



REPORT TO: MORAY INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD CLINICAL AND CARE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ON 27 AUGUST 2020

SUBJECT: CHILD PROTECTION ASSURANCE REPORT

BY: INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1. To inform the Committee of Child Protection activity in Moray during COVID-19.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee note the content of this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. As the lockdown restrictions were introduced in the UK to address the Coronavirus pandemic, there were growing concerns across the country for our most vulnerable children and young, and the impact that these restrictions would have on their safety and wellbeing.
- 3.2. To enable a more responsive approach to data analysis during the pandemic the Scottish Government introduced a weekly reporting dataset for Local Authorities.
- 3.3. The weekly data reports have been used to inform the Children, Young People and Families COVID-19 Evidence & Intelligence Reports published by the Scottish Government - the most recent in July 2020.

4. NEW CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITY

- 4.1. During the lockdown child protection procedures in Moray were maintained as a critical function, with home visits conducted by Social Work Health Visiting and School Nursing services and Police teams as required to assess children's environment as required to inform investigations.
- 4.2. Multiagency meetings moved onto virtual platforms and information sharing processes remained in place.

- 4.3. In keeping with the national picture, there was a reduction in child protection activity in Moray during the initial lockdown period. Compared to the same time last year, the reduced child protection activity in Moray is proportionally greater than national averages. This will be linked, in part, to the declining trend of children subject to child protection processes evident in Moray prior to the pandemic.

Vulnerable Children Weekly Data Report	Time Since Easter (12 April)		
% Change from 2019	13 Weeks	13 Weeks	17 Weeks
	Scotland	Moray	Moray
Wellbeing concerns generated by Police Scotland	↓3%	↓6%	↑4%
Child Protection Concerns generated by Police	↓12%	↓42%	↓20%
Interagency Referral Discussions held	↓ 6%	↓ 34%	↓28%
Children placed on the register	↓ 11%	↓ 22%	↓14%

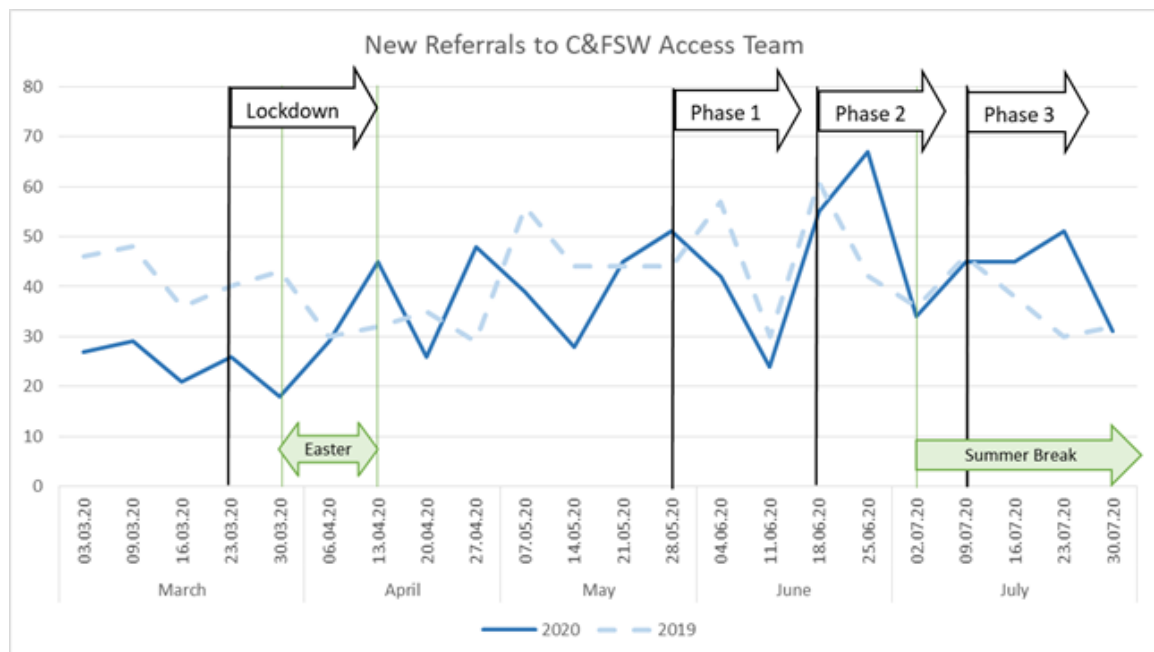
- 4.4. As an update to the national analysis published by the Scottish Government, during the 17 weeks since Easter there remains an overall reduction in child protection activity but with a narrower margin. This is due to a larger volume of child activity taking place during the summer months compared to 2019.
- 4.5. As reported nationally, in the four weeks following the move into Phase 2 there was an increase in child protection activity compared to the same timeframe in 2019. Moray data also indicates a comparative increase in child protection activity during the 4 weeks and now 8 weeks since Phase 2.

Vulnerable Children Weekly Data Report	Time Since Phase 2 (19 Jun)		
% Change from 2019	4 Weeks	4 Weeks	8 Weeks
	Scotland	Moray	Moray
Wellbeing concerns generated by Police Scotland	↑6%	↑35%	↑37%
Child Protection Concerns generated by Police	↑ 4%	↓ 44%	↑7%
Interagency Referral Discussions held	↑ 16%	↑ 50%	↑25%
Children placed on the register	↑ 7%	↑ 67%	↑ 43%

5. CHILDREN & FAMILIES SOCIAL WORK ACCESS TEAM

- 5.1. Wellbeing concerns, requests for support, child protection concerns and Police Vulnerable Persons Database records (VPD)s are all processed by the Access Team. Whilst referral activity was lower in March and May, a greater number of referrals were made to social work during both the Easter and summer holiday periods than in the previous year.
- 5.2. The number of referrals received by social work from anonymous sources since March has doubled, with 30 more referrals made in 2020 coming from anonymous sources than in 2019. This is potentially linked to the dissemination of key child protection messages in Moray as part of the ‘eyes and ears open’ campaign

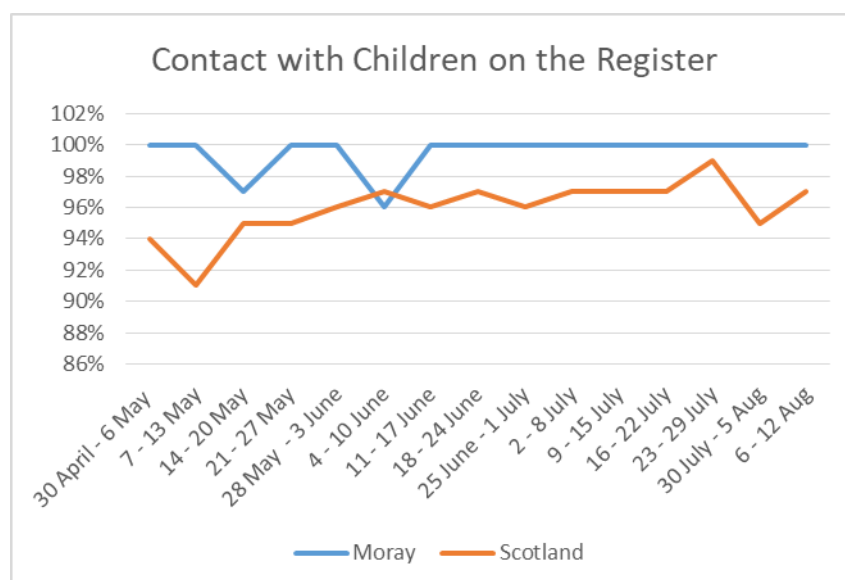
5.3. The graph below outlines new work generated for children not already open to a social work service.



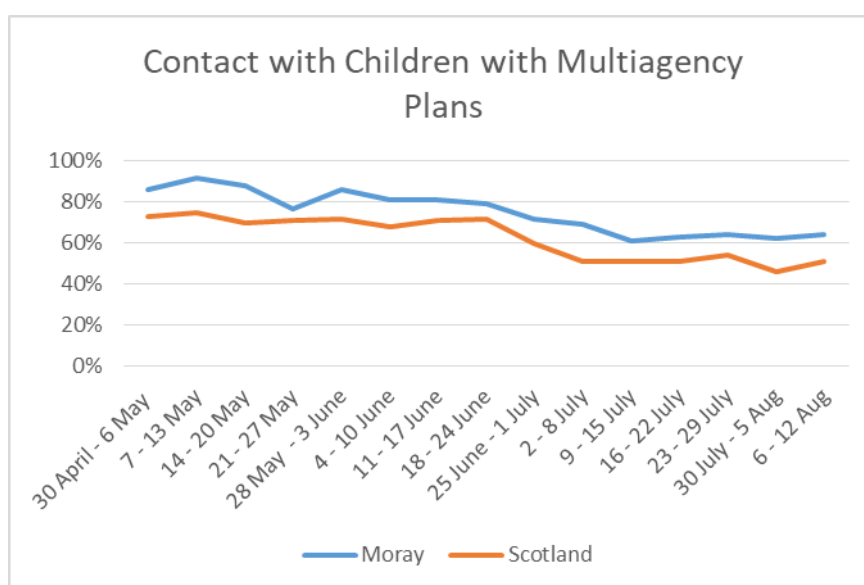
5.4. Whilst weekly numbers vary, the total new cases open to social work in March-July 2020 is similar to that in 2019. With the overall reduction in child protection activity this year, there is a greater proportion of cases new to SW relating to wellbeing, aligning with move towards a more relational approach to social work practice and earlier intervention.

6. **MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

6.1. The risks relating to lockdown and subsequent reduction of contact with vulnerable children are being monitored through the Moray Child Protection Committee risk register. The development of interagency connect teams and wellbeing hubs have mitigated some of these risks, ensuring contact is established with children and families that may become more vulnerable during the pandemic.



- 6.2. In Moray we have maintained contact with our known vulnerable children at a level that is consistently above the national average. For children on the register, face to face contact is established weekly to ensure risks monitored. Senior social work 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.
- 6.3. For children supported through the multiagency child planning process, weekly phone, virtual or face to face contact has been sought by practitioners across the partnership.



Percentage of children with multiagency plans contacted by a professional each week						
Lead Professional	2 - 8 July	9 - 15 July	16 - 22 July	23 - 29 July	30 Jul-5 Aug	6 - 12 Aug
Health Visitor	9%	16%*	26%*	9%	9%*	11%*
Social Work	78%	71%	73%	74%	72%	77%
Other –Open to Social Work**	65%	49%	47%	66%	62%	42%
Total Cases	69%	60%	63%	64%	63%	64%

*there are 4 HV and SN Teams based throughout Moray in 8 GP Practices: data includes 7 out of the 8 work bases

**data from Education not available. Cases identified through SW IT system

7. EMERGING THEMES

- 7.1. Service managers and frontline practitioners are reporting families experiencing increased relationship difficulties, heightened anxiety and stress for both young people and parents, and growing concerns in relation to increasing levels of neglect noted both in targeted and universal services.
- 7.2. Local data indicates early evidence of vulnerable families struggling to sustain outcomes for their children, with an increase in children with a previous registration history placed back onto the register during the pandemic.
- 7.3. The majority of children placed on the child protection register since the lockdown have been in receipt of Social Work support during the pandemic where concerns have escalated during the crisis.

- 7.4. Of the total children placed on the register since March 2020:
- 45% due to concerns of parental drug misuse
 - 41% due to concerns of neglect
 - 14% due to concerns parental alcohol use
 - 14% due to concerns of non-engaging family
- 7.5. Despite the evidence emerging nationally, to date in Moray we have not seen an increase in activity or concerns relating to domestic abuse, nor a greater than average number of Child Protection Orders requested.
- 7.6. As outlined in the July Scottish Government Evidence and Intelligence report:
- Families overall have adapted well and demonstrated resilience throughout, but for some there has been increased worries and stressors.
 - Calls to Children 1st Parentline has increased with main concerns relating to keeping children at home, child behaviour and mental health and emotional wellbeing worries alongside parental MH and contact between separated parents.
 - Financial pressures have increased. Supports have decreased along with uncertainty around access to hubs.
 - Where additional support needs were a feature accessing vital help has been concerning.

8. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)) and Moray Integration Joint Board Strategic Plan “Moray Partners in Care 2019 – 2029”

The Children’s Services Plan 2020-23 has as one of its priorities “Children feel safe and free from harm”. This reports provides evidence of Child protection activity in Moray

The Local Outcome Improvement Plan (2020 update) references this directly too.

(b) Policy and Legal

Moray Child Protection Committee retains the overview of Child Protection activity across Moray, assuring appropriate governance, and reports in to the Public Protection Chief Officer’s Group

(c) Financial implications

None

(d) Risk Implications and Mitigation

None noted in the context of this report

(e) Staffing Implications

None noted in the context of this report

(f) Property

No property issues relevant

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Not required for the purpose of this report.

(h) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the following staff who are in agreement with the content of this report in relation to their area of responsibility:

- Joyce Johnston, Interim Head of Children and Families and Justice Social Work
- Tracey Gervaise, Children and Families Health Services Lead

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1. Across the country child protection activity reduced during the lockdown than for the same timeframe in previous years, with early indication of marked increase in activity from mid-June to mid-July.
- 9.2. Moray data outlines a similar pattern, with figures continuing to increase from July into August.
- 9.3. In Moray we have maintained contact with our vulnerable children at a level that is consistently above the national average.
- 9.4. Emerging themes include increased risks for our vulnerable young people in relation to parental substance use and neglect.
- 9.5. As the economic impact of the pandemic is realised in Moray, the partnership must work collectively on the approach to meet increasing needs of vulnerable families.

Author of Report: Emma Johnston

Background Papers: Scottish Government: Children, Young People and Families
COVID-19 Evidence & Intelligence Report July 2020

Ref: