



North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

Communications Strategy

2020 – 2023

Review due: July 2023

1. Background

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee has a lead responsibility for multi-agency child protection policy and practice in North Ayrshire and promotes co-operation and joint working across organisations and with the public for the protection of children and young people (those aged between 13 and 18).

The Committee believe that all children and young people in North Ayrshire have the right to be cared for and protected from abuse and harm in a safe environment in which their rights are respected.

It is important to The Committee that:

- Children and young people at risk of or affected by abuse, neglect or exploitation are safer as a result of the action of services and their wellbeing is improved
- Children's rights, including the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated and to have views taken into account, are respected and promoted
- Agencies and Services work effectively together to protect children and young people and promote their rights

The Committee's high level objectives and activities are outlined in the Annual Business Plan covering April 2020 – March 2023.

<http://childprotectionnorthayrshire.info/cpc/download?file=8718>

Public awareness and communications is a core function of the Committee and this communications strategy has been developed to support this function.

2. Underlying principles

Communications will be used to assist in delivering the objectives of the Committee by raising awareness of issues, influencing attitudes and promoting behavioural change both within the multiagency child protection workforce, wider professional stakeholders and with the general public. This will be taken forward by the Public Information and Engagement sub-group.

Our public awareness, stakeholder and staff communication activity will:

- Reflect the vision and values of the Committee as outlined
- Promote key messages, advice and guidance on child protection issues using plain, easy-to-understand language, avoiding jargon and acronyms
- Promote the Committee as the authority on child protection within the local area

- Be consistent with the Child Protection Committees' Scotland Communication Strategy (<http://childprotectionnorthayrshire.info/cpc/download?file=8724>) and link to national communications activity and priorities
- Be proactive with a reactive capability when appropriate
- Be delivered through a range of channels and formats including digital channels

3. Approach

- The subject matter for much of The Committee's work can be sensitive, personal and difficult and care must be taken when communicating on topics. All communications, particularly in relation to individual cases, must adhere to Data Protection legislation, the Lord Advocate's Guidelines and any other relevant legislation. It is important to protect the identity of children and families.
- Tackling tough subjects can be hard. The Public Information and Engagement sub-group will be mindful about how different audiences will perceive the subject when responding to media enquiries, interviews or posting on social media channels. Messages should reinforce advice and guidance and signpost people to appropriate support resources.
- The collaborative nature of the Committee underlines the range of expertise on issues around child protection. Harnessing this knowledge and insight to provide powerful and considerate comment to the public, practitioners and the media will help to inform discussion and debate within a local context.

3.1. Branding

- Branding should be consistent and audience-appropriate bringing a sense of trust, authority and reliability. The brand identity (including the logo) should visually demonstrate the Committee's identity as well as representing The Committee's values and meaning. The Committee's brand identity must be included in all correspondence, information, policy and marketing materials, to build its reputation and help influence people's perceptions.

3.2. Activities

- **Marketing materials & information resources:** Should be up to date and branded appropriately. Regular audits will identify existing materials and gaps for future resources
- **Campaigns:** Should be informed by research/evidence and be integrated, targeted and measurable and aligned to the business objectives of the Committee and CPC Scotland, with appropriate calls to action. Where possible, national campaigns should be supported by local activity

- **Professional communications:** Channels such as the Child Protection Committee e-newsletter should be used to engage with staff to promote good news stories, campaigns, policies and procedures
- **Digital and Social Media:** Digital and social media offer significant opportunities to communicate and engage directly with our target audiences through relevant online channels (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Google) with posts, polls, infographics, videos and other shareable content. The Child Protection Committee Twitter channel will be used to share child protection related information, and a Public Engagement calendar will be utilised to ensure that key themes with child protection messages are promoted at the appropriate points throughout the year. The Committee will liaise closely with North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership and the North Ayrshire Council Communications teams to ensure messages are as wide-reaching as possible.
- **The website:** This should be kept up to date and aimed at both educating (parents/young people) and informing professionals. It should be a repository for policy and guidance materials, as well as providing links to other national and partner resources/websites. There should be a clear explanation of who comprises The Committee and its aims, as well as outlining the current business plan. Opportunities to develop engaging content on the website will be regularly reviewed.
- **Events:** Should be used as opportunities to promote child protection messaging and branding. Where possible, marketing material should be displayed to promote The Committee and used to support media interviews. Local community events will be outlined in the public engagement calendar and members of the Public Information and Engagement sub-group will support with the facilitation of these events.

3.3. Measuring success

- Consideration should be given to how success is measured for each campaign or other communication activity in terms of engagement, outputs and outcomes.

3.4. Partnership working

- **Co-production:** Where possible local campaigns and new materials will be developed jointly with representatives of the target audience, including children and young people.
- **Partner engagement:** Information should be developed in partnership and messages shared to ensure communications are consistent. All partner agencies represented on The Committee and the Public Information and Engagement sub-group should share content on social media channels to

maximise the reach of the messages. Partnership working opportunities with East and South Ayrshire Child Protection Committees and North Ayrshire Adult Support and Protection should be adopted when possible.

- **Fostering external partnerships** with commercial and charitable organisations can provide additional support to media campaigns and provide additional platforms to extend messaging.

3.5. Audience

There are two distinct audiences: consumer and professional. Information will be adapted to cater for those audiences, using user-friendly terminology and appropriate tone and content.

The consumer audience can be further segmented into:

- Adults living in North Ayrshire
- Children living in North Ayrshire
- Young people living in North Ayrshire
- Parents and carers involved in the child protection system
- Children and young people involved in the child protection system

The professional audience can be further segmented into:

- Workers within the public sector (including but not limited to social care, health, education, police and youth services)
- Workers within the private sector (including but not limited to retail, hospitality and public transport)
- Workers within the 3rd Sector
- Volunteers working in any of the above sectors

3.6. Messages

Key public awareness messages for The Committee are focussed on recognising and responding to child protection concerns and include:

- The Child Protection Committee and partner agencies want to make things better for vulnerable children and young people in North Ayrshire
- Children and young people should be encouraged to speak out if they are worried about something that is happening to them or another child or young person
- It is still everyone's responsibility to protect children. Everyone, including professionals, individuals and communities, must listen carefully, take concerns seriously and take action if it is required

- Sharing concerns with a professional such as a teacher, health visitor, G.P., social worker or with the police can help services protect a child from harm
- There are a range of services working with families in North Ayrshire to ensure that our children are safe
- Individuals and communities can play an active and proactive role to keep children safe offering support to families who might need a bit of help

Specific messages will be developed for campaigns or communications on particular topics where these are the subject of a campaign or other communication. The priority areas for public awareness and workforce communication are regularly reviewed and updated and reflected in the public engagement calendar.

4 Support and governance

Communications activity will be led by the Public Information and Engagement sub-group on behalf of the Committee. This sub-group will have membership drawn from the partner agencies represented on the Committee and will include those with professional knowledge and expertise in child protection alongside those with communications expertise.

The sub-group will report to the Committee to whom it will submit proposals for approval and provide regular updates and evaluation reports.

Communications support, advice and expertise in relation to marketing, digital communications, events, graphic design and media relations will be provided by the North Ayrshire Council Communications Team with additional support from communications teams in other partner agencies if appropriate/as required.

5. Media Protocol

The purpose of this Media Protocol is to clarify the process to be undertaken in the event of engagement between North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (NACPC) and the media.

The protocol defines the responsibilities of individual member organisations and the timescales to be adopted in media matters, particularly in relation to reactive media inquiries.

NACPC will not engage with the media on matters relating to an individual case except where a Significant Case Review has been undertaken by the Committee, in

which case the Chief Officers will be involved in discussions on how approaches to and from the media will be handled (see Significant Case Review section below)

5.1. Proactive approach to the media

The following process should be followed where the Committee or one of its sub groups wishes to seek media coverage of activities or issues related to Child Protection:

- 1 A decision to seek media coverage for an activity or issue is taken by Chief Officers' Group, the Committee or one of the sub groups in line with the principles included in this Communications Strategy.
- 2 A lead contact is nominated by those wishing media coverage. This person will liaise with the Child Protection Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team.
- 3 The contact will ensure that all parties have a clear idea of the purpose of the media engagement and the information to be provided.
- 4 The contact, along with the Child Protection Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team will then discuss and agree a media plan.
- 5 The media plan will then be distributed to the Chairperson of the Committee for approval, then to members of the Public Information and Engagement Sub Group and Committee for information, ideally at least two working days prior to implementation.
- 6 The media plan will be implemented.
- 7 Media coverage will be monitored and evaluated by the Public Information and Engagement Sub Group and feedback will be provided to the Committee within the routine sub group reports.

5.2. Response to 'routine' media inquiry

The media may approach the Committee - or any individual member organisation - for information or comment for the following reasons

- To seek a local angle on a national issue
- To follow up on a local contentious issue

These may be issues the Committee is already aware of – for example, a national funding announcement, some problem arising from local services, or criticism of aspects of the strategic approach.

In such cases discussion may already have taken place on how these should be handled in line with the above protocol and ‘press lines’ may have been agreed.

If no prior discussion has taken place within the Committee, the Communications/Press Officer of the organisation approached by the media should follow the procedure below:

1. Contact the Chair of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council’s Communications Team immediately to discuss if the media request would be best managed by that agency or by the Child Protection Committee
2. If the decision is taken that the organisation approached will respond directly, a copy of the response will be sent to the Child Protection Lead Officer for media monitoring purposes and the Child Protection Lead Officer will then circulate that response to each member organisation for information
3. If the decision is taken that a Committee response is more appropriate, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council’s Communications Team will collate the necessary information, seeking information from partners if required, and prepare a draft response.
4. The draft response will then be discussed with the Chairperson of Committee and amended as required until it is approved by the Chairperson.
5. The response will then be issued to the media by North Ayrshire Council’s Communications Team on behalf of the Committee and circulated by the Child Protection Lead Officer to all member organisations for information.

5.3 Response to ‘exceptional’ media inquiry

If any unexpected or ‘exceptional’ media requests are received the following procedure should be followed:

1. If a media enquiry regarding a child protection issue related to North Ayrshire is made to a member organisation, the organisation should contact the Chair of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council’s Communications Team immediately to discuss if

the media request would be best managed by that organisation or by the Committee itself.

2. If the decision is taken that it is more appropriate for the member organisation to respond directly, a copy of the draft response will be sent to the Child Protection Lead Officer for media monitoring purposes and the Child Protection Lead Officer will then circulate that response to each member organisation for information or input if required.
3. Where it is considered that a Committee response is more appropriate, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team will establish the nature of the enquiry and the information sought and will collate the necessary information, seeking information from partners if required, and prepare a draft response.
4. The draft response will then be discussed with the Chairperson of the Committee and amended as required until it is approved by the Chairperson.
5. The response will then be issued to the media by North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team on behalf of the Committee and circulated to all member organisations for information.
6. Where a response is requested directly from the Committee, the Chair of North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee, the Child Protection Lead Officer and North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team will discuss the request and determine if it is appropriate for the Committee to respond or if the enquiry should be directed elsewhere.
7. If it is agreed that the Committee should respond directly, the procedures from 3 to 6 above will be followed
8. If it is agreed to direct the inquiry to an individual member organisation, the Child Protection Lead Officer and/or North Ayrshire Council's Communications Team will contact the appropriate Committee member for that organisation – or a senior manager from that organisation - and pass on the details of the enquiry.
9. The member organisation will then prepare a draft response and (as at 2. Above) will send a copy of the draft response to the Child Protection Lead Officer for media monitoring purposes. The Child Protection Lead Officer will then circulate that response to each member organisation for information or input if required.