, based on mutual respect”**

[Research in Practice](#)

**“Language matters.....Our use of language can create barriers (e.g., if we use “attention seeking behaviour” or “manipulative” to describe someone) or it can create opportunities to build a more compassionate relationship (e.g., if we reframe our description as “connection seeking behaviour”)”**

[A Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change](#)

# Contact us

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

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What would you like to see in a future newsletter?

Please get in touch with us at

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Find out more about us at

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