

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report 2024/2025



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1 Introduction

Welcome to the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) 2024-2025 annual report. The DSCP annual report aims to provide an overview of the last years multi agency safeguarding activities, reflecting the learning and sustained improvements in our local safeguarding system by 'putting together the pieces of the jigsaw' to get a better understanding of practice on the ground.

Within the DSCP we continue to encourage a culture of open discussion, and we ask our partners to not shy away from challenge. We encourage all partner agencies to identify learning, improvement, and - ultimately consider the "so what" question thinking about how our work impacts the Children and Young People in County Durham. Through risk analysis and decision making at the right levels we are proactive in identifying emerging challenges and responding as a multi-agency group. Our aim is to create strong relationships and a positive multiagency environment in our shared and equal duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of Durham Children and Young People.

The revised Working Together 2023 guidance continues to be a driver around many changes and improvements within our practice in the DSCP. This Annual Report's findings provide the reader with evidence that safeguarding remained a priority for all partner agencies, demonstrated by consistently high levels of attendance, engagement in embedded sub-groups and a strong culture of innovation, challenge and debate keeping children and local communities at the heart of the work. To achieve the best possible outcomes, a key focus remains on the lived experiences of children and young people. The emphasis continues to be how, as a partnership we can work together to help keep them safe in their local communities, securing their physical and emotional wellbeing and ensuring they have access to the highest-quality, evidence-based support.

We want to thank all the partners that are working across the Partnership in a variety of roles, to support children, young people, and families every day. We are immensely grateful for all that you, our workforce, do across the county, day to day – thank you!



Vicky Playforth
Director of Nursing
North East & North
Cumbria Integrated
Care Board



Nicola Lawrence
Detective Chief
Superintendent
Durham Constabulary



John Pearce
Corporate Director
Durham Children and
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Samantha Allan
Chief Executive
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Care Board



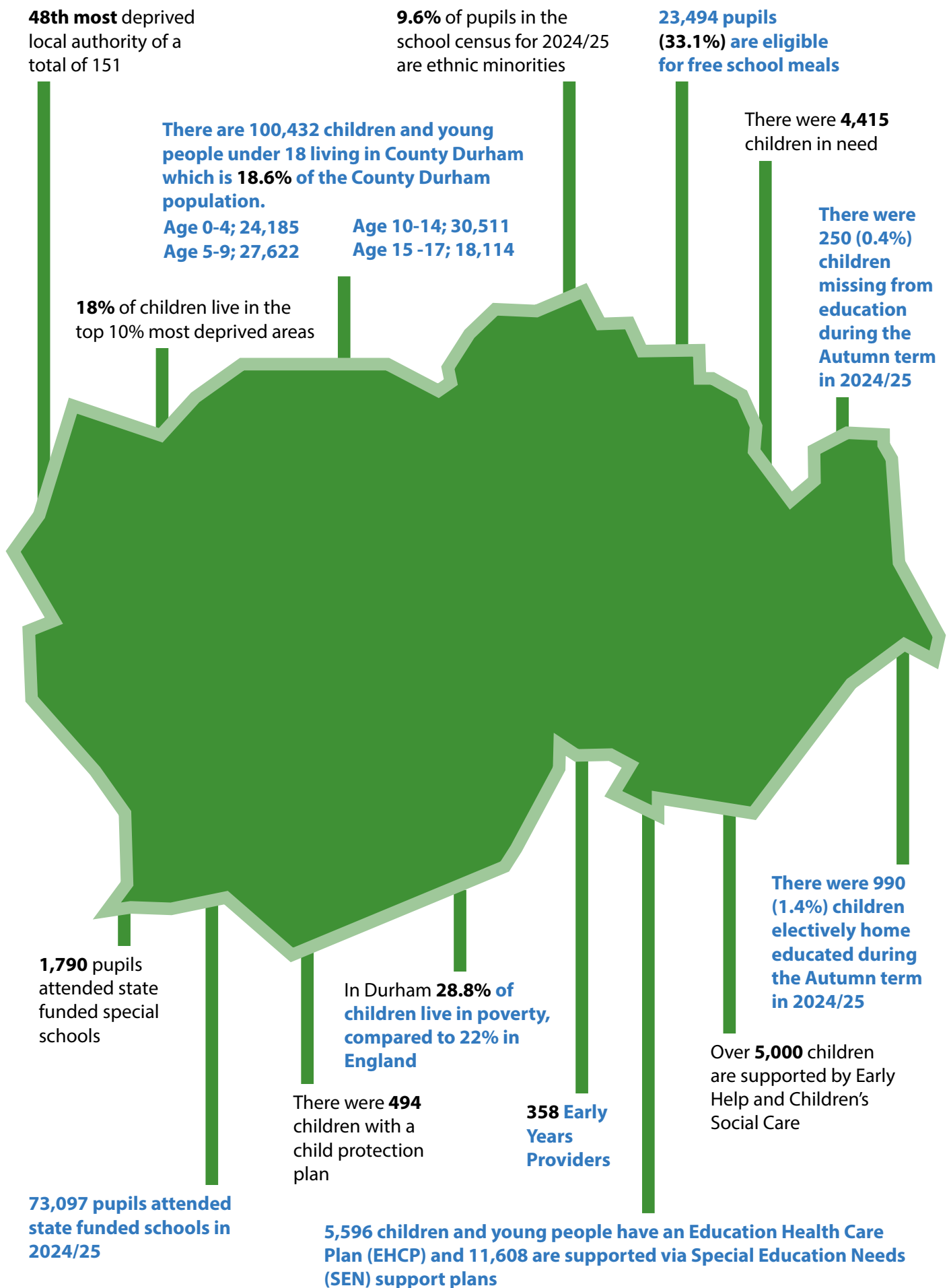
Rachel Bacon
Chief Constable
Durham Constabulary



John Hewitt
Chief Executive Officer
Durham County
Council



2 Children and Young People in County Durham





**Schools in
County Durham**

**190 primary
schools,
including
7 infant only
5 junior only**

**29 secondary
schools**

**1 pupil
referral
unit**

**42 Alternative
Provision
providers**

**8 special
schools**

**10 nursery
schools**

**6 independent
schools**

**Total
250
schools**

3 About Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) is a statutory, multi-organisation partnership coordinated by a business unit, which oversees and leads children's safeguarding across the Durham County Council area. The main objective of the DSCP is to gain assurance that local safeguarding arrangements, comprised of partner organisations, are working effectively, individually, and together, to support and safeguard children in our area who are at risk of abuse and neglect.

How the DSCP is Structured

The Durham Safeguarding Children 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 terms of reference and an annual workplan will align with the strategic priorities for the partnership. Within the updated structure each work plan demonstrates 'golden threads' of practice that run through 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.

Lead Safeguarding Partners

The Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) within the DSCP lead and drive the changes that the government have set out through the Chief Officers Safeguarding Group. This group is made up of the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency and conducted jointly with members from the Adults Safeguarding Board. For local authorities, the LSP is the Chief Executive Officer. For the Integrated Care Board (ICB) the LSP is the Chief Executive and for police the LSP is defined as the Chief Officer of Police. On behalf of their organisations the LSPs speak with authority, take decisions and commit to them on policy, resourcing and practice matters.

The LSPs are established, robust and effective, with a clear commitment from partners to review and improve working methods, building on strengths and innovation within the strong partnership relationships that exist. LSPs are responsible for holding their own organisation to account, on how effectively they participate and implement the local arrangements. They are responsible for discharging their own statutory duties. The LSPs function at the highest-level, with over-arching local governance that primarily focuses on safeguarding systems, performance, and resourcing.

The LSPs are jointly responsible for the involvement and oversight of all relevant agencies, and act as a team, as opposed to as a voice for their own organisation alone. The LSPs hold responsibility for the implementation of recommendations and learning from serious incidents, local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, although elements of monitoring these can be delegated.

Delegate Safeguarding Partners/Executive Group

The executive groups sit directly under the LSP. This group consists of the statutory Delegate Safeguarding Partners (DSP). For the Local Authority the DSP is the Corporate Director of Children and Young Peoples Services. For ICB's the DSP is the Director of Nursing and for Police the DSP is the Detective Chief Superintendent.

The partnership chair has authority, is decisive and enables resource allocation, with risk escalation to lead safeguarding partners at the executive. The Chair of the executive group changes every 12 months. The chair between April 2024-2025 was John Pearce, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services. In April 2025 the chairing responsibility will move to another member of the executive group. This is Nicola Lawrence Detective Chief Superintendent.

There were several executive leadership meetings undertaken during the period 2024/25. Executive meetings focus upon the rapid and decisive partnership action required to safeguard Durham children, young people and families who are at risk of harm and abuse. All three lead safeguarding partners have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements.

In 2024 the Executive Group continued to hold assurance meetings. These meetings are in person and allowed the Executive Group to have a greater focus on scrutiny and assurance regarding key practice and safeguarding priorities. The sessions were held for senior officers from partner agencies to provide evidence regarding the effectiveness of their safeguarding arrangements for children and young people within their agency and to allow the executive group to challenge, scrutinise and seek assurance around this work.

Business Unit

The partnership Business Unit undertake the management and support function of the partnership. The business unit staffing has remained stable over the past 12 months, allowing the team to grow in their skills and confidence to support the wider partnership. The 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.



What we do within Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

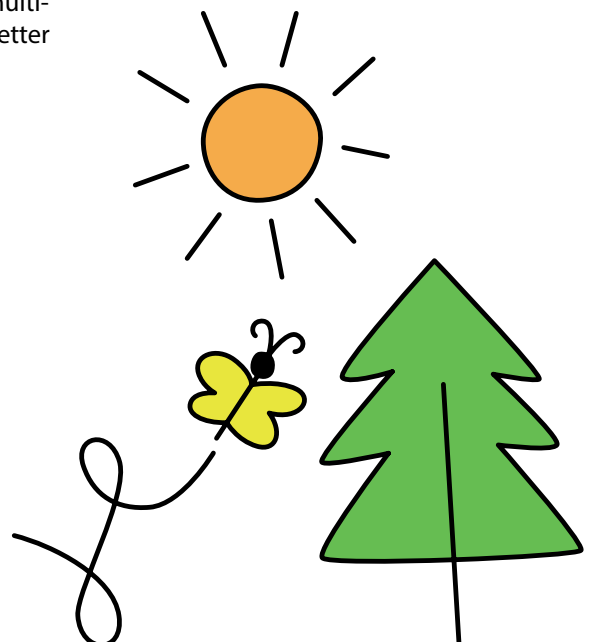
- Proactively identify and respond to new and emerging safeguarding issues and develop multiagency policies, procedures, and work streams.
- Communicate widely to people and organisations about the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so.
- Raise awareness and train the multi-agency workforce to promote a common, shared understanding of local need to 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 of single/multi-agency safeguarding practice 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.

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 is underpinned through our three Core Values – Tenacity; Curiosity; Openness.

How do we achieve it?

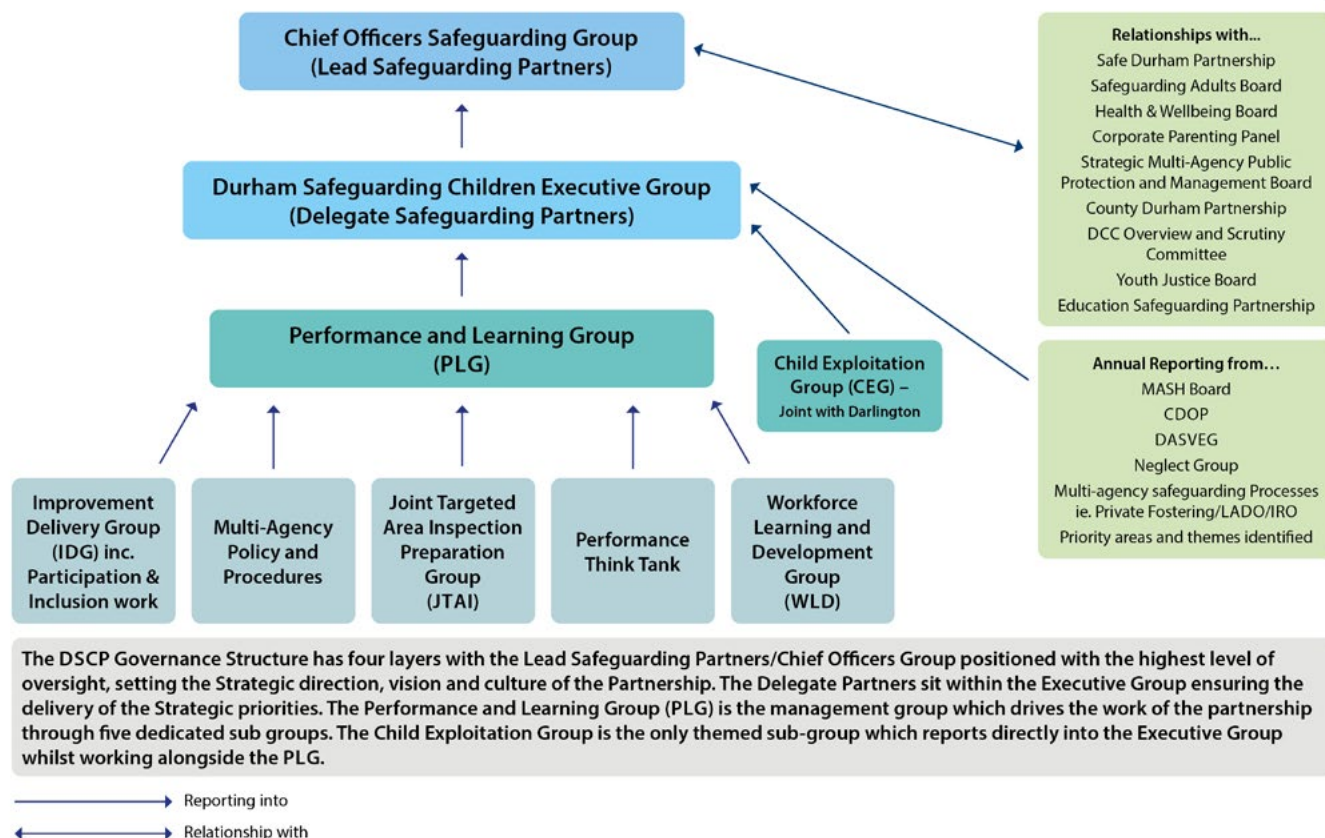
- Manage the strategic business plan which has 4 priority areas (2023-2025)
- Challenge each other and learn from practice through the learning cycle process
- Performance Framework
- Oversee Complex and Organised abuse process
- Support subgroups: Child Exploitation Group (CEG), Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI), Multi-agency Procedure Group, Workforce Learning and Development Group (WFD), Performance & Learning Group (PLG), Improvement & Delivery Group (IDG), Performance Think Tank
- Management of serious incident and child death notifications and processes
- Management and oversight of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Learning from near misses, poor and good practice
- Disseminate information and learning through our multi-agency Website, Newsletter and X



4 Safeguarding Partnership Subgroups

The Partnership has a range of subgroups sitting under the Lead and Delegate Safeguarding Partners that lead on areas of DSCP practice improvement and are crucial in ensuring that the Partnership's priorities are delivered. These groups ensure that the Partnership really makes a difference to local practice and to the outcomes for children and young people. Each subgroup has a clear remit and a transparent mechanism for reporting to the Lead and Delegate Safeguarding Partners. Each subgroup's terms of reference, chairing roles and membership are reviewed annually.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure



During 2024-2025 The DSCP had seven principal sub-groups to progress the Strategic Business Plan and core business as set out in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements:

- Performance and Learning Group (PLG)
- Improvement Delivery Group (IDG)
- Multi-agency Policy and Procedure group
- Joint Targeted Area Improvement (JTAI)
- Performance Think Tank
- Workforce Learning and Development (WLD)
- Child Exploitation Group (CEG).



Performance and Learning Group

The Performance and Learning Group monitors the impact and outcomes of partner activity on behalf of the DSCP, as required by Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. The group considers the performance of all agencies involved in safeguarding children using the vision of the DSCP as a basis from which to assess good practice and concerns, reporting such to the Safeguarding Executive Group. The Group takes forward key actions and improvements identified by the Safeguarding Partnership Executive and plans and coordinates learning activities. This will include learning from Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews and learning from national best practice.

Achievements 2024-2025

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Agreed development of a Serious Incident Notification (SIN) /Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) panel● We are now members of the Durham Learning Together practice model● Business Unit developed a more streamlined process for Learning and Reviews in the partnership● PLG considered referrals for learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Attended 3 scoping and review meetings jointly with LSPs to consider the partnership priorities and refine the key lines of enquiry for IDG● Business unit then led the IDG in taking forward those topics and questions further● Oversight of action plans from the IDG project work● Supported the Business Unit in developing the Information Sharing Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Oversight of action plans for learning from reflective discussions and rapid reviews● Oversight of learning briefings created by the Business unit in response to local and national learning● Oversight of performance Think Tank output. |
|---|--|--|

Word cloud of achievements

- Engagement in governance review led by the Business Unit
- Engagement in organisation safeguarding Assessment pilot led by the Business group
- Engagement in Development Days
- Engaged in the Multiagency Assurance Visits
- Engaged in Care Leaver death review.

Received Updates from

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Partnership scrutiny plan● Workforce Learning and Development Group● Information sharing agreement – Tier 1● Oversight of action plans for learning from reflective discussions● Impact of Working Together document Guidance● Governance structure for the partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● SEND inspection● Private Fostering● Amendments to PACE● JTAI - Multi-Agency Serious Youth Violence Audit● Concealed pregnancies. |
|--|--|

What difference has this made

The PLG model has been developed to be structured around an active learning approach, making links with a range of activity to support the priority areas of work including performance, local learning, local practice themes, national practice themes, assurance visits, and views of practitioners, children, and their families.

The PLG has integrated with other multiagency partnership groups to ensure learning is embedded in practice in all areas of the partnership.

The PLG have supported the multi-agency team to have a clear model to share and communicate learning and practice across the partnership.

Next Steps

The new Working Together guidance has highlighted a number of developments with respect to safeguarding practice across the partnership and the PLG is key to ensuring this is embedded in multiagency practice.

The PLG will finalise the development of a new Child Review Panel to manage local safeguarding reviews.

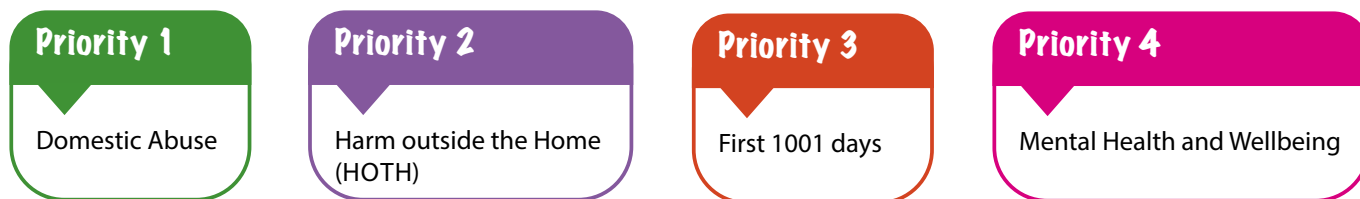
Embed the new model of practice across the partnership, identifying more positive practice examples and sharing this wider.

To continue to disseminate the learning from the current Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Improvement Delivery Group

The Improvement Delivery Group is a group that manages all the priority improvement work within the DSCP. Its role is to consider and reflect a range of information from a variety of sources relating to a multi-agency practice issue and complete work around the safeguarding partnership's priorities.

Priorities



The Improvement Delivery Group (IDG) considers the frontline challenges and successes and makes suggestions and recommendations to improve multi agency working within each priority piece of work. The priority work was launched in April 2023. Each priority runs sequentially to one another, however by using the learning cycle they also interlink and overlap when offering assurance and feedback.



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 practitioners 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 receives direction from the Safeguarding Executive and Performance and Learning Group to direct the focus of the work.

Key Achievements between 2024-2025

Priority One: Domestic Abuse (Learning cycle August 24 - November 2024)

Why: Safeguarding children and young people from domestic abuse remains a key priority for the Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DSCP).

- 1 in 5 children experience domestic abuse in their family home in their lifetime in the UK
- Domestic abuse remained the highest factor for Durham Children's Social Care safeguarding referrals during 2022/23 at 24%
- There was an increase of 27% in Children's Social Care Domestic Abuse re-referrals when compared to the previous year
- An increase of 27% in Police repeat domestic abuse incidents (recorded twice) when compared to the previous year
- Both adult and children's re-referrals to Harbour have increased, by 5% and 50% respectively.
- The improvement feedback from families who have been supported by Harbour; children and young people feeling safer has increased from 85% (Q2) to 95% (Q3)
- 40% of domestic abuse crimes closed due to victims not supporting prosecution.

The DSCP is aware that Domestic abuse undermines a child's basic need for safety and security. It can have a serious effect on their behaviour, brain development, education outcomes and overall wellbeing (NSPCC). By intervening at the earliest opportunity, the DSCP want to ensure all children in Durham are supported to understand what a healthy relationship looks like. This is so that we can achieve what every child deserves which is to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home.



Question What is the impact of early interventions/services on Domestic Abuse? (Recognising behaviours and professional curiosity about home life).

Key Line of Enquiry: Look at the journey of a family to understand those early stages and opportunities for support i.e. Early Help, Education, Health, Early Years provision.

Methodology

Deep Dive Audit

Key Findings

- Practitioners are not consistently seeing incidents of domestic abuse through the eyes of the child. We need to see an increased awareness, training, confidence and knowledge around the child as a victim of domestic abuse. You can access DSCP Training here www.durham-scp.org.uk/training-information/
- A focus on providing appropriate support, training and challenge to practitioners so domestic abuse is responded to effectively and identified across DSCP
- Increased knowledge is needed around receiving the right help and protection at the right time to allow timely information sharing and interventions to take place
- Practitioners need an increased awareness that abuse does not necessarily end when people stop living together and may in fact escalate
- Risk of harm to the children was not seen to be reduced through the identification and assessment of the risks that perpetrators and adult offenders pose. Practitioners attempted to offer targeted interventions for the adult victims, but not for the perpetrator.

Voice of the child

Child's Voice, age 11 years old:

“I didn't know dad hurt mam. But when he tried to break in, we had to move house. I don't talk to anyone, not even mam because it makes her sad.”



Child's Voice, age 9 years:

“I am scared when mam's boyfriend visits the house.”
To feel safe,
“I need him to stay away.”

Areas of development

- Domestic Abuse Practice Lead role has been created by Durham Children's Services. This is to raise awareness and improve practice across the partnership in relation to Domestic Abuse
- Refresh of Operation Encompass work now includes school-based Early Years Foundation Staff (EYFS), 6 training sessions for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) a year and is planning for a renewed 'launch' of Operation Encompass for September 2025
- Seeing children as 'Victims of Domestic Abuse' (Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021) in their own right - 'briefing refresh' for staff
- DSCP to promote the Women's Aid "The Monster Who came to tea" through a coordinated plan for all frontline children and family practitioners to watch it and for a table discussion to be had in team meetings.
- Partnership to continue to share Tier 1 information sharing guidance and training
- A linked up multiagency Domestic Abuse System, that is robustly governed, with designated subgroups to complete the priority work. This is to meet the strategic shared vision for a stronger system which drives down domestic abuse and domestic homicides, whilst ensuring that victims and survivors get the support they need
- This system focuses on driving work forward under the three Domestic Abuse subgroups - Prioritising Prevention, Supporting Victims & tackling those who harm
- The 'Tackling Those Who Harm' Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Group (DASVEG) subgroup is kept informed by a member of the 'Stalking Intervention Project' a multi-agency project involving partners from the Probation Service, Durham Police, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, and the Office of the Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner. This multiagency group will be providing a consistent approach to preventing, policing and deterring stalking behaviour in County Durham, with an offender focused approach, while remaining survivor-centred and trauma-informed, to enhance protection to victims.

What Difference has it made: (6 Months)

- The DSCP had a monthly focus and information sharing campaign within the DSCP newsletter to raise awareness of domestic abuse and priority work planning
- Awareness sessions have been offered to all partners around Domestic Abuse, with a focus being the child as a victim
- A briefing has been developed, shared and uploaded onto the DSCP website
- Data records have now been developed to share the journey of a young person and family, looking at what support was offered and what intervention was the correct intervention
- Training has been delivered across the partnership.
- Domestic Abuse ambassadors have been trained and resourced with information to develop and support improved practice within the Partnership.

Next Steps: Phase 6 will complete the Learning Cycle for Priority one. This will be the phase when the IDG will review and reflect upon the piece of work, seeking assurance from partners that the areas of development and learning have been actioned.

Priority One: Domestic Abuse (Learning Cycle April 23-July 2023)

Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) was the first piece of Partnership work completed in the IDG. In December 2024 the IDG came back together to complete Phase 6, where we review, reflect and seek assurance on the work completed.

Assurance

In the 12 months since the work was completed, we have:

- Trained a further three ambassadors for CAPVA and saw an increased number of referrals being made at the right time for children
- Developed, promoted and offered information awareness sessions for all partners in County Durham to increase their knowledge of CAPVA
- Developed and improved the data recording systems to allow practitioners, managers and strategic managers to follow and understand the journey of children who are open due to CAPVA. This data was shared and discussed in the DSCP Performance Think Tank in 2024
- Coordinated a bespoke support offer for agencies working with children who are victims of domestic abuse and then go on to display this behaviour. This meant that when children and young people were not able to access the Respect Young People's Programme (RYPP) there was alternative support offered
- Developed the RYPP program
- Implemented and reviewed the children and young peoples evaluation feedback form, to gather the voice of the child and use their feedback when developing practice further.

Priority Two: Harm Outside the Home (HOTH): (Learning Cycle December 2024-March 2025)

Why: The DSCP recognise that the children and young people that are at risk of Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) can be children who are not always visible to practitioners. Therefore, how do we strengthen and challenge the partnership to look at increasing awareness, offer a greater understanding of places and spaces, and focus on missing children and disruption.

Safeguarding children and young people from Harm Outside the Home therefore remains a key priority for the DSCP.

- The number of children scored on the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) had steadily risen to 23 children in Quarter 1 2024/25 from 14 (Q2) and 7 (Q3)
- The number of children referred to CEVT for criminal exploitation had decreased from 12 in Q4 2023/24 to 5 in Q1 2024/25, whereas the number of children referred to CEVT for sexual exploitation had increased in Q1 2024/25 to 14 from 1 in both Q3 and Q4 2023/24.
- Data from Children's Social Care also highlighted that the number of CSC referrals with the contact issue of exploitation was 15 (1.19% of all referrals) in quarter 1 2024/25. This figure has remained relatively stable over the past year.

Key Line of Enquiry: "How can we support the partnership to map and improve the Durham Harm Outside the Home offer, identifying what this is throughout every service."

Methodology

One to one interview with partner organisations and services. Partner organisations and services carried out a GAP analysis.

Key Findings

- The IDG identified many strengths and gaps in practice across the partnership. Single agency action plans were developed to look at any gaps
- and identified strengths were taken into the HOTH priority work (Priority One) starting April 2025.

What's Next: Phase 6 will complete the Cycle for Priority two. This will be the phase when the IDG will review and reflect upon the piece of work, seeking assurance from partners that the areas of development and learning have been actioned.

Priority Two: Harm Outside the Home (HOTH): (Learning Cycle August 2023-November 2024)

Harm Outside the Home was the second piece of Partnership work completed in the IDG. In March 2024 the IDG came back together to complete Phase 6, where we review, reflect and seek assurance on the work completed.

Assurance

- The Strategic CEG have embedded the areas of learning into their priority work.
- Pages on the DSCP website are currently being developed and co-created with a focus group of young people.
- The DSCP have started to raise awareness around Fearless, a 100% anonymous information sharing resource for children and young people.
- Internal training has been developed by the partnership and has been shared on the DSCP me learning site from September 2024.
- A briefing has been developed based on the responses of the survey and focus group. Outcome: [Priority Work - Harm Outside the Home \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](#)



Priority Three: First 1001 days. (Learning cycle December 2023-March 2024)

This piece of work was completed and shared within the 2023-2024 annual report. In March 2025 the IDG came back together to complete Phase 6, where we review, reflect and seek assurance on the work completed.

Assurance

In the 12 months since the work was completed, we have:

- Developed and promoted the “verify, clarify and reflect” briefing
- Developed and launched guidance on taking a Whole Family Approach
- Developed and launched a tier 1 information sharing agreement to confirm the importance of partners sharing information with one another and the legal parameters that this can be done
- Developed a regional cross boundary information sharing agreement and protocol for families that move across boundaries
- Updated the “How we practice in Durham” Practice Guide to clearly set out the importance of holding closure TAF meetings
- Worked closely with the ICB to launch a Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) campaign video.

Alongside all the work that has been completed in the IDG around each key line of enquiry, there has also been work and awareness raising throughout the years around each priority.

This has been shared both in the DSCP monthly newsletter and on our social media forums.

Priority Four: Mental Health and Wellbeing (Learning Cycle April 2024-July 2024)

Why: Whilst Mental Health is not the main reason for referrals to Children’s Social Care, it is noted that mental health difficulties either with parents, young people and/or children is a common and prominent factor in many referrals and was identified in all of our local learning.

Key Line of Enquiry: “How do we identify families at the earliest opportunity for support, looking at the journey of a family that have gone into crisis and whether there was an opportunity to offer any intervention or support at an earlier opportunity to prevent families reaching crisis point.”

Methodology

1. Multi agency deep dive. A practitioner led multi-agency audit was arranged by the DSCP Business Team.
2. A survey was shared with children, young people, parents, and carers.

Key Findings

Recording:

- There were discrepancies on different partner agencies recording systems. Children were inaccurately recorded as having communication and neurodiverse diagnoses
- Mothers’ partners were recorded as fathers to the children.

Information was limited on non-resident parents:

- None of the three deep dives had a multi-agency chronology, and none had an easily accessible full history of the child’s journey.

Information Sharing

- Limited information sharing was seen. Different partners held different information, but this was not shared either within or outside of their organisation.

- When children moved from other local authorities into the Durham area information was not transferred, and assessments were not completed with a full history

Multi agency approach/response:

- Team Around the Family (TAF) attendance was low for each family. This led to closure of TAF plans or an uncoordinated approach to the care of the children
- Some agencies struggled with the complexity of the child’s health needs, and they were coping with situations they were not able or trained to support
- Parents felt that their parenting was being questioned. There appears to be a threat around safeguarding concerns rather than support or inclusion of the parents

Voice of the child

“Always tell the truth to young people, what you tell the parent you tell the young person. Let people take it at their own pace to talk and get better. Being consistent with young people, making them feel comforted and listened too. (Young Person Deep Dive)”

“Professionals to be open minded, you don't know everything straight away, take time to learn this. We don't need someone to fix everything, but we do need them to listen and to help. Look underneath what is happening on the surface and treat everyone with kindness. (Young Person Deep Dive).”

Voice of the family

“There should be more awareness and knowledge about receiving help... I went into it blind not knowing at all how the processes worked. It was very daunting.”

“Professionals didn't try to understand us as a family. We weren't involved in decision making, weren't listened to when I said there was a decline in his mental health, and it was getting worse. They could have helped before it got to the stage it did.”

Areas of development

- A mapping exercise was completed with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Board to look at what support is available and where parents/carers/children and practitioners can access information about mental health and wellbeing
- A Communication Plan has been developed by DSCP to raise awareness of the 'Information Sharing: How we work in Durham' training package
- The DSCP is linking in with the Mental Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a Durham Multi-agency Self-harm Pathway
- A multi-agency Appreciative Inquiry with one or all of the young people, looking at why the Rapid Response team intervention worked well for them and what other partners can mirror or learn from this practice
- DSCP to develop a briefing on professional escalation and healthy challenge
- Voice of the Child and Lived Experience guidance to be launched by the DSCP
- Raise awareness with partners about the importance of including children, young people and their parents in planning and coordinating care. It's not simply about recording the voice of the child, but truly understanding the child's world, behavioural details and supporting them to understand what we do

What difference has this made

What's Next:

Phase 6 will complete the Cycle for Priority four. This will be the phase when the IDG will review and reflect upon the piece of work, seeing assurance from partners that the areas of development and learning have been actioned.

Mental Health and Wellbeing will no longer be a priority in the 2025-2027 business

plan however it will become a golden thread.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)

The Joint Area Targeted Inspection (JTAI) Preparation Group is a subgroup within the DSCP. JTAI is an inspection framework to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency approaches to safeguarding unborn/babies, children and young people.

JTAI's are conducted jointly by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) by carrying out a 'deep dive' into specific safeguarding themes. JTAI's can take place at any time, with no advance schedule. Rather than focusing on an inspection visit, the JTAI Preparation Group utilises the inspection framework as a tool for development and improvement across the Partnership. During 2024/25 the themes for inspection were 'the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk' and 'the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse'.

The JTAI Preparation Group utilises the JTAI evaluation criteria to identify areas of strong practice, and areas that we may need to focus on to improve service delivery. The group promotes and drives continuous improvement using the JTAI framework as the focus of our work.

During 2024/25, assurance activity of the 'Front Door' was conducted which complimented the JTAI framework for the identification of initial need and risk. The JTAI Group received updates on progress of the review with a commitment to focus on aligning the findings and supporting the recommendations in conjunction with the JTAI evaluation criteria during 2025/26.

In addition, the JTAI group have actively considered the evaluation criteria of the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse, drawing on existing work streams, partnership groups and audit findings to formulate reflective discussions, gain an oversight of practice and support recommendations in relation to victims of domestic abuse, again using the evaluation criteria as a focus of continuous improvement. The group is continuing to consider practice in relation to the criteria as the theme currently continues in 2025/26.

In the coming year, the JTAI Preparation Group will continue to explore 'the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk' alongside the new inspection framework which is anticipated during late Summer 2025.

Strategic Child Exploitation Group

The Child Exploitation Group (CEG) is a group that has a joint governance with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership. The purpose of the CEG 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 CEG has a clear plan broken down into three priorities:
 - Child/Children or Young Person(s) focus: partners are committed to the identification, risk assessment and risk management of those children identified as being at risk of missing and child exploitation. Children are at the centre of what we do
 - Context focus: partners are committed to targeting spaces and places and people of concern who pose a risk to exploiting children and young people
 - Early Identification Focused: Partners are committed and equipped to educate children to recognise the risks of Harm outside the Home. Partners will support parents, carers, and practitioners to understand the signs of harm outside the home.



Key Achievements

- The CEGs operate a locality model (East, West Darlington and South) which has allowed for local intelligence to better understand people, spaces and places of concern leading to targeted disruption activity throughout the year. This also allows partners who work in each of the localities to attend meetings relevant to their area such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Membership of CEG has expanded to include community safety teams, who can provide information about individual children but also assist with multi-agency disruption in spaces and places of concern
- Durham has launched People of Concern Meetings, which look beyond safeguarding individual children and focus on disruption activity for those adults who are exploiting our children. This model helps to identify those children on the periphery who are at risk of being exploited so we can offer targeted early intervention, as well as provide greater oversight of those with known strong links to exploiters so that we can effectively safety plan. This model has worked effectively alongside operations such as Operation Fallow
- Durham & Darlington Children's Social Care is now a member of the police led, Organised Crime Group Disruption Panel which enables earlier information sharing and interventions when children are identified as being at risk of exploitation
- Durham and Darlington are part of the Regional Contextual Safeguarding Network which is a forum for sharing best practice. The group has several Task and Finish Groups up and running to align practice across the region and strengthen how we work together with cross-border issues
- Durham and Darlington are part of the Anti-Slavery Network, a place to share best practice and consider transition to adulthood for our children at risk of exploitation
- In Durham, harm outside of the home has been a priority for consecutive quarters, allowing partners to come together in the IDG to look at any gaps in service and support for harm outside of the home. In the current quarter (Quarter 1 25/26) the Executive Group wanted to focus this programme of work to explore the offer relating to Harm Outside the Home across the DSCP) and produce accessible resources for children, young people, parents/carers, practitioners and community guardians so they are able to identify risks, understand support and the offer of services at every level
- Multi-Agency Task and Finish Groups were established to develop a procedure for Harm outside the Home, which will be adapted to both Durham and Darlington. Since February 2025 Durham has been piloting daily CEVT Meetings which has enabled a timelier response to risk for individual children
- Durham has opted into the Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) Pilot with Carlene Firman, and plan to undertake a pilot of the ROTH pathway with the Adolescent Safeguarding and Exploitation Team in 2025
- Durham has increased capacity in the ERASE Team, allowing for more timely and thorough return home interviews for our children who go missing. This has allowed for better intelligence gathering and more targeted disruption activity
- Training continues to be offered regularly to partners on Exploitation Awareness and Harm outside the Home Pathway
- There has been a significant focus on improving our response to children who go missing in Durham. Improved data and performance management systems has resulted in an increase in the number of return home interviews offered, held within 72-hours and the quality and impact of those interviews. The improvements are reflected in Ofsted's recent findings. CEG continues to drive the use of the Philomena protocol for missing children in care, offering training to key partners and children's homes, including Independent Providers caring for children in Durham
- There has been multi-agency audit activity to review serious incidents for 4 young people in Durham, to look at the learning and build on some of the good practice identified
- The work of the CEG is underpinned by partnership data. We are already benefiting from the improved missing dashboard and the evolved CEVT which put us in a better position to identify and contend with exploitation. A key focus for the group has been to improve our understanding of contextual elements of safeguarding to contend better with harm outside the home taking a more place-based approach. Progress has been made and we look to build on this work in the year ahead.

What difference has it made

We have a strong partnership commitment to Harm Outside the Home at an operational and strategic level.

Durham Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) March 2025 - Ofsted Findings:

Social workers respond robustly to the needs of children at risk of exploitation and those missing from home. Social workers regularly visit children and talk through episodes of going missing from care in order to understand and explore the risks that children may face. Persistent efforts are made to engage children. There is a high take-up of return home interviews, and for children at the highest risk, the quality of information obtained contributes directly to disruption activity. This has proved effective and helped to reduce missing-from-care episodes for many children.

Children who are missing receive timely and responsive action from the local authority. Return home interviews take place quickly and support the work of both social workers and carers in reducing the risk. Equally, when risks escalate, there are timely, multi-agency meetings that help to create coordinated plans to support the child and reduce risk. Alongside this, social workers undertake creative direct work to engage the child and gain an understanding of the push and pull factors leading to their episodes of going missing. This work is highly effective and has led to a reduction of risk for many children.

Children experiencing exploitation or those at risk of extra-familial harm receive strong targeted help and support. Professionals and partners commit to regular meetings to discuss children's risks and safety. They work cohesively and act swiftly in response to concerns. This benefits wider safety planning and the identification of other vulnerable children.

Children who are missing receive timely and responsive action from the local authority. Return home interviews take place quickly and support the work of both social workers and carers in reducing the risk. Equally, when risks escalate, there are timely, multi-agency meetings that help to create co-ordinated plans to support the child and reduce risk. Alongside this, social workers undertake creative direct work to engage the child and gain an understanding of the push and pull factors leading to their episodes of going missing. This work is highly effective and has led to a reduction of risk for many children.

Operation Esdras led to a review of the serious and organised abuse procedure for Darlington following multi-agency audit. This learning was shared for the benefit of Durham and Darlington.

What next

We will continue to improve the service we provide to monitor, improve and evaluate our provision in line with our priority plan and the three objectives. Of particular note we will:

- Develop our sharing and analysis of data across the partnership to underpin strategic and operational decision making
- The task and finish group will finalise the child exploitation processes ensuring it is reflective of all partners contributions
- We will continue to promote the use of the Philomena Protocol for missing children and young people in care

- The identification and targeting of places and spaces through the principles of contextual safeguarding and harm outside the home will be key to the group's success
- Implement lines of communication with children and young people in conjunction with the feedback given in the focus groups to represent the voice of the child within our work and operationally gather information.



Workforce Learning and Development Group

The Workforce Learning and Development Group is a sub-group of the Performance and Learning Group (PLG) which has the overarching responsibility of integrating learning from child safeguarding practice reviews locally and nationally into training across the partnership. The group ensures that safeguarding children training is identified, training is delivered to a consistently high standard and that there is a process in place for the partnership to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training.

Key Achievements between 2024/25

The representation on the Workforce Learning and Development Group has continued to evolve from last year and we have a representation from all our key partner organisations. As a result of full group representation, there is a clear vision of the learning from child safeguarding practice reviews and referrals for learning. The multi-agency and single agency training is developed by the group from our local and national learning themes, and we provide high quality training delivered by our partnership experts on these topics or national expertise to provide a broad overview.

This has been an extremely successful year for the multi-agency training offer due to the commitment from partners and members of this group with 20,056 courses completed over the training offer of eLearning, face to face, bespoke, safeguarding week and the development day compared to 14,793 in 2023/24. We have increased our eLearning courses from 30 last year to 45 courses. This is a huge achievement as part way through the year we changed eLearning platforms which cleansed the system and resulted in users having to re-register.

We streamlined our face-to-face training to reflect themes from child safeguarding practice reviews and learning reviews locally and nationally.

This group led on and identified the theme of 'Inclusion' for our annual safeguarding week which took place in October 2024. We greatly increased our attendance from last year. This was mainly due to the careful planning and publicity, themed sessions which appealed to the workforce and identifying the best times to facilitate sessions which allowed more practitioners to attend.

This year also saw an increase in the bespoke training offer delivered by the DSCP Training and Development Coordinator to individual agencies.

To find out more information on training, breakdown of attendance by agency and by different training options (e.g. eLearning, face to face), please see the training section of this report.

Over the past year the group have developed and embedded a training observation process where members of this group have observed multi-agency and single agency training to provide assurance on the quality of the training, eliminate duplication of training offered in house to partners and ensure consistency in the information being shared by all agencies.

What difference has this made

Due to effort and achievements of the group this year, we have a comprehensive training and learning model which involves all partner organisations and the DSCP has a clear overview of single agency training taking place. This has enabled us to provide focussed and succinct training and learning that is needed by the practitioners in County Durham. With a clear oversight from child safeguarding practice reviews and learning reviews, the practitioners report that training offered is 'what is needed', 'fresh' and 'filling gaps in knowledge'. They also tell us that by having a mixture of training options (eLearning, face to face) with short bitesize briefings to more extended sessions, means there is something for everyone regardless of their job role.

Practitioners tell us that they can see how much effort goes into designing the training offer behind the scenes and safeguarding week is an example of how agencies are considered when making decisions by having short bite sized sessions across the week over the extended lunch and twilight period which enables greater attendance and participation.

Due to the increase in training offered we have utilised our experts in topics from our workforce in County Durham for example neglect and poverty and trauma informed practice to provide training relevant to the local picture but also incorporate the national overview. Practitioners feel that this has given them a focus on what is happening in our area and agencies to reach out to, to share information or for support.



Next Steps: The plan for the coming year is to re-evaluate the way we measure how training impacts on practice. We have a 100% return rate of evaluations following training, but we would like our impact analysis 3 months to 6 months following training to be equally as successful. We want managers and senior leaders to give assurance about the impact on practice within their teams and focus on how we use what is learnt to change culture.

There has been a recognised need to strengthen the offer for Child Sexual Abuse training. Rather than continue to commission external training we plan to support 12 practitioners from across the partnership to attend 'train the trainer' training delivered by The Centre of Expertise for Child Sexual Abuse, as this will strengthen our ability to deliver regular and consistent training.

Multi-agency Policy and Procedure group

This subgroup focusses on the revision and creation of policy, procedure and practice guidance to support practitioners from all organisations working with children in County Durham. This year has been especially busy, and the following have been published/updated:

- [Child Protection Enquiries: Section 47 Children Act](#)
- [Referrals](#)
- [Information Sharing](#)
- [Online Safety: Children Exposed to Abuse through the Digital Media](#)
- [Children from Abroad, including Victims of Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Exploitation](#)
- [So Called Honour Based Abuse](#)
- [Forced Marriage](#)
- [Female Genital Mutilation](#)
- [Safeguarding Children with a Social Worker, Children in Care and Children Previously in Care at School](#)
- [Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse \(CAPVA\)](#)
- [Guidance for Safe recruitment, selection and retention for staff and volunteers](#)
- [Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

In addition, a number of local documents have been reviewed and updated in line with national and local learning including the following key documents:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● Durham Threshold guidance | ● Multi-agency child protection conference template |
| ● Bruising in non-mobile child protocol | ● Childs Voice and lived experience guidance |

Performance Model: Think Tank

The DSCP Performance Think Tank facilitates monitoring of multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements to look at data and gather the most impactful information from partners. During 2024/25, the Think Tank focused on 12 themes relating to safeguarding practice; four of these twelve were linked specifically to the DSCP Business Plan priorities.

What Think Tank does

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Facilitates qualitative and quantitative input, discussion and challenge from our partners, including Children's Social Care, Integrated Care Board, Primary Care, Police, Harrogate District Foundation NHS Trust, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust, Probation and Prison Service, Harbour, Public Health, Waythrough, Education, Virtual School, Early Years, Housing and the Voluntary Sector.● Analysis of performance indicators and qualitative information, including discussions amongst all agencies to enable a multi-agency perspective. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Utilising this information and discussion and using our autonomy to consider wider data to think about the impact, or the 'so what' question in relation to our work.● Considering how we can listen to, understand and respond to the voices of children, young people, families, carers and practitioners, aligning data to priorities and the Quality Assurance Model to inform the wider Quality Assurance and Performance Framework. |
|--|--|

Key discussions during 2024/25 enabled further multi agency exploration of themes including correlation of harm outside the home and children missing from education or electively home educated, multi-agency meetings, and domestic abuse, linking specifically to the 2024/25 priorities.

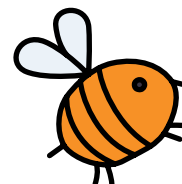
Next Steps: In line with the DSCP Business Plan 2025-2027, the 12 themes have been reviewed and the performance indicators have been closely aligned to the objectives of the business plan. This alignment has also enabled us to plan where we can link with wider partners across County Durham.

Golden Threads

the subgroups and priority work of the DSCP have also had several golden threads running through the work completed. These have included:

Golden Threads - that weave through everything we do...

Child's voice and lived experience
Working together across partners and boundaries
Whole family approach recognising networks, father's roles and hidden males
Cultural Competence
Reflective practice
Signs of Safety



Child's voice and lived experience

Within the DSCP we have tried to capture the child's voice in all the work we complete. The DSCP have created a briefing called [Voice of the Child and Live Experience](#) that highlights what practitioners should consider when working with children.

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.

What have we done:

- All commissioned training must clearly evidence how the voice of the child is incorporated in DSCP training opportunities.
- Children and young people have had the opportunity to voice their opinions in a number of our subgroups and 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.

Collaboration: The DSCP seeks to collaborate with children and their families at every opportunity, and this is routine within our priority and improvement work and how we disseminate learning. An example of how we seek participation and gather the voice of children and families was evidenced in a key piece of work completed in 2024. Following learning around how practitioners work with parents when children are not in their parent's care, a task and finish group was established to develop guidance for practitioners and advice for parents. Parents from Durham's Future Hope service and children/young people from Durham's Children in Care Council helped create the guidance and advice documents, inputting into the content and design of these which are now to be used in practice.

What next

- We will utilise what children/young people tell us and offer further opportunities to develop practice around their views.

Working together across partnerships and boundaries

The DSCP have continued to promote and share the [Regional protocol for protecting children who move across Local Authority Border](#). This was completed in 2023 in association with 12 North East Safeguarding Children Partnerships. This guidance focuses specifically on safeguarding responsibilities in relation to children who move across Local Authority boundaries, where they are Children in Need (including those in need of protection and subject to Child Protection Plans as defined by the Children Act 1989), and Cared for Children; other children receiving an out of authority service where child protection concerns arise within that service and those children receiving Early Help support and who have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

This framework is for Local Authorities to establish respective responsibilities on behalf of children where an assessment has identified that it is in their interests to receive support or protection. It also provides a framework for practitioners from other agencies to promote early and proactive information sharing regarding children who are likely to or do move across Local Authority boundaries. It should be noted that in relation to children in care this guidance specifically focuses on responsibility for child protection enquiries where children are placed, or receiving services, outside of their originating

authority. It is in addition to, and does not affect, the notification arrangements required under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010.

Whole family approach, recognising networks, father's role and hidden males

In County Durham our approach is to work "whole family".

Cultural humility

The DSCP have considered cultural humility in all the work completed across the partnership.

How we Practice in Durham (Signs of Safety):

- Signs of Safety continues to be a key practice model across the partnership. The partnership has continued to develop and share practice examples using this format
- 'Nothing about us without us' highlights the importance of involving children, young people and families in all that we do. It has been shared and promoted across the partnership.



5 Learning and Improvement Work

The DSCP is committed to working together to protect children and young people from the risk of serious harm and abuse. The DSCP seek to review and update our local pathways, policies and procedures so that they are responsive to current levels of need and risk in the local area. The DSCP, and its associated subgroups proactively work together to horizon scan for emerging risks and threats across the partnership to make sure that we are able to respond effectively. In 2024 the DSCP developed a Horizon Scanning tracker where the business unit records the themes and summaries from National Learning to give a view across the landscape.

Learning from Reviews:

Within the Performance and Learning Group (PLG) the DSCP have established a serious incident notification/child safeguarding practice review (SIN/CSPR) panel. The panel is made up of core members and any relevant agencies from children's social care, police, ICB, health trusts, education, housing, early help, probation and prison service, youth justice service and public health. The independent scrutineer attends panel meetings and legal and media reps are aligned to input where necessary. The SIN/CSPR panel oversees and manages all multi-agency learning activity in line with the newly developed Durham Learning Together practice model. The panel coordinates the outcomes of all case reviews and thematic audits and provides scrutiny of action plans where learning has identified that frontline practice could be strengthened.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the panel received a number of referrals relating to children/young people for consideration for serious incident notification and review under the Statutory process. All children were discussed by the multi-agency SIN/CSPR panel, and recommendations were then made to delegate safeguarding partners who make any final decisions regarding outcome. All referrals that were not progressed as serious incident notifications following agreement that the criteria were not met, were considered in relation to any learning. One was in line with existing learning already identified, two were referred to the child exploitation group to consider learning and two were referred to the youth justice board to consider learning.

Serious incident notifications were made in relation to five children/young people. Three were deaths of our Care Leavers, and following notification the Durham learning model which includes a local procedure for learning from care leaver deaths was followed. Each child/young person was discussed and options considered for further learning. One was referred to the Child Exploitation Group to consider learning, one followed the Domestic Homicide Related Death Review process, and one was reviewed by the panel using a framework similar to Rapid Review.

Two children met the criteria for serious incident notification and a statutory Rapid Review. Within the Rapid Review it was agreed that all information could be obtained to understand learning through this process, therefore a statutory Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) was not recommended. There was single and multi-agency learning identified from both Rapid Review processes.

An additional two learning from practice referrals were received where there was no consideration for serious incident notification but where multi-agency learning from practice may be useful. One of these referrals also met the criteria of the audit work being completed at the time under Priority Three 1001 days and was included within the multi-agency audit. One was progressed in line with Durhams learning together practice model and reviewed by the CSPR panel using a framework similar to Rapid Review.

In all instances multi-agency and single agency learning is shared within the PLG, actions are agreed, and the plans will be reviewed at 6 and 12 months to seek assurance around the learning dissemination and changes made. Learning is disseminated and used to inform the multi-agency training programme, development days and safeguarding week which are designed around current themes identified.

Case Study

Understanding the young person and what happened

Amara was a female of mixed Indian and Caribbean heritage. Amara and her sisters became looked after two months after moving to Durham due to increasing concerns about their care, mum's drug and alcohol use and worries that Amara had been sexually abused by a family member. Sadly, Amara was found hanging at the home of her foster carer in December 2024 and she died a week later in hospital. Amara was 12 years old at the time.

Prior to moving to Durham, the family was known to both children's and adult's services in another local authority. There were worries about domestic abuse, honour-based violence, mum's drug and alcohol use and mum's mental health (including PTSD).

This rapid review has focused on the involvement, support and actions of services that supported Amara and her family from their arrival in County Durham up until Amara passed away, to identify key messages, any good practice and future learning.

The following themes were identified:

Sharing information and professional collaboration Information which could have been known was not initially available from the family's previous local authority. This impacted on services in Durham having a full understanding of the family's background, risks and trauma.

Information about sexual abuse linked to wider family members was held on the Police National Database and there was a missed opportunity to identify these worries earlier on.

Opportunities were missed to intervene earlier, for example by holding an earlier strategy discussion and inviting all services with information about the family to the follow up discussion.

Amara had spoken about being sexually abused and was subjected to other traumas such as domestic abuse, however no referrals for support were made until she had her Child in Care health assessment, which itself was delayed.

Multi-agency working There were delays in Amara receiving her health assessment when she became a child in care, due to:

- Delays in the referral being received
- Errors in the paperwork being submitted
- A delay in being offered an appointment.

This delay was missed despite there being an escalation policy in place.

This has highlighted issues with Child Health Assessment systems and processes that can get in the way of practitioners being able to book an initial assessment.

Professional Curiosity Amara and her family had been subjected to various traumas such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse and honour-based violence and there were worries identified around mum's drug and alcohol use and mental health.

Agency records didn't fully reflect the worries, needs and impact, and some worries and needs were missing from the children's plan.

There was a lack of curiosity about gaps in information, including past harm and the impact of this on mum and the children, and the family's reason for moving was not actively explored.

Race, Ethnicity and Culture (intersectionality) At the time of Amara's death, some attempts had been made to better understand Amara however we still did not have a clear picture of how Amara viewed her place in the world or as a child in care.

There were clear signals from Amara that she felt she was being racially abused and her heightened reaction to a professional moving past her and making her feel dirty suggests past trauma.

Amara's behaviour had started to change and become more worrying in the run up to Christmas and occurred at the same time as the issues around racist language and comments. There was a missed opportunity to explore Amara's behaviour in this context: *'if the behaviour could talk, what might it say?'*

What has the impact been:

Given that the review took place in January 2025, the impact from learning needs more time to be demonstrated.

The partnership has already taken action to support learning in relation to recurring themes such as information sharing and professional curiosity, by updating the Information Sharing Agreement guidance and training, and creating a briefing to help practitioners stay curious in their approach: Clarify, Verify, Reflect.

The partnership will continue to address the themes raised in this rapid review by:

- Exploring how guidance from 'How we Practice in Durham' (Children's Social Care) can be used for all partner agencies to highlight the importance of communicating and involving all practitioners in assessments and plans.
- Updating the Cumulative Harm guidance and re-circulating this to partners once complete
- Reviewing the Child Health Assessment process to check policies and procedures against systems and practice so that these are aligned
- Developing an action plan to cover all multi-agency and single agency actions which will be monitored and reviewed in the Performance and Learning Group (PLG).

To support ongoing learning we are asking partners to help by:

- Discussing this key learning briefing in team meetings and in supervision
- Creating a safe, reflective space in your agency to think about what racism is, the impact it has and what is within your own and your agency's ability to challenge and change. It is okay to ask for support and help in developing an understanding of race, ethnicity, religion and culture and what this means for children and families.
- Accessing training on anti-racist and culturally sensitive practice to improve your confidence and knowledge when working with global majority heritage families
- Asking curious questions, observing and sharing information so you can identify intersectionality and its impact on children and families
- Reflecting on the importance of communicating and collaborating with all practitioners who know the child and family
- Involving all key practitioners who know the child and family in strategy discussions and assessments and include them in planning
- Considering the child and family's history and how this could still be relevant and impacting on them currently.

There are a range of local resources and training available to practitioners across the partnership to support these aims.

Improvement Work

The Safeguarding Partnership proactively raises awareness of safeguarding themes and issues throughout the year to continuously reinforce knowledge and increase alertness to issues of abuse and neglect. Through doing so it contributes to a community of residents and practitioners who are well informed to prevent harm before it occurs and know how to seek help when needed. The DSCP does this in a number of ways, one of which is by attending other meetings in addition to their own subgroups, to work collaboratively and share any themes or learning. These groups include:

- Designated Safeguarding Leads meeting (Education)
- Education Safeguarding Partnership meeting
- Alternative Provision and Independent Schools meetings
- DASVEG
- Strategic MAPPA
- Police Child and Family Scrutiny Panel
- Named GP meetings
- Mash Board
- Anti-Slavery Network
- Prevention and Early Help Partnership Meeting
- Strategic Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

This year the Partnership has also promoted:

Safeguarding Learning Events

The First '1001 Days' Development Day

This year we held our Development Day on the theme of 'The First 1001 Days' spanning from conception to a child's second birthday. The first 1,001 critical days are a unique period for a baby that sets the foundations for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing. This age group represents a critical window of development where a child's brain and overall wellbeing are highly susceptible to both positive and negative influences. Unfortunately, locally and nationally the first 1001 days are where we see most of the Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews or referrals for learning following a serious incident or child death. As such, our development day looked at five important emerging themes from these incidents which were identified by the Improvement Delivery Group (IDG) in the priority 3 piece of work.

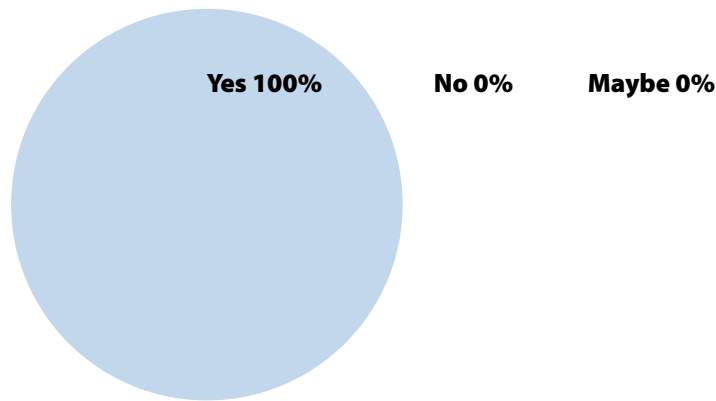
- Concealed Pregnancy
- Safe Sleeping/Safe Handling
- Pieces of the jigsaw (learning from practice reviews – information sharing, cross boundary sharing and professional curiosity)

- Enhance Parenting Pathway Program
- Whole Family Approach/Family Networks.

187 frontline practitioners joined the sessions from across our multi-agency partners working in County Durham.

Analysis of the Day

Do you think this briefing will have an impact on your practice with children, young people and families?



**Knowledge on the subject prior to the briefing
(1 being limited and 10 being in-depth)**

5.72

Average Rating

**Knowledge on this subject now that you have
completed the briefing**

8.97

Average Rating

Organisational Safeguarding Assessment

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on key agencies and organisations to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. To deliver on this function the DSCP have developed and launched an Organisational Safeguarding Assessment which is a self-audit tool that was piloted in 2024 across the DSCP.

The DSCP used the Organisational Safeguarding Assessment to provide assurance around how agencies are working to safeguard children, reporting to the PLG subgroup.

The aim of the Organisational Safeguarding Assessment was for each organisation to use the tool for assessment, rather than for compliance. The tool aims to reflect on how well safeguarding standards are embedded into frontline practice. The self-assessment tool was provided to 8 services, and a total of 38 participants, within the South of Durham with an overall return rate of 63%.

The information allows the PLG to understand the areas of the partnership where safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is working well and ensure that good practice is disseminated, enabling others to learn and to celebrate good practice. We also wanted to know where we need to improve practice. The assessment was used as a tool to understand and form the basis of discussion and development of an improvement plan. The improvement plan was developed collaboratively with all partners who attend the reflect and challenge event on the 27 September 2024.

The questions within the Organisational Safeguarding Assessment have been developed within the following themes:

- Leadership, supervision, and accountability
- Use of policies and procedures to safeguard children
- Information sharing and data management
- Multi agency training and development
- The voice of children and young people
- Domestic Abuse (Priority One)
- Harm outside the home: (Priority Two)
- First 1001 Days (Priority Three)
- Mental Health and Wellbeing (Priority Four).

A reflect and challenge event was held on the 27 September 2024. All the partners who completed and returned the tool were invited alongside the service managers from the partner agency. The day was facilitated by the DSCP Business Unit and Independent Scrutineer Adrian Green.

Self-assessment rag rating

Section	Overall Partnership Self Assessment rating of 'green'
Multi agency training and development	89%
Use of policies and procedures to safeguard children	88%
Leadership, supervision and accountability	84%
Information sharing and data management	81%
1,001 Days	80%
The voice of children and young people	76%
Menatal health and wellbeing	75%
Domestic abuse	74%
Harm outside the home	71%

Single and multi-agency improvement plans were developed as part of the assurance activity. Each agency is responsible to look at embedding these actions, offering feedback and assurance to the PLG SPOCs. Communication of findings, recommendations and an improvement plan has been shared with the group and PLG to endorse and support improvements to the service.

What's next:

- Monitoring and review sessions have been developed to allow the PLG and Executive to understand the work that is being completed to improve or promote standards of practice
 - 6-month light touch session to be offered: 7 April 2025
 - 12 months assurance session: 29 September 2025..

DSCP Briefing

In 2024/25 links to the voluntary and charitable sector have been greatly enhanced, particularly with the sports sector as there was a recognition that this sector is often overlooked even though they support and work with some of our most vulnerable children. The DSCP Training and Development Coordinator and County Durham Sport Welfare Coordinator have worked together to provide a safeguarding briefing for sports provisions across the County (e.g. boxing, football, rugby, tennis and swimming clubs). The briefing highlighted the role of the DSCP, training that can be accessed by all, an awareness of the DSCP website and how to find information that is relevant to them and an overview of priority work that is being conducted across the area.

There is now an active representation from County Durham Sport on our DSCP sub-groups and they are involved in our priority work conducted by the Improvement Delivery Group giving them a voice and greater understanding of what is happening to safeguard children in County Durham.

Assurance

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) undertakes regular scrutiny of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The work is carried out through the Performance and Learning Group sub-group. All actions arising from thematic audits and assurance visits are compiled into a themed learning log - a live document to ensure actions are implemented and sustained. Learning is disseminated to front-line practitioners through learning events, team meetings, conferences and other DSCP promotional methods and helps to inform the training offer. During 2023/24, the DSCP undertook multiple activities and sought assurance to establish how agencies work together to identify and respond to crucial safeguarding issues. An overview of these activities is provided below.

Multi-Agency Meeting Assurance Week

The DSCP have completed a yearly assurance week of Multi agency meetings. The aim of this week is to learn from best practice, to improve professional relationships, and secure multi agency ownership to enable practice systems to change and have a positive impact on the children and young people that are involved in this process.

Methodology:

- Observation of multi-agency meetings
- Discussion with Parents following the meeting
- Discussion with Children involved in meetings
- Feedback from Practitioner's attending the meetings
- Feedback was offered by some of the observers in the meetings, however 72 partners attended different meetings over the week therefore feedback was only given when there was identified learning.

Methodology:

26 Partners offered to observe the different meetings.

- CDDFT, CSC, Education, HDFT, Probation, Early Help, Police and DSCP business unit.

How:

- Early Help, Police and Children's Social Care identified 33 multi agency meetings between 30/09/2024 - 4/10/2024 to be observed.

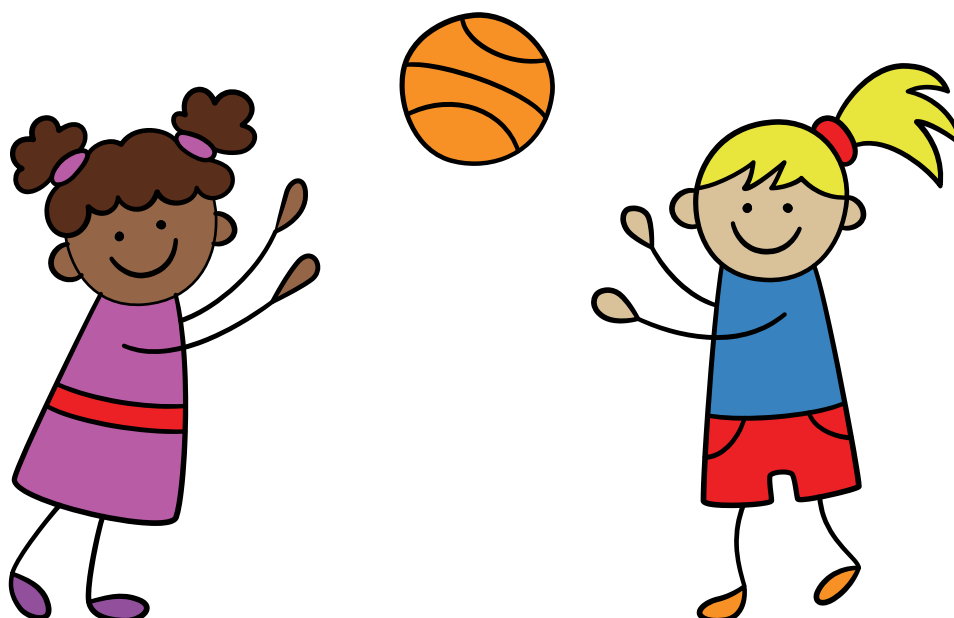
Meetings observed:

- 5 Children in Care review (CICR) meetings observed. (7 were identified but 2 children/families did not give consent to the observation)
- 2 Initial Child Protection Meetings (ICPC)
- 5 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings where children were discussed

- 4 Review Child Protection Meetings (RCPC), (6 identified but 2 families did not consent)
- 6 Strategy Meetings
- 4 Team Around the Family observed (5 identified 1 family did not consent)
- 3 meetings were moved during the week to a date outside the observation window. (RCPC, CICR).

Key Findings:

- Signs of Safety findings to be shared with the Signs of Safety Partnership Group
- Voice of the Child to be promoted throughout all multi agency meetings, and the core group of practitioners should identify who knows the child best. This should not be seen as a social work role only
- Work to be completed by the partnership looking at what makes a good multi agency meeting.
- Attendance at meetings to be discussed and scrutinised by the core group of practitioners to check the correct partners are being invited
- Attendance data for multi-agency meetings to be taken into the Think Tank.



Scrutineer

The Partnership has an Independent Scrutineer who provides leadership, vision and support and who is responsible for ensuring that all organisations contribute effectively to the work of the DSCP.

The Independent Scrutineer provides accountability for the work undertaken by the DSCP by way of reports to relevant strategic committees and partnerships. 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. This is supported by meetings for subgroup Chairs to provide clarity about the role of each subgroup in the priority areas and to raise any process or participation issues.

Function of Independent Scrutiny Role

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multiagency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections.

Information sharing model

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 to also 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 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 Department for Education (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 versus 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.

6 Use of Restraint

Use of Restraint in conjunction with Durham County Council. The DSCP monitors the use of restraint at 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 completed a site visit on the 19 May 2025. The DSCP reviewed data and CCTV footage from across 2024/25 which concluded that appropriate restraint had been utilised.

Injuries due to restraint are categorised on the level of medical intervention required with one being minor injury (no medical treatment required) and 3 being serious injury (requiring hospital treatment).

Of the 184 incidents of restraint recorded for the year, 84% (155) caused no injury at all, whilst 16% (29) resulted in injury. It is notable that 93% (27) were at level 1 (no medical treatment required), with only 1 at level 2 and 1 at level 3 category of injuries.

Scrutiny involves review of the home's CCTV where the DSCP randomly selected incidents of varying levels of use of restraint. The 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. In addition, the DSCP also accessed incident statements to correlate information from the CCTV footage.

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 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'.



7 Training

Overview of course completions

Me-Learning (eLearning) – 17,954

Training Programme
(Face to face or Virtual Teams/Zoom) – 692

Safeguarding Week – 1,021

Development Day – 187

Bespoke Training – 202

Me - Learning

- Increase from 30 courses in 2023/24 to 45 courses in 2024/25
- Course completions increased from 12,956 in 2023/24 to 17,954 in 2024/25. That is an increase of 38%
- The 15 additional courses have been developed by practitioners from the partnership and uploaded onto Me Learning for others to access. This has raised the awareness of that course subject across agencies and reached a larger amount of people due it being a flexible training option that can be accessed at any time. As the training has been developed by our local practitioners, it provides the workforce with an understanding of the local and national picture
- This is a huge achievement as part way through the year we changed eLearning platforms which cleansed the system and resulted in users having to re-register

Training Programme (face to face and virtually on MS Teams/Zoom)

The Workforce Learning and Development Group (DSCP sub-group) who has the overarching responsibility of integrating learning from child safeguarding practice reviews locally and nationally into training across the partnership, streamlined our face-to-face training or training delivered on MS Teams or Zoom to reflect themes from child safeguarding practice reviews and learning reviews. We wanted to eliminate duplication of courses being offered by our other training options (e.g. eLearning) or by single agencies.

14 courses subjects were identified which were not being covered on our eLearning platform or offered elsewhere and were themes from our local learning and reviews. 692 course completions were achieved.

Safeguarding Week

Our annual safeguarding week took place in October 2024 with an overarching theme of 'Inclusion'. We increased our attendance from 420 in 2023/24 to 1,021 this year for the Children and Young People workforce (an increase of 143%). 21 free bitesize briefings (1 hour or less) were delivered across the week covering themes for example:

- Father inclusive practice
- Working in a strengths based, relational way with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people
- Whole Family Approach
- Identifying and meeting the needs of Children and Young People with neurodivergent needs
- LGBT+ Awareness
- Adultification

Development Day

The DSCP Development Day with a theme of 'The First 1001 Days' saw 187 practitioners dial into the session on MS Teams. 5 sessions were delivered on the following topics:

- Concealed Pregnancy
- Safe Sleeping/Safe Handling
- Pieces of the jigsaw (learning from practice reviews)
- Enhance Parenting Pathway Program
- Whole Family Approach/Family Networks.

Bespoke Training

202 people completed bespoke training delivered by the DSCP Training and Development Coordinator. Training is tailored and designed to meet the needs of a single agency along with incorporating the multi-agency messages. Bespoke training was delivered to the following:

- Alternative Provision
- Community Centres
- Community Cultural Charity
- Independent School
- Social Housing
- Residential Care
- Schools.

Course Completions by agency across Me-Learning, Training Programme, Safeguarding Week, Development Day and Bespoke

Organisation Name	Total
Adult Health Services	133
Alternative Education Provider	930
CAFCASS	6
Children Social Care	4,717
Colleges (Further Education)	150
Domestic Abuse Services	69
Drug and Alcohol	156
Early Help	485
Early Years and Childcare (All Nurseries including private nurseries, Out of School Clubs and Childminders)	1,578
Education and Skills	474
Faith based	14
Fire Service	37
Foster Carers	438
Housing	32
Integrated Care Board	95
Integrated Passenger Transport (Home to School Transport including Taxi Drivers)	1,476
Local Authority Other	353
NHS Foundation Trusts	1,698
North East Ambulance Service	2
Organisations outside of County Durham	9
Police	70
Primary Care	273
Prison Service	115
Private Housing Providers	76
Private Organisations (for profit organisations including Independent Schools, Private Children's Homes and Fostering Agencies)	533
Probation Service	24
Regeneration and Local Services	37
Schools	4,231
Universities (Higher Education)	4
Voluntary Sector (Community Interest Companies, Registered Charities, Volunteers)	1,557
Youth Justice Service	284
Total	20,056

Post Course Evaluation

Course content average rating out of 5

Me-Learning – 4.73

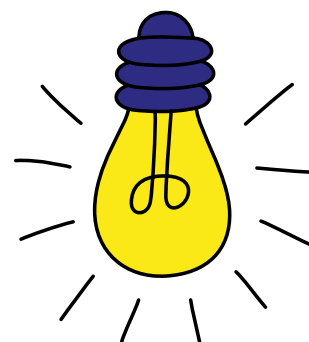
Training Programme – 4.83

Safeguarding Week – 4.64

Development Day – 4.81

Bespoke Training – 4.95

Overall average across all training is 4.79 out of 5

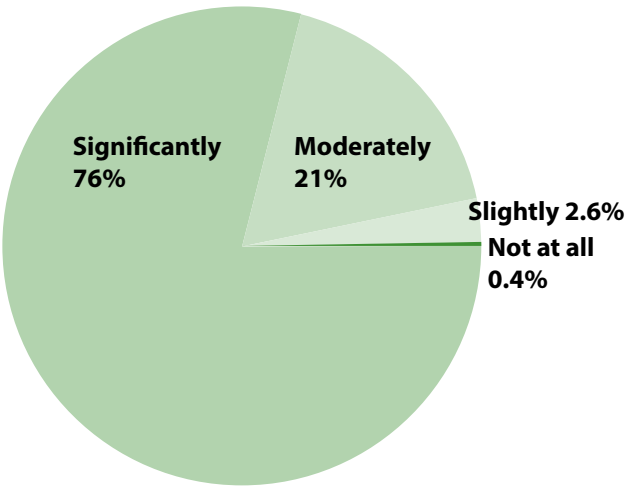


Level of knowledge on this subject prior and on completion of training

1 being limited knowledge and 10 being in depth knowledge.

	Before	After
Me Learning	5.2	8.6
Training Programme	6.2	8.7
Safeguarding Week	5.5	8.1
Development Day	5.7	8.9
Bespoke	6.2	9.1

Do you think this training will have impact on your practice with children, young people, and families?



Following up impact analysis 3/6 months following training

Tell us how the training you attended had an impact on your practice when working with children, young people and families?

“ Made me think about the language I used when recording and how this can impact young people if they read their records.”

“ I have introduced elements of this training into the organisation to raise awareness of certain issues. This has enabled the volunteers to be much more alert and aware of situations what can come up and to ask curious questions.”

“ I have a greater understanding about the safeguarding partnership and other agencies to speak to for information or support. I was able to pick the phone up and have a conversation with another agency to share information which I would never have done before.”

“ I have been able to identify worries, signs and symptoms at a much earlier opportunity and I was confident of what I needed to do next.”

“ On the day of the training, it was exactly the training we needed and particularly good to be able to talk through grey areas, real life scenarios, and understand the support and advice available. Following the training, we have been able to have clear management oversight of cases, explore the grey areas, challenge and ask the curious questions to practitioners and families which we would never have done before. This has resulted in more timely response to identifying support to families.”

“ The course was an absolute eyeopener and I went away from the training feeling like I have another level of understanding about harm outside the home. As an organisation, I have shared lots of the content with practitioners who report that they feel more equipped to understand the complexities, vulnerabilities and risk-taking behaviours of our teenagers.”

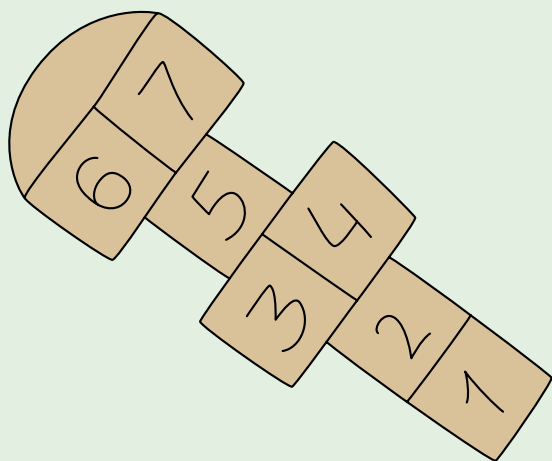
Has there been any light-bulb moments following the training which you would not have picked up on before?

“Communicating is key when working with children and young people. Information sharing as and when and logging everything is important.”

“My knowledge of safeguarding children was poor before attending the course. I now have a clear understanding of things to look out for and I have made my first referral for support for a family which has made me feel more confident in my role.”

“The degree to which every individual is responsible to share / pass up concerns. The importance of reading through the history, legislation / reviews and the issues which prompted intervention. Effective inter-agency working, and communication is clearly at the heart of better protection for children.”

“How important safeguarding is not just in my employed role but as a member of the public. If something doesn't feel right, then it probably isn't. Do something and be accountable.”



8 What's Next for the DSCP

The DSCP has completed work to review the strategic business plan and agree new priorities for 2025-2027 in line with local and national learning.

The Business Plan sets out how the DSCP will work towards our shared vision of 'keeping children safe'.

The Business Plan outlines.

- Priorities and themes that will help keep children and young people safe and protected from harm
- Partners work collaboratively to achieve the same end goals
- Partner agencies hold one another to account effectively
- Learning is promoted and embedded. Information is shared effectively.

You can find out more about the DSCP via our website About us, the Strategic Business Plan 2025-2027 can also be found [here](#).

The DSCP has agreed the following priorities to direct its work for 2025 - 2027.

Priorities

Priority 1

Harm Outside the Home (HOTH)

Priority 2

Safeguarding Through Early Identification and Intervention

Priority 3

Trauma Informed Practice

Priority 4

Working Together and Towards Reform Action Plan

Golden Threads - that weave through everything we do...

Child's voice and lived experience
Working together and sharing information across partners and boundaries
Whole family approach recognising networks
Pieces of the jigsaw through Professional Curiosity and Cumulative Lens
Intersectionality including SEND
Reflective Strengths Based Practice
Mental Health and Wellbeing



Priority One: Harm Outside The Home

Why is it a Priority for DSCP?

It is recognised that the children and young people that are at risk of Harm Outside the Home (HOTH) can be children who are not always visible to practitioners. Therefore, the DSCP want to look at how can we strengthen and challenge the partnership to look at increasing the awareness, offer a greater understanding of places and spaces, focus on missing children and disruption.

Outcomes:

- Young people, practitioners, parents/carers and public have increased awareness and are supported and educated to recognise risk
- The Durham offer is clear and understood. Children at risk are identified, assessed and effectively supported
- Targeted approach to Places and Spaces and People of Concern, mapping used to target intervention and activity is disrupted
- Young People are supported to transition into Adult Services.

Priority Two: Safeguarding Through Early Identification and Intervention

Why is this a priority for the DSCP?

The learning from the past two years within the DSCP links to early intervention and missed opportunities at an early stage. There is a focus in the DSCP to drive practice, develop practitioners understanding of thresholds and have clear safeguarding processes and pathways, which includes cross boundaries and meeting the needs of families. This in turn will reduce families going into crisis - coming through the correct process and early information sharing is key.

National Picture:

Several reviews and government reports have highlighted the need for a more consistent, effective and well-funded early intervention systems of support for families. These reviews have emphasised the importance of early intervention and prevention to improve outcomes for children and families.

Outcomes:

- All practitioners across agencies in Durham are confident at identifying risk
- Intervention is targeted and meets the needs of the family, providing the right support at the right time
- Thresholds, safeguarding processes and pathways for intervention are understood and utilised
- Practitioners are confident leading early help assessments and plans.

Priority Three: Trauma Informed Practice

Why is this a priority for the DSCP?

Increase understanding, identification and impact of trauma affecting our children, young people and parents and to identify joint improvement opportunities e.g. mental and emotional wellbeing, school behaviour and attendance, transitional safeguarding.

Learning from our Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) has highlighted heightened risk for young people who need support in adulthood.

All Rapid Reviews, CSPRs and priority work over the last 12 months have included learning around understanding complex trauma and assessing risk. This includes learning on how unaddressed trauma and distress can lead to family relationships breaking down.

Outcomes:

- Trauma informed practice is embedded across all agencies working with children and families
- Interventions include support for children, young people, parents and carers allowing trauma to be identified and supported
- Impact of trauma is identified and understood
- Focus on support at the point of incident occurring.
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in children and parents are understood

Priority Four: Working Together and Towards Reform Action Plan

Why is this a priority for the DSCP?

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.

The 2023 edition replaces Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. This new edition of Working Together 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
- 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. NSPCC (2023)
- The Children's social care national framework, which sets out expectations for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners in local authorities

In light of these publications, the DSCP had been requested to undertake a review of their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and published their revised arrangements [here](#).

Other new developments

Finalise our updated Quality Assurance Framework aligned to The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) Multi-agency child safeguarding evaluation framework and theory of change.

Review and update the Children's Social Care Safeguarding Referral form along with good referral guidance.

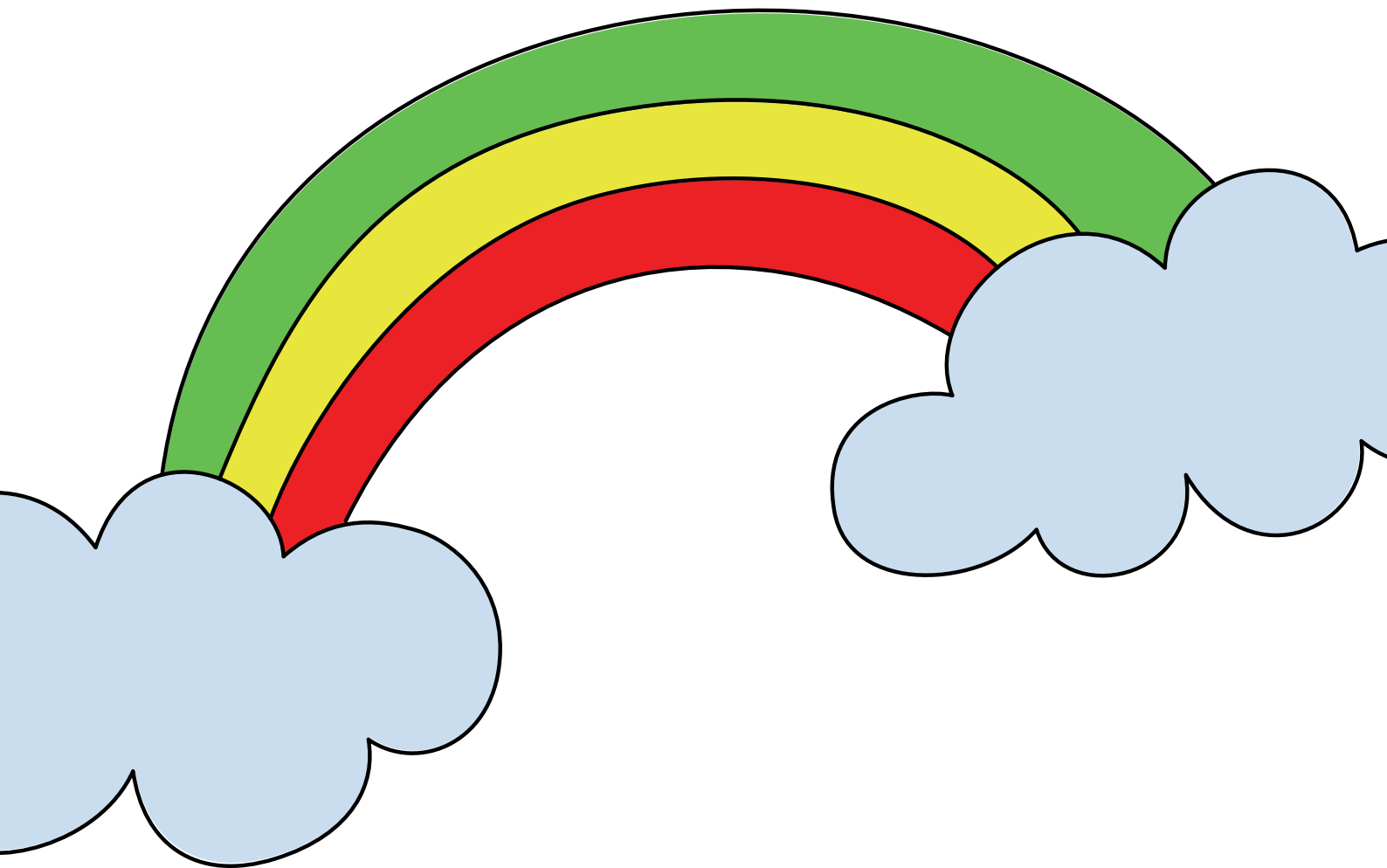
Exploring use of AI and technological developments as partnership tools.

Collaborate with other partnerships via The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) to develop a national good practice agreement for information sharing and a consistent process, when families move across boundaries.

Continue to strengthen our relationship with Education and Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sports Clubs and Faith Based Organisations.

Continue to progress the recommendations and action plan as set out in the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review "I wanted them all to notice" Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment.

Strengthen our collaboration with children, young people, families and carers.



Appendix

DSCP Budget 2024-2025

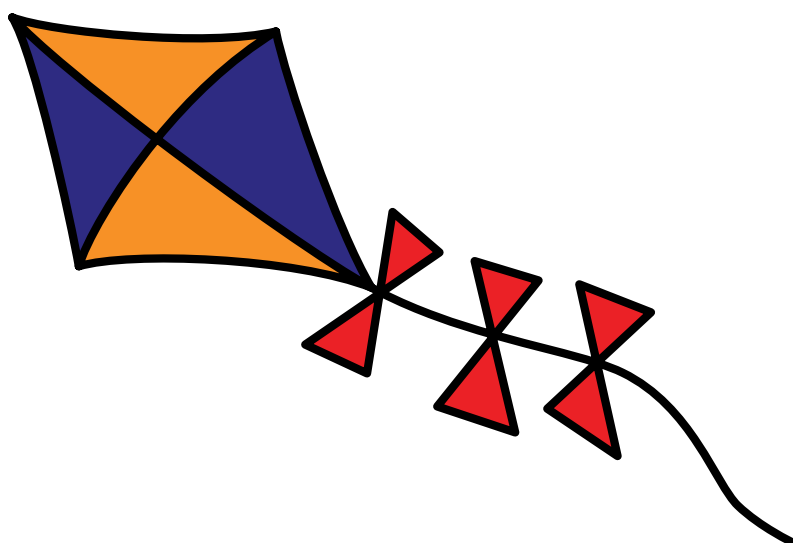
The financial contributions from the strategic partners are as follows,

Partner	Contribution 2023-24 (£)
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	346,257

**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, and bespoke training charges. This is forecast for 2024-2025 at £6,000.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership recognises and 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, as these resources are vital to supporting the partnership to deliver on the ambition for effective multi-agency arrangements.



Overview and Assurance by the DSCP Independent Scrutineer 2024/2025

I am pleased to respond as the Independent Scrutineer to the publication of the Durham Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report for 2024/25.

I can give assurance that the partnership structure and practices required of Working Together 2023 are embedded and have been followed as normal business. The Lead members have met on several occasions and the Executive Group that supports them are well embedded. The executive is keen to ensure that the partnership has the breadth of membership to ensure appropriate representation and have made efforts to identify opportunities to improve interaction and involvement as well as linking with established channels.

This year the Executive Group agreed the scrutiny methodology and schedule to compliment the already existing audit and assurance functions within the partnership. This is also supported by independent external inspections such as OFSTED and SEND.

The Executive Group have received assurance presentations from key areas of the partnership including The Front Door and Elected Home Education.

The Performance and Learning Group has continued their partnership work in relation to practice delivery against the partnership priorities for 2024-25 with the other sub-groups supporting practice and safeguarding outcomes. The outcomes of the work on the priorities are covered within the report.

The partnership has continued its efforts to raise awareness via its website, newsletters and use of social media. These efforts to raise awareness and engagement demonstrate the ongoing work the partnership is doing to reach to a wide audience covering the wider community, parents and carers, children and young people together with practitioners.

The partnership has continued to offer training accessed via the web platform and has undertaken a pilot audit process to better understand the detail of the audit and assurance feedback provided by partners.

The Executive Group has commissioned and received assurance on the potential risks posed to children and young people who are not on a school role. This scrutiny built on the good feedback Education received on their safeguarding and support for Elective Home Education from an earlier external inspection and internal scrutiny. The findings provided the partnership with assurances as to the robust identification of risks and the appropriate process and oversight in place to manage and mitigate them. The report made a small number of improvement recommendations, and all were accepted for implementation going forward.

Sadly, tragic incidents occur involving children, young people and those that have recently reached adulthood having been earlier in the care of the Local Authority. Where this has happened within County Durham or a wider duty exists, appropriate review processes have occurred at pace and with good partner attendance. These rapid reviews have involved the relevant partners and sought to understand what involvement agencies have had, what worked well and what better opportunities to work together could be made. As Independent Scrutineer, I have been involved in these reviews and am assured as to their rigor, compliance with statutory obligations and how thorough they have been.



Adrian Green
Independent Scrutineer