

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report 2023/2024



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1 Introduction

Over the last 12 months Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have seen significant changes to guidance and legislation that has helped to define and influence the work we are completing. On 15th December 2023 the Government published 'Working together to safeguard children 2023. Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children'. This statutory guidance sets out what organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 in England. 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
- The [Children's social care national framework](#), which sets out expectations for senior leaders, practice supervisors and practitioners in local authorities
- Guidance on [Improving practice with children, young people and families](#), which provides advice for local areas on embedding the Working together guidance and the Children's social care national framework in practice

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership are working hard to update and develop practice around the changes in guidance and legislation. 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 new sub-groups and a strong culture of innovation, challenge and debate keeping children and local communities at the heart of our 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, on a daily basis – thank you!



Jeanette Scott
Director of Nursing
North East & North
Cumbria Integrated
Care Board



Nicola Lawrence
Detective Chief
Superintendent
Durham Constabulary



John Pearce
Corporate Director
Durham Children and
Young People Service



Samantha Allan
Chief Executive
North East & North
Cumbria Integrated
Care Board



Rachel Bacon
Chief Constable
Durham Constabulary



John Hewitt
Chief Executive Officer
Durham County
Council



2 Children and Young People in County Durham

19% of the total population are children and young people

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

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

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

Age 0-4; 24,372

Age 5-9; 28,041

Age 10-14; 29,893

Age 15 -19; 32,486

0 - 19; 114, 792

528, 127; whole population (1351)

3,560 children in need

160 children missing from education, Autumn Term 2023/24

1,213 children were in Local Authority Care

1088 children are Children Missing from Education and Electively Home Educated

1,735 pupils attended state funded special schools

4% of pupils have a first language other than English

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

497 children were subject to a child protection plan

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

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



**Schools in
County
Durham**

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

**31 secondary
schools**

**1 pupil
referral
unit**

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

**9 special
schools**

**11 nursery
schools**

**10 independent
schools**

**Total
274
schools**

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 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 its 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 term of reference and an annual workplan which align with the strategic priorities for the partnership. Within the updated structure each work plan demonstrates golden threads to priority areas and impact on the lives of children and young people. Agendas and facilitative discussions at all meetings focus on safeguarding practice, impact and improvement.

Lead Safeguarding Partners

The Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) group is the group within the DSCP that leads and drives the changes that the government have set out. This group is made up of the head of each statutory safeguarding partner agency. For local authorities, the LSP is the John Hewitt. For Intergrated Care Board (ICB) the LSP is the Samantha Allan and for police the LSP is defined as the Chief Officer, Rachel Bacon. On behalf of their organisations the LSPs speak with authority, take decisions and commit them on policy, resourcing and practice matters.

The LSP group is 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. LSP is responsible for holding their own organisation to account, on how effective they participate and implement the local arrangements. They are responsible for discharging their own statutory duties. The LSP is the high-level, over-arching local governance partnership that primarily focuses on safeguarding systems, performance, and resourcing.

The LSPs are jointly responsible for the proper 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 Group sit directly under the LSP, this group consists of three partners:

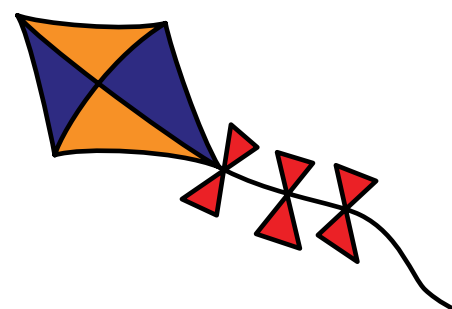
- Durham Children and Young People Service (John Pearce)
- Integrated Care Board (Jeannette Scott)
- Durham Police (Nicola Lawrence)

There were several executive leadership meetings undertaken during the period 2023-2024. Six meetings were arranged at the beginning of March 2023, however additional meetings have been scheduled when further decision making is needed. 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 2023, the Executive Group developed and improved the format for their assurance meetings, these meetings were in person and allowed the Executive Group to give a greater focus on scrutiny and assurance regarding key practice and safeguarding priorities. The sessions were held to enable 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 month, 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 persons and bodies of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so
- Raise awareness and train the multi-agency workforce to promote a common, shared understanding of local need in order to and provide children with the help they need
- Coordinate a response to serious safeguarding incidents, unexpected child deaths and dialogue with the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel
- Oversee, evaluate, and seek assurance on the effectiveness of single/multi-agency safeguarding practice in order to drive improvement
- Make recommendations in the planning of services for children in County Durham that is driven by analysis of multi-agency data, intelligence, and learning.
- Quality assurance remains our key driver across all the subgroups, using frameworks that will measure the impact of subgroup activities and challenge those working in the safeguarding arena



Our Vision and Values

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

How do we achieve it?

- Manage the strategic business plan which has 4 priority areas over the next 3 years (2023-2026)
- Challenging and learn from practice through the learning cycle process
- Performance Framework
- Oversee Complex and Organised abuse process
- Support subgroups: Child Exploited Group (CEG), Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), Neglect Group, Workforce Learning and Development Group (WFDG), Performance and Learning Group (PLG), Improvement & Delivery Group (IDG)
- 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
- Multi-agency Website, Newsletter & X
- Supporting and developing the multi-agency policies and procedures
- Extensive Multi-agency Training Programme



4 Safeguarding Partnership Subgroups

During 2023-2024 The DSCP had six principal sub-groups:

- Performance and Learning Group (PLG)
- Improvement Delivery Group (IDG)
- Neglect Group
- Child Exploitation Group (CEG)
- Workforce Learning and Development (WFDG)
- Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)



Performance and Learning Group

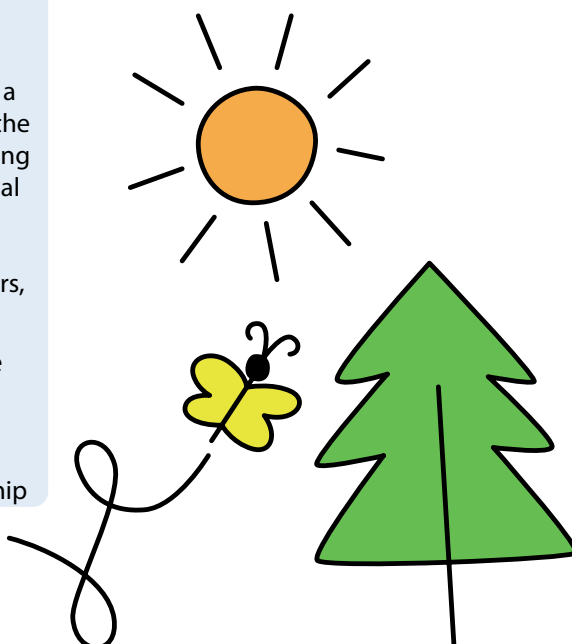
The Performance and Learning Group monitors the impact and outcomes of partner activity on behalf of the DSCP, as required by Chapter 3 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. The group considers the performance of all agencies involved in safeguarding children using the vision of the DSCP as a basis from which to assess good practice and concerns, reporting such to the Safeguarding Executive Group, by using data and intelligence. 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.

Key achievements during 2023-2024

- In order to develop a standard quality assurance process to conduct learning reviews the members of the PLG have completed the SCIE Learning Together Course and applied this to cases referred for learning
- The PLG has worked with the executive to develop the priority area questions for the IDG to take forward for multiagency assurance and has reviewed the outputs of these with their action plans to ensure that the priority areas are moving forward
- The PLG has supported the initiatives such as information sharing programme to improve partnership working
- The PLG reviews the assurance provided by partners through the new Think Tank performance analysis and through the oversight of Action Plans from the multiagency partnership work
- Sought assurance that groups working alongside the PLG have a function and clear points of reference
- Identified and ensured the dissemination of good practice to celebrate and learn
- They have analysed national learning and considered local learning themes. Learning briefings have been completed and shared through the partnership from the PLG

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 cases, local practice themes, national practice themes assurance visits, views from practitioners, children, and their families
- The PLG have supported the multi-agency team to have a clear model to share and communicate learning and practice across the partnership



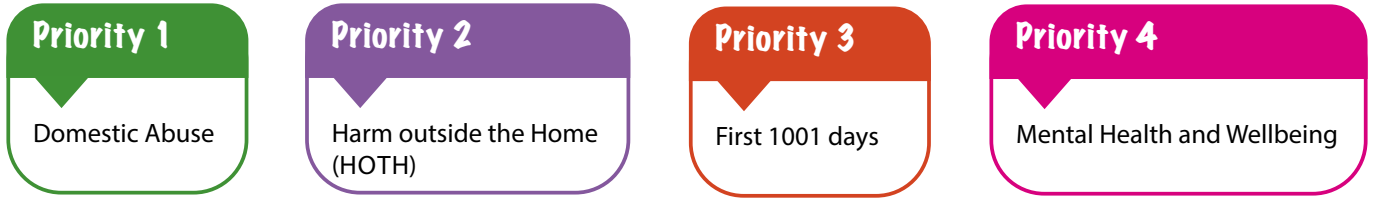
Next Steps

- 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

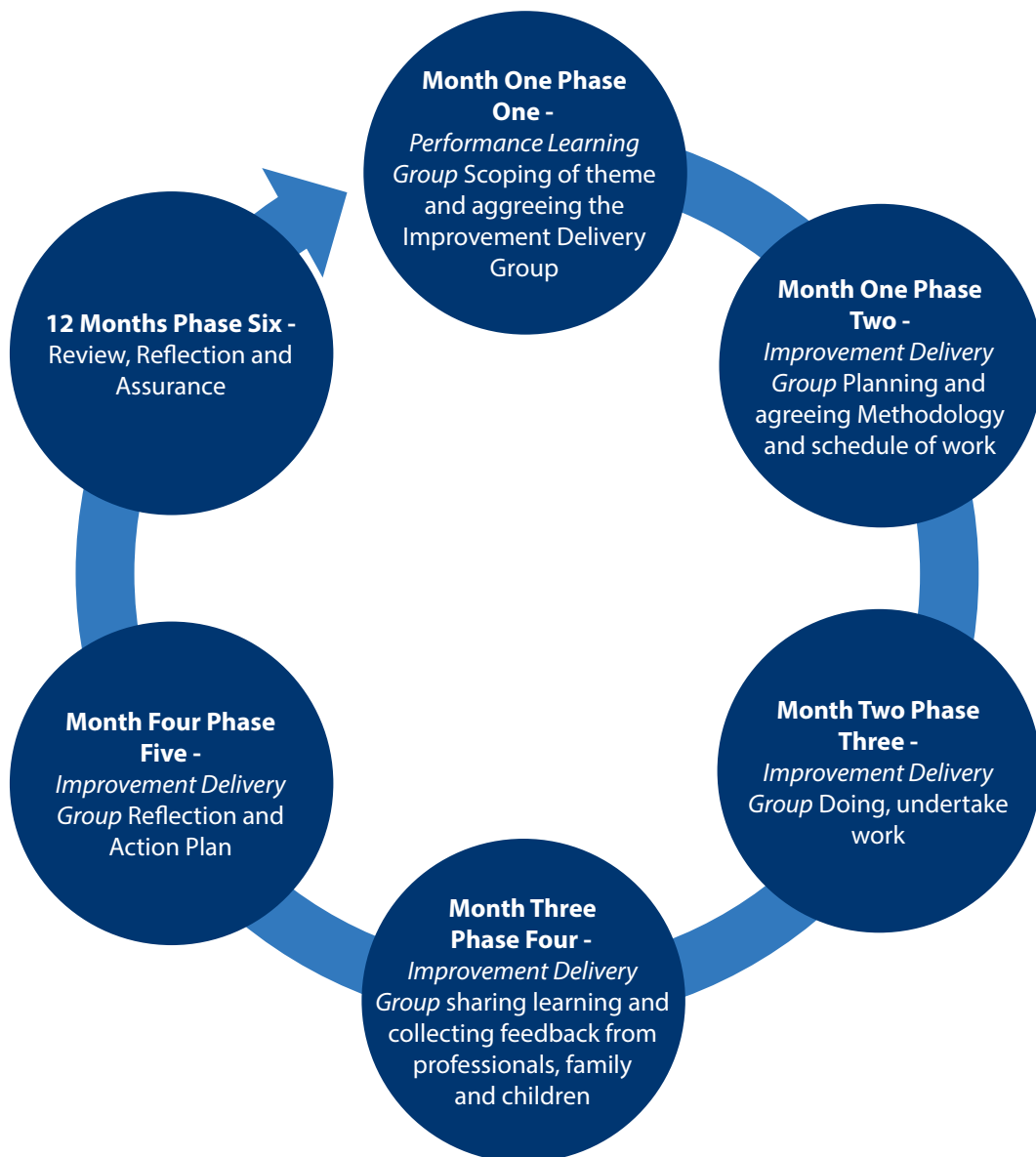
Improvement Delivery Group

The Improvement Delivery Group is a group that manages all of 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 IDG 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 brings 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, Performance and Learning Group to direct the focus of work.

Key Achievements between 2023-2024

Priority One: Domestic Abuse (April - July 2023)

Why: Domestic Abuse remains the highest reason for referral in County Durham for children and young people.

Key line of enquiry: What is working well to reduce or remove the risks of domestic abuse and to improve outcomes for children and families (in context of communities and County Durham)?

Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) was identified as the first group to look at within the IDG.

CAPVA 'A Child or young person aged between 8 and 18, that is displaying behaviours which could cause harm, his includes abusive or violent behaviour towards people close to them, particularly their parents or carers. This abuse may be physical, verbal, financial, coercive or emotional and may include behaviours such as hitting, making threats, scaring them into doing or not doing things, or causing damage in the home' (Durham definition).

The IDG were clear whilst scoping this piece of work that research tells us that there is no single explanation for CAPVA, some families experiencing CAPVA may have a history of domestic abuse. In other cases, the violence and abuse are contextualised with other behavioural problems such as substance abuse, mental health problems, learning difficulties, or self-harm. In some cases, there are no apparent explanations for the violence or abuse and some parents find it difficult to understand why one child is aggressive towards them when their other children do not display such behaviour.

Methodology

Mapping the 101 cases opened to CAPVA in Durham since its launch in February 2022.

- Looking at the data and information we hold on the 101 children
- What referrals are made, by whom, what the output to the referral is and which geographic area offers the intervention

Who has completed CAPVA training?

- Survey completed with people who have completed the CAPVA training

- Survey completed with the people who are trained to deliver the Respect Young People's Programme (RYPP)

The ID The G selected a number of children/families that have experienced working with practitioners around CAPVA and look at what has gone well

- Focus group offered to children, parents, carers, and family members
- 1:1 interview offered to children, parents, carers, and family members

Key Findings

- Since the launch of CAPVA, 101 referrals were made (February 22-April 2023)
- 26% of the cases (101 cases) that had been referred to CAPVA had a history of Domestic Abuse, where the children were the victims
- Referrals have predominantly been received from the North (42) of Durham with almost double the number of referrals than the East (24)
- Both One Point and Education had the majority of referrals from the North/East
- Parent and Police were predominantly referrers from the South of Durham
- Since February 2022, 252 practitioners across County Durham have attended the CAPVA awareness training.
- 59% of cases referred to for CAPVA we closed without completing the Respect and Young Person's Program. It was difficult to see from data the reason for this and what other support was offered to the children and families
- 4 Partner agencies within the DSCP have been

trained to deliver the Respect Young People Program (RYPP):

- Early Help – 93 practitioners
- Youth Justice Service – 26 practitioners
- Supporting Solutions – 9 practitioners
- A survey was sent to 252 people across the partnership who had attended the CAPVA awareness training
- There was a 19% (49) response rate to the survey
- Of the 49, 31% (15) advised that they had identified a child/young person in relation to CAPVA/Respect Young People Program; the majority of respondents had referred 1 - 2 Children and Young People
- A survey was sent to 11 practitioners within Harbour who had undertaken and delivered the RYPP
 - There was an 81% (9) response rate to the survey
 - All respondents felt that they were fully equipped to deliver the RYPP, with 89% feeling fairly or very confident to deliver the programme

Within the Focus Groups for the Young People and Parent, they told us:

Voice of children

“ I wasn't a fan at first because I didn't like talking, but I found I liked Sharon and so I opened up to her. ”



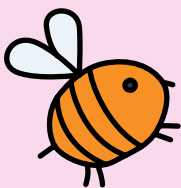
“ She talked about how it made me feel and helped me to look at how mam felt. It wasn't one sided, it gave us both a voice. ”

Voice of parent

“ It is important that professionals understand that a child's background impact them. My son once read a note the teacher had written stating he was “aggressive”, this label stuck with him, and he used this to explain his behaviour. I have learned it is important to not judge the children on one thing. Understand that children need support to manage their emotions, respond appropriately to these children, listen, and understand their story. ”

Voice of practitioners

“ I have just been in a Team around the Family (TAF) for MR and the feedback from the impact of the RYPP is absolutely brilliant. Mum, Dad, Vicky (one point) and Sarah (police) have all made comments about the ‘significant improvement’ that she has made since the RYPP. Vicky even said that the home environment feels completely different when she visits compared to when she was allocated the case. ”



Areas of development

Communication: There was limited understand of what CAPVA was and the referral route into the Respect and Young Persons program (RYPP).

Evaluation: It was difficult to get assurance around the impact of CAPVA training.

Data: Data sources were difficult to track when looking

at the numbers of children identified as CAPVA and the support offered to them.

Training: Respect Young Persons Program has been further developed, CAPVA ambassadors are trained and supporting practitioners to identified children and families for CAPVA.

What difference has this made: (6 Months)

- The DSCP supported the CAPVA awareness day in October 2023
- Awareness sessions have been offered to all partners
- A briefing has been developed, shared and uploaded onto the DSCP website. [DSCP Priority One – Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse \(CAPVA\) Briefing.pdf](#)
- Data records has now been developed to allow you to

see the journey of young person and family, looking at what support was offered and what intervention was the correct intervention

- Training has been delivered across the partnership
- CAPVA ambassadors have been trained and resourced with information to identify children and families at the earliest opportunity.

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

Why: It is recognised that the children and young people that are at risk of HOTH can be children who are not always visible to practitioners. Therefore, how do 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.

Key line of enquiry: “Are Partners within County Durham aware of the early warning signs of exploitation and softer indicators to ensure that any concerns are raised as soon as possible so appropriate support and intervention can be offered?”

HOTH: During the period of adolescent development (10 - 18 years of age) children are increasingly exposed to potential Harm Outside of the Home. This is also referred to as Contextual Safeguarding or Risk Outside the Home (ROTH). This includes harms caused through sexual and criminal exploitation, county lines, trafficking, and radicalisation. Such risks are all largely instigated by, or occur in, relationships with people beyond a child’s parents or carers.

Methodology

Survey: to understand what partners, children and their families know about early warning signs.

Focus groups were also carried out with a group of young people to find out what they understood about Harm Outside of the Home.

Key Findings

Children and Young People told us that if they were concerned about a friend/peer they would contact someone/do something about it (although they wouldn’t necessarily know who to contact).

Children did not recognise the risks to themselves or their peers, they did not recognise early warning indicators as a potential area of harm.

Parents identified a high number of the early warning indicators for HOTH. They also showed an awareness around gender bias and that all children, no matter what gender they identify within, are at risk.

Parents stated they are not sure who to share information with when they are concerned.

Practitioners showed they had a good understanding around what the early warning indicators of HOTH are Learning: Many practitioners continue to have gender bias around which children are at risk of the different categories of exploitation.

“Write things in our language so we know what people mean (YP)”

Areas of development

Recommendations to be managed through Strategic Child Exploitation Group.

Campaign: DSCP to create pages on their website for children, parents and professionals with updated information around HOTH and how to identify early warning indicators.

Training to be further developed for partners around

HOTH, training to support partners to understand what exploitation is and how to recognise early warning indicators.

Partnership to consider a joined-up piece of work around intelligence sharing from a child's perspective, how can we offer children the opportunity to share their worries or concerns.

What difference has this made: (6 Months)

The Strategic CEG have embedded the areas of learning into their priority work.

Pages on the DSCP website are currently being developed, co collaborated with a focus group of young people.

DSCP have started to raise awareness around Fearless, a 100% anonymous information sharing resource.

Outcome: Internal training has been developed by the

partnership and will be shared on the DSCP Me learning site from September 2024.

Young People from the Focus Group collaborating on a Young Persons page within the DSCP website.

A briefing to be developed based on the responses of the survey and focus group.

Outcome: [Priority Work - Harm Outside the Home \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](https://www.durham-scp.org.uk)

Next Steps: Phase 6 will complete the learning 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 Three: first 1001 days (December 2023 - March 2024)

Why: The first 1001 days is a critical time for all children, this is when babies/children are at their most vulnerable, so we need to understand how to safeguard them and get the intervention from agencies right.

Key line of enquiry: What do we know about children who are taken into Police Protection within the first 1001 days, and they are not known to safeguarding services ahead of this intervention.

First 1001 days looks at the life of a child from conception to 2 years old.

Methodology

Multi agency audit, a practitioner led multi-agency audit was arranged by the DSCP Business Team. The Lead Auditor was the Chair of the Improvement Delivery Group. The audit was completed by practitioners from the following partner agencies: Durham Children's Social

Care, CDDFT, Harrogate and District Foundation Trust, Humankind, Primary Care (GPs), DCC Education, Durham Police, Housing, One Point DCC, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley Foundation Trust, National Probation Service.

Scope

1. The children identified were children removed from parents care by Police Protection (PP) or PP was considered but Section 20 was given by the parents.
2. There were 34 children identified between September 2023-December 2023 who were removed from parent's care when they were unknown to Children and Young People's Services (17 families).
3. 8 children within the 34 children identified were aged within the first 1001 day age bracket.

4. Sibling links were considered, however only briefly discussed for learning purposes (3 children had sibling groups).

Definition of unknown: These children were not open to CYPS at the time of removal, but some of the children were known historically and/or have siblings who have records on CYPS records.

Areas of development

Professional Curiosity:

- At times information was being taken at face value; practitioners were not curious when information was shared with them, or verifying information shared
- There was a level of professional optimism, rather than a full assessment of the family
- Importance of communication and information gathering
- Whole Family Approach was at times considered but seen as a superficial exercise. Looking at children in isolation, highlighting the importance of informed decision making
- Limited evidence of multi-agency working and communication when children are open to universal services only

Professional challenge:

- The question raised was “what if they are wrong?” and do partners know they can challenge professional decision making.

Cross boundary working and information sharing:

- How are we challenging other Local Authority when children and families are being moved into the Durham area and we are not receiving information about these families

Children need to receive the right help, at the right time by appropriately skilled practitioner.

- Identify the right practitioners to coordinate support to families when they are not open to Children and Young People Service (CYPS) or when children are closing to CYPS.
- Closure meetings are key. Making sure that when children close to statutory services, universal services remain observant and refer family back in
- Multiple pregnancies, the risk of concealed pregnancies, and what support should be offered to parents following the birth of children.
- Engaging with the right services and identifying the appropriate support

Voice of parent

“Communicate a little bit more, she was fine and healthy, but I felt I needed to chase people to visit me from services.”

“Health visitor referred me to services. She did ask questions. They did it appropriately.”

“All parents are different and do things differently - all children are different. Please remember everyone is trying their best.”



Next Steps: Themes to go into DSCP Development Day on 22nd May 2024. Sessions to be facilitated on.

- Safe Sleeping and Safe Handling
- Enhanced Parent Support Programme
- Concealed Pregnancies
- Professional Curiosity and Cross Boundary Information Sharing.
- Briefing to be developed on how and when to challenge one another and the importance of professional challenge.
- DSCP to develop a communication plan on the different support services/agencies across County Durham
- Whole Family briefing to be developed by the partnership so practitioners are aware what is meant by taking a whole family approach to working with children and their families

Priority Four: Mental Health and Wellbeing

Why: Whilst mental health is not the highest reason for referrals, it is noted that mental health difficulties either with parents, young people and/or children is a common and prominent factor in all of our learning.

This priority piece of work will start in April 2024-July 2024, work around this piece of work will be shared within the 2024-2025 annual report.

Alongside all the work that has been completed in the IDG around each KLOE, there has also been work and awareness raising throughout the year around each priority, this has been shared both in the DSCP monthly newsletter and on our social media forums.

Neglect Group

The Neglect Group recently revised the 'Neglect Plan on a Page' (2023-2024). The plan sets out our partnership vision and key priorities. Our partnership vision is

'To reduce neglect; to reduce the impact of neglect by providing effective help and support at the earliest opportunity.'

We aim to do this through 3 key priorities:

1. To understand the prevalence of neglect across County Durham in order to effectively target resources which helps to prevent and mitigate impact of neglect on children and young people
2. Practitioners across County Durham have the skills, knowledge and tools to ensure effective early identification of neglect of children and young people
3. Practitioners across County Durham deliver effective interventions to address the impact of neglect on children and young people

Although Neglect continues to be a key challenge in Durham the number of children requiring a child protection plan because of neglect has fallen from 70% in 2020/21 to 63% in 2023-2024.

Key Achievements between 2023-2024

- The revised Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT) has been relaunched across the partnership ensuring at regular key contacts with child/ren and families the home environment is assessed and where inadequate mitigating actions undertaken to make positive change
- To date 534 practitioners across the partnership are trained to use the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) tool helping to support the identification of and delivery of interventions to address neglect
- We have further developed the Neglect Learning and Development programme including the face-to-face programmes: Neglect Basics and Toolkit and Neglect and Poverty, we have also introduced a range of E-Learning modules including Educational Neglect, Dental Neglect, Dietary Neglect – Nourish to Thrive, Impact of Neglect on Adolescents, Neglect, Attachment and Brain Development

What difference has this made

- In the last 12 months a total of 148 Graded Care Profile (GCP)2 assessments have been completed with families where neglect is a concern. 91 were completed by CYPS and 57 were completed by the One Point Service. Case studies are demonstrating the use of GCP2 is supporting our relationship-based approach to working with families, helping to identify family strengths as well as being very specific about what needs to change to help children thrive
- As part of the Family Hub and Start for Life programme free dental packs are being distributed to babies, children and their family to encourage effective dental health

Next Steps: We aim to develop 2 further modules to support identification and effective interventions of neglect: physical neglect, specifically supporting families with children with physical health needs such as diabetes and pre-birth neglect helping to ensure our most vulnerable unborn babies get the best start in life.

The neglect group will not be a subgroup in the DSCP moving forward, the governance for this group will move to the Early Help Partnership.

Child Death Overview Panel: CDOP

Is a multi-agency panel to independently scrutinise and review the deaths of all children normally resident in their area in order to learn lessons and share any findings for the prevention of future deaths. Meeting virtually is well established and has facilitated professionals' attendance at Joint Agency Response Meetings (JARs) and Child Death Review Meetings (CDRMs) leading to improved information sharing and learning. The Child Death Overview Panel will produce an annual report for 2023/24 which will assist in ensuring that learning from child deaths reviews is shared with partners and other relevant partnerships including the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Key Achievements between 2023-2024

1. 44 Child Death Reviews were finalised by the Child Death Overview Panel during 2023/24. The aggregated findings from all child deaths informs local strategic planning including the joint strategic needs assessment and assets assessment, on how to best safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area.

The CDOP is not commissioned to deliver public health interventions but learning from CDOP is shared with partners and integrated into programmes to support the health and wellbeing of children in County Durham and Darlington.

The finalised Child Death Reviews have been uploaded to the National Child Mortality Database which is a repository of data relating to all children's deaths in England. This will enable more detailed analysis and interpretation of all data arising from the child death review process, to ensure that lessons are learned following a child's death that learning is widely shared, and that actions are taken, locally and nationally, to reduce child mortality.

2. Eyes on the Baby Project – this project was initiated following an initial brief from CDOP that identified SUDI as a theme and key stakeholders were asked to consider what action was needed to reduce the number of sudden infant deaths in the area. The Eyes on the Baby project was a collaborative piece of work conducted by key stakeholders. A training and implementation package to promote safer sleeping and prevent sudden infant deaths was launched in 2023.

3. Review of the governance of the Child Death Overview Panel. This work was completed in February 2024 and a decision was made by the Safeguarding Partners to move the governance out of DSCP arrangements. As a result, a working group has been set up to review the CDOP functions and business support arrangements.
4. A new Designated Doctor for Child Deaths was successfully appointed in 2023 following the retirement of the previous Designated Doctor. This ensures that there is continuation of the role in leading in co-ordinating the responses and health input to the Child Death Review process.
5. CDOP Escalation Process – this was developed and agreed in early 2024. The aim of the process is to improve the timeliness of submission of child death review paperwork by relevant agencies. The impact of this will be evaluated during 2024-25.
6. Guidance for Practitioners on how to complete an effective child death reporting form. This was developed to support practitioners and provide clarification as to what should be considered when completing the child death paperwork. This has been positively received, particularly those practitioners who have not had any experience in completing such paperwork.

Next Steps: The CDOP will not be a subgroup in the DSCP moving forward, the governance for this group will move to the ICB.



Workforce Learning and Development Group

The Workforce Learning and Development Group is a sub-group of the Performance and Learning Group (PLG) who has the overarching responsibility of integrating learning from child safeguarding practice reviews locally and nationally into training across the partnership.

Key Achievements between 2023-2024

Over the past year the Workforce Learning and Development Group has evolved to include representation from more partner agencies. This has helped to identify, deliver, and evaluate multi-

agency training in a consistent way that meets the needs of the whole workforce within the partnership and compliments what is being offered in their own organisation.

What difference has this made

We have continued to develop and embed the three different training options e.g., eLearning, training programme sessions delivered face to face or via Teams/ Zoom and Bespoke training delivered to single agencies upon request. We have doubled our eLearning course catalogue with local Durham briefings and training from 15 courses in 2022/2023 to 30 courses in 2023/24 all of which have been facilitated by our practitioners within the partnership.

The Workforce Learning and Development Group has implemented a course observation process which has ensured that courses delivered are of excellent quality and standard across the 3 different training options and embeds the partnership priorities and golden threads.

We delivered safeguarding week in November jointly with Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership with 18 sessions delivered on some of the topics below:

- Harm Outside the Home
- Online Safety

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children
- Think Kane
- Just Words - Importance of language

We have further developed from last year the evaluation, feedback, and impact of training on practice. Practitioners complete a training evaluation immediately after training is completed and receive an automated certificate upon submission. This is now the only way that certificates are distributed resulting in a 100% completion rate. Impact of training on practice is followed up with practitioners at intervals following the training and they have the option of completing a forms survey, providing feedback face to face, or using the bespoke training follow up session if they have attended a session of this type. This invaluable feedback has helped us to shape future training and improve quality.

Next Steps: The Workforce Learning and Development Group continually evolves and the plan for the coming year is to provide the opportunity for practitioners to shadow and support the comprehensive training programme that is offered across the partnership. As quality is of the utmost importance, observation, and feedback on single agency training to ensure there is no duplication and consistent messages are given to practitioners across training in County Durham both single and multi-agency.

Training accreditation is our next priority and something that will put a quality kitemark on all the excellent training offered by the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership.



Child Exploitation Group: CEG

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 between 2023-2024

- A stronger operational model has been developed to provide cover throughout County Durham with three locality-based meetings (East, West and South) which has assisted the CEG to understand local intelligence. This has not only improved the provision for children and young people but has also strengthened our contextual approach allowing us to target places and spaces more effectively
- The partnership has spent considerable time understanding harm outside the home (HOTH), a survey was completed by 175 partners looking at the broader understanding of what HOTH is. An early identification briefing has been completed and shared with all partner agencies to raise awareness of early warning indicators. Work will continue to educate and increase understanding of the risk indicators
- A task and finish group has undertaken work to formulate child exploitation processes for County Durham. A key emphasis of these processes is to ensure focus is given to early help whilst utilising our full range of partners who are heavily engaged in the group
- The group has invited scrutiny to challenge our provision and seek continuous improvement. As part of this the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) undertook a review of child exploitation in County Durham and Darlington. The findings have been incorporated into our work plan under the three priorities and the group work toward them
- This year we have reviewed the child exploitation vulnerability tracker (CEVT). The tracker provides the framework by which practitioners identify and monitor risk. The improvements have made the assessments more accurate and timelier. They also monitor risk over time so the effectiveness of interventions can be measured and reacted to. It also allows us to see escalation in risk more clearly
- A key workstream of the group involves missing children, the group has overseen improvements as to how we identify missing children whilst maintaining focus on compliance and the process around return to home interviews. Capacity to undertake return interviews has been improved through additional staffing particularly on a weekend
- We have driven the use of the Philomena protocol for missing children in care. Quality dip sampling has been completed and presented within the group around the effective sharing of information. Improvement work has been completed and continues, Me Learning training was created and shared with all DSCP staff. Philomena was put on the website in January 2024 and we have had over 200 people participate so far
- The group keep the voice of the child at the heart of what we do. Focus groups have been completed within the IDG subgroup and information shared within the CEG. Children within Priority 2 (HOTH) told us that they were more likely to tell a friend or peer about a risk to themselves or other friends. They then told us they would not share this with practitioners as they worried about the repercussions of telling someone. Within a focus group completed children did confirm that if they could share information anonymously then they were more likely to help or support a friend. The CEG have looked at different mechanisms to share information anonymously and are currently working with Fearless to promote the anonymous sharing of information
- 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 this made

- We have an effective operational structure underpinned by clear processes for contending with child exploitation in County Durham which prevents children and young people from becoming victims and robustly protects those who are exploited – this was commented on by the VKPP in their inspection.
- Work in contextual safeguarding and harm outside of the home have made places and spaces within the county safer for children and young people
- Our scrutiny of missing underpinned by partnership data leading to improvements in the service we

provide through schemes like the Philomena Protocol and return to home interviews have led to fewer children going missing

- The voice of the child is well represented within the services that we provide and we have adapted to suit the needs of children and young people
- Data underpins both the operational and strategic work of the CEG and is used effectively as a preventative and protection mechanism. Not least in the use of the child exploitation matrix, CEVT and missing

What next

We will continue to improve the service we provide monitoring, improving and evaluating 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 tasking and finish group will finalise the child exploitation processes ensuring it is reflective of all partners contribution.

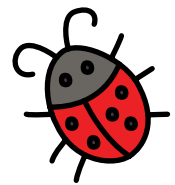
- We will continue to promote the use of the Philomena Protocol for missing children and young people in care.
- The identification and targeting of places and spaces through the principles of contextual safeguarding and harm outside the home will be key to the group's success.
- Implement lines of communication 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.

Golden Threads

Alongside the subgroups and priority work the DSCP have also had a number of golden threads 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 voice of the child and lived experience in all the work we complete. The child's voice not only refers to what children say directly, but to many other aspects of their presentation. It means seeing their experiences from their point of view. The DSCP encourages partners to regularly seek opportunities to gather the views of children, young people, and their families to inform initiatives and partnership developments.

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 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.

What next:

Areas for further development include ensuring that the nuance of a person's situation is reflected in written reports, and that reports are in plain language and are shared with the child.

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

We will create a guidance document for practitioners looking at what good listening and communication means to children and young people

"Use our language"

"Use Social Media"

"Listen to what we are telling you, but allow us a confidential space, we don't want our friends to know"

Working together across partnerships and boundaries

The DSCP have developed a protocol in association with 10 North East Safeguarding Children Partnerships: Darlington; Durham; Hartlepool and Stockton; South Tees (Middlesbrough and Redcar); Newcastle; North Tyneside; Northumberland; South Tyneside; Gateshead; Sunderland.

What have we done:

Developed a guidance focused 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 for the 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 professionals 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 cared for children (who are looked after), 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, fathers role and hidden males

In County Durham our approach is the "whole family". The DSCP have had a focus on father inclusive practice in 2023-2024.

- The whole family approach has been an overarching theme when completing any improvement and development work
- The DSCP have worked alongside the Family Hubs programme who have funded training for any professional who works in County Durham supporting families who are pregnant or have

children aged under 2 years old, to learn about the importance of supporting dads including those who have adopted, male carers, kinship carers, and those who foster

- The DSCP also support the Durham Dads and Male Carer conference in February 2024
- DSCP have created good practice guides on how to take the whole family approach, even when there are risks. <https://durham-scp.org.uk/learning-from-practice-fathers-male-carers/>

Cultural competency

The DSCP have considered cultural competency in all the work completed across the partnership. The DSCP was approached in November 2023 by a number of schools who were seeing a rise in number of families moving to their area's from other countries and with different cultural background. As a result of this we have sourced training for the partnership called: Unconscious Bias and Cultural Competence in Safeguarding Children, this is available through our training site for all practitioners in county Durham.

Reflective Practice

Durham safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) is committed to the principle that reflective practice, or learning from experience, is essential for achieving high standards for children and young people. A clear learning from experience process that reflects on examples of good and poor operational practice is a vital method for continually improving the effectiveness of services in helping and protecting children and young people.

In order to facilitate multi-agency learning, DSCP embedded a reflective practice model throughout the partnership. This is evidenced throughout every subgroup and work stream within the DSCP. In line with the principle of the DSCP, the process of reflective practice in particular has been seen in the DSCP learning and improvement work (section 5) which offers an opportunity for the practitioners involved in a case to reflect together on what worked well, what if anything could be done differently, and whether there is anything we can do, together, to strengthen safeguarding practice and/or the system.

Signs of safety

- Signs of safety continues to be the practice model across the partnership. The partnership have continued to develop and share practice examples using this format
- The new Multi-Agency Child Protection Conference Report Template were shared in September 23 along

with a briefing to give more information about the template and how to complete it. This template has been developed with the Signs of Safety Partnership

- Signs of Safety – Nothing about us without us has been shared and promoted across the Partnership

Chair and Scrutineer

The Partnership has an Independent Scrutineer and Partnership Chair who both provide leadership, vision and support and who are responsible for ensuring that all organisations contribute effectively to the work of the DSCP. Over the past 12 months there have been changes made to this role in line with the guidance set out in Working Together 2023. There has been a separation of the two roles, this is to strengthen accountability. There are now two distinct functions within effective local safeguarding arrangements.

- The partnership chair has authority, is decisive and enables resource allocation, with risk escalation to lead safeguarding partners at the Executive
- A rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function providing challenge to the safeguarding partners

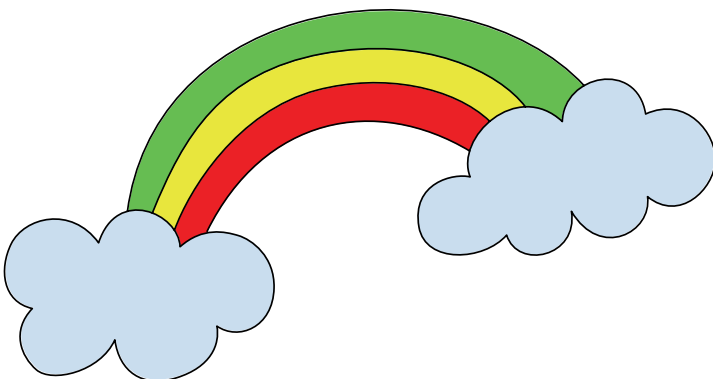
The Independent Scrutineer provides accountability for the work undertaken by the DSCP by way of reports to relevant strategic committees and boards. Effective communication between the Business Manager, Independent Scrutineer ensures that there is a clear link between the subgroups and executive group, 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 Independent Scrutineer.

Function of Partnership Chair Role

- To develop strategic links, support and hold to account all LSPs in fulfilling their safeguarding duties for children
- Ensure that local arrangements are designed to work collaboratively and effectively by encouraging and supporting the development of partnership working between the LSPs, DSPs, independent scrutiny role and MASA subgroups
- Chair the meetings of the DSCPs, including any additional meetings convened as a response to specific and exceptional circumstances, with the help of the Business Manager and Independent Scrutiny role
- Offer appropriate challenge to ensure that the partners are accountable, and that the local arrangements operate effectively

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



5 Learning and Improvement Work

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership 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 in a position to respond effectively.

Learning from Reviews:

Within the Performance and Learning Group (PLG) the DSCP have established a child safeguarding practice review (CSPR) panel (including all statutory partners) who oversee all multiagency review activity. The CSPR 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 2023 and March 2024 there has been one child referred to the CSPR group for consideration of a statutory review. This child met the criteria for 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 within the Rapid Review process. This was shared within the PLG, actions agreed, and the case will be reviewed at 6 and 12 months to seek assurance around the learning dissemination and changes made.

Case Study

Annabel was 10 days old when she tragically died, she lived with her mother, father, and older sister. She had a half-sister who lived outside the family home. Her family were open to universal services for support. Annabel's older sister had both been open to statutory services, previous issues included concerns around domestic abuse, neglect, and maternal mental health. Annabel had never been open to an assessment by children's services. Following her death and upon statutory services attending the property professionals highlighted concerns around the family living environment being unsanitary, cluttered, with evidence of prescribed medication being left on tables and evidence of cannabis being consumed by adults. Ahead of her death there had been a decline in mothers' attendance at appointments and engagement with services. Both children were sleeping in the same room as their parents and Annabel co-sleeping with parents.

The following themes were identified:

Safe Sleeping (SIDS): Safer sleeping advice needs to be robust and bespoke for families where there are additional vulnerabilities. It needs to consider in detail the increased risks in each case and involve the multiagency professionals working with the child and family.

Professional Curiosity: Professionals working with a family should fully understand the parental history held across agencies, including a full understanding of any mental health difficulties, care experienced parents and drug/alcohol difficulties. The parents' history should also include any other children they have parented and consideration to children both in and outside their care.

Fathers should not be missed or an after-thought, at all meetings fathers need to be considered as a potential risk or protective factor to a child. Men can play a vital role in their children's development and wellbeing and have a major influence on the children they care for. However, often male caregivers go 'unseen' by services involved with children due to:

- A lack of professional engagement and curiosity
- An over-focus on the quality of the care that children receive from their mothers.
- Inadequate information sharing between services.

All professionals have a responsibility to engage with fathers or question any apparent lack of engagement from other agencies. This includes putting key information in writing.

Opportunities for support: Any change of circumstances or sharing of concerns must consider, first and foremost, the impact on the child. Professionals need to balance supporting a vulnerable parent with clear child focused challenge about the potential for a negative impact on the child.

Missed Appointments: Professionals need to ensure that having a previous positive relationship with family members does not lead them to lose focus or be over optimistic about the potential for harm to a child when a parent is not engaging in appointments or being open and honest.

Sharing of information and collaboration of professionals: There are several opportunities for agencies to share information which would have been useful in building a picture of what was happening with the family, and this was not limited to one agency.

What has the impact been:

Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership are proud to be part of the multi-agency Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) prevention for County Durham. The DSCP supported work that contributed to the final report that is available to download from the project website at eyesonthebaby.org.uk

The DSCP has also supported and hosted the 'Eyes on the Baby' training on Me-Learning. The Eyes on the Baby training has been designed to help staff prevent SUDI (Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy) in County Durham. Training the multi-agency workforce in County Durham will help staff give advice about safer sleep, support shared working between services, and keep Eyes on the Baby to reduce SUDI.

Information sharing agreement coordinated by the partnership (see below).

Clarify, reflect and verify briefing created and shared across the partnership to ask for partner agencies to think about how they gather, and use information shared with them by partners.

A single agency action plan has been developed and agreed within the PLG to be reviewed at both 6 and 12 months.

In February 2024 the DSCP have concluded a thematic LCSPR which originally commenced in 2022. This was a review that included 2 children, the delay in sharing the report was to ensure the circumstances surrounding the case were fully investigated, a criminal trial ensued. The National Panel have been informed of the various stages of progress regarding these two cases. It should be noted that whilst the final report was delayed due to criminal proceedings, initial findings and recommendations were progressed through the PLG.

During 2023-24 the PLG continued to promote the pathway and referral process for cases where learning can be sought from cases, both good practice examples and learning examples. In 2023-2024 3 notification for learning were received by the PLG, this resulted in 3 reflective discussions being coordinated and 3 briefings developed. One way we share learning within the DSCP is to create and develop a range of learning briefings, which are available as part of our me learning training page on the DSCP website for all Durham practitioners.

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 professionals 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 a number of 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
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Group DASVG
- Strategic Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- Child and Family Scrutiny Panel
- Named GP meeting.
- Mash Board
- Anti-Slavery Network
- Prevention and Early Help Partnership Meeting

This year the Partnership has also promoted:

- Anti-Slavery Day
- Safeguarding Week
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Safer Internet Day
- ICON week
- Baby loss Awareness week.
- Foster carers fortnight
- Alcohol awareness week
- Child Exploitation Awareness Day
- World Suicide Prevention Day

Safeguarding Learning Events

Development Day:

Durham Safeguarding Partnership delivered a development day on the 6th of September 2023 called **See Me, Hear Me, Help Me! Safeguarding Adolescents Conference**. The Learning Event sought to highlight key aspects of learning from the safeguarding adolescent's perspective, with the delivery of "Think Kane" at the start of the day, which had direct contribution from the family.

The event focussed on a number of elements of practice:

- Reflect upon the lived experience of young people and adolescents.
 - Delivery of "Think Kane"
 - Hear individual experiences regarding Gangs, Criminal exploitation, and Youth Violence
 - Understand and develop a strength-based approach.
 - Hear about trauma informed approaches to adolescent mental health.
 - Understand adolescent development and risk
- Raise awareness of adolescent neglect
 - Develop skills in transitional safeguarding, contextualised safeguarding, trauma informed safeguarding
 - Learn from multi-agency approaches to support child victims of sexual exploitation
 - Hear from multiagency teams in both Durham and Darlington who are working with vulnerable children/ young people

In total 160 practitioners attended, with representatives from a range of services including the voluntary sector, care providers, acute and community health services, children's social care, adult social care and the Integrated Care Board. Each attendee was asked to complete a feedback form focussed upon the impact of the event, with all rating the development day as being good or excellent, and all finding the resources shared to be useful.

Alongside the development day a briefing has been developed around "Think Kane", so far this has been watched and delivered to over 1000 members of staff. Examples of impact on the delivery of this briefing are outlined below:

Voice of practitioners

“Your delivery of his story was accurate and very sensitive. Thank you I know he would be very grateful.”
(Social worker)

“I have heard Kane's story several times but each time remains as impactful, so heartbreaking.”
(Health visitor)

Voice of family

“No one wants such a thing to happen, but this is what happens to many families. There needs to be a better understanding of the effect of addiction among all professionals dealing with such issues. Your work is certainly highlighting this.”
(Grandmother)

“All I ever wanted was to help anyone that might be going through what we have and for people to do things differently! Thank-you and keep up the good work.”
(Father)

DSCP Briefing:

DSCP online briefings were held in August-September. The briefings were for all front-line practitioners and managers working in any organisation that come into contact with children, young people, and families in County Durham.

- To introduce the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP)
- To provide information on the DSCP priorities
- To provide information on what we offer
- To raise awareness of the DSCP multi-agency training programme
- To show you where to access general information, procedures, guidance, toolkits and forms for professionals, parents/carers, children, and young people

In total 188 practitioners attended, and to date 284 partners accessed the me learning recorded session. Owing to the massive success of these briefings and the impact they have had on all of the practitioners contributing to the work within the DSCP, updated briefings will be launched in September 2024.

Sexual Harm Briefing:

In 2018 Serious Case Reviews were commissioned in relation to two families. A briefing has been developed by the partnership to consider learning from both cases, as they had many similarities with sexual abuse being the main worry, but there were also several additional factors with neglect, domestic abuse, poor home conditions and poor mental health present. Whilst these factors were themselves areas of concern, sexual abuse was the pertinent issue, and the additional worries were also risk factors when considering the risk of sexual abuse within the households.

The cross-cutting theme of 'Sexual Harm' was highlighted in aspects of multi-agency working. Learning was identified around:

- Whole System approach to dealing with sexual abuse in Durham
- Management oversight and supervision
- Voice of the child (VOC)
- Understanding and responding to harmful sexual behaviour in children

In March 2023, a Challenge Event was held, the DSCP asked the partners to look at what has happened since 2018 and to bring examples of how practice has developed. This briefing was shared across the partnership in May 2023, it included the information shared within that event, as well as highlighting the improvements made around services offered to children and their families, with an embedded appreciative enquiry discussing what support practitioners. This briefing is on the DSCP training and is available to watch.

Scrutiny and 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, 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 Child Protection 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.

Aim: To gain a deeper understanding from a partnership perspective of how the Child Protection Process in Durham is experienced by children, young people and their families and seek assurance that it effectively identifies risk and safeguards children and young people.

- Observation of Child Protection (CP) Conference – October 2023
- Discussion with Parents within CP conference following the meeting
- Discussion with children involved in Child Protection Conference
- Feedback from practitioners

Conferences were observed 2-6 October 2023.

24 conferences were listed that week.

- 7 Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC)
- 17 Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC)

6 Conferences were observed by 4 partner organisations.

- Probation
- HDFT
- DSCP Business Team
- Police

3 ICPC's observed. 3 RCPC observed.

The findings for the 2023 assurance week were:

What worked well:

- Professionals who attended the conference were confident to engage in the process.
- The family were present within the room, meetings were hybrid with professionals attending remotely or/and in person which meant the Independent Reviewing Officer IRO was able to build a good rapport with family members
- Two of the conferences had a good multi agency team around the table with a clear plan
- Within two of the ICPC'S there was evidence of the harm matrix being discussed which supported assessment work and decision making
- In 1 conference a partner agency was observed to challenge other partners in their views, the IRO supported this challenge and dealt with the issue well in the conference
- The child protection plan was shared on the screen during the conference this included danger statements and actions. All parents felt clear around next steps (plans were not enlarged making it difficult for parents and people in the room to read)
- Scaling was used at the end of the Conference to support risk assessment

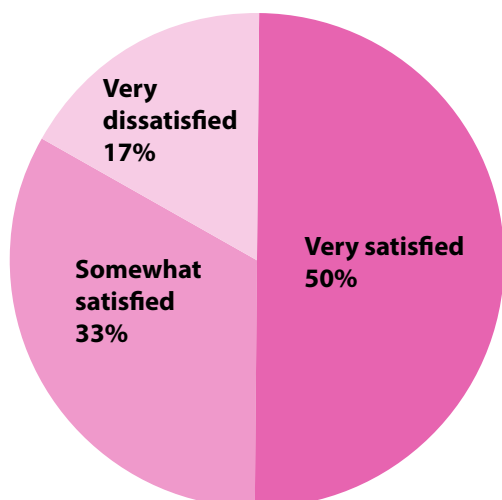
Learning from the meetings:

- There needs to be a renewed focus on attending meetings- it creates better quality planning, increase knowledge of the child and overall multi agency plan. Within 4 of the conference's observed parents had not met over half of the people in attendance. One conference observed, mother stated she had not met a single person sharing information
- Four of the six conferences had limited people in attendance, two meetings were just quorate. One of these meetings was stood down, re arranged and still not quorate when the meeting was facilitated
- Partners did not consistently provide reports or apologies to meetings ahead of time, IRO's observed to be making enquiries with partner organisation up until parents attended the conference. Multi agency professionals need to share reports in advance when they cannot attend
- Family members attended conferences with some parents, they had not been involved in assessments or planning. Family network meetings had taken place on half of the cases observed
- Social Workers voice and assessment was the strongest, this put an overreliance on the social worker to share information to parents and complete the plan for the child. Equal responsibility to safeguard should be clear and present in the meetings

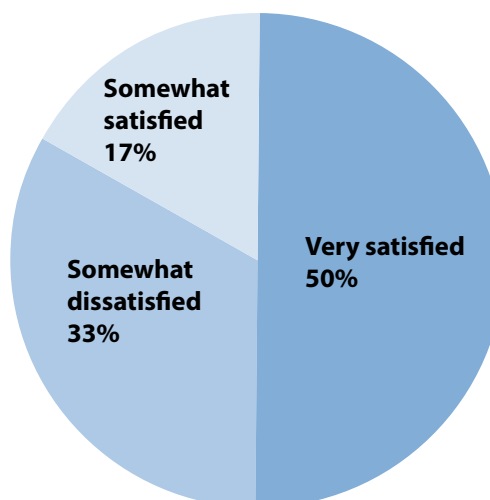


Child Protection Conference: Family Feedback: 6 families

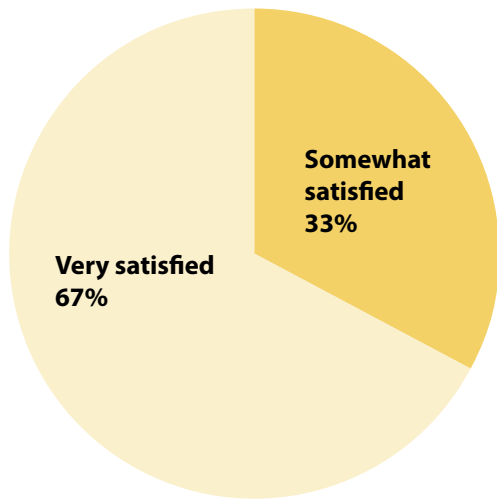
How satisfied were you that you understood the reason for this conference?



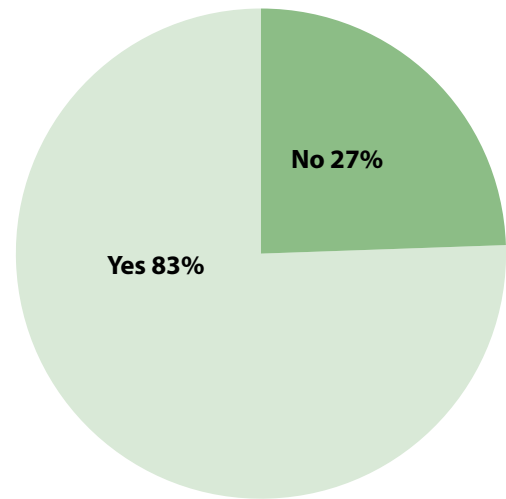
How satisfied are you that partners within the meeting explained their reasons for concerns or strengths to you?



How satisfied were you that partner agencies listen to you?



Did you feel included in the decision making?



Is there anything we could have done better?

“ No, they were all very kind and helpful. ”

“ Gary has been really good throughout this process. ”

“ It is hard having people in the meeting you don't know. ”

“ Not rescheduling first meeting. ”

“ Happy with how it went. I feel like they have all listened to me, at one point it felt like fingers were pointed at me, but the last few months this has been better, and I have felt included. ”
(Dad)



Actions:

- Multi agency Child Protection conference document has been developed and launched across the partnership. [Child Protection Conference Report Template \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](https://durham-scp.org.uk)
- Child protection briefing shared on me learning for all partners to access and update their knowledge and skills <https://durham-scp.org.uk/training-information/other-e-learning-courses/>
- Learning from practice guidance developed and launched. [Learning From Practice \(Fathers, Male Carers\) \(durham-scp.org.uk\)](https://durham-scp.org.uk)
- Single agency actions set and progressed through the PLG

Next Steps: Going forward this assurance visits week will take place in October every year and will involve a number of observations of multi-agency meetings to offer assurance and a shared understanding of the quality of practice and service delivery.

Performance Model: Think Tank

The DSCP developed and agreed a dataset in 2023/24 to enable monitoring of multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements to look at data and gather the most impactful information. This is coordinated and facilitated by our Performance Think Tank sub-group.

The Think Tank;

- 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 Trust, County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust, Probation and Prison Service, Harbour, HumanKind, Education, Early Years, Housing and Voluntary Sector
- Analysis of performance indicators, including discussions amongst all agencies to enable a multi-agency perspective
- Consideration of qualitative information, such as surveys, appreciative enquiries, findings from single and multi-agency audits, reviews and priority work
- 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 Quality Assurance Model to inform the wider Quality Assurance and Performance Framework



The Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Preparation Group

The partnership has developed and launched a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) group in 2023. JTAI is an inspection framework to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency approaches to safeguarding children and young people. JTAI's are conducted jointly by Ofsted, 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 2023/24 the themes for inspection were 'the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk' and 'the multi-agency response to serious youth violence'.

The group have explored the 'Serious Youth Violence' framework, considering how we practice in Durham and conducting a multi-agency audit relating to the theme. Subsequently, the recommendations from this work included development of a 'Serious Youth Violence Pathway' with focus on early intervention, intense intervention following custody, and emphasis regarding Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) particularly at key transition points to secondary and leaving school.

In the coming year, the JTAI Preparation Group will continue to explore 'the multi-agency response to identification of initial need and risk' and will consider the new inspection framework which we anticipate being announced in Summer 2024.

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 also to work on a particular topic relating to safeguarding in the form of a Tier 2 information sharing agreement. As a priority of the partnership, the Tier 2 agreement focuses specifically on Harm Outside of the Home.

Working with experts, we have developed our Tier 1 agreement, supported by our Executive Officers, with a strategic commitment from our partners to implement within their respective organisations to enable efficient and effective information sharing across the partnership.

We have created a bespoke training package for the partnership which reflects a positive change in the way we approach information sharing in the context of safeguarding, with particular emphasis on a change in culture relating to 'consent v public task'. This highlights conducting information sharing as a specific task in the public interest which is laid down by law, in this example, safeguarding, as a protection of wellbeing, a prevention of harm and a reduction of risk through care and support requiring information sharing.

We look forward to reporting the impact of the agreements and training in the 2024/25 Annual Report.

SCIE Learning Together Course

SCIE Learning Together training was attended by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel that sits within the PLG. The focus on completing the training is to enable those attending to complete LCSPRs and there will be more learning completed internally rather than commission externally.

The training was an introduction to the theory behind the SCIE model, it allowed familiarisation with the tools and techniques for collaborating to generate data, analysing the data, and coming to systemic findings.

18 partners within the DSCP completed the training.



6 Use of Restraints

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 also completed a site visit on the 10 June 2024. The DSCP selected a range of incidents from across 2023/24 and CCTV footage was reviewed which concluded that appropriate restraint had be utilised. This information is shared with Youth Justice Board, the Youth Custody Service, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

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 192 incidents of restraint recorded for the year, 81% caused no injury at all, and whilst 37 resulted in injury, it is notable that 97% were at level 1, with only 1 at level 2 (3%) and no level 3 category of injuries.

Scrutiny involves review of the home's CCTV where randomly selected incidents are reviewed with a manager from the home about the use of restraint, the circumstances leading up to the incident and what happened afterwards. This scrutiny provides assurance to the Partnership that the use of restraint is being monitored in terms of legality and proportionality in cooperation with the centre. The Aycliffe Centre has again been judged as 'good' in its most recent Ofsted inspection, with children's education and learning, how well children and young people are helped and protected, and the effectiveness of leaders and managers judged as 'good' and children's health being judged as 'outstanding'.



7 Training

- 14793 course completions 2023/24
- 106% increase (7172 completions) in 2022/23

Me - Learning

- Increase from 15 courses in 2022/23 to 30 courses 2023/24
- Course completions increased from 2022/23 of 5681 course completions to 2023/24 of 12956 course completions. That is an increase of 128%
- The 15 extra 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

Training Programme

- Increase from 10 courses delivered mostly on Teams/ Zoom (virtually) with a small number of face-to-face training to 15 courses delivered in a 50/50 mix of virtual and face to face. This has allowed practitioners to choose their preferred delivery option that suits their individual learning style
- Offering more face-to-face training has benefitted the workforce who prefer that method of delivery but has had an impact on numbers that can access due to room sizes. More practitioners can be trained virtually but some prefer to learn in person and enjoy the multi-agency discussions that take place during face-to-face training
- Numbers have still increased from 2022/23 of 891 course completions to 1112 course completions in 2023/24. That is an increase of 24%

Safeguarding Week

- Safeguarding week was facilitated jointly with Durham Safeguarding Adults Partnership. 18 courses were delivered and there were 420 course completions by people who work with children and families in County Durham

Bespoke

- Although this is a new method of training which has not been publicised, it is becoming increasingly popular method where training is tailored and designed to meet the needs to a single agency along with incorporating the multi-agency messages locally and nationally. The bespoke training that has been offered is a direct result from the Safeguarding Managers and Designated Leads training whereby the lead has valued the training and its delivery and thought it would be beneficial for their own organisation
- In 2023/24 bespoke training was delivered to Alternative Provision, Early Years, Parks and Countryside staff, Schools, and Gypsy Roma Traveller Wardens. 105 bespoke completions were achieved in 2023/24

Course Content

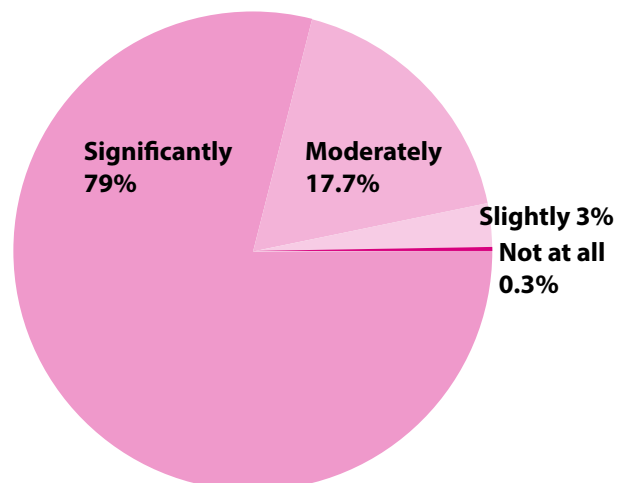
Average rating 4.67 out of 5
 Me – Learning 4.42
 Safeguarding Week 4.65
 Training Programme 4.78
 Bespoke Training 4.8

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	4.8	8.5
Training Programme	6.3	8.7
Safeguarding Week	5.7	8.2
Bespoke	6.7	9

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



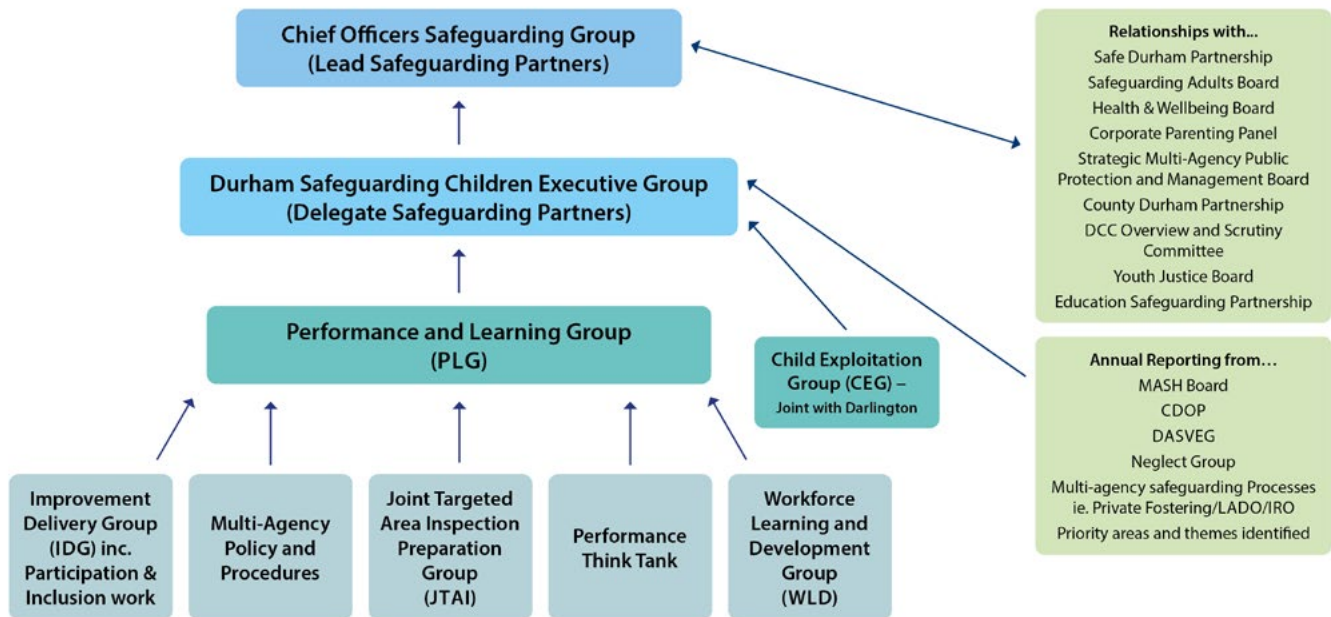
8 What's Next for the DSCP

The Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership have completed work to review the governance structure of the safeguarding partnership groups and the reporting structure from groups, boards, and subgroups. These changes have been made to support improvements to how we collaborate, scrutinise, assure, and drive the coordination of safeguarding activity.

The lead strategic group within the DSCP remains the Performance and Learning Group, this is the group that drives all the work that is being completed within the DSCP and reports into the Executive Group.

The 6 subgroups within the DSCP are all groups that are already established, Joint Targeted Area Inspections and Performance Think Tank have been added as subgroups that will report into the PLG, this means the Executive Group have governance over the work that take place within these groups.

Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership Structure



The DSCP Governance Structure has four layers with the Lead Safeguarding Partners/Chief Officers Group positioned with the highest level of oversight, setting the Strategic direction, vision and culture of the Partnership. The Delegate Partners sit within the Executive Group ensuring the delivery of the Strategic priorities. The Performance and Learning Group (PLG) is the management group which drives the work of the partnership through five dedicated sub groups. The Child Exploitation Group is the only themed sub-group which reports directly into the Executive Group whilst working alongside the PLG.

→ Reporting into
← Relationship with

Other new developments:

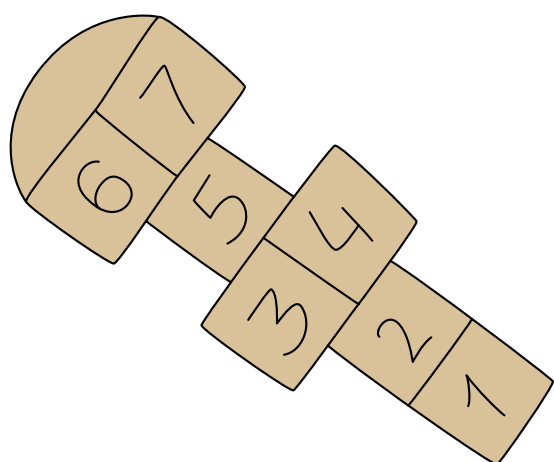
- In November 2023 the DSCP launched their new and improved website. Within the website it is the DSCP aim to provide information for professionals, parents/carers and children. The DSCP Business Unit plan to update all the pages on the site, consulting with children, young people, parents, carers and professionals who will use it
- Coordinate an Organisational Safeguarding Assessment pilot in the south of Durham and coordinate a challenge and reflect on events to explore the findings
- Continue to share the monthly Newsletter and build on its growing subscribers
- Launch a facebook page and continue to share on our X page to increase communicate with the wider partnership
- Continue to embed the Signs of Safety Practice Framework across partner agencies
- Develop a pathway and process to review care leavers deaths
- Develop and share new procedures and information from the DSCP
- Launch new training and share learning from the work completed within the DSCP
- Move towards a new Me Learning platform
- Work with Durham County Council to launch and raise awareness for Private Fostering
- Strengthen arrangements with Academy provisions in County Durham
- The Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership will continue to work hard to update and develop practice around the changes in Working Together 2023 guidance and legislation

Appendix

DSCP Budget 2023-24

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	347,060



Overview and Assurance by the DSCP Independent Scrutineer 2023/2024

I am pleased to respond as the new Independent Scrutineer to the publication of the Durham Children Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report.

During this reporting year the awaited Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance was published by Government following a lengthy period of review and consultation. The new guidance included many changes, some significant ones which relate to the actual leadership and structure of the partnership board itself. A significant change is the move away from having an independent chair of the partnership which will now be led by a Lead Safeguarding Group comprised of the heads for the three authorities, Police, County Council and the NHS Integrated Care Board. The changes also mandated the inclusion of independent scrutiny, and I am pleased to undertake this function on behalf of the partnership.

In this capacity I can give reassurance that the structural and practice changes required by the new guidance have already been implemented and the partnership continues to deliver its statutory functions in its new form. The Lead members have met on several occasions and the Executive Group that supports them are well embedded. The partnership will continue to reflect on how best the aims of the guidance can be achieved particularly around the involvement of the education providers.

The Performance and Learning Group has made good progress in relation to practise delivery against the new guidance and the other sub-groups continue to drive and support practise and safeguarding outcomes.

This report also provides insight into the actions taken against the 2023-24 agreed priorities which in summary are domestic abuse and the impact it has on children and young people, harm outside of the home, the first 1001 days of a child's life and mental health and well-being especially following Covid.

The report goes into detail on each of the four priorities as to what has been done, what has been achieved and more importantly what outcomes have been gained. The work completed thus far is commendable, and it is reassuring to see the amount of challenge and self-reflection undertaken by the sub-groups. Their inclusion of children and young people, their parents and carers in this work has ensured their views have been included.

The partnership has made efforts to raise awareness and be more inclusive with improvements for all in accessing information via a new web site, 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.

The report highlights the work done regarding the delivery of capacity and capability in terms of training, support and the practitioner academy, demonstrating a clear drive to ensure capacity and capability within the safeguarding social work capability.

Sadly, despite best efforts children and young people still suffer injury and serious harm, sometimes with fatal consequences. The partnership is responsible for considering and commissioning reviews to identify learning and prevent reoccurrence. The partnership has well established and experienced arrangements and has performed this statutory function well, ensuring staff are supported so that any learning opportunities are identified and that recommendations are implemented, tracked and reported upon appropriately.

This report demonstrates another year of commitment and delivery by the partnership, its sub-groups, practitioners and carers that support the safeguarding of children and young people in County Durham with great partnerships and strong, established partnership arrangements.



Adrian Green
Independent Scrutineer