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**REPORT TO: EMERGENCY CABINET 12 AUGUST 2020**

**SUBJECT: PUBLIC PROTECTION RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**BY: RODDY BURNS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet of the activities as at 03 July 2020 that have been undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure continuity of critical public protection services.
- 1.2 To inform the Cabinet of a report from the Scottish Government with SOLACE and partners of Children, Young People and Families Covid-19 Evidence and Intelligence published 22 July 2020  
(<http://www.gov.scot/publications/children-young-people-families-covid-19-evidence-intelligence-report/> ).
- 1.3 This report is submitted to the Cabinet following the decision of Moray Council on 25 March 2020 to temporarily suspend all delegations to Committees as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (para 2 of the Minute refers).
- 1.4 This report is the last of a suite of 5 information reports on the response to Covid-19 presented to meetings of Cabinet and Council respectively.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended the Cabinet review and note activities within the public protection portfolio that have been undertaken to ensure continuity of critical public protection services.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Cabinet note the publication of the Children, Young People and Families Covid-19 Evidence and Intelligence report.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

#### **Scope of Public Protection Activities**

- 3.1 The key routine core activities within the public protection portfolio are:-
- Child Protection
  - Adult Support & Protection
  - Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPP): Offender Management for sexual or Violent Offenders
  - Violence Against Women (VAM) Partnership
  - Alcohol & Drug Partnership (ADP)
  - Human Trafficking
- 3.2 During the Covid-19 pandemic existing public protection processes have required changes and adaptations made to respond to this situation. The annexes attached to this report outline how processes have been changed and adapted in relation to Covid-19.

#### **Use of Data**

- 3.3 The collection and use of data has been a central part of Covid-19 responses and this includes data about public protection.
- 3.4 Weekly data reports are now produced by Scottish Government and SOLACE on a suite of indicators regarding vulnerable children and adults.
- 3.5 The vulnerable children and adults data monitoring returns is submitted by all Local Authorities and by Police Scotland on Thursday of each week. Collated reports are disseminated the next day to Ministers and Public Protection Chief Officer Groups (COG) in each authority.

#### **Summary of public protection activities**

##### **Child Protection**

- 3.6 The number of referrals to the Children and Families Social Work Access Team varies from week to week, and the team continue to receive concerns from statutory partners as well as families and the community. The overall number of Police concern reports of the last 10 weeks is lower than the same time period last year. Child protection activity is lower than previous years, with majority of Initial Referral Discussion held in the last 10 weeks due to concerns of physical harm (**Appendix 1**).
- 3.7 The level of contact established for children on the register, those with a multiagency plan, and young people receiving aftercare support is monitored and continues to be above average nationally. For children on the register, senior managers are made aware of any challenges practitioners experience when engaging with families -this has mainly been due to families isolating and experiencing anxiety over home visits.

##### **Adult Protection**

- 3.8 There was an increase in the overall number of Police Concern Reports received by the Adult Access Team during the week ending 3rd June. There is not a corresponding peak in those established to be Adult at Risk concerns, suggesting the increase in concerns related to adult wellbeing immediately

post lockdown (**Appendix 2**).

- 3.9 Since the 16 April, 50 of the Adult at Risk referrals received by the Access Team have been passed onto the Adult Support and Protection Team for further action. The largest proportion of these referrals related to concerns regarding the care and support provided to an individual, followed by concerns related to financial harm, concerns regarding mental health/self-harm and concerns regarding the self-care of individuals, related to alcohol and/or home environment.

### **Drug and Alcohol**

- 3.10 Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Harm Reduction Services continue to operate, with a focused effort to ensure prescriptions continue to be issued and are accessible. Recovery support continues through telephone contact and face to face appointments where required (**Appendix 3**).
- 3.11 There is no clear evidence of any increased harms in areas such as alcohol use. There is a national increase in off-licence sales purchases of alcohol but this has to be balanced against a decrease in on-licence sales. Dr Grays Hospital has not reported an increase in AE attendances.
- 3.12 There has been a total of two suspected drug related deaths in Moray in the last 10 weeks.

### **MAPPA**

- 3.13 MAPPA arrangements continue to function well during the COVID 19 pandemic and a high level of communication and information sharing exists between all agencies involved (**Appendix 4**).
- 3.14 The number of individuals subject to MAPPA case management and supervision in the community has not changed significantly since April 2020.
- 3.15 During the pandemic two individuals were released in Moray under the early release scheme.

### **Domestic Abuse**

- 3.16 During the week that the UK went into lockdown, there was a rise in domestic abuse incidents in Moray, when compared to figures from the previous year (**Appendix 5**).
- 3.17 Within a 10 week period dating from 16 April 2020 till now, data indicates an overall 2.3% decrease in Police Scotland recorded domestic concerns.
- 3.18 National helpline data indicates an increase in service demand during this period. Locally, service helpline provision has been enhanced through additional funding though no significant increase in calls has been observed at this stage.
- 3.19 An additional resource identified to support the Violence Against Women Partnership during the pandemic has assisted greatly with both the governance of the group and the workload.

### **Homelessness**

- 3.20 Since the start of lockdown, Council house rent arrears have increased by approximately 30% (£136k) (**Appendix 6**).
- 3.21 There has been a 30% drop in homelessness applications between March and June compared to last year. The profile of homelessness has not changed during lockdown with the main reason for presentations still being relationship breakdown.
- 3.22 Weekly telephone contact has been maintained with over 100 households who receive a housing support service.

### **Welfare Rights and Crisis Grants**

- 3.23 Compared to March 2019, the number of Crisis Grant applications received in March 2020 rose by 37% and the total amount awarded has increased by 58% (**Appendix 7**).
- 3.24 Benefit or income Spent was the most common reason provided for applications.
- 3.25 The number of children linked to an application for assistance increased by 66% between February and March 2020.
- 3.26 The new Flexible Food Fund introduced by the Scottish Government has received 407 applications up until 22nd June 2020. Over 88% applicants were currently claiming other benefits and over 57% were on Universal Credit. 68% of these applications list children in the household.

### **Mental Health and Suicide**

- 3.27 Statutory services have continued to deliver Critical Functions. There has been an increase in activity of approximately 25% in comparison to the same time frame for 2019 (**Appendix 8**).
- 3.28 Primary Care and Secondary services have continued support prioritised on a risk management basis.

### **Public Protection Discussion Group**

- 3.29 A Public Protection Discussion Group continues to meet every two weeks to share intelligence and consider emerging themes in Moray. It has supported a more co-ordinated effort across the strategic groups for public protection and will be an important forum to remain abreast of emerging themes as we move out of the lockdown period.
- 3.30 It has been agreed that the inclusion of mental health services within the group's representation would be of benefit going forward.

## **Children, Young People and Families Covid-19 Evidence and Intelligence Report**

- 3.31 A Covid-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group involving senior leaders across the children's services was established in May 2020 to review intelligence about the impacts on children, young people and families and to provide local and national leadership in delivering a response.
- 3.32 The Intelligence includes weekly data reports from the 32 Chief Officer Groups and Police Scotland and broader evidence reports. Two evidence reports were published on 24 April and 24 May 2020.
- 3.33 The report provides an overview of the latest evidence and intelligence about the impact of Covid-19 and associated lockdown measures for children, young people and families, in particular for those experiencing the greatest challenges. (<http://www.gov.scot/publications/children-young-people-families-covid-19-evidence-intelligence-report/> ).

## **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

There are no direct implications arising from this report. All action taken is consistent with the corporate plan and LOIP.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

None.

**(c) Financial implications**

Financial implications have been considered as part of the development of the responses to the Covid pandemic and are reported by the Chief Financial Officer in regular monitoring reports.

**(d) Risk Implications**

None from report. A number of the measures described in the report have been put in place to address risk. There ongoing risks as the Council continues its emergency response, moves into recovery and begins to re-instate services. These will be considered and addressed as planning for the whole programme of work and individual service issues progresses.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

In adapting practices, processes and procedures across a range of partnership arrangements has resulted in staff adopting different working patterns.

**(f) Property**

None directly arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

None directly arising from this report.

**(h) Consultations**

Compilation of this report has involved consultation with the range of partners identified in the report who are involved in the activities which come within the portfolio of public protection.

**5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 This report outlines the scale and scope of the Public Protection activities during the current Covid-19 pandemic.**
- 5.2 The loss of usual forms of risk identification or monitoring from the closure of services or supports for people has created the need to find new ways of identifying, managing and mitigating risk.**
- 5.3 Services within the public protection portfolio have quickly adapted existing practices, processes and procedures to these 'new circumstances' to continue protect and safeguard Moray's most vulnerable people.**

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