



East Lothian and Midlothian
Public Protection Committee

Annual Report 2023-24



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Foreword from the Chair

Welcome to the East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC) Annual Report for 2023/24. This report outlines and summarises our activities of key importance carried out by our multi agency partnership over the past year and the achievements that have come from this.

This is my second Annual Report that I have been involved with since I took on the role of Independent Chair and it gives me great pleasure and pride to be involved in this important piece of work taking stock of the development work, we have undertaken over the year as a committee and subgroups. To see how all the hard work carried out by the staff who are our engine room has taken effect and shaped our performance.

The development work has seen us create both Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection Subgroups giving increased space for the important conversations to take place and help bring the voice of the staff and what is important to concentrate on as we move forward.

It has been an important year as we took on board the new CP and ASP Procedures implementing the new national guidance and embedded them throughout our work and training. We had a joint inspection of Services for Children at Risk of Harm in East Lothian from which we had a very positive result that strengthens us across our partnership showing us that we are heading in the right direction and producing the right results for the children in our communities.

This annual report also sets out the work planned for the next year continuing to strengthen the voice of children and young people and adults in strategic developments, supporting our workforce, using the performance data effectively to ensure a culture of quality assurance as well as continuing our joint development towards delivery of strong collaborative leadership.

We will shortly be launching our new EMPPC website which will bring in a new more modern approach to our communications to our staff and the public alike where we will be better able to showcase and share the positive work that you will see in this Annual Report. It goes without saying that I would like to thank all the members of the Committee and associated subgroups for their continuing support and commitment going forward and wish to highlight our praise and gratitude to all staff across all agencies who are so professional and work incredibly hard protecting the people in and across our communities in East Lothian and Midlothian.

I look forward to continuing our work together this coming year.

Keith Mackay
Independent Chair, East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee

Introduction

An annual report of the work of East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee has been produced since it was first established in 2014. Although we are required under national guidance to only prepare an annual report for Child Protection¹ and under national legislation a biennial report for Adult Support and Protection² we believe that it is important to bring all the elements of our areas of activity into one report on an annual basis. By providing a high-level overview of all the areas of our business we aim to illustrate their connectivity within the context of a lifespan approach.

This report provides the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of our partnership working in East Lothian and Midlothian and celebrate our achievements in the year. We also use this opportunity to reflect on the challenges and operating context in this complex area of service delivery, and how we have worked together to respond to, and overcome these.

This report covers the period between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. It includes the reported findings from the Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm in East Lothian, which although not published until 7 May 2024, was conducted during the year. It does not include the reported findings from the Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian which continued into April 2024, although reference to the inspection will be made in this report.

The report is set out as follows:

Section 1 sets out our Public Protection partnership structure and arrangements in the year.

Section 2 reports on our work in the year, detailing how we fulfilled our responsibilities as a Committee, under the themes and priorities of our Business Plan.

Section 3 provides an overview of data and performance information.

Section 4 looks forward to our priorities in the coming year.

Section 1 - Our Strategic Structure for Public Protection in East Lothian and Midlothian

1.1 Governance Arrangements

Through the **Critical Services Oversight Group (CSOG)**, the Chief Officers of our core partners (Councils, NHS and Police) provide strategic leadership, scrutiny, governance and direction to EMPPC. In the year, CSOG continued to be co-chaired by Monica Patterson, Chief Executive of East Lothian Council and Grace Vickers, Chief Executive of Midlothian Council.

The **East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Committee (EMPPC)** ('the Committee') is the local strategic partnership that is responsible for the overview of policy and practice in relation to Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls. The primary aim of the Committee is to provide leadership and strategic oversight of

¹ [Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committee and Chief Officer Responsibilities \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

² [The Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007: Guidance For Adult Protection Committees \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

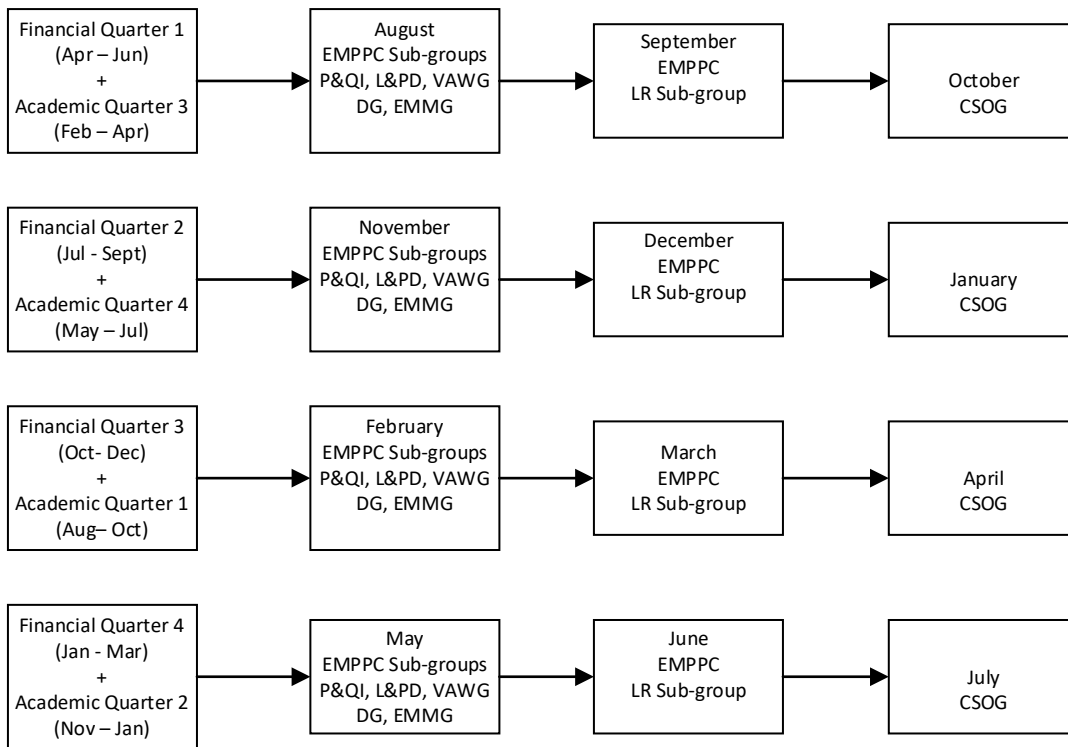
Public Protection activity and performance across East Lothian and Midlothian. In the year, it discharged its functions through quarterly meetings of the following Sub-groups:

- Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group (P&QI Sub-group) – responsible for the oversight and governance of the performance framework and quality assurance arrangements.
- Learning and Development Sub-group (L&PD Sub-group) – responsible for the development and delivery of the EMPPC Multi-agency Learning and Development Strategy.
- Learning Review Sub-group (LR Sub-group) – responsible for the oversight of progress of Learning Reviews undertaken in relation to Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection, development and review of the progress of action plans arising from Learning Reviews and oversight of local Learning Review arrangements.
- East Lothian and Midlothian MAPPAs Group (EMMG) – responsible for ensuring that the statutory responsibilities placed on local partner agencies for the assessment and management of risk posed by offenders subject to MAPPAs are discharged effectively.
- Violence Against Women and Girls Delivery Group (VAWG DG) – responsible for supporting the delivery of the Equally Safe Strategy and overview of local delivery of services.

In the year all our Committee and Sub-group meetings took place on-line.

1.2 Reporting Cycle of EMPPC

Our Committee structure runs on the basis of quarterly reporting cycles, which for the reporting year was as shown below. The reporting of data and performance follows financial quarters other than for Child Protection which follows academic quarters. We believe that we manage the lag in time between the reporting period of the Child Protection Minimum Dataset and the P&QI Sub-group well. We have a well-established a multi-agency Child Protection Minimum Dataset Sub-group which meets in advance of the P&QI Sub-group to review the data in depth, identify and plan for any improvement or further activity needed, which can progress at the earliest opportunity.



1.3 EMPPC Vision

Everyone has a right to be safe and protected from harm and abuse. We will protect our babies, children, young people and adults in East Lothian and Midlothian by working together and upholding our values.

Our core values of respect, integrity and commitment underpin our work in supporting and protecting all people who may be at risk of harm in our communities.

1.4 Our Values

Respect	Integrity	Commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For anyone who needs protection and support in all that we do. • The contribution that the representative brings to the partnership on behalf of their agency/organisation. • The fact that the partners have different responsibilities and constraints within their own organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being honest and trustworthy in our partnership working. • Having strong moral principles and doing 'the right thing'. • Following through on agreed commitments and being accountable and responsible for the actions. • Encourage and respect challenge in our partnership working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improvement in our work with anyone who needs protection and support. • Being prepared for and pro-active in the work of EMPPC. • Engaging and participating to drive forward the work of EMPPC. • Listening to and acting on the views of the people we work with.

1.5 East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Office

The East Lothian and Midlothian Public Protection Office (EMPPO) supports the delivery of the operational and strategic objectives and priorities of the EMPPC and its Sub-groups.

The EMPPO is jointly funded by East Lothian and Midlothian Councils, Police Scotland and NHS (Health and Social Care Partnerships in East Lothian and Midlothian). Its operational base is the Brunton Hall, Musselburgh.

The Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer, Child Protection Lead Officer and Co-ordinator – Protecting Women and Girls Against Violence, and Public Protection Manager are full time, dedicated posts to support the implementation and delivery of the core functions of EMPPC in their respective areas of responsibility. They are partnership funded posts and work alongside statutory and third sector partners across East Lothian and Midlothian to deliver the core functions of EMPPO as noted above. EMPPC is ably supported by a Senior Business Support Administrator and a Business Support Assistant. Our Marac³ Co-ordinator is also located within the EMPPO. We had a Learning and Development Officer vacancy for some time which had impacted on our ability to progress some of the aspects of our Learning and Development Strategy but were pleased to recruit to this during the year.

1.6 EMPPC Business Plan

Our Business Plan is structured around five priorities:

1. We will continue to strengthen our leadership arrangements in Public Protection.
2. We will provide and support the implementation of multi-agency procedures and guidance for staff working in Public Protection.
3. We will continue to develop our performance framework and approach to quality improvement.
4. We will promote a learning culture by providing staff with multi-agency learning and development opportunities in Public Protection.
5. We will raise awareness of Public Protection through communications and engagement with staff and communities.

Section 2 – Report of Progress on the delivery of our Business Plan

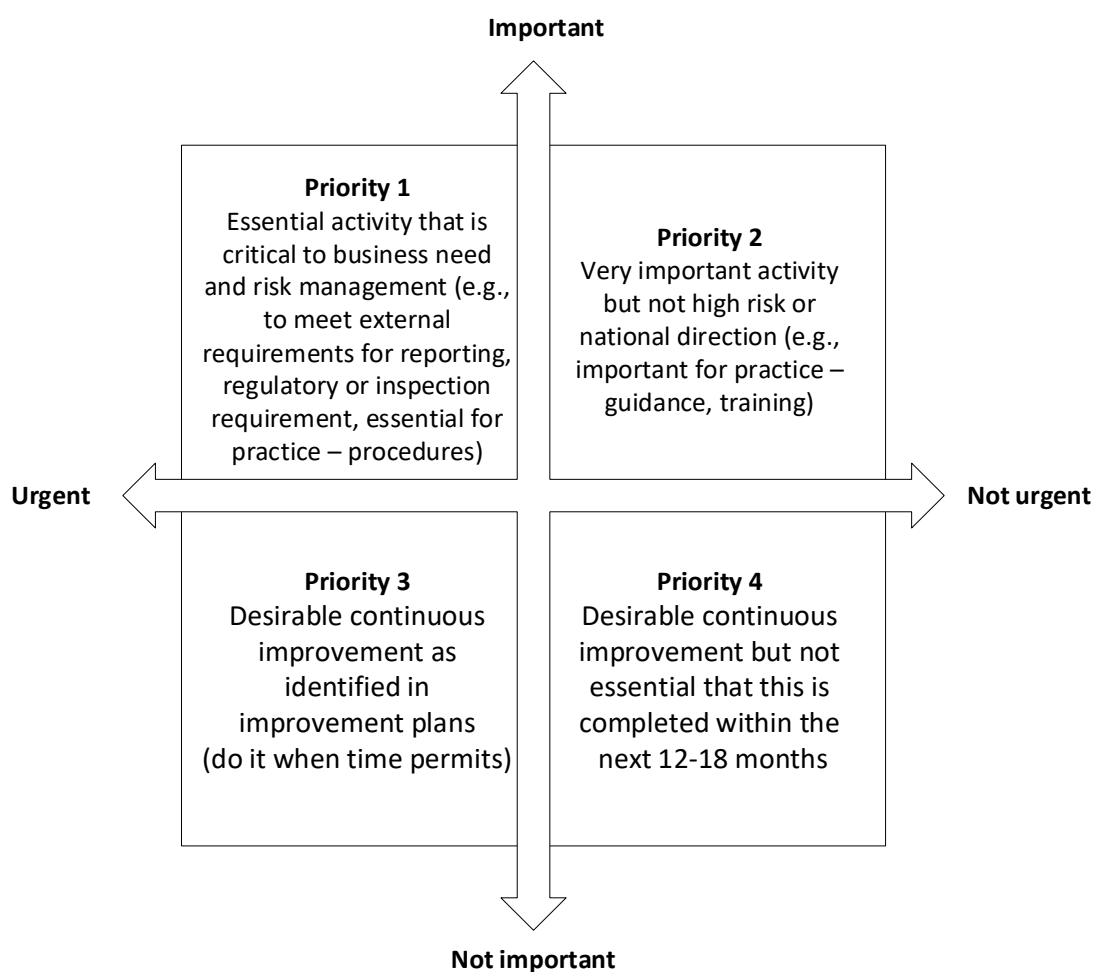
2.1 We will continue to strengthen our leadership arrangements in Public Protection – what we achieved

Strengthened approach to business planning

In the past year we have strengthened our approach to business planning, bringing greater visibility to our priorities, and review and scrutiny of our areas of business as a Committee. In the first quarter of the year, EMPPC members reviewed our priorities for the reporting year, consequently resulting in a plan with 51 actions. This reflected the wide breadth and scope of our business across our Public Protection responsibilities. Considering capacity

³ Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference – a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases and plans to increase safety and reduce risk are agreed.

demands due to gaps in EMPPO staffing in the year, and operational pressures within our partner agencies, in August 2023 we developed a prioritisation matrix, categorising actions as follows:



At our September 2023 Committee meeting, EMPPC members reviewed all 51 actions, agreeing that whilst all required to remain on our plan, the timescales for some pieces of work required to be extended. Use of the prioritisation matrix enabled us to take a risk-based approach in the delivery of our business and use our limited resources carefully. We kept our timescales and progress under review over the year at each Committee meeting and reported by exception to CSOG.

A report by the Lead Officers for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and the Violence Against Women and Girls Co-ordinator was presented to each Committee, outlining progress of activities in the Business Plan. We made improvements to the structure of this report to support timely updates, visibility of the work plans of the Lead Officers and highlight key areas of planned activity in the next quarter. In addition, we introduced a National Updates Report, prepared by the three Lead Officers, to enable Committee members to be sighted on, and communicate to their services about national developments in Public Protection.

CSOG Review and Development

CSOG began a programme of development in 2022/23 to review its existing structure and function and identify areas for improvement. Our EMPPC Care Inspectorate link inspectors facilitated four sessions, which were brought to conclusion in 2023/24. The framework for

this work was the national Chief Officers Public Protection Induction Resource materials⁴. CSOG re-stated its commitment to the continuation of a Public Protection Committee across the two local authority areas. This work has led to streamlined membership, with greater clarity of roles, decision making process and improved reporting processes. Through this work, CSOG also considered its role and responsibilities in wider Public Protection issues, including suicide prevention and harm from drugs and alcohol. It was agreed to seek reports to support its overview of the wider but connecting issues beyond the business that comes under the direct responsibility of the Committee. This is aimed at supporting Chief Officers to be sighted on the progress of plans to deliver services, address risk and implement national strategies at a local level.

We were pleased to see the work CSOG had undertaken to be positively recognised in external Joint Inspections in the year.

The report of the East Lothian Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian, published in June 2023, recognised the work that had been done to strengthen the role and functioning of CSOG. It noted that “The chief officers’ group, known as the critical services oversight group, had a clear remit and terms of reference. The governance arrangements had been subject to self-evaluation including four planned development sessions. The critical services oversight group had relevant reports from the public protection committee that included performance data and regular updates on the work of the sub-groups. Risk was explicitly considered, and decisions overseen. Other relevant areas were highlighted and considered. The meetings were quorate and well attended”.

The report also noted that “Strategic oversight of adult support and protection in East Lothian was overseen by the East Lothian and Midlothian public protection committee. The committee covered all aspects of public protection across both geographical areas. The dual arrangement was well established and supported by four sub-groups”.⁵

The East Lothian Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm recognised that the EMPPC provided “effective leadership of child protection. Reporting arrangements to the Critical Services Oversight Group (CSOG) ensured leaders were well-sighted on current and emerging risks, both in a local and national context. Working across the two local authority areas (East Lothian and Midlothian) had enabled partners to share information, learning and resources and helpfully benchmark performance. The jointly resourced public protection office provided the conduit from strategic direction to operational practice”.⁶

EMPPC Development Session

In November 2023, 15 EMPPC members came together in-person for the first time since before the Covid pandemic. The theme of our half-day development session was ‘Supporting Effective Collaboration’. The Co-chairs of CSOG, Monica Patterson, Chief Executive of East Lothian Council, and Grace Vickers, Chief Executive of Midlothian Council, provided an input to this session. They reflected on the work they had undertaken to strengthen their governance and oversight arrangements of EMPPC and their connectivity with wider Public

⁴ [Chief-Officers-Public-Protection-Induction-Resource-document-November-2023-.pdf \(cosla.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Joint inspection of adult support protection in the East Lothian partnership \(careinspectorate.com\)](#)

⁶ [Joint inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm in East Lothian April 24.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](#)

Protection matters, including the work around alcohol and drugs and suicide prevention. A key message from CSOG was for EMPPC to ensure it took enough time and space to do horizon scanning, and identify emerging trends, risks and opportunities.

This was a productive session, providing good opportunity for relationship building and looking forward to how we work effectively to deliver our responsibilities as a Committee. Committee members welcomed the opportunity to meet on a face-to-face basis, which was for some of our members the first time they had met in person. We agreed to hold a further developmental session in November 2024.

EMPPC Development

Following our development session in November 2023, we progressed a number of areas of improvement to how we do our business as a Committee, which were approved by CSOG.

We:

- Reviewed and updated our terms of reference for EMPPC.
- Introduced two new Sub-groups for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection, with terms of reference agreed. This reflected the desire to have some more in-depth discussion about these areas of business, which we recognised we did not always get the time for in our busy Committee agendas. We have also been able to involve a wider range of third sector partners in these groups.
- Decided to align the frequency of our VAWG Delivery Group and EMMG (East Lothian and Midlothian MAPPA Group) to the new Sub-groups, with all meeting on a six-monthly basis from April 2024. This structure will be reviewed after 18 months' operation.
- Changed the reporting structure of EMMG so that this would now report directly to CSOG rather than EMPPC. This was in recognition of the wider MAPPA arrangements in existence in Edinburgh, Lothians and the Scottish Borders through their Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) and MAPPA Operational Group (MOG).
- Reviewed the focus, purpose and membership of the VAWG Delivery Group, with the support of the Programme Manager, Protecting People in the Improvement Service. This was timely with the publication of the refreshed Equally Safe Strategy in December 2023. We recognised the need for alignment with the Midlothian Equally Safe Strategy, which was developed in the year, to ensure we avoid duplication or create gaps in the delivery of the Equally Safe agenda in East Lothian and Midlothian. Following this we revised the terms of reference for the VAWG Delivery Group.
- Introduced a new standard agenda item at our EMPPC meetings, enabling members to bring a report (using a standard template to promote consistency of information provided) from their agency/service perspective, outlining local and national updates, operational context and risk, which are of relevance to EMPPC. This provides a useful update for members on the issues affecting partner agencies and services.
- Introduced a Learning Review Sub-group, reporting directly to Critical Services Oversight Group. This is providing closer scrutiny over and governance of our approach to Learning Reviews, including oversight of the progress of Learning Reviews in progress, and development and progress of action plans arising from Learning Reviews.

Equally Safe in Midlothian Strategy 2023 – 27

Partners in Midlothian came together to develop an Equally Safe in Midlothian Strategy, which was approved by the Community Planning Board in March 2024, and published with a soft launch on Midlothian's website⁷ and promoted in our EMPPC Newsletter.

As part of this work, 100 staff in Midlothian responded to a survey, and 55 staff attended a consultation event in August 2023. These generated lots of ideas that will be taken forward over the lifetime of the Strategy. A Leadership Group, chaired by the Chief Social Work Officer/Chief Operating Officer Children's Services, Partnerships and Communities, met during the year to provide direction and oversight for the development and implementation of the strategy.

In launching the strategy, the Chair of the Leadership Group said: "Looking at the national figures, we estimate that over 3,500 children in Midlothian are likely to have experienced domestic abuse – these are children we all know in our nurseries, schools, health settings and community groups. This strategy is a great step forward in demonstrating Midlothian's commitment to preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls. Each and every one of us who works and lives in Midlothian has a responsibility in challenging and tackling gender inequality and working together to improve outcomes for some of the most vulnerable people and communities in Midlothian. This strategy is the result of collaboration of partners over the past year, with the support of the Improvement Service, and I am proud of the work we have achieved so far".

An action plan is now being developed to take forward the priorities for the year, which include raising awareness of the issues through training and communications, building a shared understanding of some of the language we use when talking about gender-based violence, and making best use of the resources such as programmes for early years and schools to strengthen our approaches to preventing gender based violence. One of the key priorities for the continued implementation of the Strategy is to ensure that the work is led and owned on a multi-agency basis and across all services, not just the core services with operational responsibility for responding to domestic abuse.

VAWG Delivery Group

In the year we reviewed the role and remit of our VAWG Delivery Group within the EMPPC structure, with the support of the Improvement Service. For some time, we had recognised that the wide scope and scale of responsibility sitting with the VAWG Delivery Group was hampering progress in fully delivering the national Equally Safe Strategy on a local basis. This will align with the Equally Safe Strategy in Midlothian, and East Lothian's planned work to develop a local Strategy, to minimise the risk of duplication of work.

Marac

A Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (Marac) is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse. The meeting provides a safe environment for agencies to share relevant and proportionate information about current risk, after which the Chair summarises risks and ask agencies to volunteer actions to reduce risk and increase safety. The primary focus is to safeguard the adult victim, however

⁷ [Helping prevent violence against women and girls | Equally Safe in Midlothian Strategy launched | Midlothian Council](#)

links with other agencies will be made to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator. All local authorities in Scotland hold Maracs.

Marac is our key partnership response to supporting the victims at the highest risk of domestic abuse. We operate Marac in East Lothian and Midlothian, with Marac meetings taking place every four weeks for each area, with additional meetings as required. The staffing resource requirements from the partner services for delivering Marac meetings and progressing actions involve regular commitment, and the support of our partner agencies in delivering an effective and efficient Marac process is appreciated.

We have strengthened our arrangements for the oversight and governance of Marac, by bringing this into the VAWG Delivery Group. We have developed an improvement plan for Marac, which includes the revision of supporting guidance for Marac representatives and referrers and bringing Chairs and representatives together for developmental opportunities. We developed an Information Sharing Protocol for Marac which provides clarity for Chairs and representatives. We continue to require additional Chairs for Marac to build sustainability for delivering Marac and whilst we acknowledge the operational challenges for services in resourcing this, we will seek to resolve this within the coming year.

2.2 We will provide and support the implementation of multi-agency procedures and guidance for staff working in Public Protection – what we achieved

Multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Procedures

We revised and implemented our Adult Support and Protection Multi-agency Procedures in November 2023, to bring them into line with the Code of Practice accompanying the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, which was revised in 2022. We held three briefings to launch these, to 170 staff across East Lothian and Midlothian. One of the most significant changes was the move to one overarching Inquiry, distinguished by the use of investigatory powers or no use of investigatory powers; thereby moving away from the concept of a linear process of a duty to inquire followed by an investigation. For Council Officers (and other workers involved in Adult Support and Protection) this required a cultural shift of thinking, one we believe is embedding well in both areas. This shift has been supported through training, revision of operational process guides, our revised Procedures and staff supervision.

To support the introduction of the revised Procedures, changes were made to the Social Work recording systems in East Lothian and Midlothian. In each area, one recording template for the Adult Support and Protection Inquiry was introduced. This has also supported the shift in thinking towards an overarching Inquiry, and the introduction of the national minimum dataset for Adult Support and Protection.

All our training courses and materials were updated to reflect the revised Adult Support and Protection Procedures.

Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures

We implemented the Edinburgh and the Lothians Child Protection Procedures in December 2023. This followed months of collaboration with multi-agency partners in Edinburgh and West Lothian (and for a period Scottish Borders until they decided to progress on single-area

basis) to develop a shared set of Procedures in line with the National Guidance for Child Protection. The National Guidance for Child Protection was updated in July 2023, and we were therefore able to incorporate those revisions into our Procedures.

Many of our local processes in East Lothian and Midlothian were already well aligned to support implementation of the new Procedures. In particular, we have long identified our strengths in our local Inter-agency Referral (IRD) practice, which is supported by the online shared platform for recording IRDs hosted by NHS Lothian (eIRD).

To support implementation, we delivered four online briefings to 355 staff across East Lothian and Midlothian. All training materials and courses were updated to reflect the revised Procedures.

We completed a self-evaluation exercise in October 2023 on our local implementation of the National Guidance, using a standard tool that had been developed by the National Child Protection Guidance Implementation Group. We were asked to document the supporting evidence that we had used to assess the progress we had made and assess ourselves according to the extent to which we had achieved the standard (in full, in part or yet to start).

Undertaking the self-evaluation was helpful in identifying our areas for future development which we will take forward in the coming year:

- Reviewing processes/guidance to ensure inclusion of contextual safeguarding and extra familial harm.
- Production of child-friendly communications on how Child Protection Procedures work, rights and how children can contribute to planning and decisions about their future.
- Supports, including advocacy, being in place to enable children to share their views.

Chronologies

We continued to support the work of the Pan-Lothian Chronology Partnership and remained a partner of this, albeit meetings of the Partnership halted during the year. We kept an overview of the progress of this work at our Learning and Development Sub-group. Our training materials and recording templates reflect the Pan-Lothian approach. The report of the Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian noted inconsistencies in the use of templates and application of chronologies. The quality of chronologies was also identified as an area for development in the report of the Joint Inspection for children and young people at risk of harm in East Lothian. We were unable to progress the introduction of skills-based workshops for practitioners on chronologies due to the Learning and Development Officer post being unfilled but are taking this forward in our 2024/25 workplan now that there is a post-holder in place.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

During the year, we worked with NSPCC to complete a multi-agency audit of our local approaches to responding to Harmful Sexual Behaviour, using a standard self-assessment tool developed by NSPCC. The findings were similar in each area. It was noted that there was evidence of positive multi-agency working, but there was no consistent shared understanding of harmful sexual behaviour across partners, and uncertainty round what support is available across sectors and how to access that support.

The work with NSPCC concluded in February 2024 and action plans were developed for each area. Whilst it was beneficial to undertake the self-assessment on an individual local authority basis, it was acknowledged that the two plans have similar themes and were too ambitious, within the context of limited resources. It was therefore agreed that we would develop a shared action plan across both areas, with a limited number of priorities, and with this work being overseen by the newly developed Child Protection Sub-group. In the year, our Training on Harmful Sexual Behaviour was extended to introduce a Level One (introductory, awareness raising) and a Level Two Course (assessment, responding and intervening) course.

2.3 We will continue to develop our performance framework and approach to quality improvement – what we achieved

Multi-agency Quality Assurance

We started some work to develop our approach to multi-agency quality assurance of practice but did not make as much progress as we would have liked, due to staffing capacity within the EMPPO and the work associated with three external Joint Inspections in the year. In December 2023, a small group of professionals involved in Adult Support and Protection (including Health, Police, Adult Social Work and EMPPO) attended a development session facilitated by our Link Inspector from the Care Inspectorate, to learn about the use of the Adult Support and Inspection Case File Audit tool. A Service Manager in Midlothian was involved in the case file reading for the Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian, the experience of which will stand in good stead for supporting our local audits going forward.

National Minimum Dataset for Adult Support and Protection

From Quarter 1, the Scottish Government introduced a national Minimum Dataset for Adult Support and Protection, to support a consistent national approach to data collation and performance information

From Quarter two (June 2023), we implemented Phase 1 of the national minimum dataset for Adult Support and Protection in each area, slightly later than the expected Quarter 1 introduction (we were two of 23 local authorities who introduced the new dataset from Quarter 2). This was due to the Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian, and the time required to make changes to the Social Work recording systems in each area. We recognised that it would take time to become familiar with the new dataset, particularly embedding a consistent approach to data collection and interpretation.

We engaged in national meetings hosted by the Scottish Government and IRISS to support a consistent approach to, and respond to any queries about, implementation of the national minimum dataset. This has been a helpful process for us, and through this engagement, we recognise that we have made good progress in our approach – of note we recognise that Council Officers (and other staff involved in Adult Support and Protection) have made a good cultural shift in no longer thinking about an Investigation being a separate process from an Inquiry. This is supporting our embedding of the national minimum dataset and setting us in a good place for the implementation of Phase 2 from Quarter 1, 2024 –25 (April 2024).

National Minimum Dataset for Child Protection

We introduced version 2 of the national performance reporting from Academic Quarter 2, 2023/24 (November 2023 to January 2024), aligned with the implementation of the Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures. The implementation of this went smoothly, with Social Work recording systems updated to reflect the changes.

Learning Reviews

We continued to embed our practice and processes around Learning Reviews, following the national guidance⁸ in our approach.

We strengthened our arrangements for the early stage of the Learning Review Process, with the meeting to consider the need for a Learning Review under Adult Support and Protection or Child Protection Meeting being chaired by the EMPPC Chair. This is serving us well by developing a consistent approach to these meetings. The Consideration Meeting is made up of agency representatives who are EMPPC Members, with any additional representatives decided on a case-by-case basis.

We have streamlined our paperwork/templates for Learning Reviews, with a consistent approach across both Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection.

We embedded our Learning Review Sub-group, as a Sub-group of EMPPC. This group is responsible for the oversight of the progress of Learning Reviews, action and improvement plans and consideration of resource requirements for Learning Reviews. In common with other areas, resourcing Learning Reviews and the securing of external Reviewers have proved to be a challenge for us, and we continue to engage in discussions with CPC Scotland and the National ASP Convenors Group on this issue.

Our Learning Review Sub-group reports directly to CSOG on a quarterly basis. Learning Review Reports and Summary Reports when a Consideration Meeting decides not to proceed to a Learning Review are presented to EMPPC for their review.

In the year, we received two notifications for Adult Support and Protection Learning Reviews. Both cases involved the death of an adult, under very different circumstances. The outcome of both Consideration Meetings was not to proceed to Learning Reviews, on the basis that the learning and improvements were clearly and sufficiently identified at the Consideration Meeting.

We concluded one Child Protection Learning Review in the year. This had been notified in May 2022, with a decision to proceed to a Learning Review being reached in June 2022. Due to external constraints (criminal proceedings) we were not able to commence this until August 2023. We commissioned an external Reviewer and Social Work Consultant to mentor the Reviewer and Child Protection Lead Officer, given this was our first Learning Review under the National Guidance. A decision was made by CSOG not to publish this report, to protect the privacy of the individual subject to the Review, given the nature of the case. The report of the Learning Review was brought to our March 2024 EMPPC for its review.

⁸ [National Guidance for Adult Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews](#) and [National Guidance for Child Protection Committees Undertaking Learning Reviews](#)

The improvements and sharing of learning in the above cases are being taken forward. We have shared the learning via newsletter articles and briefing notes and updated our training materials to include key messages from local as well as national learning.

We commenced a Child Protection Learning Review in November 2023, holding three Review Group meetings, a Practitioner Event and Managers' Event in the year. The Review will be concluded in the first half of 2024/25.

In February 2024 we held a Consideration Meeting for a Child Protection Learning Review and agreed that we would commission an external Reviewer for this work. This Review will be progressed in 2024/25.

We believe that we are implementing the National Guidance for Learning Reviews well. We are always mindful of the key features of Learning Reviews: Inclusiveness, collective learning, staff engagement and proportionality. Our Child Protection Lead Officer has worked with partners to ensure that Practitioners and Managers are prepared for their engagement in a Learning Review, recognising the need to provide information about the process and provide reassurance that Learning Reviews are not investigations and take a systems approach. We have introduced a briefing for Event participants and will embed this in any further Learning Reviews.

Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian

The Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian came to its conclusion with the publication of the report on 20th June 2023⁹. The inspection programme involved the analysis of a Position Statement which was developed on a multi-agency basis, where we identified our strengths and areas for development. Inspectors also reviewed the findings of a staff survey of 135 staff from across a range of organisations, including Health, Social Work, Police and third sector providers, scrutinised 90 records, held focus groups with staff and engaged in Professional Discussion with strategic leaders.

The Inspection reported on the following areas of strengths:

- The partnership's approach to adult support and protection inquiries was robust.
- Person-centred engagement and consultation with the adult at risk of harm was evident throughout the delivery of all key processes. This supported effective consideration of risk.
- Effective social work management, support and supervision was consistently recorded and contributed to the effective delivery of key processes.
- Almost all adults at risk of harm who required a risk assessment had one completed. The quality of risk assessment had improved significantly following the implementation of the Type, Imminence, Likelihood and Severity (TILS) framework. Subsequent risk management work needed improved.
- The partnership's large scale investigative process was established and included a useful reflective element that supported improvement actions.
- The partnership's vision was well understood. The delivery of strategic aims was supported by the Public Protection Committee improvement plan.

⁹ [Joint inspection of adult support protection in the East Lothian partnership \(careinspectorate.com\)](https://careinspectorate.com)

- The Public Protection Committee and Critical Services Oversight Group were well established. There was synergy between these groups that supported the effective delivery of strategic aims.
- The partnership responded appropriately to the demands of the pandemic. They ensured the continued delivery of adult support and protection services and provided good support to practitioners.

The Inspection highlighted the following priority areas for improvement:

- Adult support and protection improvements were positively impacting on key areas of practice. Importantly, procedural updates had not kept pace. The guidance should be updated as a priority.
- Findings from adult support and protection audits and improvement actions about risk management and chronologies should be fully implemented.
- A multi-agency approach to audit would strengthen joint improvement work. This should involve frontline practitioners from across the partnership.
- Relevant professionals should engage more collaboratively with critical processes. This includes attendance from police and health at case conferences and the consideration of second workers from all agencies.
- Strategic planning and improvement work should include feedback from, and engagement with adults at risk of harm with lived experience. This should be progressed as soon as possible.
- Interventions with alleged perpetrators and financial harm needed significant improvement to ensure appropriate action is taken on a multi-agency basis.

A multi-agency improvement plan was developed following the inspection which will continue to be progressed in the coming year, and progress overseen by our new Adult Support and Protection Sub-group and link Inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

Joint Inspection of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm in East Lothian

A joint inspection of services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm was carried out over a six-month period from October 2023, with the report published on 7th May 2024¹⁰.

The inspection footprint included reviewing practice by reading a sample of 60 records of children at risk of harm, held by a range of services, a survey of 408 staff, focus groups with 130 staff working directly with children and with strategic leaders. The partnership had completed a self-evaluation and provided a Position Statement as part of the submission of evidence to the inspection.

The inspection reported the following key messages:

- Children and young people were safer as a result of staff's effective recognition and response to risks and concerns.
- Partners worked well together using inter-agency referral discussions to plan responses if children and young people were at risk of harm.
- Staff were confident in their ability to recognise and report child abuse, neglect and exploitation, and assess and analyse risks.

¹⁰ [Joint inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm in East Lothian April 24.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](https://careinspectorate.com)

- Most children and young people experienced positive relationships with staff that had helped to keep them safe.
- The Single Point of Access had enabled many children and young people to receive effective support for their mental health and wellbeing.
- Children and young people with very high levels of risk and need were being well supported by multi-agency staff to remain with family or in care settings locally.
- Children and young people had a very good awareness of their rights.
- Children and young people were being well supported by staff to participate, share their views and contribute to decision-making.
- Leaders, operational managers and staff shared high aspirations and a strong value base for the delivery of services.
- Leaders worked well together through clear governance structures and reporting arrangements. Staff had confidence in their leaders.
- Staff felt well supported through supervision arrangements, peer support and the support of their managers.

Areas for improvement were identified as follows:

- Partners had not fully established ways to collect, analyse and report on the difference services were making. They had scope to develop a greater understanding of this.
- Partners were not consistently seeking, collating and using the views of children and young people and their families to inform service improvements.
- Independent advocacy is well established, and the partnership is committed to filling the gap which means that currently some children and young people at risk of harm do not have access to this support if they want it.

The overall evaluation of the impact on children and young people was assessed as Very Good. The Care Inspectorate grading scale states that “an evaluation of very good will apply to performance that demonstrates major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for people. There are very few areas for improvement. Those that do exist will have minimal adverse impact on people’s experiences and outcomes. While opportunities are taken to strive for excellence within a culture of continuous improvement, performance evaluated as very good does not require significant adjustment”.

Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian

In January 2024, we received notification of a joint inspection of Adult Support and Protection in Midlothian, with the first Professional Discussion taking place in March 2024, and multi-agency Position Statement was prepared in the early part of the year. The inspection carried on into the new financial year, with the final report being published in June 2024. We will report on the findings of this in our next Annual Report.

Across all three inspections, we were assured that the areas of strength and areas for improvement identified by inspectors had been identified in our Position Statement. We recognise the significant amount of partnership work undertaken by staff and senior leaders across our core partner agencies in the preparation for, and involvement in inspection. In particular, the Committee and CSOG have acknowledged the continual cycle of Joint Inspection across the Police ‘J’ Division, which includes West Lothian and Scottish Borders, and for NHS Lothian, which includes City of Edinburgh and West Lothian. In addition, each Council has been involved in a number of inspections of different services, which has placed

significant demands on staff at various levels of the two Councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships.

Across all three inspections in which we were involved in the past year, there are common themes in areas for improvement. We had already identified these as areas for improvement which will feature in our workplan for the coming year:

- Seeking, collating and using the views of children, families and adults involved in Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection Processes to inform service improvements.
- Developing a multi-agency approach to audit and quality assurance.

2.4 We will promote a learning culture by providing staff with multi-agency learning and development opportunities in Public Protection – what we achieved

We continued to implement our Multi-agency Strategy for Learning and Development and kept it under review in our Learning and Practice Development Sub-group.

We delivered 65 learning and development events in the year. This included 39 courses and 26 briefings. These are broken down as follows:

	Number of courses	Number of attendees
Quarter 1, Apr - Jun	11	278
Quarter 2, Jul - Sept	6	131
Quarter 3, Oct to Dec	10 ¹¹	206
Quarter 4, Jan to Mar	12 ¹²	253
Total	39	868

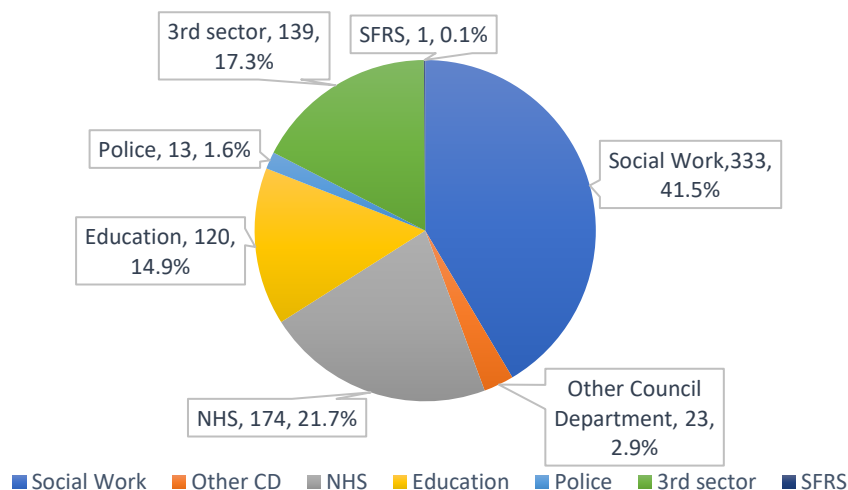
	Number of briefings/events	Number of attendees
Quarter 1, Apr - Jun	6	432
Quarter 2, Jul - Sept	5	223
Quarter 3, Oct to Dec	10	671
Quarter 4, Jan to Mar	5	439
Total	26	1765

¹¹ Includes one Council Officer modular course that ended in the quarter

¹² Includes one Council Officer modular course that ended in the quarter

We delivered 39 courses covering 18 different topics, to 868 staff and volunteers. This was 12 more courses than the previous year, reaching 180 more staff. The profile of attendees by agency is shown in the chart below¹³. Given staffing gaps and absences, and no dedicated training staff resource in the EMPPO in the year, this was a commendable achievement. We had to cancel two courses in the year and two briefings due to staff absence (one an externally commissioned trainer).

Attendance at Training by Agency - 2023/24



24 courses took place in person, 13 on-line and two on a hybrid basis. 14 courses incurred a hire charge due to the need to secure external venues as the Brunton Hall venue we have previously used was unavailable due to work being carried out to assess the condition of the building, due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete. Consequently, our training costs increased in the year, and will do so again in 2024/25.

A range of partners from both areas co-worked with EMPPO staff to develop and deliver our training, as part of their partnership commitment. This is greatly appreciated, and we believe supports a richer learning experience for participants. This included staff from: Education, East Lothian and Midlothian, MELDAP, Public Protection Team, NHS Lothian Public Protection Unit, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration, Social Work, East Lothian and Midlothian (both Children’s and Adult Services) and Women’s Aid East and Midlothian.

Although feedback was provided by only half of those staff attending training, those who did provide feedback shortly after attending evaluated this highly. Staff particularly welcome the opportunity to come together in person, which provides the opportunity for networking and learning more about each other’s roles.

In December 2023, 408 staff responded to the staff survey as part of the East Lothian Joint Inspection of Services for Children at Risk of Harm. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the learning and training they have participated in has increased their confidence and skills in working with children and young people at risk of harm. 71% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that that participation in regular local multi-agency training and development opportunities has strengthened their contribution to joint working

¹³ Agency breakdown based on 803 attendees. Agency breakdown not available for one course (65 attendees).

with children and young people at risk of harm (14% stated that the statement was not applicable). This provides good assurance that training provided on both a single and multi-agency basis is supporting practice.

In common with many other areas, we have further work to do to measure the longer-term impact of training and its application in practice. Whilst we send out a survey to staff three months after attending a training course and review responses, the completion rates are too low for us to meaningfully report on this. In the coming year, our Learning and Development Officer will engage with national work as part of Child Protection Committees Scotland's workplan to develop approaches to evaluation of training.

We delivered 26 briefings/learning events in the year, four more than last year, and reaching 551 more staff. This is our second year of delivering one-hour briefings, which provide the opportunity for staff to learning about a specific topic in a short, bite sized way without cutting into their other workplace demands. We received positive feedback about our briefings.

Topics included the launch of our Child Protection Procedures, the launch of our Adult Support and Protection Procedures, Advocacy for adults at risk of harm, Home Fire Safety Visits, Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland, Neglect, Trading Standards and Marac. We cancelled two briefings in the year due to staffing absence. All briefings were delivered online. The themes for our topics come from Learning Reviews, reviews of our data and performance and inspection findings.

To recognise the launch of the 16 days of activism, we held an on-line event on the Safe & Together model¹⁴ and how it is used to work with families impacted by a domestic abuse perpetrator's behaviours. This was led by a dedicated trainer from the Safe & Together Institute and attended by 85 staff. This was very well received by staff, both those who are new to the model and those practitioners who use the model finding this an invigorating refresher.

173 staff attended our on-line learning event entitled 'Why we need to have a trauma lens in our Adult Support and Protection work' to recognise Adult Support and Protection Day on 20th February 2024. This was led by Shumela Ahmed, Managing Director of the Resilience Learning Partnership¹⁵ and advisor to the National Trauma Training Programme¹⁶. Participants fed back that this was a powerful and insightful input from the lens of lived experience.

Across all courses, our take up was 74.3% of spaces. Demand exceeded available spaces in our Child Protection Risk Assessment and Processes courses, with a small number of staff being placed on a waiting list for the next course the following quarter, and an additional course being delivered to meet demand.

Across all training, 74 staff cancelled their space with more than five days' notice, 46 staff cancelled with less than five days' notice and 121 staff did not attend on the day of the training. Follow up was made with all staff who did not attend on the day of the training,

¹⁴ [About the Safe & Together™ Model | Safe & Together Institute \(safeandtogetherinstitute.com\)](https://www.safeandtogetherinstitute.com)

¹⁵ [Resilience Learning Partnership](https://www.resiliencelearningpartnership.com)

¹⁶ [The National Trauma Training Programme \(NTTP\) | NHS Education fo \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/nhs.uk/education/national-trauma-training-programme)

with the most common reason for non-attendance being short notice operational demands or staff absence. Given the largest staffing group attending training comes from Social Work, the operational pressures impact on training attendance are quite often unavoidable, and we do endeavour to offer out any spaces to anyone on a waiting list.

All the organisation, administration and support to ensure the smooth organisation and running of our training offering is carried out by Business Support Staff within EMPPO. Their practice and process around this is efficient and effective, and the amount of work that goes into this cannot be underestimated.

We believe, based on the feedback we receive from staff, those involved in developing and delivering training and discussion that takes place at our Learning and Development Sub-group, that we are delivering a learning and development programme to a high standard of quality and effectiveness.

The Council Officer Forum in East Lothian and Midlothian took a pause in the early part of 2024, to enable us to take stock of its future running. Over time we had found that the same, small group of Council Officers would attend this, and there is a need to increase its profile and offering across the wider Council Officer grouping. This will be progressed in the coming year.

We continue to be committed to embedding Safe & Together¹⁷ in East Lothian and Midlothian. Funding to support implementation is provided through the national Delivering Equally Safe Fund. Both areas saw a stalling of progress of getting staff through Core Training in the year, due to staffing gaps in the local training leads, a continued lack of a local trainer and in East Lothian the diverting of staffing resources to the work associated with the Joint Inspection for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm. Both implementation groups met in the early part of 2024 to plan the work to further embed Safe & Together in the coming year, including applications for three local staff to become accredited trainers, and projections for training to support the funding application for 2024-25.

in 2023 we committed to implement the Equally Safe in Practice ¹⁸framework in both areas. This framework aims to equip the Scottish workforce with knowledge, understanding and the tools necessary to improve responses to Violence Against Women and Girls and ensure safe and positive outcomes for women, children and young people. This comprises of a suite of training programmes developed by Scottish Women's Aid. The Level 1 (general workforce) programme consists of three online modules (gender equality, domestic abuse and sexual abuse). We made limited progress in the year to implement the Equally Safe in Practice framework in both Council areas, due to gaps in the VAWG Co-ordinator post, but this was picked up again in March 2024 and will be progressed over the coming year in both areas. The Level 1 modules were rolled out to staff in Midlothian, with 102 staff completing the gender equality module, 88 completing the domestic abuse module and 61 completing the sexual abuse module. This was promoted with Housing staff particularly, with positive feedback from a small number of staff. We will progress implementing this framework across both Council areas in the coming year.

¹⁷ [About the Safe & Together™ Model | Safe & Together Institute \(safeandtogetherinstitute.com\)](https://www.safeandtogetherinstitute.com)

¹⁸ [About ESIP | Scottish Women's Aid \(womensaid.scot\)](https://www.womensaid.scot)

We continued to establish the Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) Learning and Development Forum to support practitioners involved in Child Protection IRDs, with Police, Health and Social Work staff coming together for two events in the year. Topics have included Harmful Sexual Behaviour, staff wellbeing, County Lines, thresholds and what the data is telling us about IRDs. These events have proved popular with good engagement and positive feedback on its approach to providing a supportive learning environment to enable staff to reflect on IRD practice in a multi-agency forum.

2.5 Raising awareness of Public Protection through communications and engagement with staff and communities – what we achieved

We continued our commitment to develop and disseminate a quarterly newsletter to staff across East Lothian and Midlothian, with a distribution to over 500 named individuals and teams. Whilst our exact reach is not known, we know it is shared widely across networks and we have received positive feedback from staff about its style and content. Its role in sharing information about the work of the Committee and communicating our vision was recognised in the three Joint Inspections in Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection that took place in the year.

Our newsletter provides the opportunity to raise awareness of the work of the Committee, with a regular feature on a Committee member about their role and contribution to the work of the Committee. We included articles on Adult Support and Protection, Child Protection and Violence Against Women and Girls. The newsletter provides a good opportunity to highlight connecting themes with Spotlight articles on trauma informed practice, Chronologies, Schedule 1 offences and SMART planning. We include resource materials to support awareness raising and training opportunities, and we also take the opportunity to raise issues that come up through local and national Learning Reviews and in local training.

Our website for EMPPC was de-commissioned in October 2023 as we were unable to resolve a contract issue. We had previously recognised that our website was out of date and therefore began work to develop a new website with the support of one of our partner agencies. The development of this is underway and will be launched during 2024. As an interim solution we disseminated guidance and Procedures via our networks to ensure that staff could still access these and have temporarily hosted our multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Procedures and Child Protection Procedures on both Council websites.

Our activities around sharing of key Public Protection messages for partner media platforms were reduced in the year, although national communication campaign materials were shared when available. We recognise we have further work to do to raise awareness of Public Protection beyond staff and volunteer groups. Our new website will have information available for the public about Public Protection and how to raise concerns about a child or adult who may be at risk of harm, alongside frequently asked questions about key Protection processes. We will use the launch of our new website to further develop a communications plan with our key partner agencies.

Section 3 – Data and Performance Information

3.1 Adult Support and Protection

The National Minimum Dataset for Adult Support and Protection was introduced nationally in Quarter 1, 2023/24. Our Critical Services Oversight Group agreed to a delay of this by one quarter, due to the need to make significant changes to the Social Work recording systems in each area, and the Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian. We therefore introduced the National Minimum Dataset in both areas from Quarter 2, 2023/24 (from July 2023).

Prior to the introduction of the National Minimum Dataset, local indicators were in place from 2015/16; this included monitoring patterns of referrals, inquiries, multi-agency attendance at Case Conferences and timescale standards. Our local indicators provided assurance to EMPPC that arrangements for Adult Support and Protection work were in place to keep adults safe through timely intervention and support.

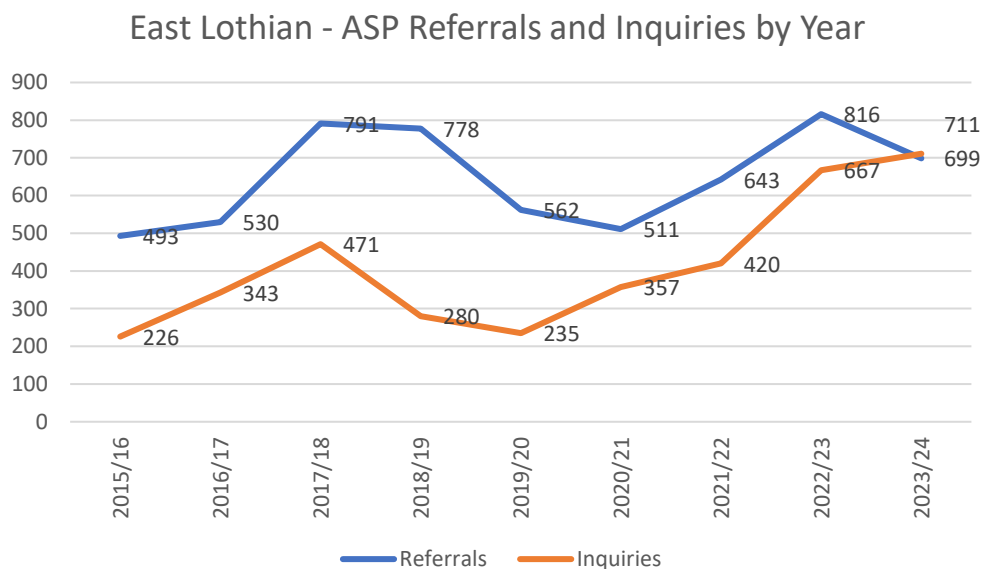
Whilst we benefit from coming together as two areas to share learning and expertise, we recognise the differing structures in the delivery of Adult Support and Protection work and are therefore cautious about making direct comparisons between the two areas. In East Lothian Council Officers are located across a number of teams, and Council Officers undertake a mixture of short- and longer-term work. In Midlothian there is dedicated Adult Support and Protection Team which deals with the majority of the longer-term work, although there is a wider group of Council Officers who primarily undertake duty work. Through the P&QI Sub-group, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service reports on the number of Home Fire Safety Visits that take place and the number of Adult Support and Protection concerns that are referred to Social Work. We have been able to use that data to provide assurance of good practice in addressing Adult Support and Protection concerns.

When a referral is made to the Council Contact Centre in East Lothian or Midlothian, the referral is screened to determine if it should be dealt with under Adult Support and Protection, within 24 hours. If it is, an Inquiry will be undertaken by a Council Officer, who is a Social Worker with specialist training to undertake Adult Support and Protection work. In each area there is a local timescale of completing an Inquiry within a timescale standard of 21 days. We will introduce performance reporting of the meeting of those timescales from Quarter 1, 2024/25.

East Lothian

Table 1 illustrates the number of referrals and inquiries since EMPPC began collating and reporting on this in 2015/16. We see no trend in the number of referrals received by year and note a slight reduction from last year. The number of inquiries undertaken increased for the fourth year in a row, and we need to review this in the coming year to see if this is a trend.

Table 1



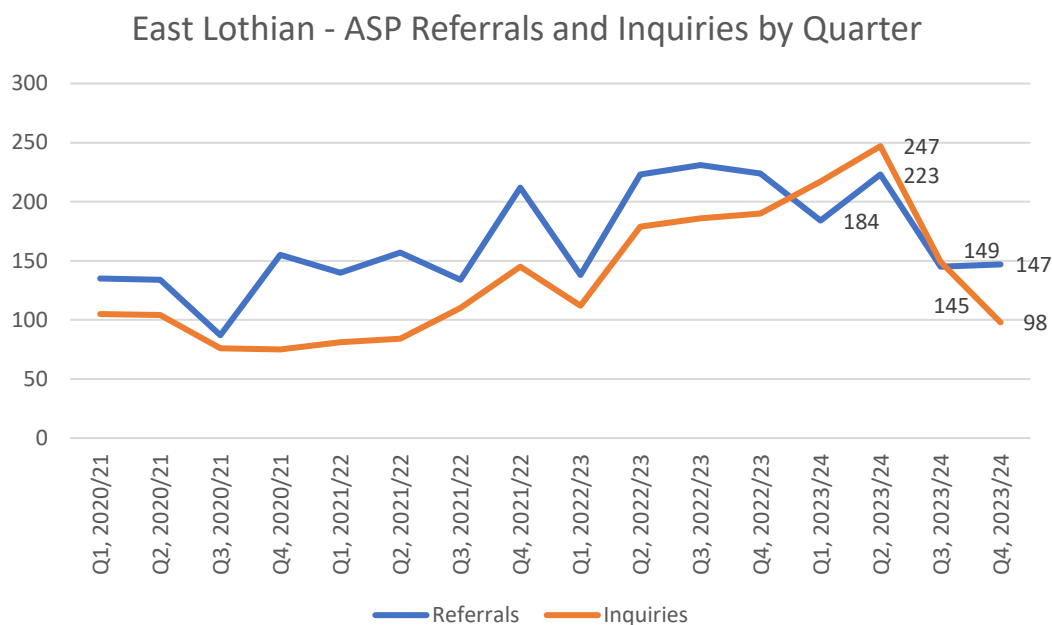
Following receipt of any referral to Adult Social Work to the East Lothian Council Contact Centre, the referral is screened by a Duty Team Leader, within a standard of 24 hours of receipt. At screening it will be confirmed if the referral is to be dealt with under Adult Support and Protection. A referral may be re-categorised from Adult Support and Protection if, on the face of the information provided, the Duty Team Leader considers that there is insufficient information, or the level of concern does not suggest that this should be dealt with under Adult Support and Protection. Similarly, a referral may be re-categorised as Adult Support and Protection.

In 2023/24 for the first time the number of inquiries undertaken under Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian exceeded the number of referrals, by 12. Breaking this down further by quarter, which is shown at Table 2 below, we see that for three quarters out of four in 2023-24 (Quarter 1, Quarter 2 and Quarter 3) the number of inquiries exceeded the number of referrals.

Key messaging from operational and strategic leads has promoted a positive change in culture over recent years in East Lothian, moving away from managing risk through a welfare approach towards a more consistent approach in the application of Adult Support and Protection inquiry as a referral response. This has been supported by increased operational oversight of Adult Support and Protection work generally in East Lothian. We believe this explains the increase in the number of inquiries year on year.

The screening process has been strengthened over the last two years, and we know from discussions through our EMPPC Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group that it is robust and carried out in a timely manner within East Lothian. Our Operational Managers in Adult Social Work report that from discussions in supervision, and their oversight of Adult Support and Protection work, there is increased confidence and decisiveness in Adult Support and Protection work, with inquiries being instigated appropriately. This was echoed in the report of the Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian which noted that referrals dealt with by the duty system were handled in a timely manner and “all inquiries were completed in line with the principles of the legislation”, with “management oversight evident for almost all inquiries completed”.

Table 2



Following the implementation of the National Minimum Dataset from Quarter 2, 2023-24, we are now able to identify the balance between inquiries with or without the use of investigatory powers. This is illustrated in Table 3 below. Although there are only three quarters to date, we believe that the increase in the use of investigatory powers is reflecting an increased confidence and competence in identifying what powers are being used and when. This is similarly reflected in our local discussions when reviewing data on a quarterly basis.

Table 3

	Inquiries without use of investigatory powers	Inquiries with use of investigatory powers	Total
Q2, 2023-24	76.52% (189)	23.48% (58)	247
Q3, 2023-24	51.00% (76)	49.00% (73)	149
Q4, 2023-24	13.27% (13)	86.73% (85)	98

Steps were taken in Quarter 1, 2023/24 to improve the recording of the principal type of harm, with welcome clarity about harm categories and definitions through the introduction of the Adult Support and Protection Minimum Dataset. The use of ‘other’ as a category of recorded harm is now rare, and we have accurate identification, distinction between and recording of self-neglect, neglect and self-harm. For three quarters worth of available data in 2023/24, the three most common types of harm in inquiries with the use of investigatory powers were financial, followed by self-harm and physical harm.

As expected, the majority of inquiries related to adults living in their own home and there is nothing unusual standing out about this data.

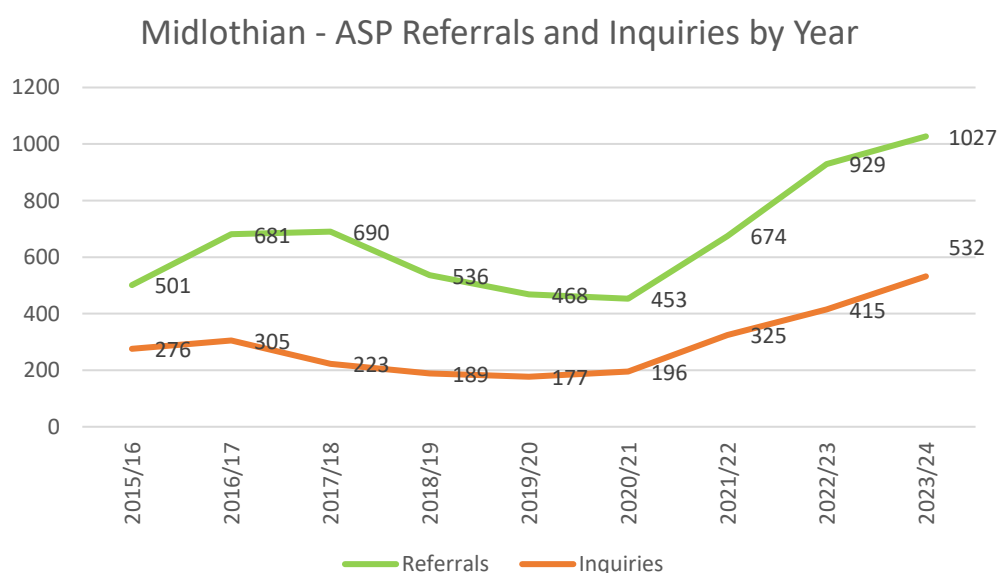
In East Lothian, the Social Work recording system has been updated to include recording fields on the offer and take up of advocacy. We had previously identified this as an area for improvement through audit work and practice is now more in line with the Code of Practice. The Joint Inspection of Adult Support and Protection in East Lothian recognised the work that had been done to actively promote advocacy via focused staff briefings provided through EMPPC Training Calendar (twice yearly), articles in the EMPPC Newsletter and inputs at Council Officer training.

Midlothian

Table 4 shows an increase in Adult Support and Protection referrals for the third year in a row, with a doubling of referrals since the first year of the pandemic. There was an increase by 10.55% in 2023/24 from the previous year. Inquiries similarly increased for the third year in a row, by 28.19% in the last year. There has been no corresponding increase in Council Officer resource in that period, and no publicity campaigns to encourage referrals about Adult Support and Protection. However, we know from the wide range of referral sources in Midlothian that there is good awareness of the need to refer concerns. This seems to be in line with the national picture of increasing referrals.

Following receipt of any referral to Adult Social Work to the Midlothian Council Contact Centre, the referral is screened by the dedicated Adult Support and Protection Team, within a standard of 24 hours of receipt. The performance in meeting this standard has been excellent over a number of years now, with a well embedded system in place.

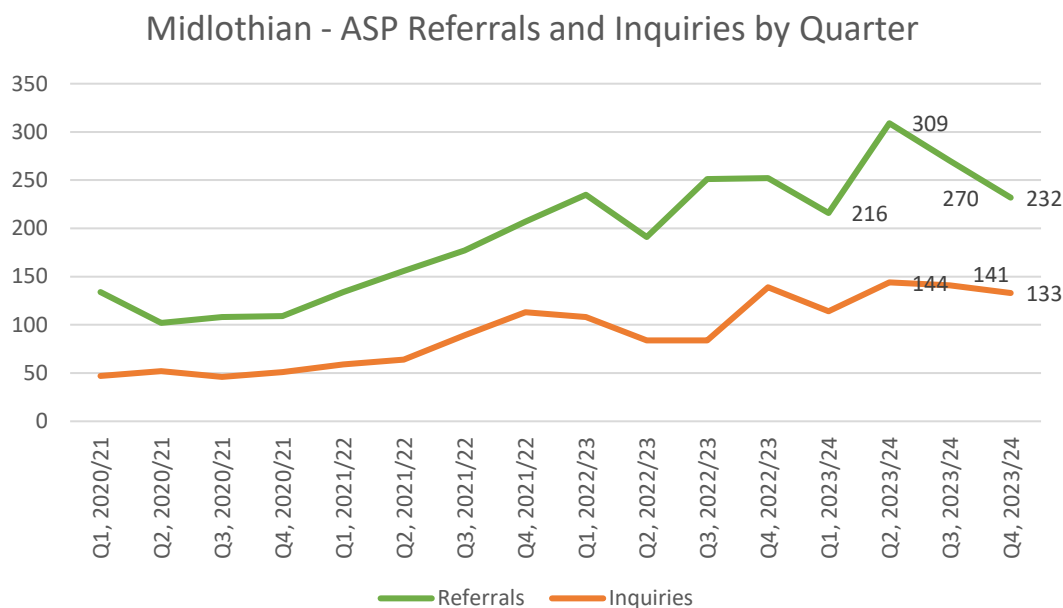
Table 4



In Table 5 below we can see the relationship between referrals and inquiries by quarter. Quarter on quarter, there are no trends in the number of referrals or inquiries. The spike in the number of referrals in Quarter 3, 2023/24 was examined closely, and related to some mis-badging of Police welfare concerns as Adult Support and Protection referrals. This was quickly addressed and resolved and did not create any risk, with assurance that the needs of

the adult had been appropriately addressed, and the opportunity taken to re-issue screening guidance to staff.

Table 5



It has consistently been reported over a number of years that the conversion rate from Adult Support and Protection referral to inquiry in Midlothian has sat at just below 50%. A significant proportion of referrals are screened out at the initial stage without progressing to an inquiry, however, when we look at the outcomes recorded on referrals, almost all referrals have had some form of action, and are referred to other teams/services within the Health and Social Care Partnership.

To understand more about the data, in 2023 it was agreed that we would routinely sample a portion of referrals per quarter that did not progress to an inquiry to understand more about what this data was telling us – including about thresholds for decision making, quality of referral information, repeat referrals. This work was undertaken for three quarters in 2023/24, with the Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer, Adult Support and Protection Team Leader and Mental Health Team Leader auditing cases that did not proceed to Adult Support and Protection Inquiry. In audits of 40 cases in the first two quarters, there was agreement not to progress to inquiry in 37 cases. In the remaining three cases follow up action was taken through Social Work allocation or current case management. These audits concluded that there was assurance of sufficient safety measures in place at the screening stage and the adult’s needs had been met appropriately with non-Adult Support and Protection intervention. It was identified that the quality of information included in referrals needed to improve to support the ability to badge a referral as Adult Support and Protection.

The operational management and supervision of the work of Council Officer activity are strong in Midlothian, with comprehensive recording of risk assessment and analysis. Even with the high number of Adult Support and Protection inquiries, rising year on year, there is close tracking and oversight of the progress of Adult Support and Protection work, and performance in timely completion of inquiries is strong.

The most common type of harm in inquiries with the use of investigatory powers in 2023/24 was psychological, followed by financial/material harm and neglect/acts of omission. There is

a more varied spread of harm identified in the categories provided under the Adult Support and Protection Minimum Dataset, and from regular meetings between operational Managers and the Adult Support and Protection Lead Officer, we believe that Council Officers are identifying harm more confidently and competently. This has positively resulted in less use of ‘other’ categories to define harm.

As expected, the majority of inquiries related to adults living in their own home and there is nothing unusual standing out about this data.

In the last quarter we saw a marked increase in the use of inquiries with investigatory powers. This is shown at Table 6 below. Although there is only one quarter’s worth of data, operational Managers report increasing awareness by Council Officers in identifying when it is appropriate to use investigatory powers. This is supported by the recording system within Social Work which identifies what type of power has been used.

Table 6

	Inquiries without use of investigatory powers	Inquiries with use of investigatory powers	Total
Q2, 2023-24	67.36% (97)	32.64% (47)	144
Q3, 2023-24	69.50% (98)	30.50% (43)	141
Q4, 2023-24	51.13% (68)	48.87% (65)	133

3.2 Child Protection

Child Protection performance information and data is discussed and reviewed by the P&QI Sub-group. In advance of this, a multi-agency sub-group comes together to scrutinise the information in greater detail and produce a comprehensive report for consideration at the P&QI Sub-group. This works well and enables us to manage the time-lag between the data reviewed and our meeting structures, as we use academic quarters for our Child Protection data but financial quarters for our meeting structures.

The Scottish Government published the Children’s Social Work Statistics 2022-23 – Child Protection on 26th March 2024. This covers data on children subject to Child Protection processes. The data relate to the reporting period 1st August 2022 to 31st July 2023. We reviewed this data at our P&QI Sub-group to give us a national and local comparator.

Tables 7 and 8 show the number and rate of Inter-agency Referral Discussions (IRDs) per 1,000 children. As with last year, the rate of IRDs remained higher than the national rate of 13.2, at 17.5 in East Lothian and 27.6 in Midlothian. This was a slight increase from the previous year in East Lothian from 17.8 and in Midlothian a slight decrease from 31.9. Similar to last year’s report, we have been conscious of our higher rates of IRDs to other areas for some time and continued to discuss this in our P&QI Sub-group. We can see that the corresponding rates of our local partners (Edinburgh and the Lothians Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures) are also higher. We are confident that our IRD processes are robust, with an IRD Overview Group meeting fortnightly in each area to review IRDs and the interim

safety plans and undertake quality assurance activity. IRD practice is particularly strong in each area, and this was recognised in the East Lothian Joint Inspection of Children at Risk of Harm.

Table 7

Number of IRDs 01/08/22 - 31/07/23

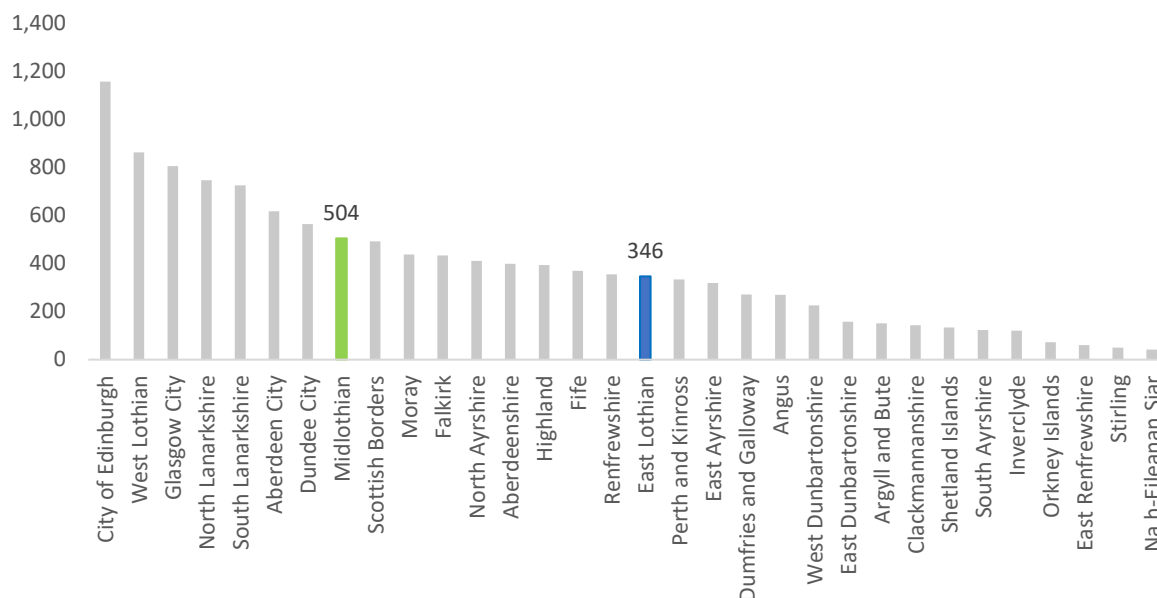
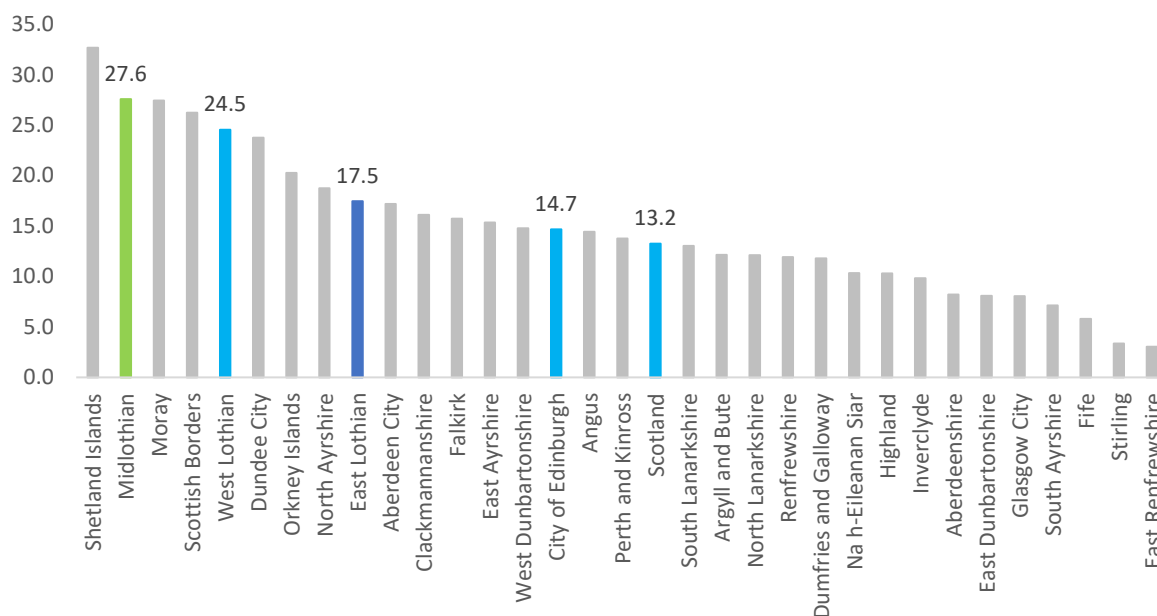


Table 8

Rate of IRDs per 1,000 children 01/08/22 - 31/07/23



[Note 1] Rate per 1,000 children for 2022 and 2023 is calculated using National Record Statistics mid-2021 population estimates (0-15 years). Rates may vary slightly from previous publications due to updated mid-year population estimates.

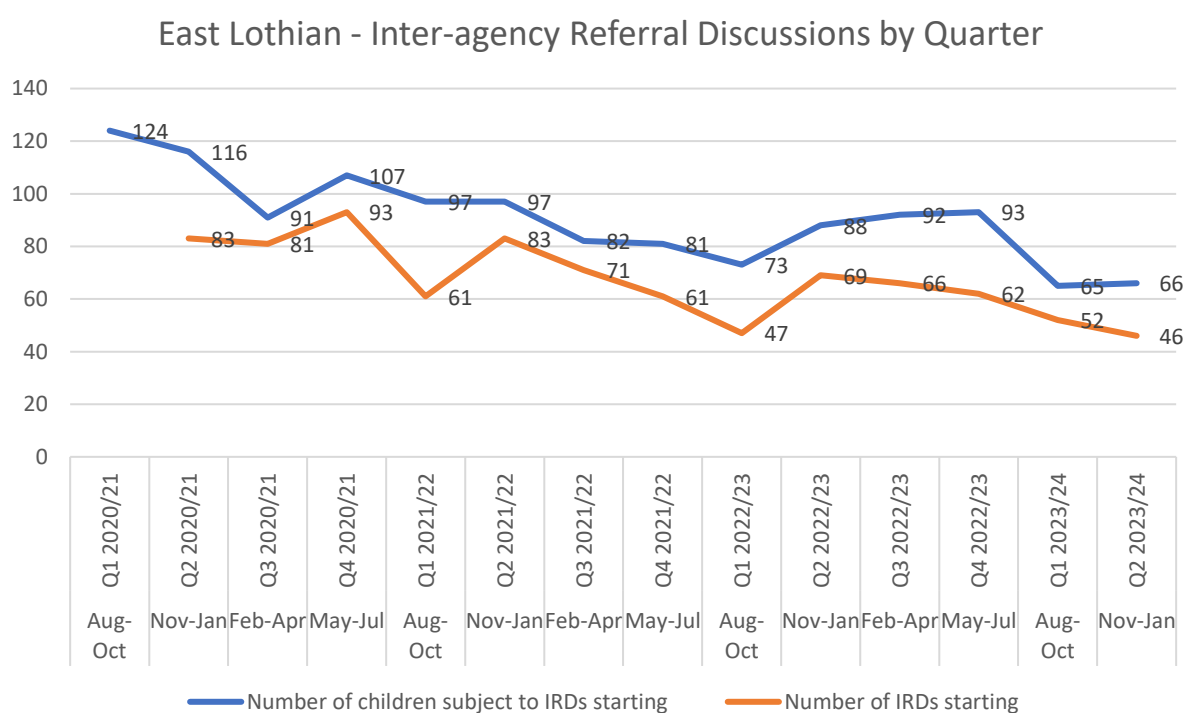
[Note 2] The rate shown in this table includes unborn children who are on the Register.

Child Protection Registrations are routinely reviewed in the P&QI Sub-group, to keep an indication of activity around Child Protection registrations and de-registrations, and consequent impact of Child Protection work. Single agency audit arrangements are in place to review the progress and effectiveness of Child Protection Planning and we will strengthen this in the coming year on a multi-agency basis.

East Lothian

We can see from Table 9 below that there is no quarterly trend or seasonal pattern in the number of IRDs in East Lothian. We routinely monitor the number of repeat IRDs per child and the number of children who are being looked after by the local authority with an IRD – the low numbers provide assurance that appropriate supports are in place to address the issues that bring a child into Child Protection processes in East Lothian. This was also identified in the Joint Inspection of Services for Children at Risk of Harm.

Table 9



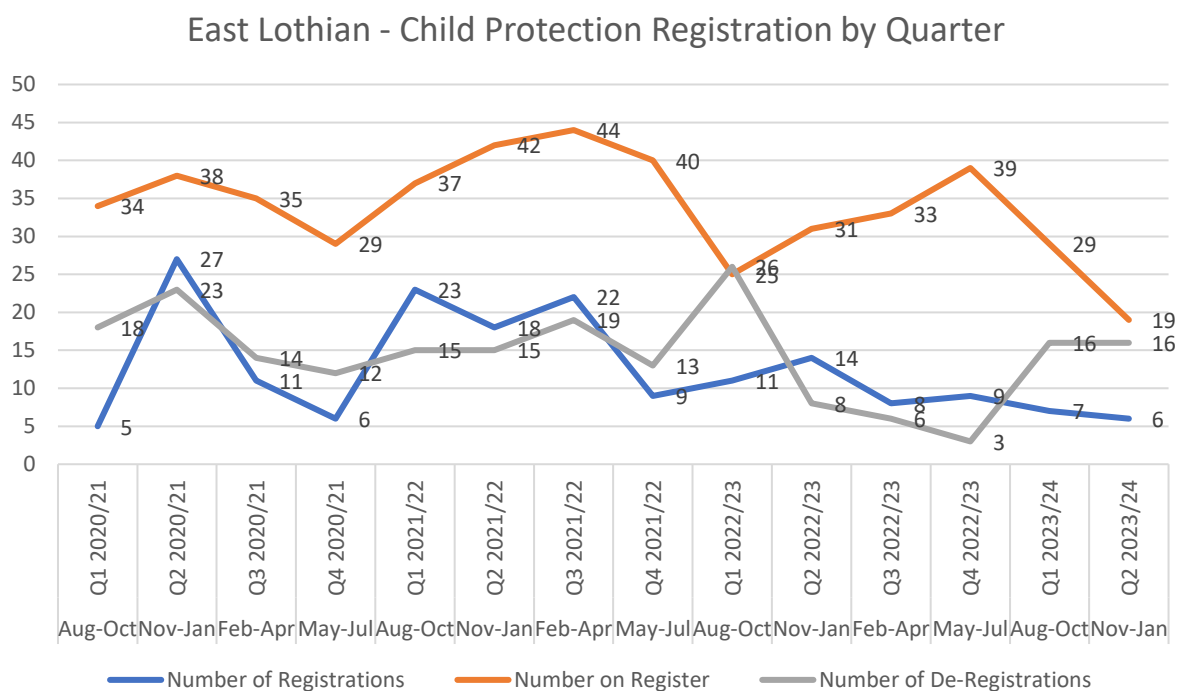
East Lothian has seen a drop in the number of children whose names are placed on the Child Protection Register over two Quarters in the year. This is shown at Table 10. There has also been a reduction in the conversion of IRDs to Child Protection Registration. We believe these are possible indicators of the partnership’s strengths in information sharing and safety planning. The Signs of Safety¹⁹ approach to assessment and plans has been implemented well, and there is a strong emphasis on working in partnership with children and families in safety planning in a strengths-based way.

The Child Protection National Minimum Dataset Version 2 now categorises concerns at Child Protection Registration by identifying vulnerability factors and impacts on/abuse of the child. In East Lothian, the most frequently identified concerns included the following:

¹⁹ [What Is Signs of Safety? - Signs of Safety](#)

- Vulnerability factors - the most frequently identified concerns included parental substance use (alcohol and/or drug use), domestic abuse and parental/carer mental ill-health. The Safe & Together²⁰ approach supports Children’s Services staff in East Lothian in their response to domestic abuse.
- Types of harm - neglect, emotional abuse and physical abuse. There are some early signs that the implementation of the neglect toolkit is supporting staff in their identification of neglect.

Table 10



Midlothian

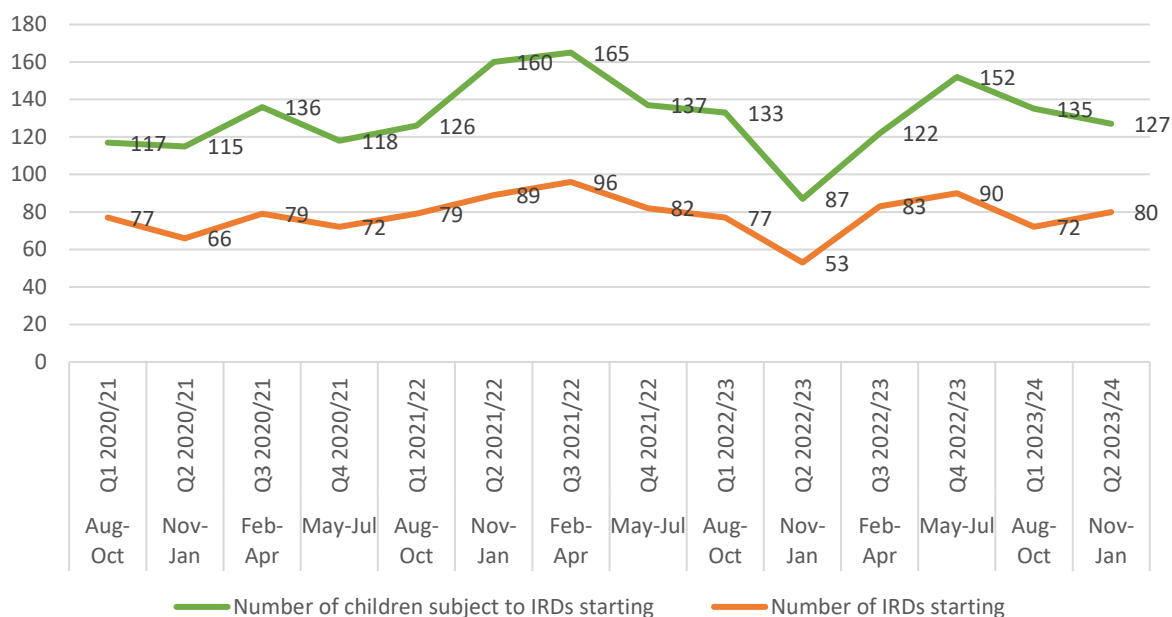
From Table 11, we can see there is no quarterly trend or seasonal pattern in the number of IRDs in Midlothian. Midlothian traditionally has had a higher than national average rate of IRDs, and we have seen this continue in the quarterly data. Larger family groupings feature in IRDs in Midlothian, and we also see this in Child Protection Planning Meetings. The IRD process in East Lothian and Midlothian has been well established for a number of years now and is well aligned to the National Guidance for Child Protection. The IRD Oversight Group in Midlothian meets fortnightly and reviews all IRDs, with that group providing assurance about the appropriateness of IRDs.

We routinely monitor the number of repeat IRDs per child and the number of children who are being looked after by the local authority with an IRD. Through the IRD Oversight Group which meets fortnightly, we are assured that repeat IRDs reflect the appropriate raising of concerns, particularly around domestic abuse.

²⁰ [About the Safe & Together™ Model | Safe & Together Institute \(safeandtogetherinstitute.com\)](https://www.safeandtogetherinstitute.com)

Table 11

Midlothian - Inter-agency Referral Discussions by Quarter



The Child Protection National Minimum Dataset Version 2 now categorises concerns at Child Protection Registration by identifying vulnerability factors and impacts on/abuse of the child. In Midlothian, the most frequently identified concerns included the following:

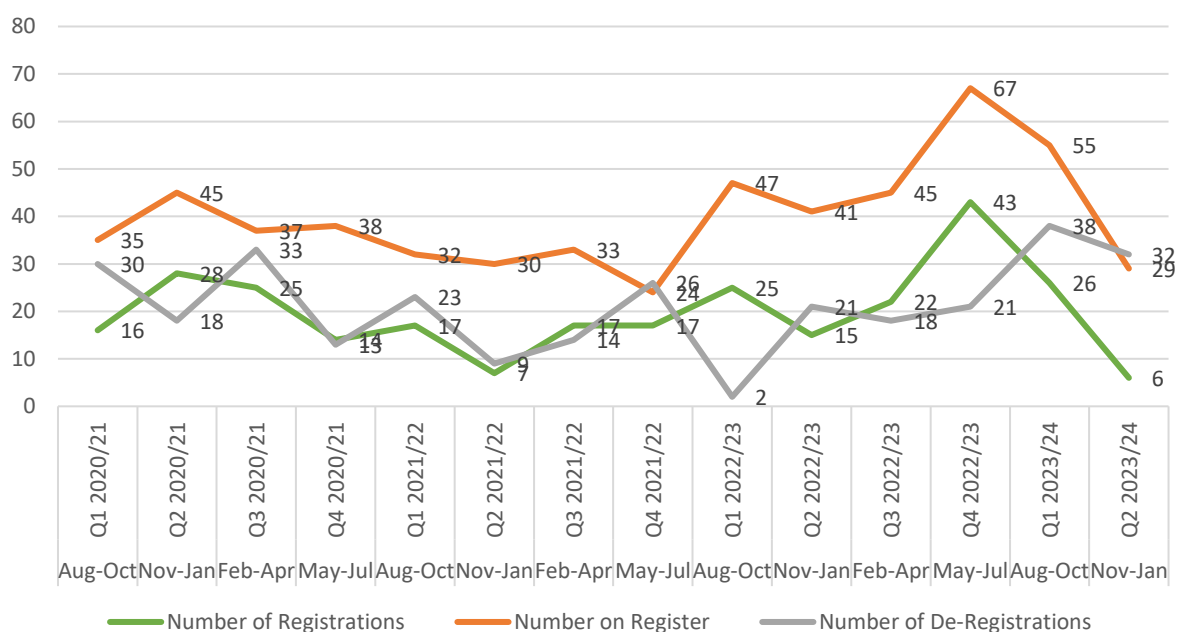
- Vulnerability factors - domestic abuse was the most frequently identified, which we believe reflects the embedding of the Safe & Together approach within Midlothian Children’s Services. The other two most frequently identified vulnerability factors were substance use (alcohol and/or drug use), and services finding it hard to engage.
- Types of harm - emotional abuse, neglect and physical abuse. There are some early signs that the implementation of the EMPPC Neglect Toolkit is supporting staff in their identification of neglect.

At the end of Quarter 4, 2023 (April to June 2023) we saw the highest number of children on the Child Protection Register, with 48 children from 25 families subject to initial and pre-birth Child Protection Case Conferences (as they were called prior to the implementation of the revised Multi-agency Child Protection Procedures in November 2023). This increase was associated with the higher number of IRDs in the same and previous Quarter. On discussion at our P&QI Sub-group although we did not identify any particular reason for this increase (i.e., there was no change in practice or process or specific campaigns) the high level of complexity of issues facing children locally in Midlothian and associated implications for service provision were recognised.

There is a very low number of children who are re-registered within Midlothian. This, and audits completed by Children’s Services’ Managers three months after a child’s name is removed from the Child Protection Register, provide assurance about the impact of supports and intervention for children subject to Child Protection processes.

Table 12

Midlothian - Child Protection Registration by Quarter



3.3 Violence Against Women and Girls

We are not able to report the number of incidents for domestic abuse reported to the Police in East Lothian or Midlothian for the full year, due to Quarter 4 (January to March 2024) not yet being available from the Police.

On 26th March 2024 the Scottish Government published the Official Statistics of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the Police for 2022/23²¹. Some of this data has been included here to provide a more holistic view of this data over the years. We are not yet able to provide data for 2023/24.

Women’s Aid East and Midlothian (WAEML) is the key agency working in East Lothian and Midlothian providing support to survivors of domestic abuse. Located within this service are three Domestic Abuse Advisors who directly support victims referred to Marac and attend Marac as a partner service. Through the Performance and Quality Improvement Sub-group we monitor the number of women supported by WAEML and those awaiting a service.

WAEML operated a waiting list for a one-to-one outreach service throughout the year in each area. Staffing capacity and funding constraints place pressure on the service, but there is a robust weekly waiting list management process in place, with everyone on the waiting list contacted at least every ten days to ensure close tracking of support needs and appropriate escalation into service when risk increases. On average, cases are open for four and a half months within the outreach service. Following outreach, women, children and young people are encouraged to access the responsive and group work programmes for ongoing therapeutic support if required.

²¹ [Supporting documents - Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the police in Scotland, 2022-23 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/supporting-documents-domestic-abuse-statistics-recorded-by-the-police-in-scotland-2022-23)

A Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (Marac) is a local meeting where representatives from statutory and non-statutory agencies meet to discuss individuals at high risk of serious harm or murder as a result of domestic abuse. The meeting provides a safe environment for agencies to share relevant and proportionate information about current risk, after which the Chair will summarise risks and ask agencies to volunteer actions to reduce risk and increase safety. The primary focus is to safeguard the adult victim, however links with other agencies will be made to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator. All local authorities in Scotland hold Maracs.

In East Lothian and Midlothian, we hold Marac meetings every four weeks, with 13 scheduled meetings in the year. We aim to keep the number of cases in any one session to ten maximum, and consequently on occasion we need to hold additional meetings to respond to demand. All Marac referrals with a child associated to the case are referred to Children’s Services to enable an assessment of the need for Child Protection processes to be instigated.

East Lothian

Table 13

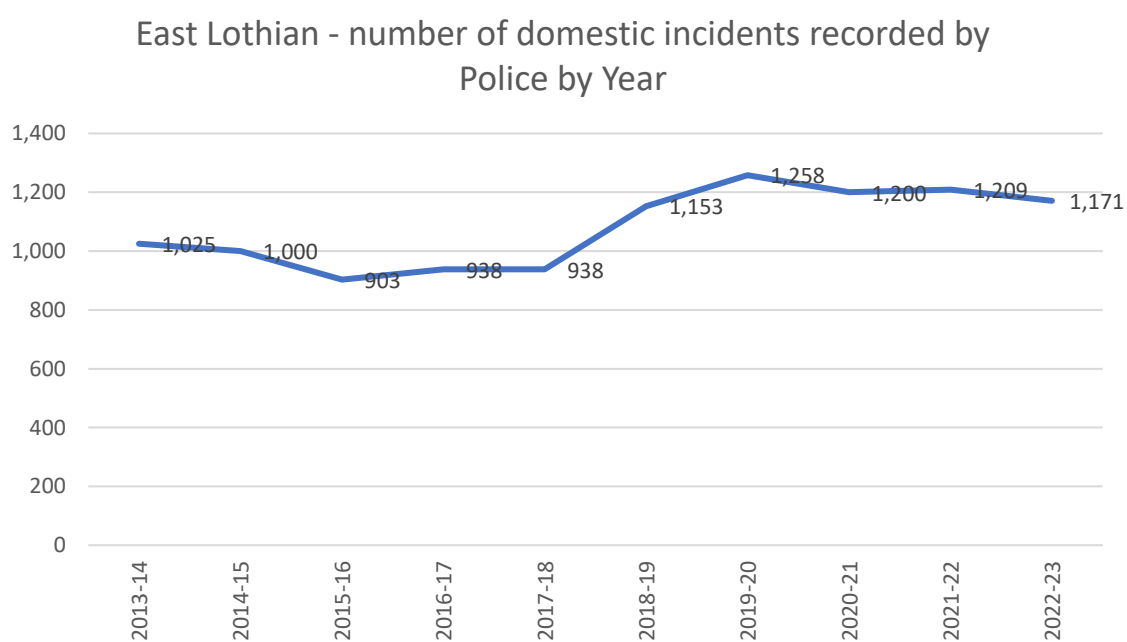
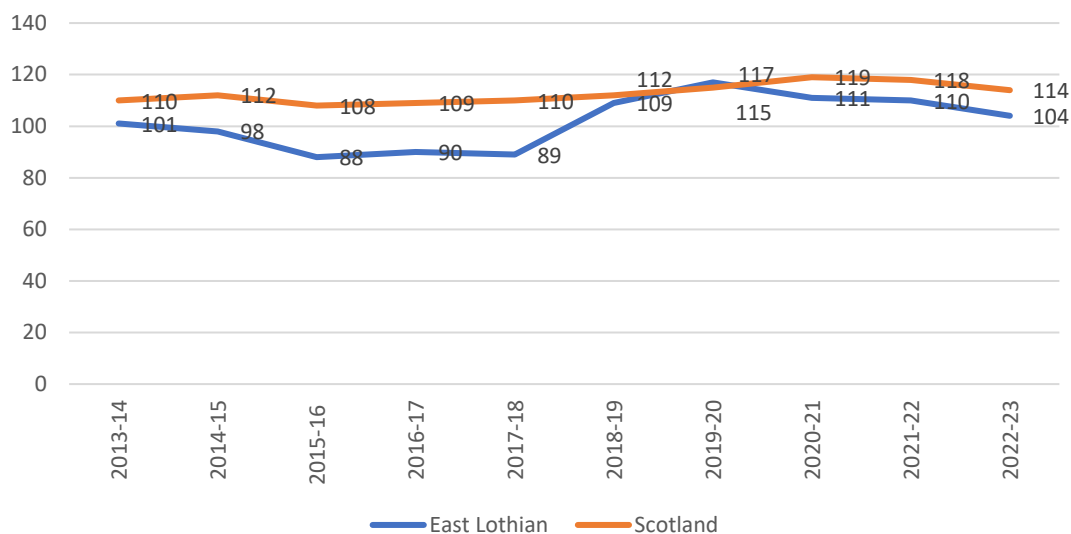


Table 14

East Lothian - rate of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by Police per 10,000 population by Year



From the data available for three quarters, shown in Table 15 below, in East Lothian, there were 54 more incidents of domestic abuse reported to the Police than in the whole of the previous year. Following an incident of domestic abuse reported to the Police, the Police will offer to make a referral to a specialist service for support. In East Lothian 180 victims were offered such a referral in the year, with almost all being referred to Women’s Aid East and Midlothian.

Table 15

East Lothian - number of domestic abuse incidents reported to Police by Quarter

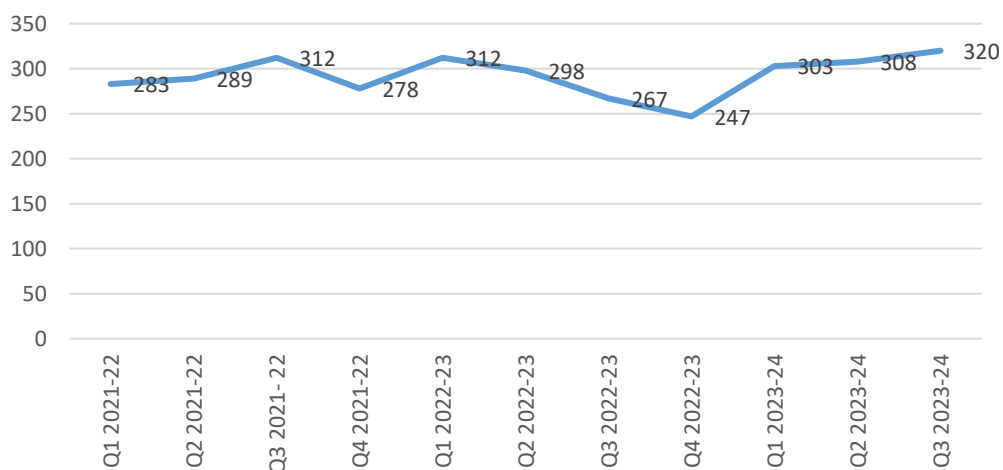
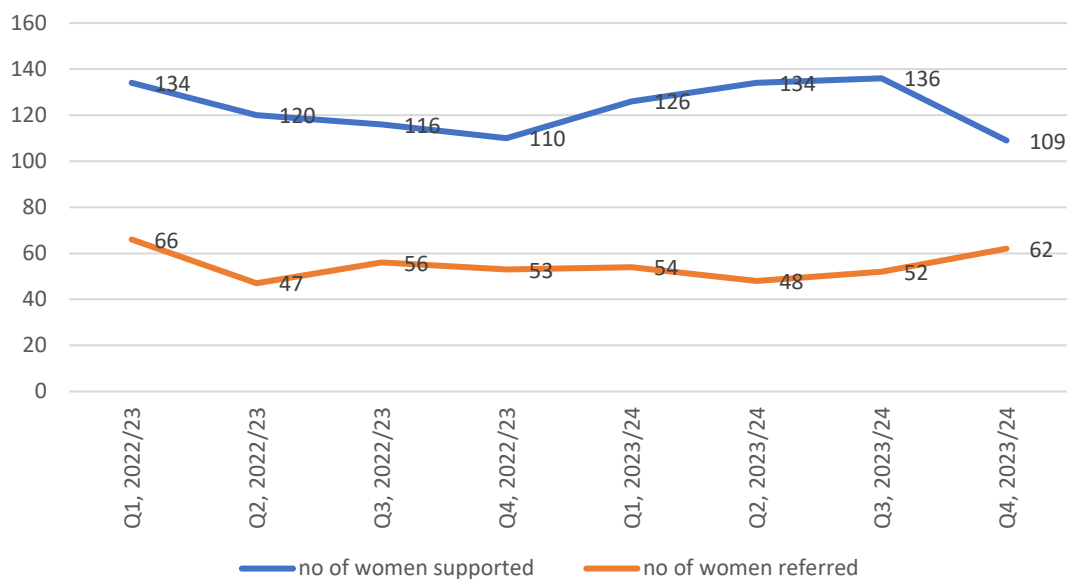


Table 16 shows the number of women supported and number of women referred each quarter in East Lothian. An average of 62 women in East Lothian were awaiting a service for one-to-one outreach support at the end of the year.

Table 16

East Lothian - Women's Aid East and Midlothian by Quarter



There were 152 victims heard at Marac meetings in East Lothian in the year, a significant increase by 46 from the previous year. To meet this demand, there were five additional Marac meetings, bringing the total number of Marac meetings to 18.150 victims were female and two male. In 73.0% (111) of cases there was at least one child associated with the victim or perpetrator. 44 of the 152 cases were repeat cases (where the victim had been referred within the previous 12 months).

Table 17

East Lothian - number of victims at Marac meetings by Year

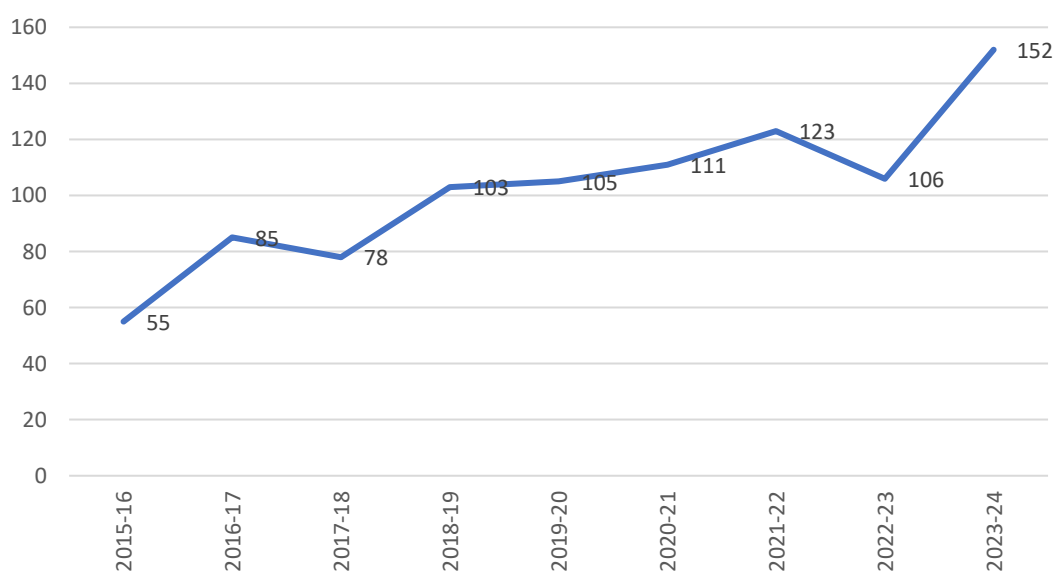
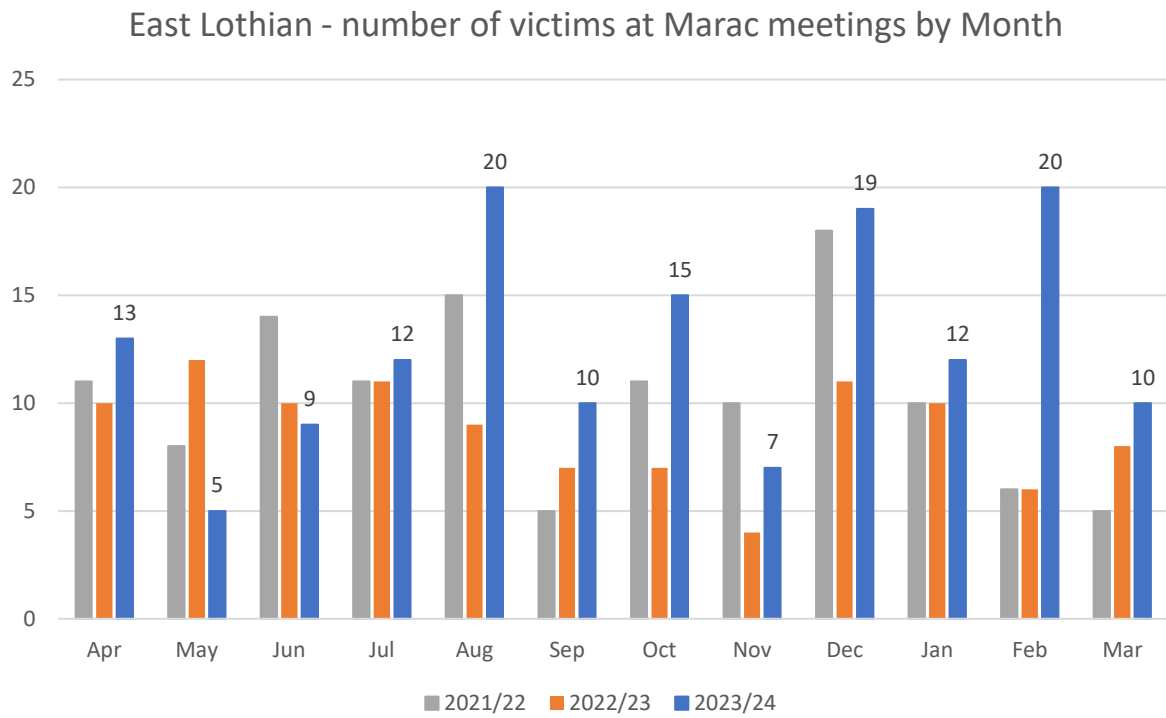


Table 18 below breaks this data down further by month, with comparison to the previous two years.

Table 18



Midlothian

Table 19

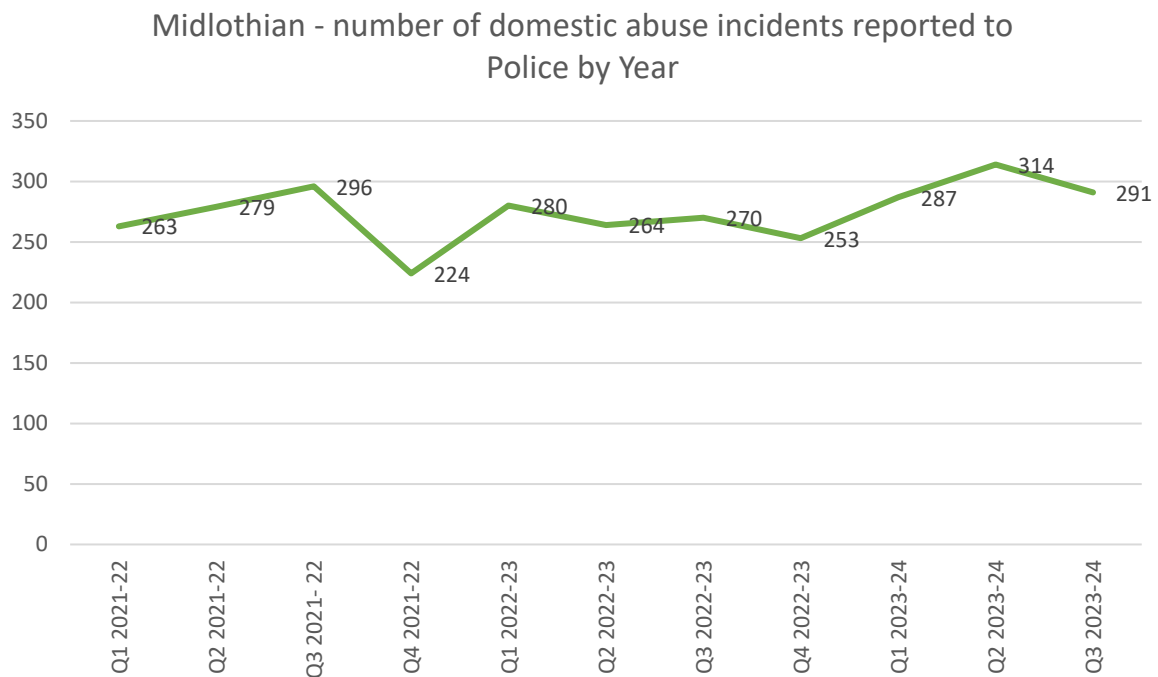
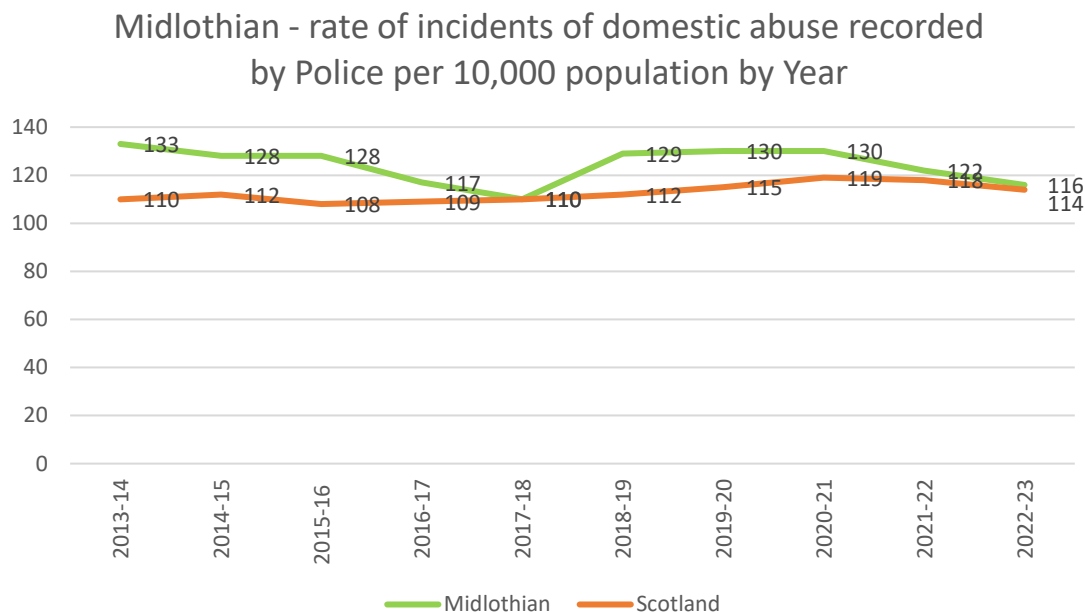


Table 20



From the data available for three quarters, shown in Table 21, there were 78 more incidents of domestic abuse reported to the Police than in the whole of the previous year. There is no identified pattern or trend. In Midlothian, 216 victims were offered a referral to a specialist service for support following an incident of domestic abuse reported to the Police. Almost all were referred to Women’s Aid East and Midlothian.

Table 21

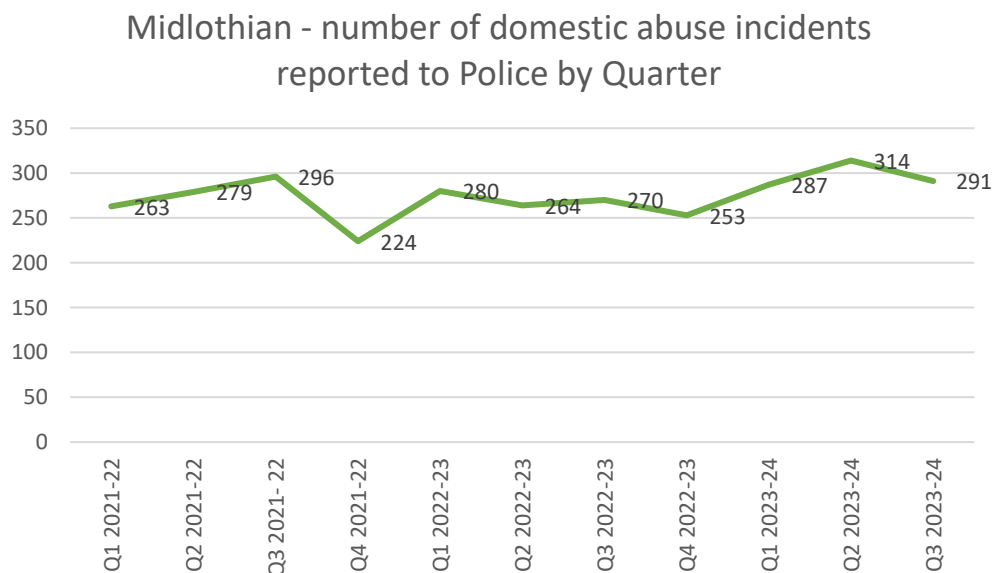
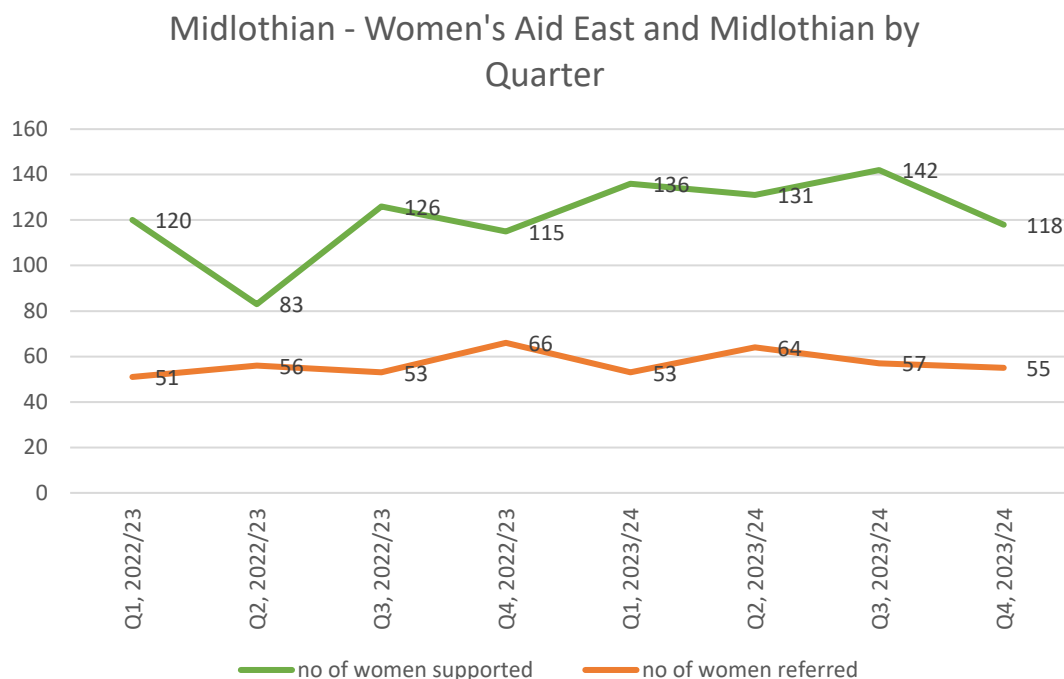


Table 22 shows the number of women supported and number of women referred each Quarter in Midlothian. WAEML operated a waiting list for a one-to-one outreach service throughout the year, with 65 women in Midlothian awaiting a service at year end.

Table 22



There were 125 victims heard at Marac meetings in Midlothian in the year, a reduction of 12 from the previous year. To meet this demand, there were two additional Marac meetings, bringing the total number of Marac meetings to 15. 119 victims were female and six were male. In 71.2% (89) of cases there was at least one child associated with the victim or perpetrator. 30 of the 125 cases were repeat cases (where the victim had been referred within the previous 12 months).

Table 23

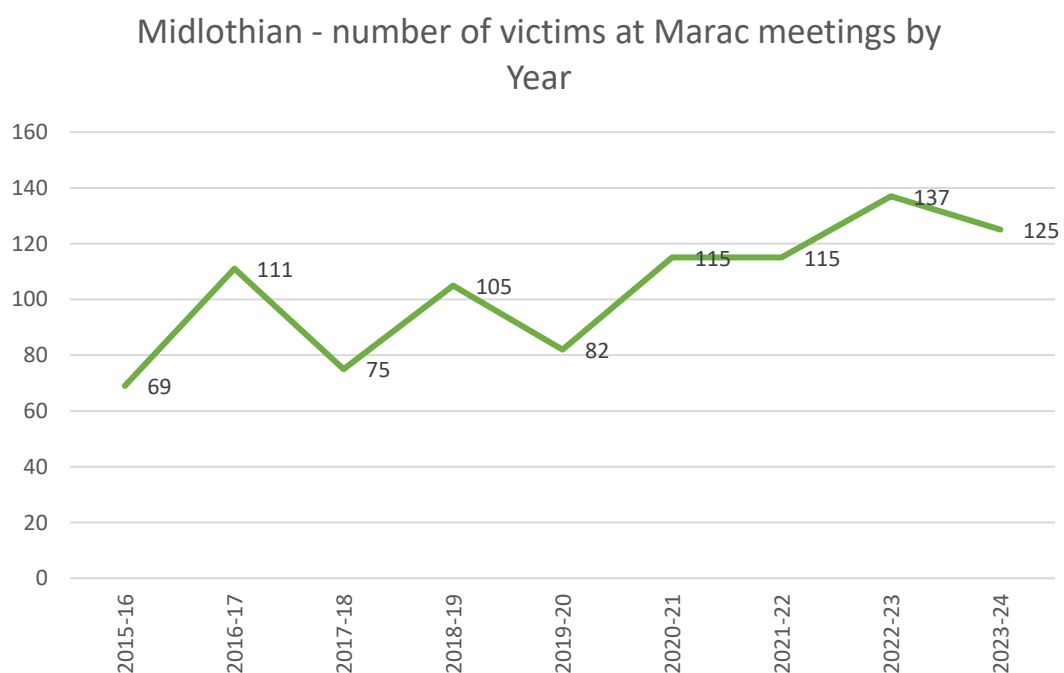
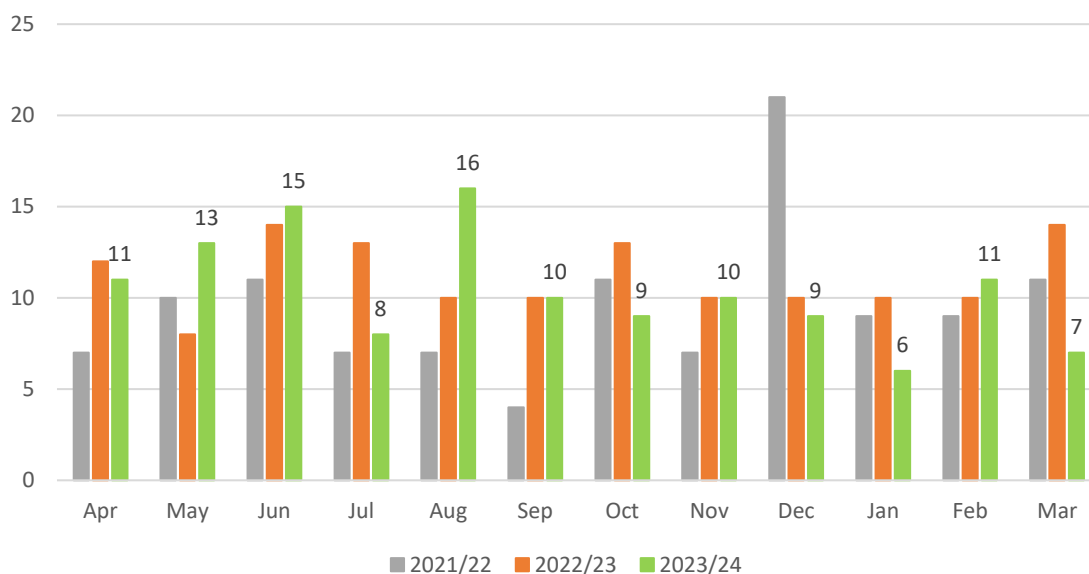


Table 24

Midlothian - number of cases heard at Marac meetings by Month



3.4 MAPPA (Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements)

Quarterly reporting of MAPPA arrangements in East Lothian and Midlothian is made to the EMMG Sub-group of EMPPC.

East Lothian

The number of registered sex offenders being managed in the community on 31st March 2024 was 75. MAPPA is functioning efficiently and effectively, with no registered sex offenders reported for any sexual re-offending, and audits of MAPPA cases identifying strengths in risk management and partnership working.

Midlothian

The number of registered sex offenders being managed in the community on 31st March 2024 was 60. MAPPA is functioning efficiently and effectively, with no registered sex offenders reported for any sexual re-offending, and audits of MAPPA cases identifying strengths in risk management and partnership working.

Section 4 – Looking Forward to 2024/25

In 2024/25 we will continue to build on our strengths as a Public Partnership and progress the areas of work to deliver on our five key priorities.

We will hold a further developmental session for EMPPC in November 2024 which provides an opportunity to take time out of the busy schedules and workplans, to learn together and reflect on how we work together.

We will embed our revised Public Protection arrangements, with the introduction of our two new Sub-groups for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection, and the shift to six monthly meetings for VAWG Delivery Group and EMMG.

We will progress the key areas of improvement identified in the three Joint Inspections that took place in 2023/24 – in particular, we will give priority to:

- Ensuring that we incorporate the voice and lived experience of children and adults who come into contact with Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection processes.
- Continue to embed the national Minimum Datasets for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and seek to improve how we demonstrate the impact of the Committee and the work that services do to improve the outcomes and lives of children and adults who come into contact with Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection processes.
- Strengthening our approach to multi-agency quality assurance of Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection work.

We will continue to deliver our multi-agency Learning and Development Strategy and will develop a new Strategy for 2025-27.

We will support East Lothian to develop a local Equally Safe Strategy, continue to work with Midlothian in the implementation of its Strategy, and will ensure that the work of the VAWG Delivery Group is aligned to, and supports the local Strategies.

We will continue to implement the National Guidance for Learning Reviews for Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection and will seek to progress any Learning Reviews and decisions about the need for a Learning Review in a timely and proportionate manner. We will disseminate learning from local and national Reviews through training, briefings and our Quarterly Newsletter.

A key focus for the 2025 calendar year will be to strengthen our approach to communications, particularly for the communities of East Lothian and Midlothian. The launch of our new website will be a key step towards this. We will bring key partners together to form a Communications Group to support the development of our approach.