

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 29 JANUARY 2004

EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2002-2003

Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise elected members of the content of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Annual Report 2002-2003 and of the arrangements made for its public launch.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 1996, the then Scottish Office published updated guidance (Circular SWSG 4/96) on local Child Protection Committees (CPCs). The main purposes of CPCs were defined as being :

- To ensure joint agency procedures which are consistent with the policies and plans of each agency for related service provision;
- To develop, promote, monitor and review local child protection policies;
- To have a major strategic role in ensuring inter-agency co-operation and the effective and efficient use of shared resources.

- 2.2 CPCs bring together senior officers from the main agencies responsible for providing services to children and their families so that they can plan effectively for the protection of children and encourage full co-operation.

- 2.3 At local level, a pan-Ayrshire CPC was established in 1996, superseded by an East Ayrshire CPC in 1998 (Policy and Resources Committee 10 September 1998, Minute Reference Page 3709, item 16 refers). The CPC meets approximately bi-monthly.

- 2.4 As previously reported to Committee, members will be aware that further guidance on the role and remit of CPCs is about to be issued by the Scottish Executive as part of the Child Protection Reform Programme initiated in the wake of the Audit and Review of Child Protection in Scotland (*It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright*), published in November 2002. A separate report will be presented to Committee when the new guidance has been issued.

3. EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2002-2003

- 3.1 On 26 November 2003, the East Ayrshire CPC Annual Report 2002-2003 was approved for publication. A copy of the full report is attached at Appendix 1.

3.2 The report contains a number of sections, comprising:

- Background profile of East Ayrshire;
- Activities carried out by the CPC in 2002-2003;
- Statistical information about child protection in East Ayrshire;
- Brief statement on quality assurance;
- Work plan for 2003-2004
- Membership information

3.3 The report has been circulated to all of the statutory agencies represented on the CPC. In addition, a public launch of the report has been arranged for immediately after the conclusion of the Committee meeting on 29 January 2004. Senior representatives from each of the CPC's constituent agencies have been invited to attend the launch, together with senior elected members and senior officers from the Council.

4. POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no immediate policy, legal or financial implications arising from this report.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Committee is requested to:

- a) note the content of this report and;
- b) also note that the report will be presented to the Education Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2004.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
9 January 2004

For further information, please contact John Alexander, Principal Officer (Quality and Planning) (Tel. 6978)

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : JACKIE DONNELLY, HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK

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EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2002 – MARCH 2003

CONTENTS

Background : ***The purpose and Functions of the Child Protection Committee 3***

Section 1 ***A Profile of East Ayrshire 5***

Section 2 ***Activities of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee..... 9***

Section 3 ***Child Protection in East Ayrshire : Statistical Analysis..... 11***

Section 4 ***Quality Assurance..... 16***

Section 5 ***Child Protection Committee Workplan 2003 / 2004..... 17***

Appendix 1 ***Membership of East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee.....18***

EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2002 – MARCH 2003

BACKGROUND

In March 1996 the then Social Work Services Group issued updated guidance in relation to local Child Protection Committees in circular SWSG4/96.

It described the purpose of the Child Protection Committee as :

to ensure joint agency procedures which are consistent with the policies and plans of each agency for related service provision;

to develop, promote, monitor and review local child protection policies;

to have a major strategic role in ensuring inter-agency co-operation and the effective and efficient use of shared resources.

In order to be fully effective, it recognised that “Child Protection Committees need to have a clearly recognised relationship to the responsible agencies”.

Child Protection Committees bring together the main agencies responsible for the provision of services for children and their families so that they can plan effectively for protection of children and encourage full collaboration. To that end, their functions allow them to “exercise a collective and overarching influence on all of the agencies concerned”. These functions are to:-

ensure that local inter-agency guidelines on procedures to be followed in individual cases are produced, maintained and regularly reviewed and that the procedures, including referral procedures, are known about by those who may need to know;

promote good inter-disciplinary practice in preventing and dealing with the causes and effects of child abuse;

assess issues of significance in collaborative working which arise from the handling of cases and from reports on inquiries;

review arrangements for providing expert advice and inter-agency liaison;

monitor and review information about the operation of the Child Protection Register;

identify inter-agency training needs and take a leading role in developing and promoting inter-disciplinary training programmes;

publish an annual report.

(Source: “Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility” Scottish Office – 1998)

An Ayrshire-wide Child Protection Committee operated until 1998 when it was decided that it was more appropriate to have a Child Protection Committee in each of the three local authority areas. As a result, on 10 September 1998, the Policy and Resources Committee of East Ayrshire Council agreed that the Chief Executive “should take the necessary action to establish an East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee”. An initial meeting of the re-constituted Committee took place on the 22nd January 1999. As Chair, Bernadette Docherty, produced the first annual report of the East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee for the period September 1998 – August 2000. A second annual report covered the period September 2000 – March 2002.

SECTION 1 - EAST AYRSHIRE- DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Population

East Ayrshire is a medium-sized authority and covers a geographic area of some 190 square miles, with a population of approximately 120,000 residents, located in a mixture of urban, rural and isolated communities. The following information was identified in the 2001 census:

East Ayrshire has a population density and an age structure close to the Scottish average although with a greater proportion of those aged 60-65 and older;

Whilst the overall proportion of households with dependent children is above average, those with children aged under 4 is small in comparison with the rest of Scotland.

The social composition is very traditional with a high proportion of people who are married and lower proportions of single people living alone. There are significantly high proportions of non-dependent children living at home. There are also high numbers (mainly women) who categorise themselves as looking after the home/family. The proportion of lone parents in East Ayrshire is close to the average for Scotland. The proportion of male single parents is low;

There are high levels of ill health;

There are very high levels of unemployment, particularly for women, and very high proportions of long term unemployment but relatively low levels of youth unemployment;

East Ayrshire has the highest proportion of people with no formal qualifications of any authority in Scotland and the rise in proportions of people with qualifications in the last 10 years has been low in comparison with the rest of Scotland, widening the educational gap overall (East Ayrshire also has a low proportion of its 16-17 population who are full time students);

There has been an above average shift in house tenure to owner occupation in the last 10 years, although East Ayrshire still has one of the largest proportions of households who are council tenants;

94% of the population of East Ayrshire represent themselves as white Scottish - the second highest proportion in Scotland. In all other ethnic groups, the proportion represented within the population of East Ayrshire is very low compared to the national average. The only non-white minority ethnic population of any significance in East Ayrshire Council is Chinese with a proportion is 0.18% of the population of East Ayrshire, compared to 0.32% nationally.

East Ayrshire is faced with a projected decline in population and an ageing population profile.

Birth and Death Rates per '000 population

	East Ayrshire	Scotland
Birth rate per '000 pop.	10.5	10.4
Death rate per '000 pop.	12.5	11.3

Source: GROS (Scotland's Population 2001) 2002

Estimated Population by Age (GROS, June 2001 Mid Year Estimates, based on census 2001).

AGE RANGE	TOTAL PERSONS	% OF POPULATION
0-4	6456	5.37
5-9	7545	6.27
10-14	8288	6.89
15-19	7413	6.16
20-24	6235	5.18
25-29	7159	5.95
30-34	9067	7.54
35-39	9486	7.88
40-44	8814	7.33
45-49	7848	6.52
50-54	8832	7.34
55-59	7267	6.04
60-64	6520	5.42
65-69	5940	4.94
70-74	4912	4.08
75-79	3944	3.28
80-84	2566	2.13
85-89	1380	1.15
90 & over	638	0.53
TOTAL	120310	

Population estimates and Projections

YEAR	TOTAL ESTIMATED POPULATION	% CHANGE FROM 2000
2000	120,120	
2006	117,304	- 2.34
2011	113,980	-5.11
2016	110,464	-8.04

Deprivation

East Ayrshire has a 7.84% unemployment rate compared to a national rate of 4.28%. (Office for National Statistics, March 2003).

Public health information reported by NHS Ayrshire and Arran in 1999, identified East Ayrshire as scoring higher than the Scottish average in 4 out of 7 deprivation categories.

The Scottish Indices of Deprivation (SID 2003) published by the Social Disadvantage Research Centre at the University of Oxford identifies East Ayrshire as the 6th most deprived local authority in Scotland. Findings included:

Evidence from Council and Scottish Executive sources in respect of benefit and tax credit claims further emphasises the scale of deprivation faced by many families in East Ayrshire:

% of Pupils Receiving Free School Meals

	2001/02
Primary schools	22.5
Secondary Schools	17.5

Source: East Ayrshire Council 2002

% of Pupils Receiving Clothing and Footwear Grants

	2001/02
Primary schools	40.7
Secondary Schools	18.1

Source: East Ayrshire Council 2002

Allowances and Claimants per '000 population August 02

	East Ayrshire	Scotland
Income Support 16+	116	104
Incapacity Benefit 16-59/64	102	92
Attendance Allowance 65+	187	160
Job Seekers Allowance 16-59/64	51	34
Council Tax Benefit 18+	146	133
Housing Benefit 16+	124	109

Source: Scottish Executive (Benefits and Tax Credits in Scotland report for August 2002).

Substance Misuse

Substance misuse is a major underlying factor in child protection cases. Substance misuse in East Ayrshire is estimated to be the highest of any rural authority:

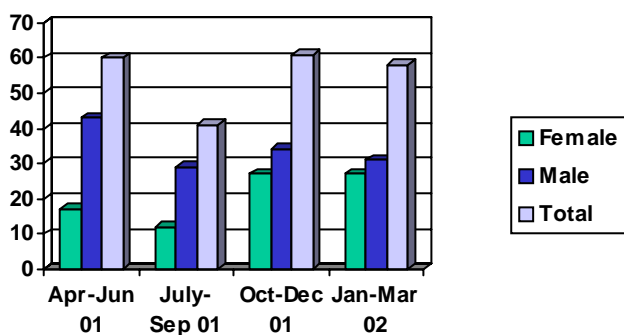
1171 PEOPLE - 1.8% OF POPULATION

Source: (Estimating the Prevalence of Local and National Drug Misuse in Scotland: Glasgow University/SCIEH, November 2001).

There are high levels of alcohol misuse as evidenced in the level of referrals to Ayrshire Council on Alcohol which is contracted to provide counselling and support services. During the period illustrated an additional 82 new referrals were taken by the Bridge Project.

East Ayrshire New Referrals 2001-2002: 220

East Ayrshire Caseload at 30th June 2002: 69



Teenage Pregnancies

There is a significantly higher level of teenage pregnancies in East Ayrshire than in Scotland as a whole, although the trend is downwards.

Age at conception 13-19 years (Rates per 1000 Female Population)

Year	1999	2000	2001
East Ayrshire	54.7	48.7	45.2
Scotland	44.5	42.6	39.1

Source: ISD Scotland SMR1/01 and SMR 2/02

Children Attending Nurseries

Some 2210 children attend nursery schools or classes in East Ayrshire.

Source: East Ayrshire by Numbers (East Ayrshire Council)

SECTION 2 - ACTIVITIES OF THE EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee (the Committee) has met on six occasions during the period April 2002 to March 2003. The following paragraphs summarise the principal activities carried out during that period.

Child Protection Register - At each meeting of the Committee there is discussion and analysis of statistical information from the Child Protection Register. This allows any trends and issues to be identified and informs inter-agency discussion about ways to improve the effectiveness of practice.

Child Protection Procedures - Having reviewed the inter-agency Child Protection Procedures, the Committee approved and launched a revised set of procedures, which are now being used by all partner agencies. An extensive programme of inter-agency training will support the implementation of the procedures to ensure that staff in all disciplines are familiar with them and are operating to them with confidence.

Child Protection Policy - The Committee influenced child protection policy through feedback on operational issues from frontline staff. The Committee also participated in other wide-ranging debate, including meetings of Child Protection Committee Chairs convened by the Scottish Executive. It also continued to influence elected members and Chief Officers during budget setting with a view to securing additional resources for child protection work.

Child Protection Practice – The Committee influenced the decision of East Ayrshire council to employ five drugs workers as a result of it highlighting the direct link between substance misuse and child protection/abuse.

Scottish Executive Audit and Review of Child Protection (“It’s Everyone’s Job to Make Sure I’m Alright”) – Arising from the report on the death of Kennedy McFarlane, which the Committee had considered in detail, the Scottish Executive issued its audit and review report on child protection practice in Scotland. The Committee considered in depth and influenced debate on the audit and review report. The Committee also received reports on the fieldwork for the report, which included examination of East Ayrshire practice, and commented on the final report following publication. The Committee’s comments were subsequently adopted by East Ayrshire Council and submitted to the Scottish Executive. A range of measures to address improvements in child protection practice within East Ayrshire have been approved by East Ayrshire Council, with initial 3 year funding from the Changing Children’s Service Fund of £305,000 per annum. Within the overall package of measures, there is funding to appoint a Child Protection Co-ordinator to support the work of the Committee, with particular reference to training issues, and a Children’s Reviewing Officer (Child Protection) with full time clerical support. There is also funding to support the full time secondment of a Health Visitor to improve joint working at the frontline between Social Work and Health.

Training – The Committee established a Training Sub-Group to consider inter-agency training issues and draw up a training plan to guide the delivery of the necessary training. The Sub-Group met on four occasions and prepared a draft training plan for the consideration of the Committee at its meeting on 5 June 2003. Subject to Committee approval, the training plan will be implemented with the assistance of the Child Protection Co-ordinator (see para. 4 above).

Information Leaflets – The Committee has overseen the preparation and distribution of a range of leaflets, including launching a public information leaflet entitled “The Internet – A guide for parents on how to help your son or daughter enjoy using their computer without causing you or them worry”. It recognises that there are risks and dangers for children and young people in accessing and using the Internet. There is increasing evidence that people with ulterior motives are using this medium to gain access to vulnerable children, some of whom have been abused as a consequence. The leaflet provides information to inform and empower parents to protect their children.

National Issues - Throughout the year, the Committee benefited from receiving 150 relevant papers and articles on child protection matters of national significance, circulated by the Committee Chair, to inform policy and practice.

Presentations – The Committee received presentations on staff vetting procedures under the new Disclosure Scotland arrangements and on the Change Project, a local service working with sex offenders. In addition, the Committee had facilitated the giving of awareness raising presentations on child protection to service directors, teachers and nursery staff.

SECTION 3 – CHILD PROTECTION IN EAST AYRSHIRE : STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Background

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (the 1995 Act) places certain duties on local authorities in relation to the well being of children in their area. These include a general duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need and a specific duty to cause inquiries to be made into the case of a child who may be in need of compulsory measures of care owing to lack of parental care, abuse or neglect. Arising from these duties, local Social Work authorities receive reports about children who may have been abused or may be at risk of abuse. These children may have been referred by relatives, neighbours, professionals or other sources. Social Work staff have the responsibility of deciding when there is a need to initiate a child protection investigation and the subsequent steps to follow. National guidance sets out a framework for collaboration between Social Work and other agencies in child protection cases (Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility : The Scottish Office 1998).

At the initial stages of investigations, practitioners will assess whether the child is at immediate risk of serious harm. If so, they may seek to secure the safety of the child by applying for a Child Protection Order or an Exclusion Order under the 1995 Act. Case discussions may be organised to clarify and share information and decide on the next course of action. Inter-agency Child Protection Case Conferences may be convened to consider the nature and extent of any future identified or potential risk and to decide what action should be taken to reduce risk, including whether or not the child should be placed on the Child Protection Register.

It is important to recognise that the Child Protection Register was not a measure of the ongoing work done with the children on a long term basis nor an indicator of the level of risk while on the register. Nor does it relate to cases of the abuse of children by strangers, focusing rather than children where there has been a failure to protect on the part of their parents/carers.

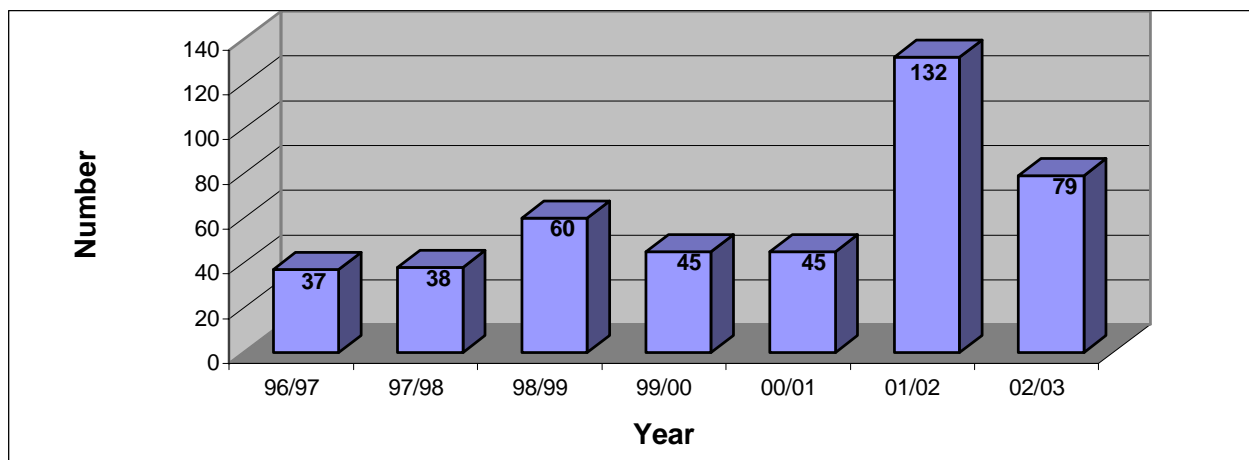
Referrals

The following shows the pattern of referrals over the period 1996-1997 to 2002-2003:-

Figure 1

Child Abuse Referrals 1996-97 to 2002-3

No of children referred over the 12 months to 31March



As can be seen from this chart the rate of referrals for alleged or suspected child abuse remained fairly constant throughout the five years from 1996-97 to 2000-1 inclusive.

In the year ended 31 March 2001 the number of child abuse / child protection referrals was 45. In the year ended 31 March 2002 these numbers had increased markedly to 132, an almost threefold increase. However, there was a reduction of referrals to 79 in the 12 months to 31 March 2003.

It should be noted that the apparent dramatic increase between 2000-1 and 2001-2 is partly attributable to a re-definition of what constitutes a child abuse / child protection referral. Up until 2001-2, a referral was not categorised as such until **after an initial assessment** had been made and a decision taken to invoke Child Protection Procedures. With the introduction of the “alert” system, whereby the Child Protection Register is notified of all referrals where there is an indication or a suspicion of abuse **at the referral stage**, these are being identified as child abuse / protection referrals at a much earlier stage in the process, thereby increasing the numbers.

However, when this increase in referrals is looked at alongside the increase in registrations (see Figure 2 below) it is apparent that the change in the referral procedure is not the sole cause.

Sources of Referrals 2002-2003

Parent or Guardian	-
Family / Relative	6
Self-referral by child / young person	-
Neighbour / friend	-
Education	12
Community Medical Officer	1
G.P.	-
Hospital Medical / Nursing staff	3
Police	10
Social Work	36
Children’s Reporter	-
Other Agency	13
Other	1
Total	82*

*N.B. Children can be the subject of more than one referral

Outcome of Referrals

Of the 79 children subject to child protection referrals during the period 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003,

16 resulted in no further action

18 initial assessments led to no further action under Child Protection Procedures

44 were referred to case conference

4 remain subject to ongoing investigation

Child Protection Registrations

An inter-agency Case Conference decides whether any child(ren) should be placed on the local Child Protection Register. A child should be registered when his / her safety and welfare is considered to require an inter-agency child protection plan. An inter-agency plan provides a framework for inter-agency assessment, casework and review. The purpose of a child protection plan is to reduce or remove any perceived risk to the child and to safeguard and promote his or her welfare.

Local authorities are responsible for maintaining a central register, known as the Child Protection Register, of children who are the subject of an inter-agency child protection plan. East Ayrshire has its own register, and maintains a combined Register with the West of Scotland Standby Service. Registration is an administrative system for alerting workers to the fact that there is sufficient professional concern about a child to warrant an inter-agency child protection plan, and ensures that the plans for these children are formally reviewed at least every six months. Further enquiries, including criminal investigation, may continue beyond this stage.

The Child Protection Register provides a central point for rapid inquiry for professional staff who are concerned about a child's safety, development or welfare. The Register can be accessed 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Child Protection Case Conferences between 1 April 2002 and 31 March 2003

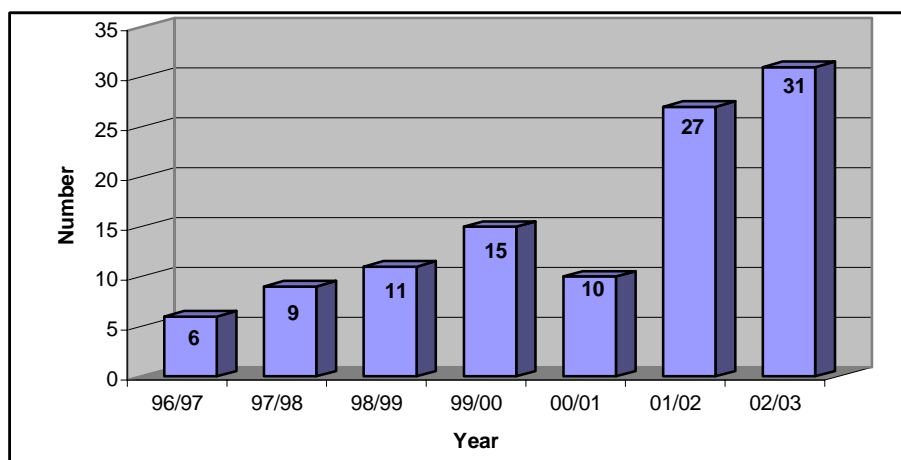
Of the 79 children subject to child protection referrals in 02/03, Initial Case Conferences were held in relation to 44 children, resulting in 35 being registered during the year.

27 children remained on the register from 01/02 and an additional 7 children were placed on the register in 02/03 as a result of referrals that had been made during 01/02.

There were Review Case Conferences held in 02/03 in relation to 59 children on the register, 38 of whom were de-registered and 31 of whom remained on the register at 31st March 03. (NB some children were the subject of more than one review during the year).

Figure 2 :Number of Children on the Child Protection Register 1997 – 2003

No of children on the Child Protection Register as at 31March



Children on the Child Protection Register as at 31st March 2003

As at 31st March 2003 there were 31 children/young people on the Child Protection Register, representing 15 families.

AGE RANGE BY GENDER

Age Range by Gender	0-4	5-10	11-15	16+	TOTAL
Male	8	5	3	0	16
Female	5	8	2	0	15
TOTAL	13	13	5	0	31

CATEGORY OF REGISTRATION

	0-4 yrs		5-10yrs		11-15 yrs		16+		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Emotional Abuse									0
Failure to Thrive									0
Physical Injury	3	1	2	4	1				11
Physical Neglect	5	3	2	3	2	1			16
Sexual Abuse		1	1	1		1			4
TOTAL	8	5	5	8	3	2	0	0	31

By year's end on 31 March 2003 there were 31 children on the Child Protection Register, which represents an increase of 4 from the corresponding date in 2002.

It should be noted that the ages of children on the register during the course of the last year remains at the lower end of the range, with 26 children (83%) being less than 11 years old.

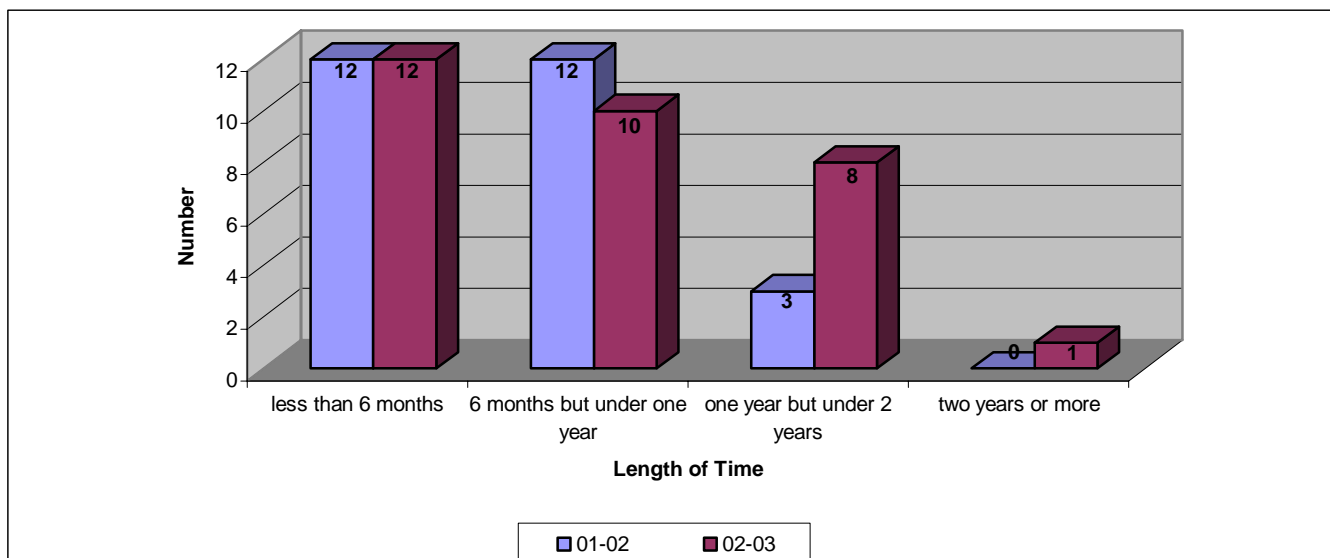
In terms of category of registration, the largest number, 16 (51%) were registered under "Physical Neglect", with 11 (36%) registered under "Physical Injury". The remainder, 4 (13%) were registered under "Sexual Abuse".

Parental abuse of alcohol or drugs is a major underlying factor in registrations.

The gender balance on the Child Protection Register is about even between males and females.

Figure 3

Length of Time on the Child Protection Register



As at 31 March 2003, 12 children (39%) had been on the register for less than six months. The numbers reduce gradually as time increases between 6 months and 2 years. And fall sharply at the 2 year point, with only 1 child (3%) remaining on the register for more than 2 years.

Primary Known or Suspected Abuser 2002 – 2003

An analysis of the figures over the past year reveals that, of the 31 children registered at 31 March 2003, the suspected or known abuser was the natural parent or his/her partner in 26 cases (83%) and another person known to the child in the remaining 5 cases (17%).

SECTION 4 - QUALITY ASSURANCE

Apart from holding detailed information on all registered children in line with the requirements of the (then) Scottish Office document "Protecting Children : A Shared Responsibility", the East Ayrshire Child Protection register holds information on "Alerts" to the register, when there is on-going investigation into allegations or suspicions of abuse; missing children circulars from local authorities across the United Kingdom; a list of all Child Protection Register keepers in Scotland and a database to track Criminal Injuries Compensation claims in respect of abused children and young people.

There are a number of checks made to ensure the information held on the Child Protection register is accurate, up to date and complete:-

the Service Unit Manager, designated as the Keeper of the Register, is required to make regular checks,

in addition, the Principal Officer (Children and Families and Criminal Justice Services) checks the register at a minimum of monthly intervals,

Quality and Planning Section staff assist in Quality Assurance by periodically undertaking checks in relation to aspects of the Child Protection process as identified by the Principal Officers.

Since 2001, a Child at Risk Monitoring System has been in operation. Key workers are required to give fortnightly updates on progress of registered cases to line managers in relation to the agreed Child Protection Plan for that individual child or young person, including dates children were seen, key contacts, developments etc.

In response to the recommendations of the Scottish Executive Audit and Review, more refined and detailed quality assurance measures will be put in place by the Child Protection Committee in the coming year in order to allow qualitative as well as quantitative measures of performance at agency and inter-agency level to be monitored and reported in future reports.

SECTION 5 - CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2003 – 2004

Implement action plan in response to Scottish Executive Audit and Review report (see Section 2)

Implement Inter-Agency Training Plan (see Section 2)

Develop and issue public information materials on child protection for adults and children/young people (see Section 2)

Develop and implement more refined and detailed performance measures to allow qualitative as well as quantitative factors to be monitored and reviewed (see Section 4)

Receive presentations from relevant outside agencies and individuals on child protection matters

Foster links with other local authorities and the West of Scotland Consortium and develop the Committee's participation in inter-agency planning.

APPENDIX 1

EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Stephen Moore, Head of Social Work, East Ayrshire Council (Chair) *

Graham Short, Head of Quality Improvement, East Ayrshire Council (Vice-Chair)

John Crawford, Head of Protective Services, East Ayrshire Council

Bill Eadie, Principal Officer, Children, Families & Criminal Justice, East Ayrshire Council

John Alexander, Principal Officer, Quality & Planning, East Ayrshire Council

John McMenemy, Senior Procurator Fiscal Depute, Procurator Fiscal Service

Joe Scanlon, Authority Reporter, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration **

Detective Chief Inspector William Prendergast, Strathclyde Police

Detective Inspector Kevin Quinn, Strathclyde Police

Anne Ritchie, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Paisley

Dr Sheila Smith, Department of Child Health, Ayrshire Central Hospital

Lisa Miller, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Crosshouse Hospital

Maureen Bell, Designated Nurse, Child Protection, Ayrshire Central Hospital

Amanda Kitchen, Children's Refuge Worker, Kilmarnock Women's Aid

Maggie Boyd, Rape Counselling & Resource Centre

replaced by Jackie Donnelly from 1 September 2003

** replaced by Karen Linney from 5 January 2004