

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Published October 2024



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1 Foreword

Over the last 12 months the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have seen significant changes to guidance and legislation that has helped to define and influence the work we are completing. On 15th December 2023 the government published 'Working together to safeguard children 2023'. Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children. This statutory guidance sets out what organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 in England.

This new edition of Working Together 2023 is central to delivering on the strategy set out in [Stable homes, built on love \(2023\)](#) which outlines the Government's commitment to support every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home.

Alongside the Working Together statutory guidance, the Government published:

- An updated Working together [statutory framework](#), which sets out the legislation relevant to safeguarding
- The [Children's social care national framework](#), which sets out expectations for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners in local authorities
- Guidance on [Improving practice with children, young people and families](#), which provides advice for local areas on embedding the Working together guidance and the Children's social care national framework in practice.

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership are working to update and develop practice around the changes in guidance and legislation. This document sets out how the Safeguarding Partners in Durham will work together with relevant organisations and agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and their families.



Our Vision and Values

Our vision and values are simple, it's about 'Keeping Children Safe' on the premise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It acts as an umbrella covering all that we do and underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.

The Partnership looks to realise this vision by focussing on:

- **Prevention through early intervention** – We will work together to prevent harm at the earliest opportunity
- **Joined up response** – We will respond bringing together the expertise of partners
- **Listening** – We will listen to and observe children ensuring their voice is heard even when they don't or can't speak out
- **Identifying** – We will identify those most at risk of harm by sharing information and data effectively
- **Challenging** – We will challenge, learn and continuously improve

and by applying the following values:

- **Tenacity** – acknowledges that there will be an element of endurance required by teams and individuals facing difficult and long term problem solving where solutions are not immediately apparent. In the area, effective inter-agency working is vital to maintain a focus on keeping the child safe
- **Curiosity** – it is essential that we look beyond the immediate presentation to ensure that the concerns about children are not being masked or hidden by individuals, circumstances or a lack of curiosity on the part of those responsible for safeguarding
- **Openness** – we need to be open and empathetic to the child and the perspective of other agencies. This includes an openness to challenge and be challenged so that the best decision in the interests of the child are made

2 Lead and Delegate Safeguarding Partners

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 Statutory guidance identifies three Statutory Partners as the Local Authority, Integrated Care Board and Police, all whom have equal and joint responsibility for fulfilling the role.

The Lead Safeguarding Partners in Durham who are accountable for the delivery of the Statutory duties of the Safeguarding Partners are;

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Chief Executive of the Local Authority - Chief Executive Officer, Durham County Council● Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board – Chief Executive, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board● Chief Officer of Police - Chief Constable, Durham Constabulary● In Durham Lead Safeguarding Partners have | <p>appointed Delegate Safeguarding Partners who have oversight and ensure the delivery of the functions are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Corporate Director, Durham County Council (Children and Young Peoples Service)● Director of Nursing, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board● Detective Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary |
|---|--|

The role of the Partnership Chair is agreed on an annual basis. The current Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair is the Corporate Director, Durham County Council (Children and Young Peoples Service).

The partnership Business Unit undertake the management and support function of the partnership. The well-resourced Business Unit continues to plan and move forward with joint strategic work, making best use of some of the working practices which have now become business as usual.

3 Relevant Agencies

Durham has a well-established network across the statutory and wider partnership with a high level of attendance and valued contributions from representatives. These representative are key organisations that work with children and their families within Durham.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Durham County Council (Children & Young Peoples Service, Education Services (all schools), Early Years (all providers) Youth Offending, Housing, Public Health (including Dentists and Pharmacies), Community Safety, Parks & Countryside, Adult Safeguarding● North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (including Primary Care & GP Services)● Durham Constabulary● Harrogate District Foundation Trust (HDDFT 0-19 Children's Health Service)● County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (Primary Care and Midwifery Services)● Tees Esk and Wear Valley Mental Health Trust (TEVW/CAMHS)● Early Years and Childminder Provisions● Education Establishments not under the responsibility of the Local Authority including Alternative Provisions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Further Education Providers and Colleges● National Probation Service● HMP Durham Prison● Harbour Domestic Abuse Service● Way Through Drug and Alcohol Service● VCSE's (All VCSE's, Durham Community Action, Better Together Network, County Durham Sport)● Faith Based Organisations (All faith based denominations, Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, Durham Cathedral Strategic Safeguarding Group, Safeguarding Advisors Group)● County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service● CAFCASS● British Transport Police |
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All organisations who work with children and their families are relevant to the work of the partnership. Organisations are welcome and encouraged to be represented within the partnership sub-groups and collaborate in any priority and learning processes.

4 Geographical Area

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership operates within one Local Authority; Durham County Council. There is cross boundary working particularly with Darlington which shares a Police Force within Durham Constabulary and across the North East and North Cumbria ICB which operates across the North East Region.

Child and Young People in County Durham in 2023-2024

19% of the total population are children and young people

8.2% of pupils in January 2024 school census are Black, Minority, Ethnic

23,000 (31.9%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals

There are 98,957 children and young people under 18 living in County Durham

Age 0-4; 24,372

Age 5-9; 28,041

Age 10-14; 29,893

Age 15-19; 32,486

0-19; 114,792

528,127; whole

population (1351)

3,560 children in need

160 children missing from education, Autumn Term 2023/24

1,213 children were in Local Authority Care

1,088 children are Children Missing from Education and Electively Home Educated

1,735 pupils attended state funded special schools

4% of pupils have a first language other than English

18.6% of school aged young people have recognised Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), that's around 14,200 learners

497 children were subject to a child protection plan

74,063 pupils attended state funded schools in 2023/24

3,042 children and young people in all schools in Durham have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) including those maintained by other Local Authorities

**Schools in
County
Durham**

**211 primary
schools,
including
8 infant only
8 junior only**

**31 secondary
schools**

**1 pupil
referral
unit**

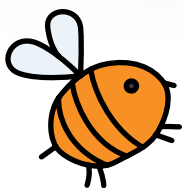
**1 Alternative
Provision
(AP) Free
school**

**9 special
schools**

**11 nursery
schools**

**10 independent
schools**

**Total
274
schools**



5 Delivery of the Arrangements

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) is established in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (as amended by Children and Social Work Act 2017) and Chapter 2 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership provides the safeguarding arrangements under which the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies work together to coordinate their safeguarding services, identify and respond to the needs of children in County Durham, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide scrutiny to ensure the effectiveness of the arrangements

The Safeguarding Partners share principles as set out in the Children’s Social Care National Framework and responsibility for ensuring effective local safeguarding arrangements. In situations that require a clear, single point of leadership, all three Safeguarding Partners should decide who would take the lead on issues that arise. These three Safeguarding Partners are charged with supporting and enabling local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where;

- Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- Information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families
- Children’s wishes and feelings are sought, heard and responded to
- Children are raised by their families, with their family networks or in family environments wherever possible
- There is a child-centred approach within a whole family focus

In order to work together effectively with local organisations and agencies the Safeguarding Partners will develop processes that:

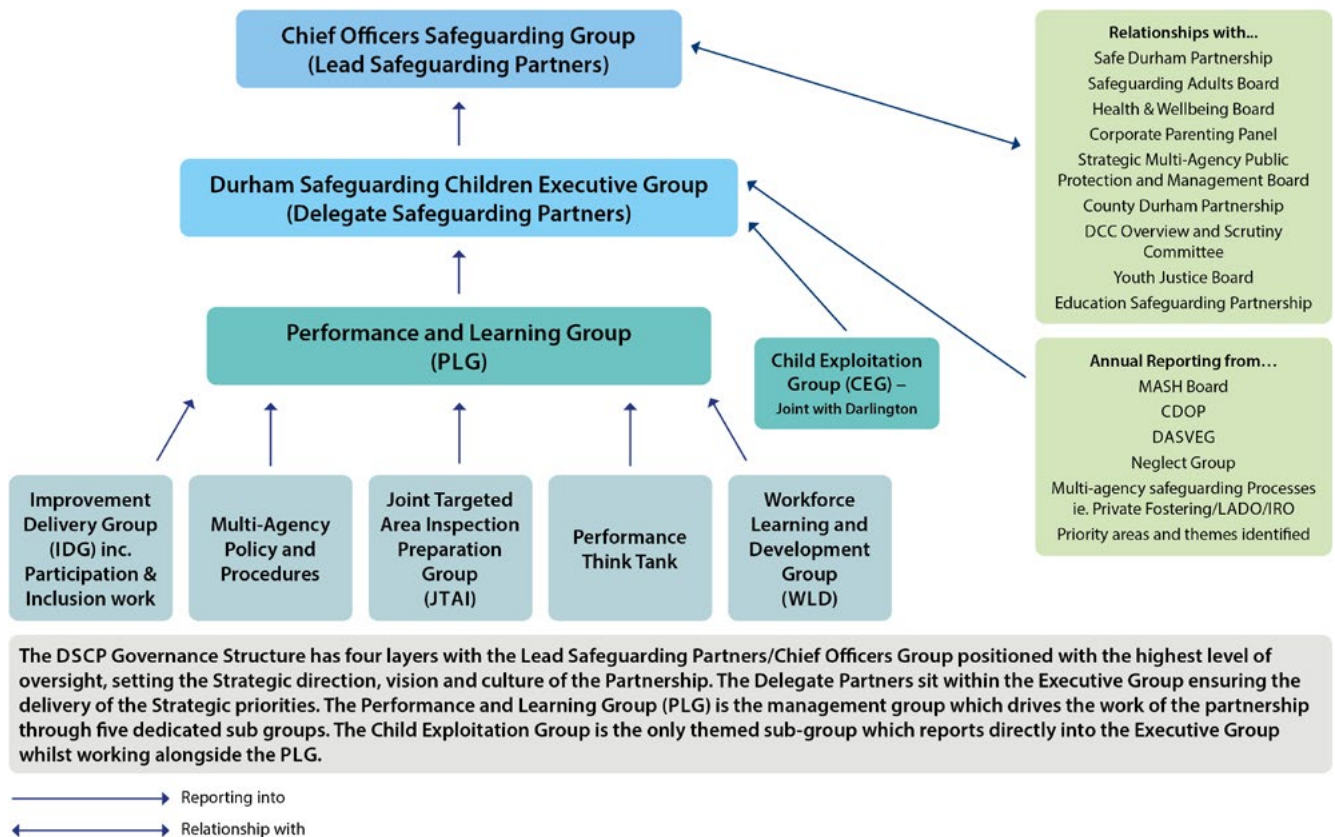
- Facilitate and drive action beyond usual institutional and agency constraints and boundaries
- Ensure the effective protection of children is founded on practitioners developing lasting and trusting relationships with children and their families
- Supports, oversees, challenges and facilitates these systems at a strategic level. In addition to monitoring safeguarding activity, the Partnership has a role in challenging single agency practice in relevant circumstances

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership reviewed their governance arrangements at the end of 2023-2024 to ensure that the local arrangements enabled Partners to fulfil their duties and were in line with the requirements set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. This included updating the partnership structure, sub-groups, governance and reporting mechanisms.

The Partnership continue to improve how we collaborate, scrutinise, assure, and drive the coordination of safeguarding activity. Within the partnership each sub-group has a clear term of reference and an annual workplan which align with the strategic priorities for the partnership. Within the updated structure each work plan demonstrates golden threads to priority areas and impact on the lives of children and young people. Agendas and facilitative discussions at all meetings focus on safeguarding practice, impact and improvement.



Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure



What we do within Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership:

- Proactively identify and respond to new and emerging safeguarding issues and develop multiagency policies, procedures, and work streams
- Communicate widely to persons and bodies of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so
- Raise awareness and train the multi-agency workforce to promote a common, shared understanding of local need in order to and provide children with the help they need
- Coordinate a response to serious safeguarding incidents, unexpected child deaths and dialogue with the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- Oversee, evaluate, and seek assurance on the effectiveness single/multi-agency safeguarding practice in order to drive improvement
- Make recommendations in the planning of services for children in County Durham that is driven by analysis of multi-agency data, intelligence, and learning
- Quality assurance remains our key driver across all the subgroups, using frameworks that will measure the impact of subgroup activities and challenge those working in the safeguarding arena

How do we achieve do it:

- Manage the strategic business plan which will be reviewed at the end of 2024-2025
- Challenging and learn from practice through the learning cycle process.
- Strengthening Quality Assurance Framework using Theory of Change Model
- Implement plan of Scrutiny
- Oversee Complex and Organised abuse process.
- Management of serious incident and child death notifications and processes
- Management and oversight of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Learning Together Model – near misses, poor and good practice
- Improved communications via Multi-agency Website, Newsletter & Social Media
- Supporting and developing the multi-agency policies and procedures
- Extensive Multi-agency Training Programme
- Support subgroups: Chief Officers Safeguarding Group (COSG), Executive Group, Performance and Learning Group (PLG), Child Exploitation Group (CEG), Improvement and Delivery Group (IDG), Multi-agency Policy and Procedures Group, Joint Targeted Area Inspection Preparation Group, Performance Think Tank, Workforce Learning and Development Group (WLD)

Partnership Groups

Chief Officers Safeguarding Group (COSG)

This is the group at the top of the Durham Safeguarding Child Partnership structure with the highest level of oversight, setting the strategic direction, vision and culture of the partnership. The Lead Safeguarding Partners meet three times per year at the Chief Officers Safeguarding Group, along with Delegate Safeguarding Partners and the Adults Safeguarding Board members to ensure a joined-up approach.

Executive Group

The Delegate Safeguarding Partners sit within the Executive Group ensuring the delivery of the strategic priorities. The Delegate Safeguarding Partners meet nine times per year. Three times at the ordinary Executive Group meetings joined by the chair of the Performance and Learning Group and other relevant parties. Three times a year at the Executive Group with a focus on quality assurance themes and reporting. Three times a year jointly with the Performance and Learning Group named as the Scoping and Review Meetings, where together the group reflect on the findings from the priority learning cycle and scope out future key lines of enquiry as a collaborative group.

Performance and Learning Group (PLG)

This is the Strategic management group that drives forward the improvement and assurance work of the partnership utilising five dedicated sub-groups. The group meets twelve times a year, nine times as the ordinary Performance and Learning group and three times a year jointly with the Executive group named as the Scoping and Review Meetings, where together group reflect on the findings from the priority learning cycle and scope out future key lines of enquiry as a collaborative group. The group oversees all of the priority work undertaken and reviews action plans to ensure these are reflected on and impact identified. The group has oversight of the performance model highlighting emerging themes across agencies. All local child safeguarding practice reviews and learning from practice is progressed through the group. This group currently sits beneath the Executive Group on the structure chart, the chair attends the Executive Group meetings.

Improvement and Delivery Group (IDG)

This group is a key group driving the priority work forward through a four month cycle of learning. Group membership changes every four months to ensure that members are the right people based on the priority for that learning cycle. The group meet as a minimum once a month.



The Improvement Delivery Group is a group that manages all of the priority improvement work within the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership. Its role is to consider and reflect a range of information from a variety of sources relating to a multi-agency practice issues and complete work around the safeguarding partnership's priorities. The Improvement Delivery Group considers the frontline challenges and successes and makes suggestions and recommendations to improve multi agency working within each priority piece of work.

The aim of the Improvement Delivery Group is to ensure a clear line of sight into practice across the landscape of provision for County Durham's most vulnerable children. The Improvement Delivery Group should bring together the views of children, their families, and professionals to inform the continuous development of services and approaches aimed at protecting children from harm and making positive differences to their lives. The Improvement Delivery Group chair attends and reports into the Performance and Learning Group.

Child Exploitation Group (CEG)

The Child Exploitation Group is a group that has a joint governance with neighbouring Darlington Safeguarding Partnership and who share a police force with Durham. The purpose of the group is to monitor, improve and evaluate the strategic response of partner agencies in tackling children missing from home, care and education and the reduction of child exploitation across Durham and Darlington. The group meet four times per year and report directly into the Executive Group, the chair attends the Performance and Learning Group to ensure a joined-up approach.

Multi-Agency Policy and Procedure Group

This group reviews and updates all of the multi-agency procedures and local resource documents that are shared across the partnership ensuring a multi-agency lens and consistency. The group meets six times a year, the group chair attends and reports into the Performance and Learning Group.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection Preparation Group (JTAI)

The Joint Targeted Area Inspection Preparation Group utilises the inspection framework as a tool for development and improvement across the Partnership. The Preparation Group explores 'the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk'. The group meets twelve times a year, the group chair attends and reports into the Performance and Learning Group.

Performance Think Tank

The performance analysis "Think Tank" is the working group for the partnership performance model, the group analyses the multi-agency performance data with a wider lens reporting relevant headline information and trends into the Performance and Learning Group. The group meet eight times a year, the group chair attends and reports into the Performance and Learning Group.

Workforce Learning and Development Group (WLD)

The Workforce Learning and Development Group has the overarching responsibility of integrating learning from child safeguarding practice reviews locally and nationally into training across the partnership. This group drives the Training Programme ensuring a multi-agency lens. The group has membership across partner and relevant agencies that enables them to identify, deliver, and evaluate multi-agency training in a consistent way that meets the needs of the whole workforce within the partnership and compliments what is being offered in their own organisation. The group meet four times a year, the group chair attends and reports into the Performance and Learning Group.



6 Voice of Children, Young People, Families and Carers

Hearing the voices of children and their families is an integral part of the work of the partnership, within the DSCP we strive to ensure that their voice is routinely included in all the work we complete. The child's voice not only refers to what children say directly, but to many other aspects of their presentation. It means seeing their experiences from their point of view. The DSCP encourages partners to regularly seek opportunities to gather the views of children, young people, and their families to inform initiatives and partnership developments.

Understanding the lived experiences of our children and young people in Durham in terms of culture, poverty, identity, diversity and the environment in which they are living is crucial if we are to address safeguarding issues. The importance of challenging racism, adultification and intersectionality are just some areas where the partnership needs to take a lead. Successful outcomes for children depend on strong relationships between parents/carers, children and young people and the practitioners working with them. The signs of safety model is the means through which practitioners work collaboratively with individuals and families to establish a shared understanding of what needs to be done, and by whom, in order for the concerns about a child's wellbeing to be resolved. A child centered approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child.

- All commissioned training must clearly evidence how the voice of the child is incorporated in DSCP training opportunities
- Children and young people have the opportunity to voice their opinions in a number of our subgroups and within all of our priority work.
- There is a specific evidence-based focus on how partners capture the voice of the child in all audits undertaken. This offers assurance to the DSCP that not only are children/young people listened to, but they are also encouraged and supported in engaging in decision making processes.
- Building and maintaining strong relationships with existing participation networks
- Children, young people, parents and carers are invited to collaborate on the partnership website and input into learning and development opportunities
- Partners will work in partnership with parents and carers where possible by building relationships, using clear language and communication, by involving and empowering parents and carers and their families

Partners will ensure that practitioners follow the principles for working with parents and carers as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 chapter 1.

Areas for further development include ensuring that the nuance of a person's situation is reflected in written reports, and that reports are in plain language and are shared with the child. We will utilise what children and young people tell us and offer further opportunities to develop practice around their views. Scrutiny activity will also be more inclusive of children and families using existing mechanisms. It will be important to ensure that children and young people who are involved in the work of scrutinising the Partnership can be properly supported.



7 Education, Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise (VCSE), Sports Clubs and Faith-Based Organisations

Education, which includes infant, primary and junior schools, maintained schools, academies, academy trusts, free schools, pupil referral units, special schools, independent schools, alternative provisions, colleges, early years nursery and childcare settings and any other educational providers; all have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. Many voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE), sports clubs and faith-based organisations provide education and activities for children and young people as part of their work. People working in education, VCSE's, sports clubs and faith-based organisations play an important role in building relationships, providing direct support to children and identifying concerns and responding to those concerns. They may be the first trusted adult to whom children report safeguarding concerns.

The Corporate Director for Children and Young Peoples Services and Chief Executive are responsible for Local Authority Education, they are the Delegate and Lead Safeguarding Partners therefore represent Education within the Executive and Chief Officers Safeguarding Groups. All of the Durham Safeguarding Partnership sub-groups have good representation from Local Authority Education Services who represent all education provisions and ensure that information is shared, and views gathered so that there is wide representation, this is partially due to the significant staffing resource that remains within the Local Authority. The sub-groups all have representation from Durham Community Action who support VCSEs across Durham and act as conduit across a vast footprint. The Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Core Membership includes representation from Schools and Early Years, other Education settings such as colleges, VCSEs, sports clubs and faith-based organisations are invited where relevant.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership are working to ensure that there is collaboration with all education providers. There are a number of education meetings in place to support relationship building which are well attended across all provisions and include representation from the 143 Maintained Schools and 119 Academies who are represented across 23 Academy Trusts. Education Safeguarding Partnership, Designated Safeguarding Lead network and Durham Association of Secondary Headteachers meetings are all held three times a year with good representation. There are two Head Teacher briefings held by the Local Authority Head of Education, one of which is open to all schools. There is a good communications network through regular safeguarding emails and the Schools Portal which are both open to all provisions.

The VCSEs, sports clubs and faith based organisation network is vast, and Durham Community Action are pivotal in supporting the Partnership to navigate such a large network. Where possible the partnership aims to build relationships with organisations direct by attending the Better Together Forum, County Durham Sport and a number of Faith Organisation Safeguarding Groups.

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership provide full access to the Training Programme free of charge to all VCSEs, sports clubs, faith-based organisations and Education providers including Alternative Provisions, the only exception being Independent Schools who are charged a minimal fee. Providers across the landscape have a good relationship with the partnership Training coordinator who ensures that the offer is inclusive and has delivered several bespoke sessions helping build on our relationships. All settings are communicated with regularly and invited to participate in improvement work, scrutiny and assurance and the organisational safeguarding assessment. Representatives from the Partnership and Business Unit attend all possible meetings across VCSEs, sports clubs, faith-based organisations and Education to ensure there is good relationships and communication, learning is shared and collaboration with improvement work encouraged.

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is committed to continuing to build on the relationships with VCSEs, sports clubs, faith-based organisations and Education providers, there are clear aims and objectives within the 2024-2026 Scrutiny Plan and Working Together and Towards Reform Action Plan.

8 Relationship with Secure Establishments, Youth Custody and Residential Homes

Durham has one secure establishment within the local area; Aycliffe Secure Services Centre. The Centre houses a changing population of young people (aged 10-17) with complex needs. The home regularly reports information regarding the use of restraint to the Youth Custody Service and Ofsted. The DSCP reviews data and information relating to the use of restraint and also completes an annual site visit. Scrutiny involves review of the home's CCTV where randomly selected incidents are reviewed with a manager from the home about the use of restraint, the circumstances leading up to the incident and what happened afterwards. This scrutiny provides assurance to the Partnership that the use of restraint is being monitored in terms of legality and proportionality in cooperation with the centre. The Aycliffe Centre has again been judged as 'good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection, with children's education and learning, how well children and young people are helped and protected, and the effectiveness of leaders and managers judged as 'good' and children's health being judged as 'outstanding'.

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership respond to any concerns identified relating to Youth Custody. There is a representative from the Youth Justice Board within the membership of the Performance and Learning Group and a member of the Performance and Learning Group within the membership of the Youth Justice Board to ensure open communication and strong relationships. The partnership Business Manager is represented within the Police Child and Family Scrutiny panel where cases involving Youth Custody have been scrutinised and any learning identified.

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have strong relationships with Local Authority residential homes within Durham. The Business Manager is represented at the Local Authority Inspection Preparation group where residential homes are discussed and Ofsted reports shared. The vice chair of the Performance and Learning Group is represented at Corporate Parenting Panel which includes reg44s which are reported by the Independent Visitor and representation from commissioning which ensures that information is shared, and any areas of concern identified.

The Business Unit are exploring a similar framework to that applied to Secure settings where there is scrutiny of the use of restraints within residential settings to identify learning and good practice.

Partnership members have a wide view across the landscape that allows areas of concern to be identified and highlighted within the Performance and Learning Group. All of the above relationships are regularly reviewed, and we are exploring how this can feed into the performance framework and be strengthened.



9 Training Programme

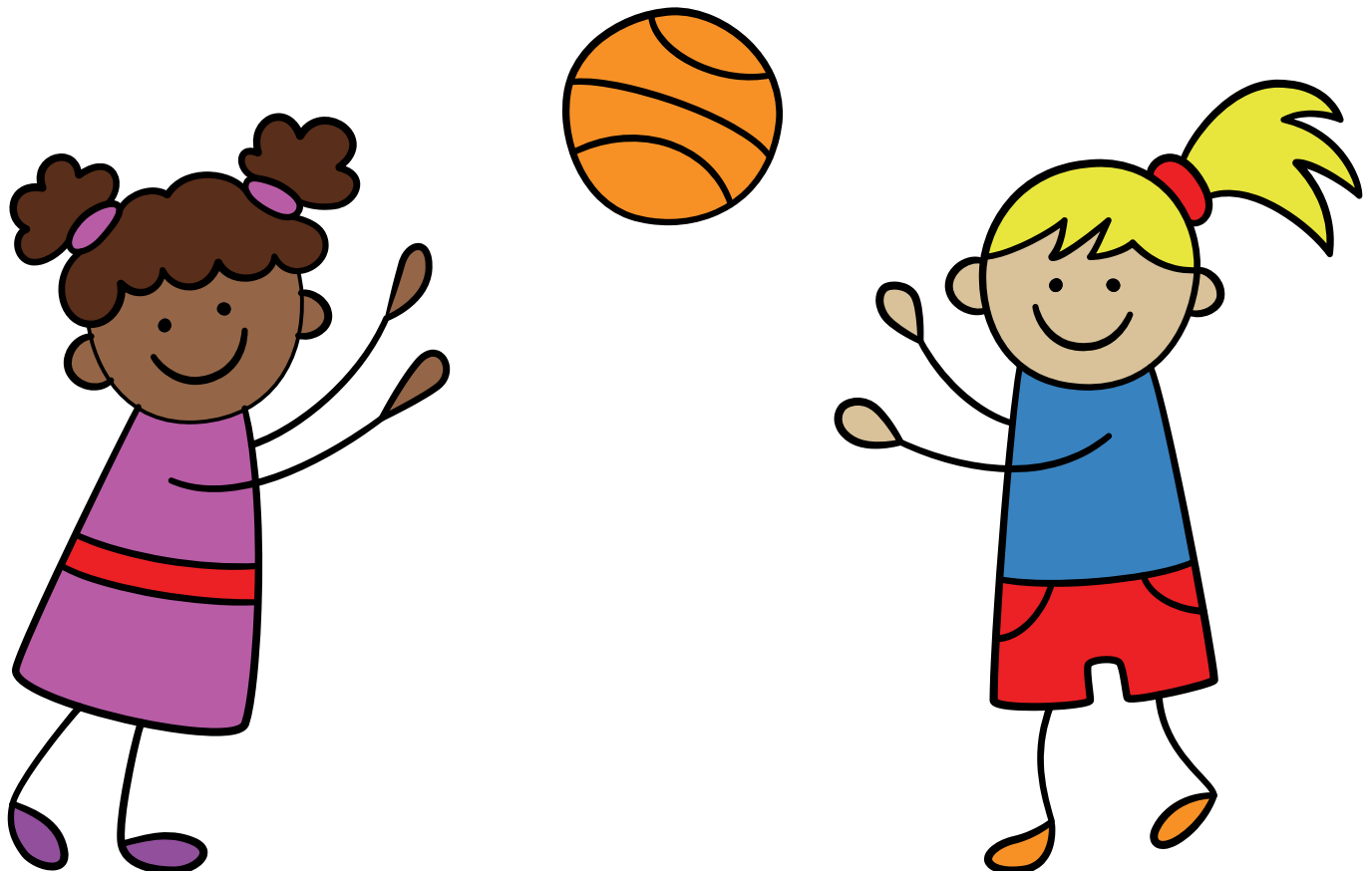
Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have a well-established training programme managed by a designated Partnership Training Coordinator and Business Support Officer within the Business Unit. The Workforce Learning and Development Group is a multi-agency sub-group which has the overarching responsibility of integrating learning from child safeguarding practice reviews locally and nationally into training across the partnership. The dedicated group and workforce have helped to identify, deliver, and evaluate multi-agency training in a consistent way that meets the needs of the whole workforce within the partnership and compliments what is being offered across partners own organisations. 2023-2024 saw a total of 14,793 courses completed across the offered platforms.

Durham offers an extensive flexible training programme of 15 commissioned courses delivered face to face or via teams/ zoom and 30 e-learning courses, this is free to all partners including all education and VCSEs, the exception being any for-profit organisations for which there is a minimal one-off registration fee. Learning from practice and priority briefings are delivered direct to agencies upon request, where there is an identified gap from monitoring attendance or if there is significant single agency learning identified which may require a more tailored intervention. There is a budget allocated to facilitate a minimum of one development day a year when multi-agency learning is identified that requires a targeted response around practice improvement. The training programme delivers an annual programme of learning under "Safeguarding Week" which focusses on a theme identified through local and national learning, this is free to all practitioners working within Durham without exception, 2024-2025 Safeguarding Week will deliver 21 sessions across 5 days focussing on inclusion.

The Training Coordinator delivers chargeable bespoke training to partners upon request, these sessions are tailored and designed to meet the needs of an individual organisation whilst ensuring a multi-agency lens. Income generated from bespoke training is utilised for additional training and events.

Training Providers are commissioned through the Business Unit with oversight of the Workforce Learning and Development Group, resources within the Partnership and Business Unit are utilised as well as commissioned external training providers. The training programme is reviewed annually or sooner if an emerging trend requires a response, and courses are added throughout the year.

The Training Programme has 100% feedback on all courses completed, this feedback is analysed and used to inform future programmes. During 2023-2024 79% of practitioners fed back that they believed the training accessed would have a "significant" impact on their practice with children, young people and families. A full annual report is available via the DSCP website.



10 Independent Scrutiny arrangements

Due to the retirement of the Independent Chair and Scrutineer in October 2023 the partnership was able to review their arrangements for Independent Scrutiny in line with the requirements set out within Working Together 2023. The model agreed by Durham will maintain the critical friend role and allow for strong relationships whilst give flexibility to develop other SMART pieces of work and be innovative in future. The model sets out that the partnership will commission an Independent Scrutineer for an estimated 15-20 days per year and agree a budget which can be utilised to strengthen the arrangements giving flexibility to commissioning external resources. There is an expectation that up to three pieces of scrutiny work will be completed per year with one of these involving a wider panel and at least one of these including children and young people as part of the scrutiny.

The Partnership has recently commissioned an Independent Scrutineer to ensure that there is a rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function providing challenge to the safeguarding partners.

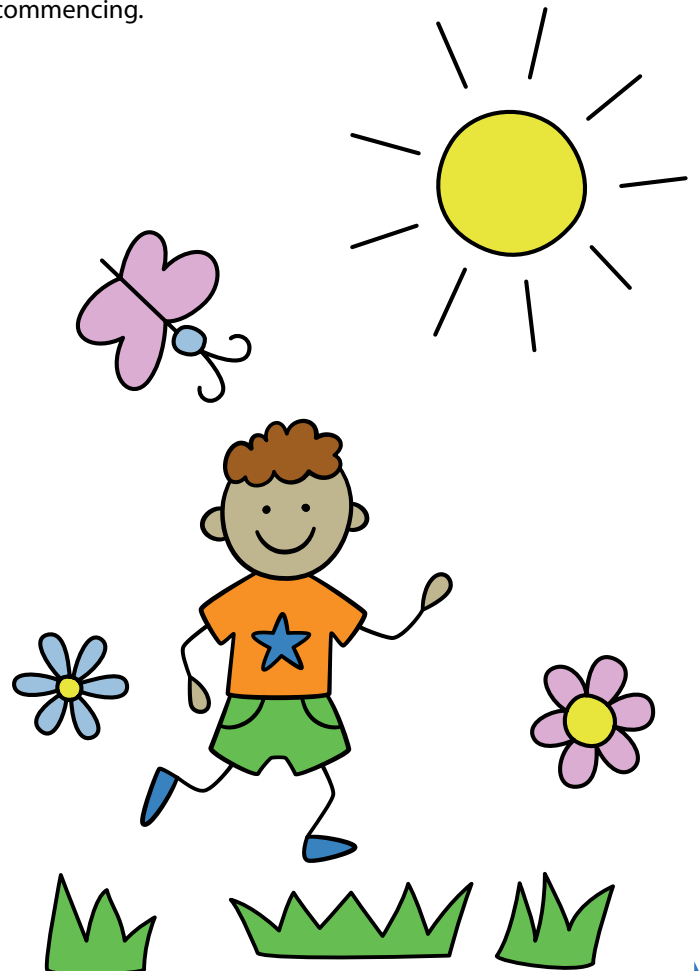
The Independent Scrutineer provides accountability for the work undertaken by the DSCP by way of reports to relevant strategic groups. Effective communication between the Business Manager and Independent Scrutineer ensures that there is a clear link between the subgroups and Executive Group, enabling risks, themes, and opportunities to be highlighted at an executive level, and challenge, direction and opportunities to be shared into subgroups.

Six Principles of Safeguarding

Empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability.

The overarching purpose of scrutiny is to reassure the DSCP on how well and effective the partnership safeguarding arrangements are working for children, families, carers and practitioners; to seek to identify risks, barriers, strengths weaknesses and opportunities and to involve a wide audience especially children and young people in producing the findings. To ensure best practise and comparison it is proposed that the regional approach to our DSCP scrutiny is followed, building on the six Principles of Safeguarding and the six steps of Independent Scrutiny. The six steps scrutiny model is not a check list and so will need to be used as a basis for the approach taken however each piece of scrutiny will be bespoke to the subject matter and the reassurances desired from the piece of scrutiny. For each review, terms of reference will be scoped, developed and agreed prior to the work commencing.

The DSCP have agreed a plan of Scrutiny from September 2024 to March 2026 which links to core safeguarding arrangements, strategic business plan and areas identified through inspections and learning. This plan will help to evidence the effectiveness of these arrangements and any recommendations for improvements. Independent Scrutiny will form part of the DSCP Quality Assurance Framework.



11 Process for Undertaking Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Learning

Working Together 2023 sets out clear guidance for Safeguarding Partners in relation to learning from serious incidents and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews as well as more broadly recommending that learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice. There is a shared aim in identifying improvements to practice and protecting children from harm, to highlight commonly recurring areas that may need further investigation and share learning, including from success, that could lead to improvements elsewhere. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership aim to use learning from previous incidents to prompt reflection and analysis of where improvements need to be secured and action taken, learning is important to identify reoccurring themes that may need wider consideration. Safeguarding partners play an integral role in establishing a system of learning and reflection noting that reflecting on how well the system is working, understanding if there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice needs to change is critical in the system being dynamic and improving our response to children and their families. It is important to remember that Learning is not conducted in order to establish or apportion blame to those individuals or agencies working with children but should seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents. Whilst there is clear guidance and requirements when there have been serious incidents and learning from these is needed, there is also an acknowledgement that not all cases meet the definition of a 'serious incident' but may still raise issues of importance where there has been good practice, poor practice or a 'near-miss' incident all which may enable learning.

The Partnership recognises that if we focus learning only on serious safeguarding incidents where a child has died or been seriously harmed and abuse is known or suspected, we risk limiting or distorting our understanding of whole system functioning. We know that there are sometimes 'no harm' incidents, concerns about new safeguarding challenges, feedback from children and families and, more positively, evidence of good practice that needs to be shared to improve the way we work.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have embedded the Learning Together Model to inform the practice in Durham and support a shared approach to Learning across partners.

We welcome referrals for learning through established processes supported by our 'Learning Together Practice Guidance'.

The key elements that define the process are;

- If the child has died or suffered serious injury meeting the threshold for notifiable incident
- If there is a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review agreed
- If there is learning from a case but neither of the above are relevant

There are two referral routes for learning based on the above;

- Referral for a case where the referrer believes that the serious incident is notifiable
- Referral for a potential learning opportunity

All learning referrals are overseen by the partnership 'Performance and Learning' sub group, with reporting up to the Delegate Safeguarding Partners and Lead Safeguarding Partners where appropriate. The group is responsible for ensuring that learning is disseminated through any identified mechanism relevant to the learning, including learning briefings or the training programme. The mechanism for delivery is agreed on an individual case by case basis to ensure the best approach is taken.

Where a Child Safeguarding Practice Review has been agreed a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel made up of core members from the Performance and Learning Group and other relevant parties oversees the Review Process. Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have made a significant investment to upskill a number of practitioners from various agencies including the Performance and Learning Group members, to enable Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews to be completed using internal resources where possible. During the Rapid Review meeting when a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review is recommended the Panel will consider if this can be completed in house or needs to be commissioned externally.

The Delegate and Lead Safeguarding Partners will make any final decisions regarding the progression and commissioning of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The commissioning of external reviewers is managed by the Business Unit

through the Corporate Procurement Process. All reviews should include the child’s perspective and family context, where appropriate families will be included in the review process.

All reviews, learning recommendations and action plans are monitored through reporting mechanisms to the Performance and Learning Group, Delegate Safeguarding Partners and Lead Safeguarding Partners. The Partnership will have a presumption of transparency about the publication of its reviews, unless particular circumstances warrant not publishing or publishing a redacted version for example due to the need not to compromise the current safety and well-being of individual children or their families.

The Durham Safeguarding Partnership Learning Together Practice Model guidance sets out the process for all learning across the partnership in detail.

12 Information Sharing

Following the recommendations of the Independent Review into Children’s Social Care by Josh MacAlister, published in 2022, the Department of Education commissioned work to support a number of local safeguarding children partnerships to strengthen their local safeguarding information sharing governance arrangements. They invited areas across the country to apply for support and expertise, and Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership were successful in our application. We have worked in partnership with Somerset Council to review and implement a new overarching strategic information sharing agreement (Tier 1) and also to work on a particular topic relating to safeguarding in the form of a Tier 2 information sharing agreement. As a priority of the partnership, the Tier 2 agreement focuses specifically on how we share information relating to Harm Outside of the Home.

Working with experts, we have developed our Durham Tier 1 agreement, supported by our Delegate and Lead Safeguarding Partners, with a strategic commitment from twelve partners and relevant agencies to implement within their respective organisations to enable efficient and effective information sharing across the partnership.

We have created a bespoke training package based on the guidance within Working Together 2023 and DfE Information Sharing Advice for practitioners. This reflects a positive change in the way we approach information sharing in the context of safeguarding, with particular emphasis on a change in culture relating to ‘consent v public task’ and a greater understanding of lawful basis. The training delivers key messages such as “It is only through sharing information that agencies or organisations and practitioners build a richer picture of the day-to-day life of the child and family they are working with.”

The feedback and impact of the training will be monitored by the Workforce Learning and Development Group and reported up to the Performance and Learning Group, Delegate Safeguarding Partners Executive Group and Lead Safeguarding Partners Chief Officers Group.

13 Performance Model

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership developed an agreed dataset that monitors multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements to look at this data set and gather the most impactful information the partnership also coordinated a sub group, named ‘Think Tank’. The ‘Think Tank’ has the following functions:

- A Performance analysis “Think Tank” including the right people from all agencies analysing multi-agency data together with a wider lens
- Input from; Children’s Social Care, Police, ICB, Primary Care, HDFT, CDDFT, Dentists, Pharmacies, Probation, Prison Service, CAFCASS, Harbour, Humankind, Education, Early Years, Housing, Voluntary Sector
- Flexible Indicators across 12 key themes, with a multi-agency lens always asking what that means for each agency.
- Think Tank has autonomy on indicators and reporting
- Combining Quantitative and Qualitative data
- including surveys and appreciative enquiry alongside findings from multi agency and single agency audits, reviews, and priority work
- Ensuring that data is aligned to priorities and Quality Assurance Model to inform the wider Quality Assurance and Performance Framework
- Thinking about the “So What” question and impact
- Ensuring Child and Young Person, Families, Carers and Practitioners Voices are heard
- Quarterly reporting of relevant headline information in a Signs of Safety format

14 Threshold Document

The Durham threshold document sets out the local criteria for action and includes links to additional information which may assist with professional judgement in understanding, and subsequently meeting a child and family's needs. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who meets families has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. Across Durham we expect everyone to take a child-centred approach. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say and take their views seriously. The best way to address a concern is through a conversation with the family (if this does not increase the risk for the child or anyone else) and with all the other practitioners involved.

Durham Continuum of Need model and threshold document is available on the DSCP website. This will be reviewed and updated twice a year to ensure that it aligns with the multiagency safeguarding arrangements.

15 Strategic Business Plan

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership has a Strategic Business Plan that sets out the partnership priorities. The plan is set out across an agreed time period however consideration for review is given annually to ensure that it remains appropriate within the time period in line with any changing local and national demands. The Strategic Business Plan will be shared on the Partnerships website.

16 Annual Report

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership will produce an independently scrutinised yearly report which sets out what the Partnership has done, the impact it has had and how effective its multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have been in practice.

The report will be published on the Partnerships website and with relational boards and groups in line with local reporting agreements. In line with the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance the report will also be sent to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care.

17 Funding Arrangements

The 2024-2025 financial contributions from the Statutory and non-Statutory partners are as follows,

| Partner | Contribution 2024-2025 (£) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Durham County Council | 191,604 |
| Integrated Care Board (ICB) | 105,135 |
| Durham Constabulary | 39,285* |
| Probation | 4,873 |
| HDFT | 2,680 |
| CDDFT | 2,680 |
| Total | 347,060 |

**In addition to the financial contribution Durham Constabulary contribute a Partnership Analyst as a fulltime resource shared between the Durham and Darlington Children and Adults Partnerships*

In addition to the contributions made by partners income is generated by the training programme through non-attendance charges, registration fees from profit organisations, bespoke training charges. This is forecast for 2024-2025 at £6,000. Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership is grateful for all contributions including the non-financial contributions which are made from a wide number of partners and relevant agencies providing their time and knowledge, these resources are vital to supporting the partnership to deliver on the ambition for effective multi-agency arrangements.

18 Dispute Resolution

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout. Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership will expect and support practitioners at all levels to hold one another to account and to challenge appropriately when concerns or disputes relating to the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements arise. Partners within Durham are committed to resolving disputes by having open and transparent conversations, and respectfully challenging each other. Partners are encouraged to use whistleblowing procedures where appropriate.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership has a multi-agency process for the resolution and escalation of professional disagreements. The 'Managing Professional Differences Policy' provides guidance to follow in the event that professional differences cannot be resolved through discussion and negotiation between practitioners/agencies. A 'Multi-Agency Professional Challenge/Resolution Process' specifically sets out the process where there is a challenge relating to Child Protection Processes.

