

Welcome to the latest edition of the DSCP Newsletter. We hope you find it useful and informative. Please contact us by email if you have any comments or suggestions for future newsletters (DSCPsecure@durham.gov.uk). To follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DurhamSCP>

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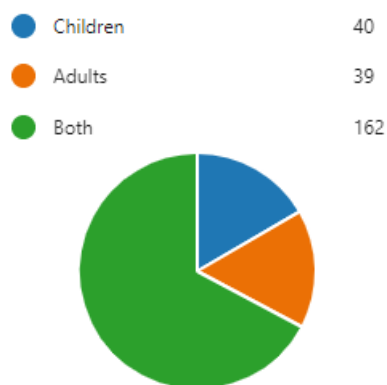


Safeguarding Week 2023

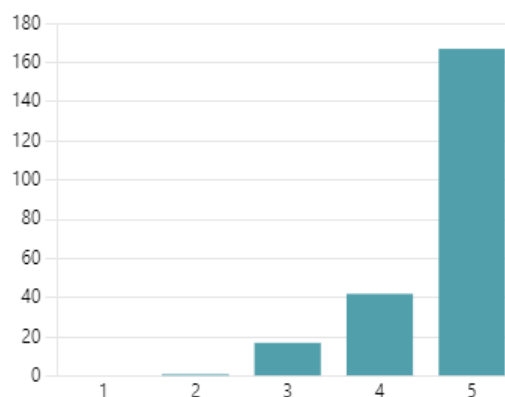
We hosted a joint Safeguarding Week with Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership week commencing 20 November. Thank you for all partners that attended the sessions and we do hope that you found the session useful to your everyday practice as well as thought provoking. Thank you to all the facilitators who brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise to their session.

General feedback from the evaluations

Do you work with:



How did you rate today's session?



4.65
Average
Rating

Level of knowledge on this subject (1 being you have limited knowledge and 10 being you have in-depth knowledge)

Prior to session
5.72
Average Rating

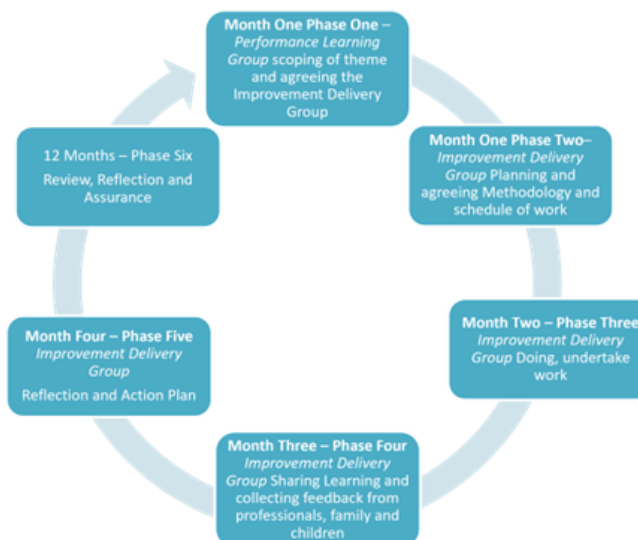
Following the session
8.17
Average Rating

Priorities

Priority One: Domestic Abuse

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have now completed their first learning cycle for the 2023-2026 DSCP priorities. The learning cycle was facilitated by the Improvement Delivery Group, this is a multi-agency space where practitioners come together to consider safeguarding practice, what is working well and when there may be challenged, how can we learn and develop together.

The first piece of work under the Domestic Abuse priority we looked at [Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse \(CAPVA\)](#). A practitioner briefing is currently being developed and will be shared in December 2023 on the website. Within this piece of priority work we have also taken time to reflect upon the how the first cycle went and identifying any ways to further develop/learn from this process.



Key Achievements:

- ◆ The was a good commitment from the IDG group to attend meetings and complete the work.
- ◆ Partners demonstrated an ability to have transparent conversations across agencies which increase the understanding of different approaches and priorities with key practitioners.
- ◆ Online surveys were utilised to engage with practitioners with a good level of responses.

What was our learning/feedback:

- ◆ Phase 1: the question from the Performance Learning Group (PLG) was broad and lacked direction for the group; *This feedback was incorporated with greater clarity provided for IDG work for Priority Two.*
- ◆ Phase 2: There was low engagement from children and families within the work. This was despite financial incentives offered to engage in work; *There were a number of external factors that may have influenced this which we have considered and will use to inform the plan for engagement for Priority Two.*
- ◆ Phase 3: Some partners were resistant to share information within the group about children and families. They questioned the proportionate nature of the information shared.
- ◆ *Whilst the IDG work is within Working Together 2018, the DSCP Business Unit will also consider this in relation to updates to the information sharing document to ensure clarity when sharing information for the purpose of improvement work.*

Next Steps:

We will now move towards phase 6 of this work. An action plan has been developed and agreed within the Performance and Learning Group. In the next 6- 12 months work will be completed around :

Communication: Targeted communication work by the DSCP to inform the partnership of the CAPVA and RYPP.

Evaluation: Impact and outcome tools to be developed by the partnership to measure the impact of the programme.

Data: Developments to recording systems that will support and allow partners to understand the demand and record outcomes for the children referred for CAPVA.

Training: Consideration of the RYPP training programme and who is delivering the courses to children. CAPVA Ambassadors who will continue to roll out RYPP training, this will likely start in 2024.

DSCP business team to develop a short briefing for the partnership to share the work completed and the learning from this first priority.

If you would like more information about the Improvement Delivery Group or the priority work, please contact Laura Bywater or Vicki Vickerson at DSCPSecure@durham.gov.uk

Priority Two: Harm Outside The Home

National Vulnerability and Exploitation Conference 7th - 8th March 2024

Vulnerability, Knowledge, and Practice Programme (VKPP) are inviting colleagues to attend their National Vulnerability and Exploitation Conference either in person for free (accommodation is not included) at the College of Policing in Ryton, or virtually.

The event is being hosted by the Hydrant Programme, Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme and VKPP. The conference is focussed on protecting children and adults affected by vulnerability related risk and harm by looking at cross-cutting issues across the programmes, the Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce and the wider vulnerability and exploitation landscape.

The conference is for both policing and wider stakeholders.

For more details and to register please use the link: [Vulnerability and Exploitation Conference 2024](#)

Priority Three: 1001 Days

The **Eyes on the Baby** training has been designed to help staff prevent SUDI (Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy) in County Durham. Most unexpected deaths of babies under 1 year occur in families living in impoverished circumstances with multiple risks or vulnerabilities, and a multi-agency approach is needed to reach the families most at risk of infant death. Training the multi-agency workforce in County Durham will help staff give advice about safer sleep, support shared working between services, and keep Eyes on the Baby to reduce SUDI.

The training is available in 3 strands (PLEASE ENSURE YOU COMPLETE THE CORRECT STRAND OF YOUR JOB ROLE. This **should** have already been filtered on Me Learning based on the sector and service selected on registration): [CLICK HERE](#)

STRAND 1

Staff who encounter vulnerable families **occasionally** as part of every-day work (e.g., working inside peoples' homes or responding to a crisis). Example list of practitioners below:

- Maintenance workers
- Housing Officers
- Fire Service (Home Checks)
- Fire Wardens / Inspectors
- Probation Officers
- Youth Offending Officers
- Refugee Services
- Food bank / Milk Bank / Baby Bank staff
- Police Officers
- Police Community Support Officers
- Paramedics
- Domestic Violence Teams
- Urgent Treatment Centre Staff
- Shelter Staff
- Temporary Housing Staff

STRAND 2

Staff who provide **direct** support to vulnerable families (e.g., **frequent** contact with families or support with infant care or family issues). Example list of practitioners below:

- Children's Services Staff
- Early Help Practitioners
- One Point Key Workers
- Family Workers
- Social Workers
- Foster Carers / Connected Carers
- Families First Staff
- Mental Health Support Staff
- Drugs & Alcohol Support Staff
- Breastfeeding Support Staff
- Gypsy & Roma Support Staff
- Early Years / Nursery Staff
- Childminders
- Fatherhood Champions
- Pharmacy staff

STRAND 3

Health practitioners involved in **routine or emergency care** of vulnerable families (e.g., pre and postnatal support or universal safer sleep information). Example list of practitioners below:

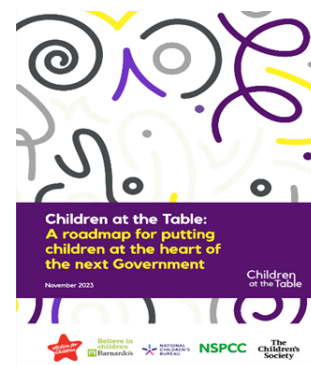
- Health Visitors / Home Visitors
- Midwives & Maternity Care Assistants
- Community Midwives
- Infant Feeding Leads
- GPs and Practice Nurses
- Neonatal Care Staff
- Family Nurse Partnership Staff
- Smoking Cessation Services
- Perinatal Mental Health
- Paediatricians
- Paediatric OTs & PTs

Priority Four: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Children at the Table

The NCB (in coalition with a group of children's charities) has called for the next government to prioritise the well-being of children and young people, placing their needs at the forefront of policy decisions in their landmark report titled "Children at the Table.". The report highlights the challenges facing children today, including rising poverty, mental health concerns, and educational disparities, emphasising the need for a comprehensive and committed approach to improving their lives. It urges the next government to implement an ambitious cross-government strategy, actively involve children and youth in decision-making processes, and increase investment in early intervention and prevention programs.

[You can read the report here.](#)



What's New



New Chair for the Executive Group:

In the November 2023 Newsletter we said goodbye and good luck to our Independent Chair and Scrutineer, David Pickard. David Ashton, Durham Constabulary has taken up the role of partnership Chair for the Executive Group for the next 6 months.

The Role of the Partnership Chair:

The role of Independent Chair is to oversee the partnership working between the constituent organisations, engaging with Partnership colleagues and other stakeholders to maximise the benefits of collaborative working, shared decision making and effective governance. In addition, the Chair will participate in and help to shape the approach to partnership development, ensuring that liaison with other key partnership organisations is optimised and contributes strongly with the vision and values held by the DSCP.

New Independent Scrutineer:

The appointment of our new Independent Scrutiny will take place over the next 2 months and hopefully in our February 2024 newsletter we will be able to share the news of the new appointment.

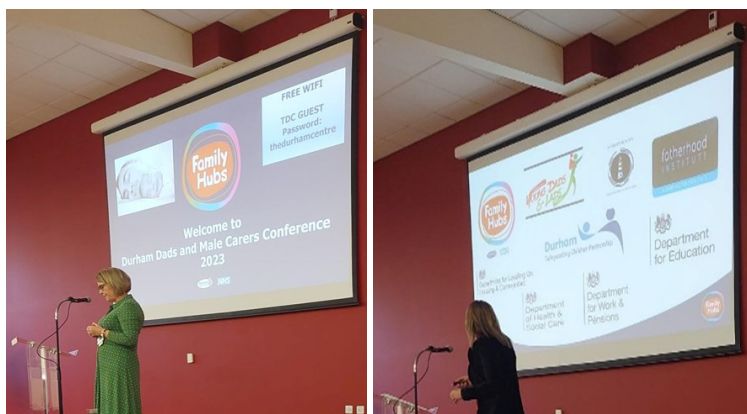
What is an Independent Scrutineer.

Working Together 2018 sets out clear guidance that the role of independent scrutiny is to provide assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area, including arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases. The independent scrutineer should consider how well the safeguarding partners are providing strong leadership and agree how this should be reported. The guidance is concise and gives an element of flexibility in that the decision on how best to implement the role is to be made locally, safeguarding partners should ensure that the scrutiny is objective, acts as a critical friend and promotes reflection to drive continuous improvement.

Working Together 2023:

The draft Working Together 2023 proposes a number of changes in relation to the independent scrutiny role and the role of the independent chair. Whilst the consultation is ongoing it is not known what the final arrangements will look like, there is a suggestion that the independent chair and the independent scrutineer will be separate roles, hence the DSCP approach to appointing a separate Scrutineer at this time. We are eagerly awaiting the launch of the guidance in December 2023 which will make clear recommendations for strengthening the partnership arrangements.

Events



On the 17th November 2023: the DSCP had the pleasure of supporting the Durham Dad's and Male Carers Conference 2023. It was an amazing opportunity to discuss the Journey Durham are on to be inclusive to Dad and making sure their voices are heard.

Training

Safer Recruitment – DBS Eligibility Workshop

We are delighted to be able to offer Safer Recruitment – DBS Eligibility Workshop on our training programme. Two dates have been identified—Tuesday 6 February and Tuesday 12 March 2024. This will be delivered by DBS Northeast Regional Advisor. Spaces are limited so don't delay in securing your place by clicking [HERE](#) to book. We are hoping to also offer this workshop in our new training programme from April 2024 onwards.

Please can you disseminate this email across your organisation and contacts.

If you require any further information, please email us at dscptraining@durham.gov.uk



Local Resources

Unseen Males has been a golden thread within the DSCP for the last year, we have completed a number of pieces of work.

The DSCP has recently completed a 7 point learning briefing from the audit activity, this briefing is called, Clarify, Reflect and Verify:

<https://durham-scp.org.uk/download/unseen-males-learning-from-audits/>



Unseen Males: Learning from Audits

Self-Reported Information- Clarify, Verify and Reflect: Professional Curiosity

1 Background

Learning from national and local case reviews tells us that sometimes children may have been safeguarded and protected from harm if practitioners working with the family **clarify, reflect, and verify** upon the information shared with them during assessments. Within a recent multi agency audit the DSCP noted that if practitioners had asked questions to further **clarify** situations that were presented to them, they may have been able to **reflect** this back and **verify** what it was really like for the child living in those circumstances. If these three steps are taken it makes a better assessment of risks and need and therefore supporting the correct support and intervention to be offered.

Why does this matter?
When working with families, much of the information and insight into the family comes from them directly and is 'self-reported'. Professionals need to ensure that they triangulate what parents are saying by establishing the facts, gathering evidence, and communicating well with all involved. There is a need for all professionals to have a conscious and healthy inquisitiveness, not taking information at face value but **clarify, reflect** back what they are being told and **verify** information. It is important to make it clear in recording the origin of a piece of information and if it self-reported, this avoids the risk of it becoming assumed as fact through the passage of time. Wherever possible, check out details of self-reported information by asking who, where when and confirm/validate the information.

2 Clarify

- Who is reporting the information, is this first-hand information?
- Have I understood this information correctly, can I understand this further, who can I discuss this with?
- What is the context of the information? How can I gather more details. Where, when, who, why, what, how.

Top Tip: Coordinate a multi-agency supervision to discuss identified concerns or factors. Prepare for any difficult conversations, be ready to respond with respect and empathy.

3 Reflect

- How does this new information impact upon my understanding of strengths, vulnerabilities, and risks?
- What is the impact of this information on the child?
- Do I need to change my approach to working with the family in light of this information?

Top Tip: Make time and space in your working day to pause and reflect on what you have seen and heard. What do you know for sure? What assumptions have you made?

4 Verify

- Who can confirm accuracy of the information?
- Has consent been sought to share information with others or gather further information in order to confirm?
- Triangulate the information you have received
- Establish the facts.
- Gather further information.

Top Tip: Discuss any concerns with colleagues, with partner organisations and within your supervision any details that are not clear.

7 Useful links

(details about resources and training is available on DSCP website)

- Graded care Profile 2 <https://durham-scp.org.uk/professionals/practice-guidance/>
- Child Exploitation risk assessment Tool <https://durham-scp.org.uk/download/child-exploitation-risk-assessment-information-form/>
- NSPCC recognising and responding to abuse May 2023: [Recognising and responding to child abuse and neglect: NSPCC Learning](#)
- Signs of Safety mapping tool: [Signs of Safety for Professionals \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](#)
- The developing world of the child: [Seeing the Child \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](#)

5 Learning

- Self-reported information can be assumed as fact, this is then shared through the passage of time and the wrong assessment could be made.
- Professionals should have a conscious and healthy scepticism of information shared.
- It helps to avoid over optimism and making assumptions bases upon self reported information.
- Professionals should ensure the origin of information is reports clearly in children's files and records.
- Reflect upon the self-reported information and what this means in the context of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Consider whether there is a need to change the plan or the approach to working with the family in light of this information.
- Find out more information to better understand the information you are being told.

6 Complicating Factors

- Individual factors such as your own experiences and values could get in the way, e.g. a fear of saying something wrong, or lacking in knowledge around a subject therefore there could be avoidance of uncovering information you don't feel able to deal with for whatever reason.
- You also may be used to seeing certain behaviours or situations, therefore, you don't really notice them anymore or you just accept this as a part of the family dynamic.
- External Factors such as a lack of support for practitioners or managers and not enough time and space to reflect can be a barrier.

Top Tip: Take notice of any feelings of uneasiness or uncertainty when discussing information. Act on what you find out.



Spotlight On

To the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership,

Looking back over the past year, we know that without all of your help, support, enthusiasm and energy we would not have been able to achieve the things we have. Thank you all for your commitment to the changing structure, processes, and practice.



Within the DSCP business unit we are excited for 2024, with a number of plans in place to continue to strengthen the way we safeguard children in County Durham.

We hope everyone has a restful time off with family and friends.

Many thanks

The DSCP Business Team

National Guidance & Resources



[Tell Ofsted about a serious incident in a children's home or secure children's home](#)
OFSTED, October 2023

[Missing children, missing grades](#)
Children's Commissioner, November 2023

[The multi-agency response to children and families who need help](#)
OFSTED, November 2023

[Homeless 16- and 17-year olds in need of care](#)
Children's Commissioner, November 2023

[Key messages from research on harmful sexual behaviour in online contexts](#)
CSA Centre, October 2023

[Private fostering: 'the potentially vulnerable children going under the radar of services'](#)
Community Care, November 2023

[Supporting new parents through adversity – part one](#)
NSPCC Learning (YouTube video), November 2023

[Supporting new parents through adversity - part two](#)
NSPCC Learning (YouTube video), November 2023

[The Online Safety Act: what it means for children and professionals](#)
NSPCC Learning, November 2023

[Children, violence and vulnerability 2023](#)
Youth Endowment Fund, November 2023

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