

Five Nations – Adult Safeguarding Policy

Joanna Macdonald

Chief Executive, National Social Work Agency, and
National Chief Social Work Adviser

The National Social Work Agency



The **National Social Work Agency** is Scotland's national leader for social work excellence – **it is progressive, collaborative and people-focused.**

By combining expertise and knowledge with practical support, the National Social Work Agency aims to empower social workers and partners to deliver equitable, high-quality care for all.

We are responsible for leading excellence and driving positive change across the social work profession in Scotland, and for providing expert impartial social work advice to Scottish Government policy teams.

National Social Work Agency is:

- an **executive agency** of the Scottish Government
- led by Joanna Macdonald, as **National Chief Social Work Adviser** and **Chief Executive**
- a principal partner in the **Scottish Social Work Partnership**, with COSLA and Social Work Scotland

Leading excellence, driving change

Vision, mission and values



Our vision

The National Social Work Agency will empower Scotland's social work profession to champion social justice, protect rights and keep people safe across Scotland.

Our mission

We will work in partnership with the social work profession, people with lived experience, and partners to strengthen practice, elevate the profession, shape policy, and drive positive change.

Our strategic objectives

- drive national leadership
- provide impartial social work advice across government
- promote continuous improvement in design and delivery of social worker education and learning
- plan for a future workforce
- strengthen improvement and implementation
- foster excellence in our organisation

Our values

- leadership
- collaboration
- excellence
- equity

Leading excellence, driving change

Remit and responsibilities

Provide national leadership, coordination, and support for the social work profession in Scotland, and will:

- advocate for all social workers, including students
- provide professional, impartial social work advice to Scottish Ministers
- contribute to national policy affecting social work
- support the National Chief Social Work Adviser to provide national professional leadership
- hold policy responsibility and oversight of social work education and professional learning
- oversee improvement priorities and promote collaboration with improvement agencies in the sector
- report annually on Scotland's social work services and workforce
- work with partners, through the Scottish Social Work Partnership (SSWP), to have oversight of national workforce planning and workforce numbers
- enable collaboration and delivery of the Scottish Social Work Partnership's Strategic Plan for Social Work in Scotland (2026–29)

Difference we will make ...

- **Statutory authority and impartial expertise:** provide independent evidence-based professional advice to Ministers, ‘on policy in relation to social work and the protection of individuals at particular risk of harm’
- **Championing social work in government:** act as an authoritative voice for social work, advocating its critical role in health and social care, and in improving outcomes for people
- **Consistency in national policy and practice:** develop national frameworks that reduce variability, promote best practice, and enhance public confidence in social work
- **Proactive policy and legislative input:** engage early in policy development to assess proposals for their impact on human rights, equity, and social justice, preventing unintended consequences
- **Driving effective implementation:** monitor and influence the rollout of national strategies so they reflect the realities of social work practice and deliver meaningful improvements for people
- **Future-proofing the profession:** lead on workforce development through a National Training Plan, ensuring consistent standards, continuous professional development, and readiness for emerging challenges
- **Transparency and accountability:** publish an annual report to Scottish Ministers highlighting issues, progress and recommendations for strengthening social work’s contribution to national priorities

Relevance of the National Social Work Agency to Adult Support and Protection



- Over 63,000 ASP referrals across Scotland in 24/25; ASP referrals go to – and responses are progressed through - social work services
 - Professional and workforce implications: Supervision; learning and development; and workforce planning. NSWA has a key role.
 - ASP Council Officers are qualified professionals – predominantly social workers - who have specific statutory responsibilities under the ASP Act; advice to Ministers and policy teams needs to reflect role of social work
- Social workers generally – and ASP Council Officers specifically – are fundamental to safeguarding rights and ensuring lawful practice within Scotland’s ASP processes
- Strengthening the visibility, sustainability, and support of the social work workforce is a priority of the National Social Work Agency. This will have positive impact on those undertaking ASP activities, and subsequently on adults at risk.



Adult Support and Protection Scotland

Vikki Milne,
Adult Support and Protection Team,
Scottish Government

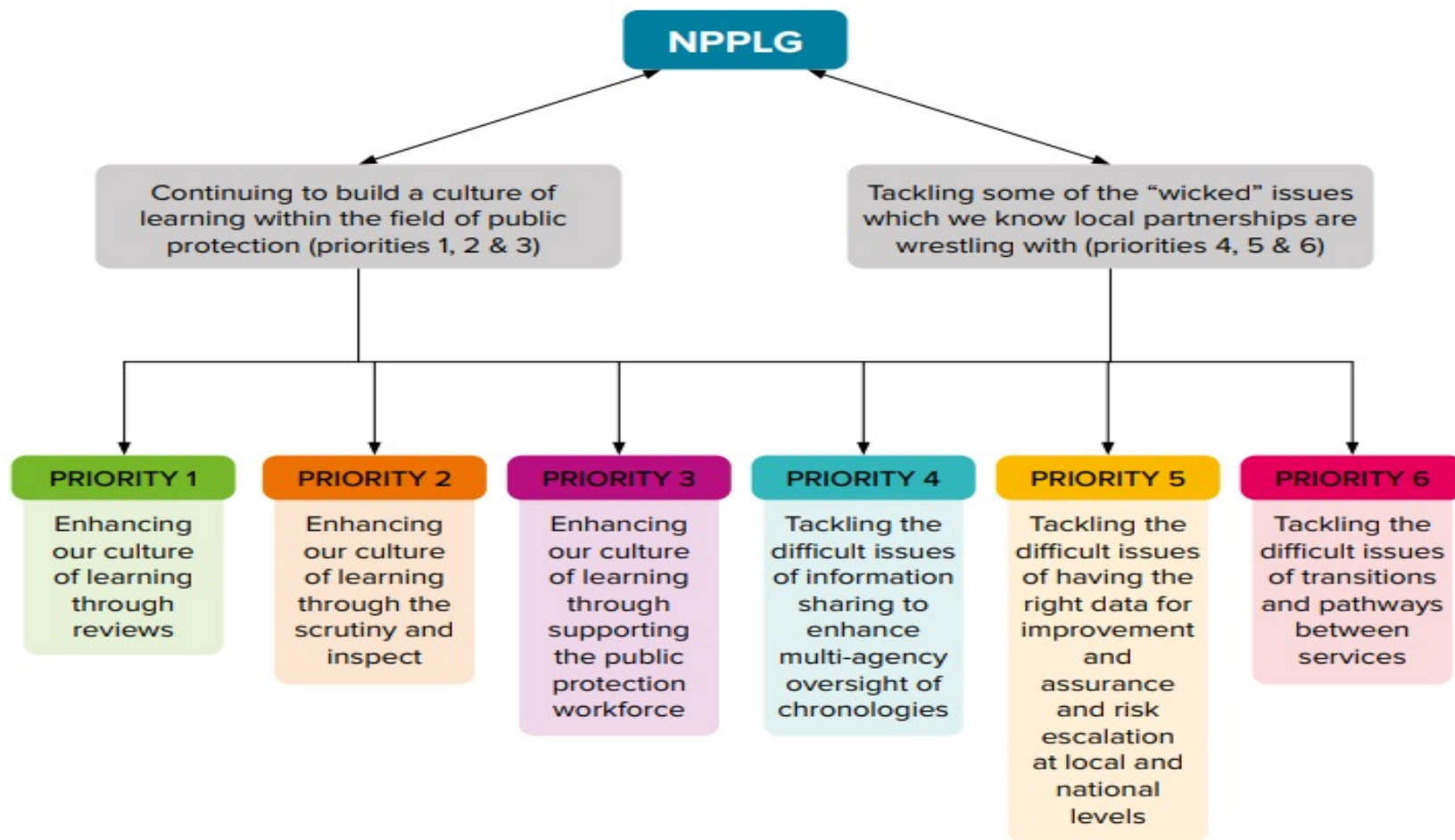
- **2024/25 Adult Support and Protection (ASP) national data report** published in September 2025, providing an overview of ASP activity across Scotland.
- **Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007** amendment via the Care Reform (Scotland) Act to provide clarity on the legal pathway for independent health care services to share information where they are concerned an adult may be at risk.
- **National Large Scale Investigation (LSI) guidance** published in October 2025, which aims to improve the consistency in how LSIs are undertaken across Scotland.
- **ASP Learning and Development Framework** published in February 2026 for use by multi-agencies to ensure that people are suitably trained and skilled in respect of supporting and protecting adults.
- **ASP resources:** [ASPIre Hub | Iriss](#)
- **Contact:** ASP@gov.scot



National Public Protection Leadership Group

Sinéad Power,
Head of ASP and PP Unit,
Scottish Government

- National Public Protection Leadership Group (NPPLG) was established in 2024
 - Aim: to provide **national multi-agency leadership of public protection** across Scotland
 - Purpose: to **drive continuous improvement** and **share best practice** of local initiatives, and **provide national coherence** to public protection policies
 - Approach: to **understand risk and vulnerability as a collective**
 - **Scope:**
 1. child protection
 2. adult support and protection
 3. violence against women and girls
 4. multi-agency public protection arrangements
 5. alcohol and drug related harms/deaths
 6. suicide prevention
- Also, where relevant: homelessness, refugees, asylum seekers, human trafficking, missing people
- Membership: COSLA, Police Scotland, NHS, local authorities, Scottish Fire and Rescue, Scottish Government, Public Protection areas, Care Inspectorate on behalf of scrutiny bodies.
 - Meetings: Quarterly meetings, and developing engagement with Chief Officer Groups (COGs)

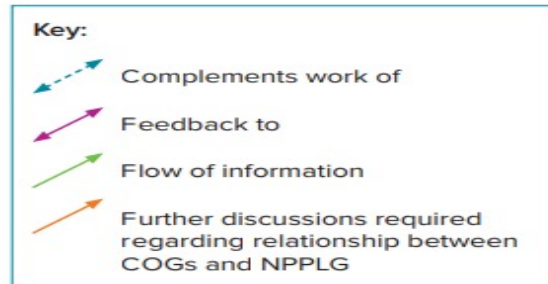


NPPLG Workplan Priorities

PUBLIC PROTECTION – NATIONAL ‘MAP’

Awareness/Wider Network:

- Children & Families National Leadership Group
- The Promise Implementation Board
- National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group
- Community Justice Programme Board
- The Working Group on Missing People
- Human Trafficking Strategic Oversight Group
- Ukraine Safeguarding Group
- COSLA/SWS Group – UASC⁽²⁾
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Strategic Implementation Board
- Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group
- Community Planning Partnerships



⁽¹⁾Understood that this is paused
⁽²⁾Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

National Context in Which NPPLG Operates