

Minister for Childcare and Early Years  
Mark McDonald MSP



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Convener, James Dornan  
Education and Skills Committee

Your ref: **Child Protection Improvement Programme**

14 June 2017

*Dear James*

During my statement to Parliament on 2<sup>nd</sup> March about our Child Protection Improvement Plan, I agreed to update you on progress with the formation of the National Child Protection Leadership Group.

It may be helpful if I start with some background information. The report of the Child Protection Systems Review Group identified leadership as a critical factor in ensuring an effective child protection system and recommended the establishment of a National Child Protection Leadership Group to support the sector by providing national strategic oversight and mechanisms for improvement across Scotland.

I accepted all the recommendations of the Review and I have now written out to individuals who I feel have demonstrated a track record of strong leadership and who I think will bring their professional expertise they have built throughout their career to the Leadership Group. I have attached a draft remit and invited membership for the group in **Annex A**.

As part of my personal commitment to leadership and collaborative working in this area, I have taken the decision to Chair this Leadership Group and to invite the Children and Young People Spokesperson for COSLA to become the Vice Chair of the group. The first meeting of the Leadership Group will be on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update you on our plans for the reform to the child cruelty provision in the 1937 Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act, where we will be updating the current provision to reflect a modern-day understanding of neglect which recognises that emotional and psychological neglect

can be just as profound as physical harm. As I outlined in my statement to Parliament on 2 March, new legislation will be brought forward in the current session of Parliament to introduce this criminal offence of abuse and neglect of children. A consultation on the new provision will be run by the end of this year.

**Mark McDonald**

**National Child Protection Leadership Group****Background**

The report of the Child Protection Systems Review Group identified leadership as a critical factor in ensuring an effective child protection system. The Review Group also noted that Child Protection Committees at a local level are often required to address issues which are common to their counterparts in other locations and that this can cause significant duplication of effort, as well as a lack of consistency. It observed that the introduction of a body with senior leadership representation from the organisations which have responsibilities for scrutiny and delivery of child protection, could assist the whole sector by providing national strategic oversight and mechanisms for improvement across Scotland. Such a body could own a programme of continuous improvement while at the same time ensure that the impact of any proposed policy changes was properly understood and taken into account before changes were pursued.

The Review Group recommended the establishment of a National Child Protection Leadership Group to support the sector by providing national strategic oversight and mechanisms for improvement across Scotland. The Minister for Childcare and Early Years accepted the recommendations of the Review Group and announced to Parliament that he would Chair the National Child Protection Leadership Group.

**Remit**

To support, strengthen and improve, from a national perspective, activity on child protection across Scotland. The Leadership Group will identify where there is potential for collaborative solutions to be developed and promoted nationally in order to deliver more effective, consistent protection and support for children and families and to reduce duplication of effort. The Leadership Group will also provide scrutiny and advice to Scottish Government on proposed policy changes.

In particular, the Group will:

- have oversight of implementation of the recommendations in the Systems Review Report
- make appropriate links to emerging child protection issues and other relevant pieces of work.
- support Chief Officers to strengthen delivery of their responsibilities, as set out in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014), and to identify areas where further work may be required.
- develop a number of regional leadership events for all Chief Officers' Groups and Chairpersons of Child Protection Committees to network, share good practice and collectively horizon scan for new risks facing children and young people.
- Work with Child Protection Committees Scotland to support local areas to deliver robust continuous improvement programmes.

## Membership

The Group is Chaired by Mark McDonald, Minister for Childcare and Early Years along with COSLA's Children and Young People Spokesperson, once appointed, as Vice Chair. Membership is drawn from organisations which advise, deliver or support improvement in child protection practices and services in Scotland.

Children and Young People Spokesperson	COSLA
VICE CHAIR	
Iona Colvin	Chief Social Work Adviser, Scottish Government
Judith Ainsley	Head of Child Protection, Scottish Government
Susan Hannah	Head of Children and Young people Improvement Collaborative, Scottish Government
Claire Burns	Co-Director, CELCIS & Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures
Karen Reid	Chief Executive, Care Inspectorate
Anne Houston	National Chair, Child Protection Committees Scotland
Sally Ann Kelly	Chief Executive, Aberlour, and Chair of Committee on Care & Support for Children and Young People, Coalition of Care and Support Providers Scotland (CCPS)
Wendy Mitchell	Head of Nursing, Performance & Strategic Management for Child Protection, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
DCS Lesley Boal	Head of Public Protection, Police Scotland
Neil Hunter	Principal Reporter/Chief Executive SCRA
Peter Diamond	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
Angela Leitch	Chief Executive, East Lothian Council. Strategic Lead for Children and Education, including Child Protection SOLACE
Alison Gordon	Chief Social Work Officer, North Lanarkshire
Kay Tisdall	Professor of Childhood, Edinburgh University

## Meeting frequency

The Group will meet four times a year.

## Membership responsibilities

All members will have the following responsibilities:

- To demonstrate personal and collaborative leadership for the sector, taking shared responsibility for tackling challenging issues and implementing change
- To bring their knowledge and expertise to inform work on child protection.
- To consult with colleagues in their organisations, and where relevant, other organisations, before and after meetings of the Group.
- To act as advocates for improvements promoted by the Group and influence change in their own organisations and beyond.
- To identify any risks and issues which impact on the delivery of actions and to propose actions for mitigating and resolving these.

- To provide constructive challenge, and advice to the Scottish Government.

Certain individuals will also have specific responsibilities and these are described below.

**Chair and Vice Chair** - will provide leadership to the Group, ensuring full participation during meetings and that all relevant matters are discussed and decisions made.

**Scottish Government members** – will ensure coherence with other relevant Scottish Government policy and legislative developments and ensure the Group is kept up to date with these developments.

**Secretariat** - Secretariat will be provided by the Scottish Government

