



SHETLAND CHIEF OFFICER GROUP

"Working together to keep everyone safe in Shetland"

Minutes of the Meeting of Chief Officers Group held on

23 March 2026 at County Building

PRESENT -

Maggie Sandison, Chief Executive, Shetland Islands Council (Chair COG) (MS)

Sandra Summers, Lead Officer Shetland Public Protection Committee (SS) - on Teams

Lindsay Tulloch, Independent Convener, Shetland Public Protection Committee (LT)

Debbie Sangster, Service Manager, Compass Centre (DS)

James Maybee, MAPPA Independent Chair, Highland & Islands Strategic Oversight Group (JM)

Chris Sewell, Shetland Area Commander, Police Scotland (CS)

Ruth MacMillan, Executive Manager, Adult Social Work, Acting Chief Social Work Officer (RM)

Jordan Sutherland, Executive Manager, Children Social Work, Acting Chief Social Work Officer (JS)

Brian Chittick, Chief Executive, NHS Shetland (BC)

Dave Ross, Acting Division Commander, Highland and Islands, Police Scotland

Reka Szucs, Admin Assistant, SPPC (minutes) (RSz)

APOLOGIES -

Jo Robinson, Director of Community Health and Social Care and Chief Officer of IJB (JR)

Steven Rankin, Link Inspector, Care Inspectorate, (SR)

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| Welcome and Apologies | 1 | MS welcomed members, apologies were noted, and introductions were made. |
| Min. and matters arising of the meeting of 16/12/2025 | 2 | Minutes were agreed to be accurate, members noted that there were not any matters arising at this point of the meeting. |
| SPPC Lead Officer Report | 3 | SS provided a summary of her attached report.
SPPC has been focusing on Quality Assurance groups. While IRDs initially presented some issues, these have now been resolved. DI Anna Johnston is overseeing the PPU Unit and is keen to be involved in discussions going forward. CS noted that Adult IRDs follow a national process. CS, AJ, RM and JS met to discuss how this process operates locally and to consider what local guidance could look like.
SS added that an adult file-reading exercise is planned. |

Quality Assurance Child Protection - A summary of the child protection file-reading exercise was included in the papers for this meeting.

PLACE is currently on hold locally while SIC Legal explores data-sharing agreements.

National Review of CSE - This item is on the agenda, and the first draft has been shared.

PCOM - Matt Mason is progressing the *TINA campaign*, focusing on support for potential suicide intentions and reviewing available training. BC commented that NHS has been leading ASIST training, including some Adult Protection aspects, with courses available on Safer Shetland. Work is ongoing to reconnect with some affected families to ensure it remains appropriate to continue the activities.

SS noted that there remains some confusion around **PVG's**. A local group led by Martin Summers (Youth Services) is providing support and clarity on the new guidance.

Digital Safety and Child Sexual Exploitation - A new mobile phone policy has been introduced across all schools. James Johnston (QIO) is leading this work, with a monitoring phase planned from Term 4 to assess how the consequences outlined in the policy are being applied in practice.

CSE training is being explored. Craig Thompson (Police Scotland) is in discussion with Workforce Development regarding next steps.

SPPC is continuously working to engage parents and is supporting the Family Centre to develop a two-hour course for parents on **online safety**.

The Inter Partnership Training Group has reduced its meetings to twice a year, as training provision is running smoothly. GBV Level 2 trainers are planning to add new dates to the training calendar for 2026.

SPPC continues to work on the **Learning Review**. A draft report was shared at the SOCRG meeting, and SS is incorporating feedback to develop the final report. Learning has been identified both from the findings and from the review process itself.

BC raised a question regarding **mandatory training**, noting low participation from NHS staff. SS advised that Child Protection and Adult Support and Protection Level 2 training has had low NHS uptake for the second year. SS is exploring the possibility to develop a combined four-hour CP and ASP training model. Information has been shared with Kerri Ratter at NHS. SS also noted that following recent discussions with Orkney, NHS Orkney delivers only NHS-designed CP and ASP training.

SS provided further detail on the **file-reading exercise**. SPPC worked in partnership with the Care Inspectorate to pilot their new approach. During the agreed timeframe, Shetland had only a small number of looked after at home (LAC) children, so additional files linked to compulsory supervision orders were included. There were marked improvements in evidencing the voice of the child and parents within the files, particularly in how their views were captured and reflected in meetings. Communication between services was strong, timeframes were generally met, and there was clear alignment with expectations of how the framework should operate in practice.

Challenges identified included the development of multi-agency chronologies and the creation of SMART action plans. Capturing lived experience, both during and

following intervention, was also noted as an area for improvement. Work is ongoing with Adult Social Work to strengthen approaches to recording lived experience. Health assessments and clarity around which health assessment is required have been identified and picked up by NHS Shetland.

Action Plan Updates:

- Further clarity is required regarding education files and school-based processes to ensure consistent recording. Helen Cooper (Children's Services) is supporting this work and is keen to gain a clearer understanding of local expectations in relation to home-educated families.
- A resource has been secured from Highland Council to support local recording of the voice of the child.
- The National Risk Framework is being updated, with work underway to establish a consistent local process and baseline expectations for its use.
- focus on highlighting good practice and maintaining monitoring of participation rates. David McQueen (Independent Reviewing Officer) will progress this through the QACP Group to monitor uptake and capture learning. This review will consider not only family attendance but also professional participation in child protection processes. The group will explore whether professionals feel confident to attend Child Protection Conferences and contribute differing professional opinions.

RM commented that it is unusual for professionals to voice a view that differs from Social Work during case conferences, raising the question of whether professionals feel able to challenge or disagree within that forum.

**Shetland
Violence
Against
Women
Partnership
Update**

- 4 SS gave a summary of the report attached with papers.
SS reported that coordinated **ABC campaign** prevention activity around Up Helly Aa had a positive impact, with no police incidents recorded, and that work is underway to explore extending the campaign into schools to strengthen early prevention. There is however a freedom of information request asking what has been done in relation to GBV at events, specifically Up Helly Aa. Minutes of meetings and correspondence were requested. Jacquie Whitaker (NHS Shetland) is leading the information gathering around this.
SS reported that UHI is developing **trauma-informed training** for staff to strengthen awareness and responses to violence, with a particular focus on male-dominated work environments.
The **DES funding and the VAWG coordinator** post has been extended for another 2 years, plans are in motion to recruit for a part time position.
A local **Marac review** has been done with an action plan circulated, and follow-up will be scheduled as required.
SS noted that the **Shetland Women's Survey** showed that participation in the 2025 survey doubled to 116 respondents. Over half reported experiences of discrimination and gender-based violence, most of whom did not receive support or report to Police. Key themes included normalised misogyny, low confidence in reporting outcomes, and inconsistent service experiences. The findings highlight the need for continued work on public attitudes, reporting confidence and

communication around justice processes, with the final report due for publication on 8 March, International Women's Day.

Key priorities for the next period focus on continued work on progressing accreditation, refreshing membership, and enhancing communications and digital visibility as part of rebranding.

MS commented that the visibility feels empowering and brought some positive change. RM commented that the Women's Survey showed over 75% of respondents had not reported to the police, highlighting the need for further examination of court processes. RM added that Women's Aid is exploring the establishment of a **Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy Service**, which could help address this issue.

JM commented that the Marac referral numbers are quite outstanding. He wondered what the obvious explanation for the 100% increase in numbers. RM noted that there has been work going into support services understanding and some training opportunities has been explored.

SPPC Chairs report

- 5 LT gave summary of his attached report. LT reported that an announcement has been made regarding a **public inquiry into child sexual abuse**. The detail of how this will progress and what will be required will become clearer as the project plan develops. LT noted that a significant amount of work has already been undertaken through the National Review, which should place the service in a strong position to support the inquiry going forward.

LT provided a brief update on **mandatory reporting** following the last SPPC meeting. It was noted that the Government is establishing an independent advisory group to examine the most appropriate approach. Further detail is awaited, and updates will be provided once the group's work and timescales are confirmed.

LT noted that the Scottish Government **misogyny public awareness campaign** is currently ongoing during February and March and highlighted this to ensure the SPPC is aware.

LT provided an update on **home education**, noting that concerns are being discussed locally in Shetland, in line with national issues. It was highlighted that the Scottish Government has announced an independent review of home education, from which recommendations are expected. These will be considered locally once available.

LT noted that the **National Adult Support and Protection – Learning and Development Framework** is now live and available online for practitioners to access and use.

LT highlighted the launch of the **What Remains** online resource. This resource relates to men who abuse their partners, where abuse has led to suicide, and provides guidance and support for survivors affected by this form of abuse. The update highlighted that awareness is being raised across Shetland to enable partner agencies to effectively signpost survivors to this support.

LT reported on **Children's First financial support and debt advice**, noting that information has been shared to ensure practitioners are aware of the support available. It was highlighted that this enables services to support families through access to independent funding streams.

LT noted the availability of **online learning and a toolkit** to support families, including children, with parents in prison.

LT concluded by noting a new free eLearning module on **Digital Safeguarding in Practice** has been developed by CYCJ in collaboration with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. The course aims to raise awareness of online risks for children and supports practitioners to promote safe digital use, recognise signs of online sexual abuse and grooming, and respond effectively to harmful online behaviour.

MS noted that the Shetland Partnership had recently discussed the need to remain alert to the impact of **rising living costs** and increasing financial pressures on families, particularly those who are already struggling, and the importance of identifying early signs and appropriate interventions. LT agreed, noting that rising costs, including food, may further push households who are already struggling into greater difficulty. RM added that the cost of home heating oil has increased significantly, with delays of up to two weeks for deliveries, which was highlighted as a serious and worrying concern for affected families.

BC reflected on the importance of shaping current workstreams with compassion, particularly in relation to **respect, misogyny**, and emerging influences such as the "manosphere." Drawing on lived experience as a parent and youth sports coach, BC highlighted concerns about how misogynistic terminology and messaging may be impacting young people and questioned whether national and international narratives risk inadvertently driving further interest rather than supporting prevention. BC emphasised the need for compassionate, preventative conversations that promote respect and understanding without stigmatising, and noted the importance of developing the softer skills needed by adults to facilitate and challenge behaviour effectively. RM emphasised the importance of avoiding unintended consequences, such as making boys and men feel excluded or "othered," and highlighted the need to create inclusive spaces that allow for constructive, preventative conversations. SS noted that it would be helpful to explore how issues such as the manosphere and online misogyny are currently addressed within education, including internet safety inputs, and whether coverage is sufficient and consistent. SS highlighted the importance of wider messaging to young people, parents, and communities, drawing attention to positive bystander approaches and the need to support individuals to challenge behaviour safely and compassionately, without targeting or stigmatising boys or young men. MS emphasised the importance of focusing on challenging the action or behaviour rather than the individual, noting that this is the core principle they are aiming to teach and embed in practice.

JM wanted to note that **Families Outside** is currently at risk of losing its Highland and Islands Regional Family Coordinator post due to a funding shortfall of around £25,000, which is the only such post in the north. JM highlighted that losing the role would be a significant setback given the support it provides to families affected by imprisonment and advised that discussions are underway with Families Outside leadership to explore short-term funding options to sustain the post while longer-term solutions are considered. RM responded that locally only one person has accessed the *Families Outside* service over an extended period. RM noted that a previous £1,000 contribution to the Justice Partnership was discontinued, as current funding priorities are focused on the right project and Space to face as we use that regularly.

- 6 JM reported that **Quarter 3 data** continue to show a steady upward trend in numbers, which is expected to continue, and that work is ongoing to manage demand through improved efficiencies. For Shetland, all performance indicators continue to be met at 100%, and an updated performance report will be circulated for feedback as part of ongoing development to better evidence the effectiveness of MAPPA.

JM further reported that the **Level 1 risk management process** has been reviewed locally and nationally, with Police Scotland bringing proposals to the national strategic group in February, driven largely by increasing case numbers. While there was some local disappointment that a full multi-agency review was not possible, there is recognition of the need for Police Scotland to take action, and a commitment locally to align any national changes with existing practice to ensure effective and seamless risk management continues.

JM noted that the **risk register** remains unchanged, and there are no known divergences between Shetland's risk position and the overall risk register.

JM added that the **Annual Report 2024/25** received positive publicity, marking the first time there has been good, balanced coverage in the press, which was welcomed and seen as helpful.

JM reported on **Initial Notification Reports (INRs)**, noting that one case has progressed to an Initial Case Review, which is due to conclude by the end of the month. A second case (from Highland) did not progress beyond the INR stage, as it did not meet the threshold for a Significant Case Review and there was clear evidence of effective multi-agency working, particularly involving adult social work, with no significant concerns identified.

JM gave an update on forensic psychology service which now has a six-month pilot consultation service delivered through NHS Highland, currently restricted to the mainland. JM advised that assurances have been given that forensic psychology input will be available for island authorities in high-risk cases where required, and noted that Highland Justice Social Work has also secured funding to commission its own forensic psychology service, with making sure the island authorities have fair access to this support.

JM noted that the **SLWG** is currently considering funding arrangements, led by Phil Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer (Highland). It was reported that he was unable to attend the strategic group meeting last week but is planning to set up a further meeting within the next one to two weeks to progress this work.

JM concluded that there were no further updates regarding **MAPPS**. It was noted that all four authorities have signed up to the charter, with the caveat that some outstanding issues, including vetting matters, still need to be worked through.

RM queried whether there had been any update from the Home Office on how the caveats raised by multiple authorities would be addressed. JM responded that there is currently no further clarity, but MAPPS is due to be discussed at the forthcoming National Strategic Group meeting, after which any relevant updates will be shared.

BC commented positively on the developments around forensic psychology provision, noting potential benefits for Shetland, including access to training for custody on-call staff. BC also highlighted ongoing strategic discussions across health partners to address gaps and challenges in accessing specialist forensic mental health support, particularly in more rural and remote areas.

7 SS provided an update on the National CSE Review, outlining the following key points:

- **Data return stage:**
 - A data return is due by 17 April and has been largely completed.
 - Outstanding information is awaited from Education and Police Scotland.
 - Thanks were given to Morag Williamson (Children's Social Work) for capturing and populating much of the information, with Anna Johnston from Police Scotland coordinating returns across all four authorities.
- **Case data:**
 - Over the two-year period, 42 cases of child sexual abuse/sexual exploitation were investigated.
 - Of these, a small number involved online exploitation, with the remaining cases involving in-person incidents in Shetland.
 - Additional consent-related cases were identified and will be added to the total.
- **Group-based exploitation:**
 - There is no evidence of group-based CSE activity locally during this period.
 - This presents a challenge for self-evaluation and prevention planning, as it is not currently prominent on the local radar compared to mainland.

Information gathered will feed into the **national inquiry**, but current local processes are not expected to change.

The next phase focuses on a **self-evaluation exercise**, scheduled for **13 April**, based on practitioner and COG member views. Evidence templates have been shared, and members are asked to identify any gaps or additional evidence. SS noted confidence that the return will be fully populated and suggested advance individual input to support structured discussion at the meeting.

MS noted that while there is no current evidence of group-based exploitation locally, the key challenge is demonstrating how services would recognise it if it emerged, with assurance that existing child protection procedures would respond to any concerns raised. SS reflected that while training does not currently address this issue directly, it is covered indirectly through signs and symptoms, and highlighted concerns around under-reporting, peer-to-peer exploitation, and the risk of harmful behaviours becoming normalised. The discussion emphasised the importance of promoting awareness, reporting, and compassionate conversations about healthy relationships. MS concluded that the focus should be on strengthening and improving current practice in response to these emerging challenges. RM queried whether there is existing CSE/CSA training developed elsewhere in Scotland that we could tap into. SS responded that training is available by Craig Thompson, Police Scotland, and highlighted interest in exploring a more formal, accessible online module locally to improve awareness of exploitation, healthy relationships, and how to seek help.

JS commented that Morag Williamson, SIC, Nicola MacLennan, NHS, and Claire Adamson, SIC have completed a *train-the-trainer* session on child sexual

exploitation in Inverness, which can now be cascaded locally.

SS advised that the **next stage** of the process will take place at the COG meeting scheduled for 23 June, which will include engagement with the Care Inspectorate. By that point, all submissions will have been completed, with the final submission deadline being 8 May, and these will inform the Care Inspectorate's discussions with the COG. SS noted that following this, the Care Inspectorate will decide whether and when to undertake any on-site activity, such as requests for further information or file reading. MS reiterated that Shetland is not isolated from national conversations, and that the regular sharing of national information helps maintain awareness and reduces the risk of complacency. MS noted appreciation that, although this work was not originally planned, it has required a significant level of activity due to tight deadlines, and thanked members for their efforts and commitment in progressing it.

AOB

- 8 RM noted that the Senior Officers Case Review Group has agreed to proceed with an **informal learning review** following the death of an adult. RM highlighted that this was a complex case involving adult protection processes, capacity concerns, and significant support input, and felt the review would be valuable to identify any learning that could be applied to future practice.