

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report 2021/2022





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Introduction

As the three statutory partners of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, we present our report covering the period 2021/22. In it we aim to demonstrate how we function and provide assurance that our safeguarding arrangements are effective in keeping children safe.

The current partnership arrangements have now been in place for 3 years and although at times challenging, there is clear evidence that this way of working enables leaders at service delivery and quality assurance levels to maintain ownership of the safeguarding agenda. At the time of penning this introduction we are in the process of reviewing and modifying how we operate as a partnership. We intend to adopt a 'learning hub' type model which will allow us to focus more clearly on the things that matter in order to strengthen partnership working in service delivery. It is envisaged that this will help monitor the impact we have so that we make a real and tangible difference for children and families in County Durham.

We have all endured another year living and working through the COVID-19 Coronavirus and the significant impact it has had both personally and professionally in terms of how we all deliver our services. All partner agencies continued with a positive 'can do' attitude to the challenges faced and have been determined to keep vulnerable children at the forefront of their thinking. This working has been a real strength of the partnership. New ways of working we introduced have been embedded where appropriate into normal practice.

We detail in this report some key areas of success where we have made a real difference for children and families, but also highlight areas where we need added focus to continually improve services across the DSCP and our individual agencies. The latter part of the report looks at how we intend to develop over the coming year.

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Children and Young People in County Durham

19% total population are children and young people

6.7% of pupils in the January 2022 school census are Black and Minority Ethnic

21,658 (29.1%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals

There are 101,979 children and young people under 18 living in County Durham

Age 0-4	25,658	Age 10-14	30,024
Age 5-9	29,949	Age 15-19	29,348

3763 Children in Need

985 children were looked after

76 children are missing from education

501 children and young people are electively home educated

1590 pupils attend state funded special schools

3% of pupils in the 2022 school census have a first language other than English

10,462 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support in Durham schools

389 children were subject to a child protection plan

74,472 pupils attend state funded schools (Jan 2022)

2,624 children and young people have Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) including those maintained by other Local Authorities



Schools in County Durham



196 primary schools
including

8 infant only
schools

8 junior only
schools



31 secondary
schools



1 pupil
referral
unit



10 special
schools
(1 academy)



11 nursery
schools

About Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) has a statutory duty to prepare and publish an Annual Report every 12 months which describes how our partners safeguard vulnerable children and young people. Our primary responsibility is to provide a way for the local agencies that have a responsibility for child welfare, to agree how they will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure that they do so effectively. We changed from the old Board structure into a Partnership in April 2019 and are governed by our Partnership Arrangements.

The Annual Report 2021/22 aims to demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership, as set out in the national statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)', have been fulfilled and to provide assurance that the multi-agency safeguarding system is effective.

The work of the partners throughout the entire reporting period continued to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with changes in working practices and activity necessary, but this seems if anything to have strengthened connectivity across the Partnership.

The Vision and Values of the DSCP have remained the consistent driver over the last year with continued emphasis on Child Exploitation and Neglect as well as our focus on the following four Practice Improvement themes:

- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment.

The Partnership has been supported by seven strategic sub-groups; Embedding Learning; Performance, Challenge and Impact; the Child Exploitation Group, the Workforce Learning and Development group, Neglect Group and the Child Death Overview Panel.

Our Vision and Values

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

Our Partners

Each local area is required by law to have a Safeguarding Children Partnership. The DSCP is a statutory body established in legislation (Children Act 2017) and works according to national guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018', and in accordance with the local Partnership Arrangements. The statutory guidance provides children's safeguarding with a legal framework, setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners.

The statutory bodies are supported by a number of other Relevant Agencies coming from the areas of Criminal Justice; Health; Education and the Voluntary sector.



DSCP Budget 2021-22

The financial contributions from the strategic partners are as follows, with monies from the 4 NHS Trusts being part of the CCG overall total:

Partner	Contribution 2020/21 (£)
Durham County Council	191,604
Clinical Commissioning Groups (ICB)	105,135
Durham Constabulary	39,285
CDDFT – Admin costs for CDOP	6,036
Training fees	5,000
Total	347,060

Safeguarding Children Sub-Groups

The DSCP has seven principal sub-groups – Performance, Challenge and Impact; Embedding Learning; Child Exploitation Group; and the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

● Performance, Challenge and Impact Group

The purpose of the Performance, Challenge and Impact group is to monitor the impact and outcomes of partner activity on behalf of the DSCP, as required by Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

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, by using data and intelligence.

● Embedding Learning Group

The purpose of the Embedding Learning Group is to improve the quality of multi-agency safeguarding frontline practice through the implementation of a joint, co-ordinated approach which will ensure good outcomes for children which will be evidenced through multi-agency audit, peer review and inspection.

Their work will respond to the recommendations and actions from inspection; audit; serious case reviews/child safeguarding practice reviews; local learning lessons reviews; complaints; performance information; and feedback from children and families. This is to ensure multi-agency safeguarding practice is high quality; makes a difference to children; and enhances learning about what works for children and families.



● Child Exploitation Group

Over the last 2-3 years the DSCP had an unusually high caseload of Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and through the transition across to Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) had these to finalise. During the reporting period six serious case reviews were concluded and published. (link to website). Cases have been referred under the CSPR process, but none have progressed to full review. There have been 3 Local Rapid Reviews and one case which was progressed to a Learning Review. With one other case it was agreed that the criteria for a local CSPR had been met, however all the learning had already been identified at the Rapid Review stage meaning there was no added value in undertaking this.

● Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 specifies, 'When a child dies, in any circumstances, it is important for parents and families to understand what has happened and whether there are any lessons to be learned'.

The CDOP oversees all deaths of children under 18 regardless of cause, of which there have been 28 in the reporting period. All of these are subject to a Child Death Review (CDR) (link to report). The CDOP works closely with the Safeguarding Executive Group to highlight any emerging themes and issues and learning from child death reviews that require further consideration. The CDOP also completes its own Annual Report.

Significant work has taken place to harness the recommendations and learning from all reviews and other areas of both internal and external scrutiny. The Partnership, in an evolving way now determines Practice Improvement Themes which require sustained multi-agency focus going forward, with the governance for progression sitting both with the Embedding Learning Group and CDOP which has its own Thematic Review process. It is within these themed areas that the learning from both Child Death Reviews (CDR) and CSPR's sit.

The purpose of the Workforce Learning and Development is to ensure that safeguarding children training needs are 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. The Workforce Learning and Development has the responsibility to integrate the learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and significant events into training. The group will deliver a communications strategy to raise the profile of the DSCP.



The Ongoing Effect Of COVID-19

Covid continued to have an impact on the working arrangements of the DSCP during this reporting period, most notably around our meeting structure which in the main continued to be across Microsoft Teams.

This has ensured extremely strong attendance across partner agencies and will continue to be the model going forward, but with a mix of hybrid style meetings when the need arises. The other key area having effect is across our multi-agency training provision.

There has been significant development on what this offer looks like and forms part of our current Training Strategy, which is heavily focused on remote and digital learning (see Training section).

Safeguarding assurance still formed part of the monthly Embedding Learning Group with an ongoing responsibility to assess and address potential gaps in service delivery in terms of both restriction and capacity, in order to maintain an effective Partnership service as the pandemic evolved.

The group was able to coordinate and maximise the capacity of frontline practitioners across the Partnership to ensure that the most vulnerable children were consistently seen.



Partnership Development Sessions

There have been 2, 6 monthly development sessions in the partnership which included representatives from the relevant agencies.

April 2021 Topic – Signs of Safety Practice Framework

- How do the values underpinning the vision align with the values/ambition of the DSCP?
- Where are the opportunities for the DSCP to embed this framework?

Signs of Safety

We have continued to embed the Signs of Safety framework across the partnership placing a real focus on the strengths within families and the importance of building good quality relationships with children, their families and naturally connected networks.

Our child protection strategy meetings, child protection conferences and child protection plans are all aligned to the signs of safety framework.

We use key Signs of Safety tools such as the Harm Matrix and Scaling questions to help practitioners, families and managers think about how worried we are about a child or young person.

Families and their network are central to the child protection process and there is an expectation that child protection plans are now developed collaboratively with families in child protection conferences. We know through our audit work and the recent Children's Services Ofsted Inspection that practice is improving as a result.

Outcomes

A multi-agency signs of safety group has been established, which considers the progress the delivery of signs of safety, the impact and learning for the partnership. This group will continue with its work through the next year.

October 2021 Topic - Harmful Sexual Behaviour

(Guest speaker – Professor Simon Hackett)

- What gaps are there in our Partnership arrangements re HSB?
- Are we confident staff are skilled in having those difficult conversations?
- Gathering and sharing good practice.

Outcomes

Development of multi-agency thematic plan around awareness, good practice, and communications. Area included in the Child sexual abuse Improvement.

Learning through the Partnership

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Over the past year we have undertaken two rapid reviews. None of these reviews identified the need for a Local Safeguarding Practice Review. One review resulted in a local learning event with practitioners and the other, learning was identified in the rapid review. The actions from these reviews were included within our improvement areas above and have been progressed.

Learning from National Panel

Local learning as well as national reviews such as “Myth of Invisible Men – NAI in under 1’s” have helped inform and been informed by the multiagency and improvement plans locally. Key themes from the learning relating to teenage neglect and transition and how this has informed the development of the Asset team and priorities around contextual safeguarding.



Practitioner Led Multi-Agency Audits

The Partnership seeks to challenge partners to continuously improve safeguarding for children and young people in County Durham. Multi-agency, collaborative and practitioner led auditing is scheduled throughout the year and the Partnership aims to complete between 4 and 6 multi-agency audits within the annual reporting period. Along with the Section 11 and Practitioner Survey, our multi agency audit programme informs our direction and understanding of local practice. The focus of audits is determined through discussion between the DSCP Business Manager and the chairs of the two main subgroups, utilizing learning from both groups.

A flexible approach is taken to scheduling the audits and the areas for review to ensure the process remains responsive to the understanding of issues within the partnership and the level of complexity or investigation required. The Embedding Learning sub-group has been responsible for coordinating responses to findings, ensuring all areas for improvement are addressed effectively and that any learning gained from audits is embedded in practice across the partnership.

2021-2022 - Summary Learning Points

- Collaborating effectively, reviewing knowledge and facilitating partner involvement are consistently identified as a key practice to successful safeguarding interventions.
- Leadership characterised by pro-actively engaging partners in the ongoing development of responses, effectively communicating and seeking information in the decision-making process, is probably the single most important area of practice that would benefit from development
- Improved outcomes are observed in situations where practitioners gain confidence from accessing clear procedures, tools and management support
- Measures to ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding issues is the first consideration, to ensure all individuals are considered and the best available support is made available throughout and beyond responses to the initial reason for referral.
- Understanding the lived experience of the child does not fulfil its potential contribution to effective decision making and responses if it does not reflect the lived experience across a range of environments and contexts. The partnership's response is reflected in the adoption of the Improvement Theme "The Lived Experience and Voice of the Child" and the development of Standards of Expectation for consideration of the voice of the child across all partner agencies.

Recurring Themes and Observations from Multi-Agency Audits

The following are the key findings from the multi-agency auditing programme:

System

- Practice benefits when there is consistent supervisory support and case oversight. The most frequently identified benefits are
 - opportunities for reflection on achieving best outcomes
 - exploring approaches to decision making
 - reassurance to practitioners
 - supporting challenge and professional discussion.

This has resulted in the development of training and support planning regarding management understanding and decision making within the partnership training offer.

- Practitioners benefit when there are clearly understood pathways and tools. The most frequently identified benefits are
 - engaging partners in “partnership working”
 - timeliness of action
 - consistency throughout case record.

Think ‘Others’

- Consideration of potential effect of risks on the child’s family, e.g. siblings and extended family members, is frequently missing or not robust in the development of plans and multi-agency responses. Practitioners could be broader in their focus of concern, and this is more frequently identified when seeking to resolve issues within complex family arrangements. This has resulted in the development and promotion of group supervision within partner practice
- Better outcomes are observed when practitioners use tools such as chronology, genogram, harm matrix; and/or apply specific methods such as family network conferencing. As a result, the partnership adopted of the Improvement Theme “Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment” which has led to development and promotion across communication channels of tools such as the Harm Matrix and multi-agency Chronologies
- Outcomes may improve by formal consideration of options for available support beyond the response to the immediate concern. A lack of engagement with Early Help and specialist agencies in the decision to close a case is often highlighted as a missed opportunity for improving risk assessment and decision effectiveness.

This has led to Early Help working with key partners, children, young people and parents and carers to develop a new Early Help Assessment based on our Signs of Safety practice model.





Working Together

- Effective partnership working, maintained throughout the safeguarding response, is the most frequently highlighted area for development.
 - Pro-active engagement of partners and communication by lead professional
 - Encouraging professional curiosity
 - Maintaining engagement with all partners
 - Seeing the safeguarding need as multi-dimensional
 - Engaging beyond the formal processes, such as strategy meetings
 - Communicating and information sharing as a continuous process
 - Enabling professional discussions by valuing and recording dissenting opinions This has led to the adoption of management understanding and decision making as an Improvement Theme within the partnership, developing standards for Reflective Discussion embedding good practice across partner agencies.

Child Centred

- Overall, the most consistent factor is practitioners maintaining a child-centred approach
- There is often a clear difference between good and bad in the quality of practice with very good examples of practitioners recording the voice or making clear effort to consider factors affecting the lived experience of the child, contrasted with none or little effort in other cases. This area of practice would benefit from consistent standards
- Tools for engagement are often agency centric with a resulting strong but narrow understanding of the child's lived experience. A multi-agency tool would be useful to practitioners in providing a shared expectation of holistic information in risk assessment and decision making. As a result, work on promoting use of the Harm Matrix across the partnership is planned.
- Knowledge of the Voice of the Child is often not shared effectively with partners and so does not always create a full picture of understanding throughout the process of implementing a safeguarding response. This can reduce the effectiveness of decision making. As a result of the adoption of the Improvement Theme "The Lived Experience and Voice of the Child" the partnership has updated the partners 'Professional Pledge' and relaunched the commitment that children are central to all we do and we hold each other to account.

Training and the Delivery of Local and National Learning

The learning from the audits above, local Reviews and national Reviews are analysed to establish common themes and recommendations. This informs the basis of our 6 monthly safeguarding week content but also areas of training and development for training programme where trainers are commissioned who are 'experts' within the topic subject.

In relation to our improvement areas, the Training Programme has been revised to include the learning from these areas

Management Understanding and Decision Making

- Emphasis has been placed on reflective supervision, professional curiosity and challenge in safeguarding week and safeguarding managers/Designated Safeguarding Leads training
- Safeguarding Week was developed by Senior Members of Partner Organisations to come up with a focus topics and facilitators from each agency
- There was a gap identified in training programme which was safeguarding training specifically for Managers and DSL. SOS, Harm Matrix, Multi-Agency Chronologies, Reflective Supervision, Professional Curiosity which have all been highlighted in recent reviews as areas of improvement have been implemented
- Impact forum – giving professionals the opportunity to share how training has impacted on practice and their managers the opportunity to monitor this
- CP Conference training developed with IRO and eLearning package is available on Me Learning. Mock Conference training is also being developed with roll out in September.

Voice and Lived Experience of the Child

- This is a common theme in all training on the DSCP training programme and great emphasis and information is shared on this
- Safeguarding week topic, consistent slide on 20 topics in safeguarding week on this and further plan to carry out a practical session on tools to use
- Development of Safeguarding Managers training which focusses on VOC and lived experiences, how they can evidence and utilise the tools in the workplace, ensure that the practitioners they supervise are using this effectively and that children and young people's voices are being recorded consistently.



Risk Assessment/Cumulative Harm

- Cumulative Harm action plan has been completed
- Embedded into Safeguarding Managers training
- Topic at safeguarding week.

Child Sexual Abuse

- CSA training commissioned by Barnardo's and evaluations are excellent
- CSA delivered by CSA Centre in safeguarding week to bring a national perspective to complement our local knowledge.

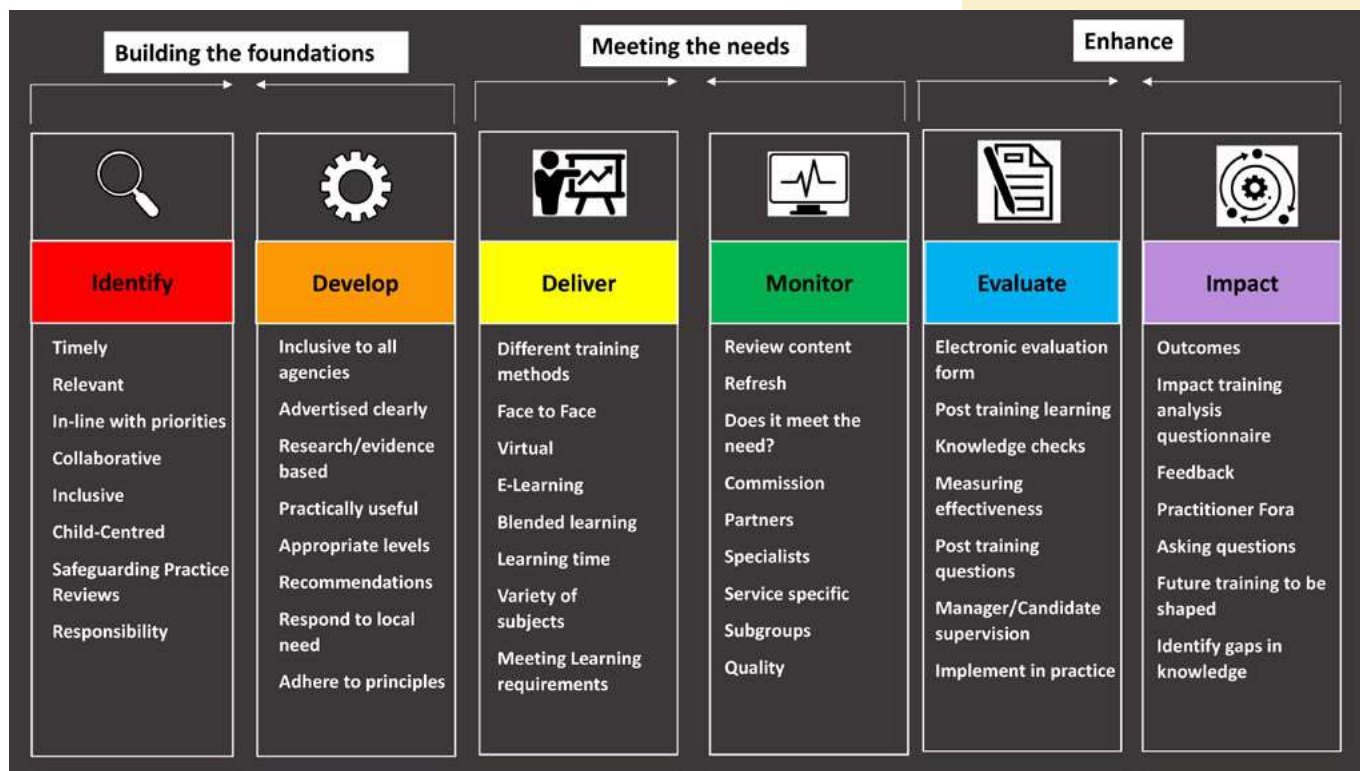
Impact of training on practice is monitored firstly by training evaluations and secondly by Impact Forum which is a new group where all those that have accessed training come together to share how effective the training was, how this has impacted in their work and the difference it has made to children and young people. Safeguarding Managers training then talks about Managers monitor this with the practitioners they supervise.

Evaluation of safeguarding week and the increase in bookings on the same topics on the training programme indicates practitioners were given a taster and wanted to know more about this subject by attending a more in-depth training programme.

Although our safeguarding weeks have been a success, there are lessons to learn with regards to key representatives from partnership to take responsibility in dissemination of information to practitioners and to ensure attendance.

- Advertising on social media requires improvement for next time.





Key Safeguarding Partnership Considerations Looked After Children and Care Leavers

In January 2022 the Looked After Children Service underwent a restructure and is now made up of five teams consisting of a team manager, social workers and a social work consultant. We have embedded a relationship-based practise approach, valuing relationships with children and their families, each other and the partners we work with. This has resulted in positive feedback about the support we give our children and their families.

Partners work with children and their families to proactively support the child to return home when it's safe and in their best interests to so. We have seen an increase in children returning home and are offering support to ensure this is maintained. We are developing strong working relationships with our commissioning services which allows homes to be found for children which can well meet their needs.

In the second half of the reporting period there has been a significant amount of work undertaken aligned to our practice framework, Signs of Safety, to support our multi-agency practitioners proactively identifying naturally connected networks and ensuring they are central to our care planning practice.

Developing Pathway Plans for young people at an earlier stage is a focus of our development work and we are now evidencing more direct work with young people informing their own plans. There has been additional training in areas such as working with parents in a trauma informed way to help parents increase their knowledge of the impact of trauma on their children.

The Care Leaver service is now more streamlined since the restructure in Jan 2022. This has included better partnership working with health, voluntary sector and housing and as a result we are starting to see better

outcomes for our care experienced young people. The Care Leaver Hub opened in February 2022 this has created many opportunities for our care leavers.

Further developments for children looked after include:

- A Pathway is now in place to ensure all children placed out of area are offered a health passport
- Ongoing improvements with the provision of Requests for Health Passports from the Local Authority will need to be maintained for the children placed in Durham
- Due to increase in under1's in Durham becoming looked after, a review of the pre-birth service was undertaken including birth response plans and Early Help. As a result the 'Pause' Board, which works with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeated pregnancies that result in children needing to be removed from their care, was established and there is now a Strategic Delivery Group for Vulnerable Pre-Birth and under 1-year olds in County Durham.

Outstanding



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 11-17) with complex needs. The home regularly reports information regarding the use of restraint to the Youth Justice Board and Ofsted, who has judged it as being **outstanding** in all areas (April 2021).

Injuries due to restraint are graded 1-3, with 3 being the most serious involving serious cuts, fractures or loss of consciousness. Of the 408 incidents of restraint recorded for the year, 71% caused no injury at all, and whilst 117 resulted in injury, it is notable that 96% were at level 1, with only 1 being recorded in the highest level 3 category.

Scrutiny involves a regular review of the home's CCTV where randomly selected incidents are reviewed with a manager from the home about the use of restraint, the circumstances leading up to the incident and what happened afterwards. This scrutiny provides assurance to the Partnership that the use of restraint is being monitored in terms of legality and proportionality in cooperation with the centre. The Aycliffe Centre has been judged as outstanding across all areas in its most recent Ofsted inspection.

Early Help Transformation Programme

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced in the November 2021 Spending Review a £200m uplift in funding to support a 3-year extension and refresh of the national Supporting Families programme, known in Durham as Stronger Families. The new programme will focus on building the resilience of vulnerable families and require all areas to have joined up, efficient local early help services, able to identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time.

As of 22 March 2022, Durham achieved significant and sustained outcomes for 995 families in 2021/22 which exceeded the target of 761 set by DLUHC. Since 2015, 6085 families have 'turned around', 5331 families have achieved significant and sustained outcomes and 754 achieving continuous employment.

Activity

Working with key partners, children, young people and parents and carers to develop a new Early Help Assessment based on our Signs of Safety practice model. This will be launched in August 2022. This development will also capture Early Help Assessments and Team Around the Family (TAF) arrangements undertaken across the wider early help system, providing a richer picture of early help offered and the impact on children, young people and families across County Durham.

Locality Early Help Conversations, which continue to be held fortnightly providing an environment to ensure children, young people and families requiring additional help and support have access to the broad range of help across the early help system, resulting in approximately 86% being offered VCS support as part of their offer of support.





Case Study

A young girl was brought to her GP regarding concerns about her emotional wellbeing and bullying at school. The child had recently been discharged from CAMHS and Gran (Child's Carer) was not sure where to turn to for support. The GP discussed Early Help and obtained consent to make an Early Help Request. The GP telephoned the Early Help Triage Team and discussed the worries for the family as well as what was going well.

The GP and Early Help Triage Worker agreed it would be appropriate to discuss the family's needs at a Locality Early Help Conversation. Partners in attendance at the Conversation, including CAMHS, were able to gather and share additional and appropriate information as Gran had consented.

Due to appropriate information sharing the family were referred to the One Point Intensive Family Support Team where a Key Worker was allocated and a Team Around the Family arranged. The partners in attendance committed to providing multi-agency support which was co-ordinated through the One Point Key Worker and the Child and Family Plan which included:

For the Child

Further therapeutic support from CAMHS. Support from One Point in using the Mental Health First Aid Kit (sleep diary, mindfulness/relaxation strategies and a "My Life Journal"). One to one support regarding risk taking behaviours. Collaborate working with school and development of an incentive scheme to encourage school attendance and attend Homework Club.

For Gran

Support for Gran to better manage her own mental health. Parenting support for Gran to assist in managing her Granddaughter's behaviour and mental health. A referral to Adult Social Care for Gran to request an assessment for home adaptations to improve the home environment. A Think Family Employment Advisor to support Gran to look into volunteering opportunities (at Gran's request) to help with Gran's mental health and confidence.

For Both

A Family Support Network identified by child and Gran with the support from Key Worker has enabled those people who are important to the family to support them when things are tricky without the dependency or need for a formal "service" which is far more sustainable. The family continue to work positively with One Point and partners and are making good progress.

ICON

ICON is a parenting programme aimed at giving parents the skills to deal with a crying infant.

Infant crying is normal

Comforting Methods can help

Ok to walk away (for a short period as long as baby is safe)

Never, ever shake a baby

This has been designed to improve parental reaction to crying and specifically to reduce incidents of abusive head trauma. It is an evidenced based programme which is being rolled out nationally, commissioned regionally by NHS England. It is endorsed by The Royal College of General Practitioners and The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

It is delivered across 5 key touchpoints which are mandated as below;

- At the hospital before discharge
- By the community midwife in the baby's first 10 days
- By the health visitor in the first 14 days
- By the health visiting again at three weeks
- By the GP at the six-to-eight-week postnatal check.

ICON roll out In Durham was led by the Designated Nurse and included Early Help and Pre-birth teams. Anyone who is a parent, a prospective parent or has caring responsibilities should be informed of this message and part of ICON's success in Durham is the reinforcement of that message at every 'touchpoint' as well as at opportunistic contact with new or potential parents and carers. Phase 2 of ICON will include increasing the reach of the programme across the DSCP partnership.





Achievements Against Priorities

'When everything is a priority, nothing is!'. Considering this maxim, the partnership continued to recognise there was a need to focus in the right areas in order to make a difference and have impact on our service delivery. Four Practice Improvement themes were identified (see below), with each managed by the Safeguarding Executive and the wider partnership across the period.

Improvement Theme

- The Lived Experience and Voice of Children

Activity

- Standards of Expectation designed and introduced across all partner agencies
- Professional Pledge updated and relaunched commitment children are central to all we do and we hold each other to account
- DSCP training offer designed so that lived experience of children is consistent in all courses
- Impact Forums introduced to assess real difference on practice multi-agency training has
- Audit programme developed so voice and lived experience is considered across all DSCP and single agency audits.

Impact/Difference

- Agencies understand the expected standards when considering lived experience/ voice of children
- Robust processes are in place in each agency to monitor and report on compliance and impact.

Improvement Theme

- Management Understanding and Decision Making

Activity

- Standards for Reflective Discussion developed and embedded into practice across partner agencies
- Professional Pledge updated and relaunched commitment children are central to all we do and we hold each other to account around decisions made
- Risk Assessment/Cumulative Harm embedded into Safeguarding Managers training
- Audit activity and Third-Party Assurance to examine decision making in child protection processes.

Impact/Difference

- Through audit and key scrutiny there is clear evidence of reflective supervision taking place across agencies
- Regular evidence appears of strong supervision and management oversight in a high percentage of cases.

Improvement Theme

- Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Activity

- Enhanced multi-agency training provision introduced
- Extensive 12 week phased multi-agency Communications Plan developed and implemented
- Good Practice guidance developed
- Focus of DSCP Development Day, October 2021 (Professor Simon Hackett)
- The DSCP revised and relaunched its harmful sexual behaviour procedures in February 2020. A series of briefing was offered across Children's Services to highlight the procedures
- A briefing was also provided to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Central Referral Unit (CRU) that sits within First Contact
- A referral pathway was agreed with CDYJS and First Contact to ensure that appropriate referrals were shared with CDYJS
- A tool has been developed for practitioners across the partners to use to identify the stages of sexual development for children and young people including behaviours that are healthy through to problematic, inappropriate or concerning and abusive.

Impact/Difference

- Referrals under the Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) pathway have increased since the relaunch and County Durham Youth Justice Service (CDYJS) who manage the HSB pathway on behalf of the partnership, have observed referral numbers increasing (to CDYJS) from 24 referral between 1/4/19 to 31/3/20 to 152 for the same period 2021 to 2022
- The increase in referrals has seen a much better response from partners in information sharing via the professionals only meetings that take place that include police, health, CDYJS, schools and children's services. This has improved how we can support young people and their parents/primary carers when their child is under police investigation and how we can ensure that their safety and that of others is not compromised through safety planning and when indicated, risk management plans
- The increase in referrals has seen an increase in AIM3 assessments including AIM: Under 12s assessments. These assessments have been undertaken with a social worker and a case manager from CDYJS (one worker has to be trained in the respective AIM assessment framework)
- CDYJS has been able to provide support, consultation and quality assurance oversight for the practitioners undertaking the assessments from a manager who is now trained in the supervision of AIM3
- A range of resources for working with HSB have been collated and are available to practitioners in Children's Services
- CDYJS has been able to provide support for practitioners with interventions when requested
- The tool gives guidance on how to respond to such behaviours. The tool has been promoted through briefing that have taken place in July 2022.



Improvement Theme

- Cumulative Harm and Risk Assessment

Activity

- Cumulative Harm guidance developed and cascaded across communication channels looking at key areas like Harm Matrix and Chronologies
- Practice Expectations 12 month Rollout Plan introduced
- Access into Signs of Safety briefings enhanced and woven into all DSCP training provision.

Impact/Difference

- Through appropriate levels of scrutiny and health check, multi-agency meetings are well facilitated to enable the continued assessment of risk and progress for children and families
- There is a robust analysis of family history, capacity to change and the impact on the child
- There has been improvement as to how professionals use plain language that children and families understand.



Overview by the Independent Chair/Scrutineer of the progress made by the DSCP 2021/22

I was appointed by the DSCP Executive in September 2020 with the remit to not only chair certain meetings, but to act as a critical friend to the DSCP in scrutinising their effectiveness.

The annual report indicates what has been achieved by the partnership in 2021/22 against the continuing significant impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The partnership, agencies and particularly staff have continued to respond well to the pandemic by working together to maintain effective safeguarding arrangements for children and young people throughout the year, despite these challenges.

My first task on appointment was to undertake an independent review of how the partnership was operating and the outcomes and associated impact that it was achieving. This review was published in full and progress against the recommendations were detailed in the DSCP Annual Report for 2020/21.

As a result of this review during 2021/22 the DSCP Executive undertook to restructure the way the partnership functioned focusing on both a stronger assurance model and a learning model detailing how the partnership can understand practice and make improvements in a timely manner. Whilst this remodelling did take some time it is due to be launched in September 2022. The new way of working can be found at appendix one contained in a letter to partners explaining the change, associated rationale, and intended outcomes.

I had previously identified that the DSCP needed to focus more on the positive impact on children, young people, families, and carers from their actions. It is of note that this annual report is structured to include impact and difference across the improvement themes delivered throughout the year. This also included two Professional Development Days covering the subjects of Signs of Safety and Harmful Sexual Behaviour. It is also positive to see the DSCP developing excellent working relationships with Durham University to assist in practitioner development.



The scrutiny panel consisting of three independent voluntary members and the Independent Chair/Scrutineer commenced a review into the effectiveness of Designated Safeguarding Leads in Education towards the end of this reporting year following the review of the Voice of the child the previous year. Their findings will be presented to the DSCP Executive in September 2022. The purpose is to seek assurance, or otherwise, over effective single and multi-agency practice in this area. I would like to thank these independent and voluntary members for their continuing commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people and the practitioners charged with doing so.

Durham Constabulary was the subject of a PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency, and legitimacy) inspection in 2021/22 undertaken by His Majesty Inspector of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Service (HMICFRS). They were awarded a good for protecting vulnerable people. In May 2022 Ofsted conducted an inspection of Durham Local Authority Children's Services where an overall grade of good was given with an outstanding for the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families. Whilst these were single agency inspections, both did cover aspects of multi-agency working to safeguard children and young people, and therefore can give some assurance as to practice in this area.

In conclusion, I believe the DSCP is meeting its statutory obligations and will continue to improve how it achieves this, on delivery of the new operating model during 2022/23.



What's Next for 2022/23

The Partners requested a review to consider the options for a future learning model for the partnership.

A number of frameworks used by other partnerships were considered and it was agreed that the DSCP move towards a new meeting structure.

Changes towards this new model will be progressed into 2022/2023. We will hope to provide our analysis of the impact of this new direction in next year's annual report.

The development of the improvement areas will be progressed and up until the new arrangements are in place, the partnership will continue with the improvement areas below:

- Management Understanding and Decision Making
- Voice and Lived Experience of the Child
- Risk Assessment and Cumulative Harm
- Child Sexual Abuse.

Other priorities across the partnership

- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies
- Improve effectiveness of Partnership scrutiny and the assessment of impact
- Progress the DSCP website
- Maintain the Child Protection procedure updates
- Progress the work of the Child Death Overview panel
- Launch the new DSCP Website.



New DSCP Website

The redesign of the website has come from the learning from our audits, reviews and practitioner survey with the intention of focussing on realising the following benefits:

- Creating an effective communication channel within the Partnership
- Improving the accessibility of safeguarding tools and resources to practitioners
- Improve efficiency to partnership administration of training
- Present an effective public facing representation of the Partnership and its work.

Key Features

- Redesigned user experience – users should be able to find what they're looking for in three mouse clicks or less
- A new Training Section, making it easier to examine the whole programme of training
- Individual pages outlining information about each training event
- An integrated booking system to allow users to request a place on training directly from the course information page
- A new 'Resource Library' containing a wide range of practitioner and public resources
- Direct access from the Home Page to most popular downloaded resources
- Easy access to multi-agency child protection procedures
- An archive of the DSCP E-Bulletin and form to subscribe for future editions direct to your inbox
- Thematic sections for practitioners to quickly find and easily access general information and resources relating practice themes such as Domestic Abuse, Signs of Safety and Early Help
- A 'What's New' section on the homepage to highlight news, new resources and events as they become available.



Letter to the Partnership

22nd July 2022

Appendix 1

Dear DSCP Partner,

We wish to inform you of exciting changes to the operating arrangements and meeting structures in the partnership.

Since the launch of the DSCP partnership arrangements in April 2019 the partnerships' structure has been:

- The DSCP executive
- Embedded Learning Group (ELG)
- Challenge and Performance group
- Child Exploitation Group
- Neglect
- Several task and finish groups.

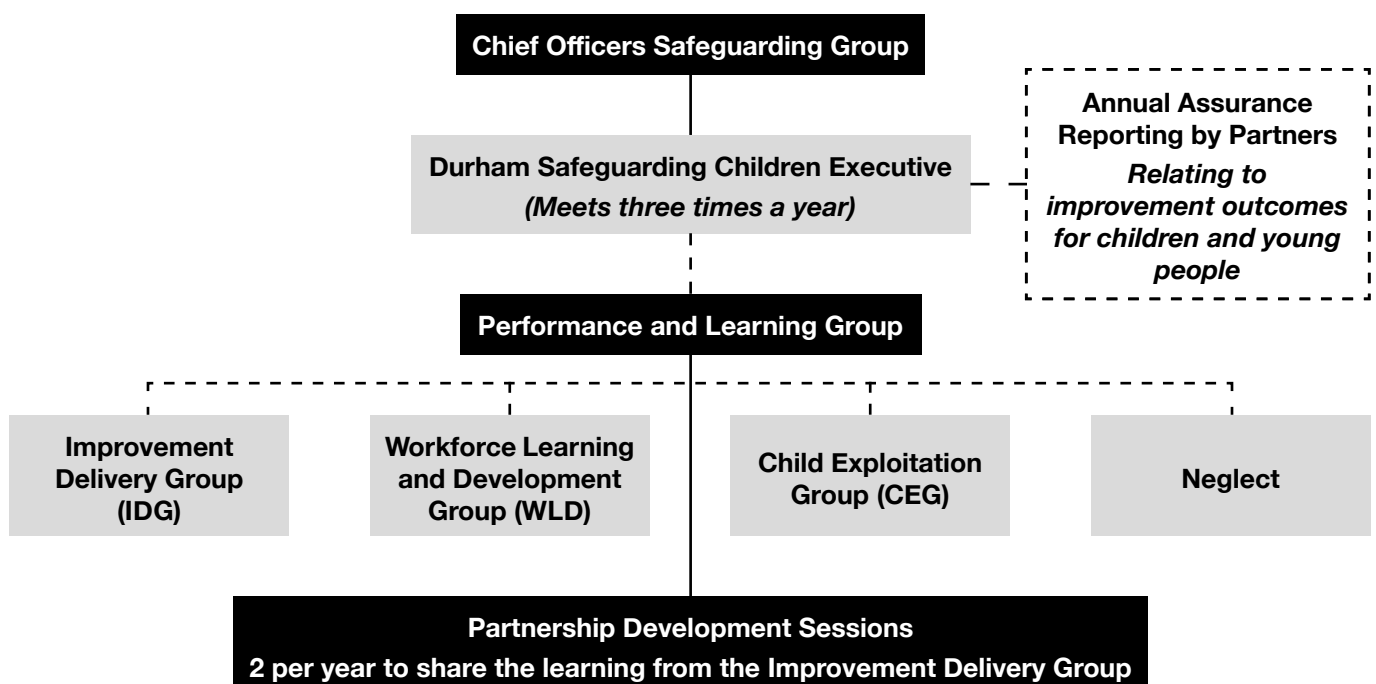
These groups have been very well attended and partner agencies have shown commitment to the work and made significant progress. However, there are several groups with similar attendance and the partnership wanted to look at ways to streamline these groups and focus their emphasis on learning and impact.

We explored how the 2 main groups, the Performance, Impact and Challenge group and the Embedded Learning Group (ELG) can be more responsive to local and national issues and determine areas for improvement by engaging with children and young people and practitioners.

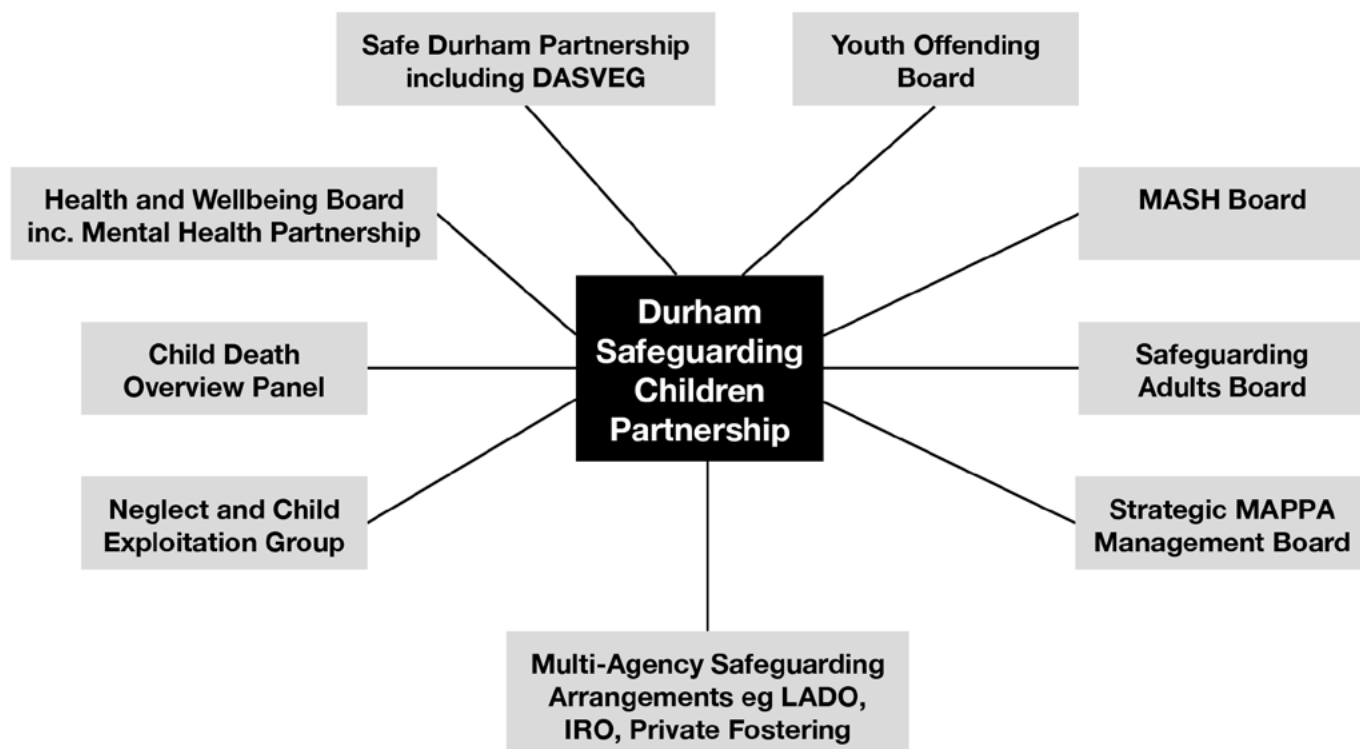
The biggest motivation for this change has been to consider a how the partnership can understand practice and make improvements in a timely manner.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure

Key - Working Relationship——— Reporting Relationship- - - - -



Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure Reporting and Assurance Structure



Safeguarding Executive

The Safeguarding Executive will consist of the 3 safeguarding partners, the independent scrutineer and the Business Manager and will meet quarterly as a business meeting and will consider assurance reports.

Going forward it is proposed that the Safeguarding Executive will have the following functions:

- Provide Strategic direction
- Promote active learning
- Decision makers for Rapid Reviews etc.
- Receive assurance from Partners agencies and consider impact.

The Safeguarding Executive will meet with the two groups (Performance and Learning Group and the Improvement Delivery Group) three times a year to explore the new area for improvement and review the impact of the work completed from the previous theme. The groups together will explore learning both locally and nationally which includes the views of children and young people and the voice of practitioners to determine 3 improvement areas to be explored in the Improving Practice Delivery group (IDG). There will be more of a focus on practice.

It is envisaged that this will feel different for agencies and practitioners from the current meeting set up, and their engagement in the process of determining practice issues, it is hoped that by obtaining information quickly that this will move improvements in practice more reactively.

The Embedded Learning Group and Practice and Performance group have been concluded and the new Performance and Learning group will commence from the 1st September 2022.



Performance and Learning Group

The purpose of the Performance and Learning Group (PLG) will be to:

- Take forward learning priorities for 3 key areas of priority work. The key areas will be identified annually in conjunction with the executive
- Identify key pieces of work for the Improvement Delivery Group (IDG) to take forward and embed into front line practice in the context of the agreed priorities and receive regular progress updates
- Receive exception reports from analysis and then identify of potential Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for deep dive analysis
- Identifying and ensuring dissemination of good practice, to celebrate and learn
- Analysis of local information and single agency intelligence to identify, scrutinise and determine action required to address any emerging themes
- Identification of partnership training needs, linking in with the Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) to take forward any required commissioning and delivery
- Coordinate and oversee an annual programme of multiagency auditing to provide assurance about improvement and impact, receive findings and ensure that learning is disseminated to front line staff
- Receive and disseminate the learning from rapid reviews and LCSP reviews and near misses
- Work with the Safeguarding Executive and Improvement Delivery Group (IDG) to determine the area of focus for the IDG 3 times a year and review and monitor the impact of the previous improvement area.

It is anticipated that the membership will be representatives from the following agencies:

- Durham Children's Services
- Durham Early Help Services
- Durham Police
- Northeast and Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust
- Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust
- Durham County Council Education
- Voluntary Sector
- Durham and Darlington Probation Service
- Durham Public Health.

Representatives should have the delegated responsibility to take actions for their own agency.



Improvement Delivery Group

The Improvement Delivery Group's purpose will be:

- The Improvement Delivery Group's role is to consider and reflect a range of information from a variety of sources relating to a multi-agency practice issue and to one of the safeguarding partnership's priorities
- The Improvement Delivery Group will consider these frontline challenges and successes and makes suggestions and recommendations to improve multi-agency working which are presented into the Executive Group by the Partnership Improving Practice Group
- The Improvement Delivery Group has been established by Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership to improve the effectiveness of Durham's Safeguarding and child protection practice across partnership agencies
- 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 including those in receipt of Early Help services
- The Improvement Delivery Group will bring together the views of children, their families, and professionals to inform the continuous development of services and approaches aimed at protecting children from harm and making positive differences to their lives. The Improvement Delivery Group will receive direction from the Safeguarding Executive and the Performance and Learning Group to direct the focused areas
- The Improvement Delivery group will have a standing membership of a few key individuals. Depending upon the area of practice in focus, individuals working in that area will be invited into the group to explore the issues and develop an improvement plan 3 times a year. These plans will be endorsed by the Safeguarding Executive and the Performance and Learning Group (PLG).

The Improvement Delivery group will also commence from 1st September 2022, and it is envisaged that the representation will be similar to members within the existing Embedded Learning group.

The other groups have been maintained and there will be no change.

Performance

Exception performance reporting will be addressed within the Performance and Learning Group. The request is that agency SPOCs continue to complete the performance score card and input their agencies information as requested by the Programmes Manager.

This information will then be analysed and presented within an exception report to be presented to the Performance and Learning Group.

Performance will be reviewed and may be revised over coming months.



Assurance

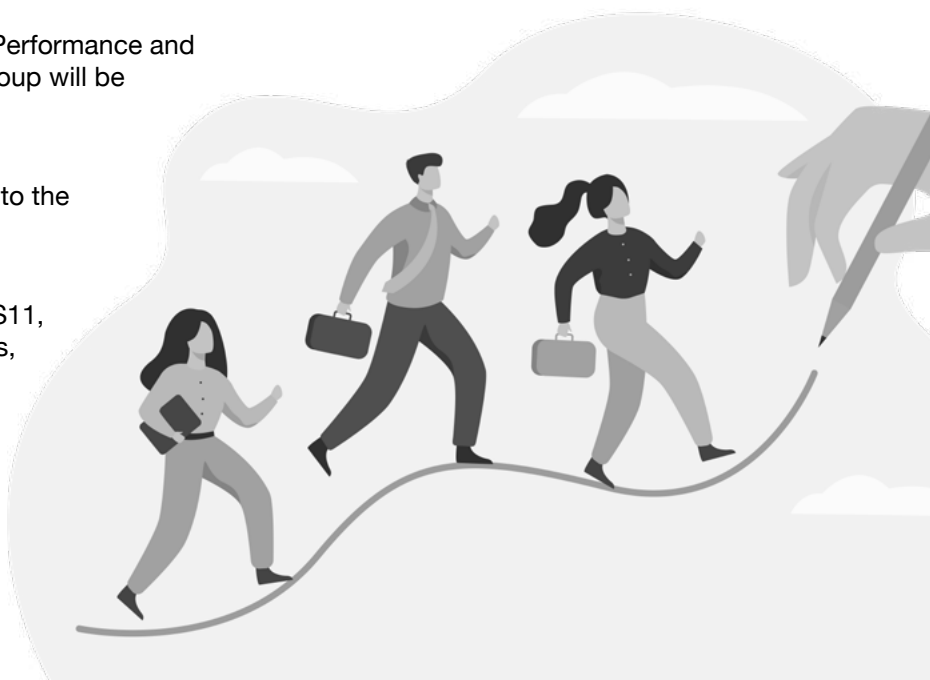
We will be seeking assurance reporting annually and have a proposed forward plan for this and information requested in an assurance and impact report within the Background Papers section of this letter.

Multi-Agency Audits

Multi-Agency Audits will continue and the programme for 2022/23 is attached for information. These audits will be discussed in the Performance and Learning Group. Audit themes may change depending on the work undertaken by the Performance and Learning Group and the Improvement Delivery Group.

Next Steps

- We ask for your assistance in identifying representation from the agencies noted in the Performance and Learning Group and the Improvement Delivery Group sections
- We ask that your Specific Points of Contact for performance continue to provide the requested performance information
- You share these changes across your agencies
- Please see the terms of reference for the groups to assist in identifying a representative
- Please see the new assurance report template which will be used to assure the partnership
- We will continue with our twice a year development session and will share the notes of the Executive and outcome of the work from the Improvement Delivery Group quarterly
- New Teams virtual meeting invites for the Performance and Learning Group and Improving Delivery Group will be sent by mid- August
- Please note the proposed forward plan for assurance reporting and send any queries to the email below
- We ask for continued commitment to the other DSCP processes, e.g., procedures, S11, practitioner surveys, development sessions, safeguarding weeks etc.



Could you please provide the names of your representative and any specific queries or comments to Jacqui.doherty@durham.gov.uk by 5th August 2022.

We thank you for your continued commitment and engagement with the Partnership.

Yours Sincerely

John Pearce, Dave Ashton, Anne Fox and Jeanette Scott
Safeguarding Partners



pp

Jacqui Doherty
DSCP Business Manager

Background Papers

1. WLD Terms of Reference
2. Performance and Learning Terms of Reference
3. Improvement Delivery Group Terms of Reference
4. DSCP Terms of Reference
5. New Operating Structure (PowerPoint)
6. 2022/23 Audit Schedule (PowerPoint)