

# Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership

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12 Month Report  
2022/23



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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 12 monthly report of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership. The purpose of this report is to set out the key areas of work undertaken between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023, and identify areas of priority to further improve the effectiveness of the Partnership.

The SSCP's lead members are the CEO of Somerset Council, the CEO of Somerset Integrated Care Board and the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Constabulary. They each delegate a member of their organisation to be part of the SSCP Executive, with a commitment to shared and equitable leadership of the safeguarding children arrangements, as set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2018). [You can find the SSCP Structure Chart here.](#)

We are committed to working together as equal partners in the safeguarding arrangements. The work across the partnership incorporates all agencies and organisations who work with children and families. The Partnership also links with the Somerset Safeguarding Adult Board, Corporate Parenting Board, Youth Justice Partnership Board, and Safer Somerset Partnership, and other relevant groups where there are shared areas of priority or development.

This year, we said thank you and goodbye to SSCP Executive Member Julian Wooster and welcome to Claire Winter.

## Our Lead Members are:

Sarah Crew - **Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset Constabulary**

Jonathan Higman - **Chief Executive Officer, Somerset ICB**

Duncan Sharkey - **Chief Executive Officer, Somerset Council**

## Our Executive are:

Shelagh Meldrum - **Chief Nursing Officer, Somerset ICB**

Dickon Turner - **Superintendent, Avon and Somerset Constabulary (Chair)**

Claire Winter - **Executive Director, Children and Families, Somerset Council**

## FOREWORD

### Reflections on 2022-23 from our Independent Scrutineer, Dr Mark Peel:

I want to use this opportunity to think back to the safeguarding conference, organised by the Partnership Business Unit, held at Taunton Racecourse in March. By the time you read this I know that may feel like a long time ago, but I do think it's worth just a minute to reflect on what a great day that was and for me as an opportunity to reflect on the strength of safeguarding practice in Somerset.

The conference reminded me that it really is true to say 'together we are stronger' and that whilst technology offers us so much, that there is no substitute in this work for real, direct human contact, for our shared concerns and our shared enthusiasm.

I also want to recognise here the work of the sub-groups that support safeguarding in Somerset. Chairing a sub-group or contributing to a task and finish group, are the absolute backbone of safeguarding. This can be hard work and as it is inevitably 'behind the scenes' sometimes does not attract the appreciation and plaudits merited.

So to all of you who have contributed in any way to one of our safeguarding sub-groups, as Chair, through bringing

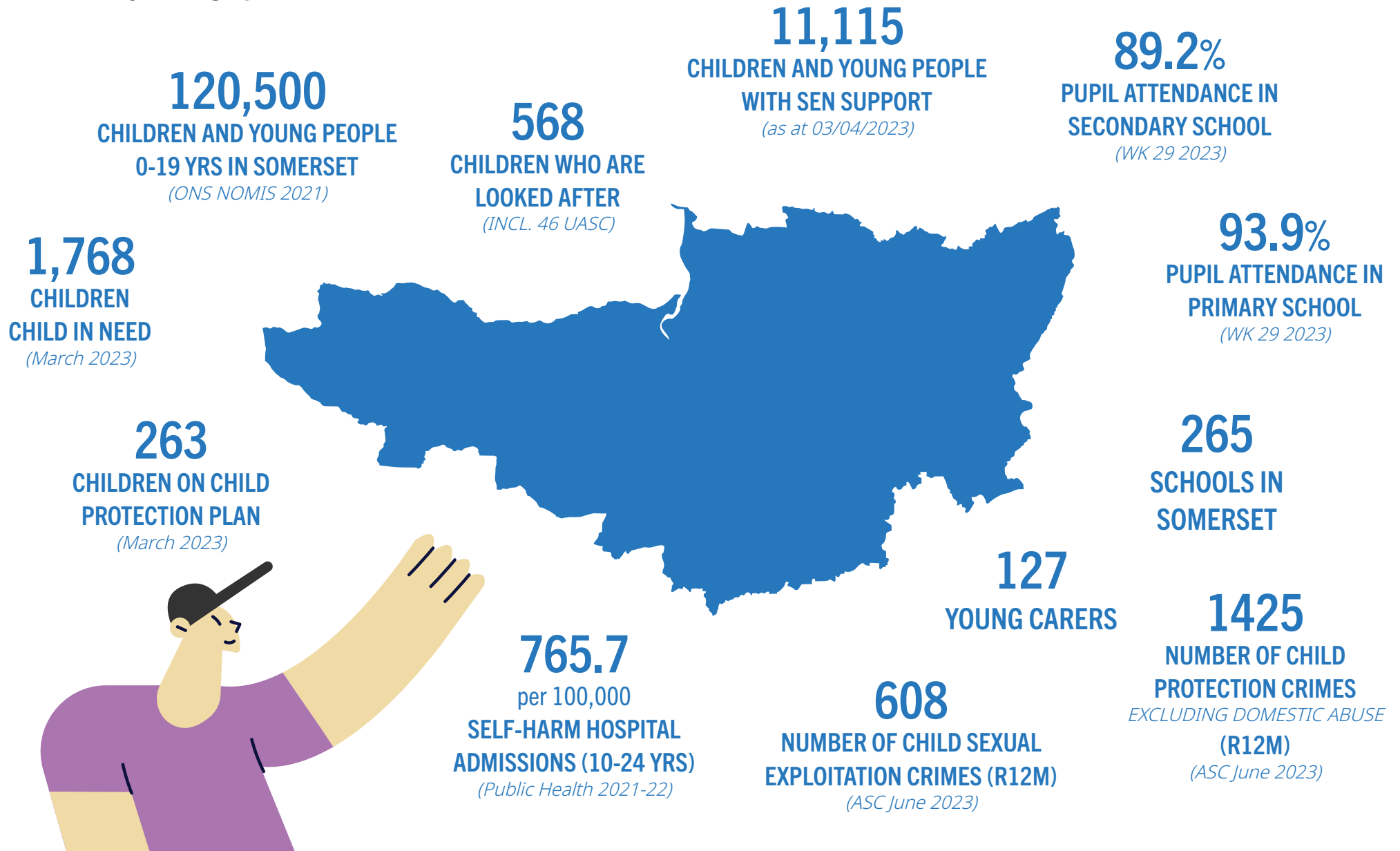
your expert perspective to the table and representing your agency, I say a very personal 'thank you'.

Change and consistency at the top! Over the course of the last year we have welcomed Duncan Sharkey as new Chief Executive of Somerset Council, have seen great changes in the structure and delivery of Health services, some senior figures move onto pastures new alongside Political change across the County. But this also permits new people and new ideas to come through and from my perspective the consistency of safeguarding in Somerset has remained undiminished.

**Mark**

# SOMERSET CONTEXT

## Somerset Key Demographics (2022-23):



## RAPID REVIEWS AND LOCAL CHILD SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS (LCSPR)

This year, the Partnership have completed seven Rapid Reviews and no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. One of the Rapid Reviews related to the death of a child.

Year	Number of Rapid Reviews
2020 - 2021	2
2021 - 2022	6
2022 - 2023	7

The Partnership notes that this is the second concurrent year where we have seen an increase in the number of Rapid Reviews completed. We recognise that this number is influenced by a range of factors, including socio-economic contexts, and will continue to monitor this figure and take action where there are concerns or trends across serious child safeguarding incidents in Somerset.

When there is a serious incident which does not meet the criteria for a Rapid Review or Child Safeguarding Practice Review, the Partnership may also undertake non-statutory learning activity to identify learning and create change across the system. This year, the Partnership completed three non-statutory learning reviews.

### Identified learning from activity the Partnership have completed included the following themes:

- Engaging fathers and male carers
- Non accidental injuries to babies

- Contingency planning and managing effective transitions for families between services
- Missed opportunities for information sharing between agencies
- Professional challenge and curiosity
- Having clear outcomes from Child Protection medicals

### Learning from reviews was disseminated in a range of ways, including:

Partnership videos, e-learning, training, bite size briefings and events, the SSCP Learning Bulletin and single agency newsletters, single agency briefings and workshops, updates to SSCP tools and guidance, and the delivery of workshops during the SSCP Annual Conference.

### How useful are different methods of disseminating learning from practice?

Using a range of methods to disseminate learning aims to reach the widest possible audience and share key messages with services who also have competing demands from learning and development in non-safeguarding areas of practice.

Data from our SSCP Learning Bulletin and training system tells us that there is a good level of interaction with articles in our Learning Bulletin, and our training data tells us what proportion of workers from each agency have accessed training for a full overview of up to date learning from recent reviews in the area.

We would like to continue to build on this next year, and increase engagement with our Youtube channel, where we have short videos delivering key safeguarding messages.

In 2022, the Partnership reviewed our Methodologies framework to update how we complete Rapid Reviews, CSPRs and non-statutory reviews. The new framework gives more detailed guidance on how to:

**Plan** - Complete concise reviews which clearly highlight the learning for the system.

**Assess** - Agree SMART actions.

**Do** - Complete actions in a timely manner.

**Review** - Evaluate the impact of actions on the system, practitioners and outcomes for children and families.

This year, the Partnership has completed a range of activity to seek to evaluate the impact of activity arising from CSPRs completed in previous years, including Child Charlie, Child Alex and the Thematic Review into Non-Accidental Injuries. Work to measure impact includes single agency audit, practitioner focus groups and surveys.

### Some key highlights of this work include:

- Evidence of better multi-agency pre-birth planning and information sharing.
- Practitioners feeding back that the changes made to the Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit enable better engagement with families, sets a strengths-based approach and supports a better understanding of neglect and the measurement of this over time.
- Feedback that the changes made to the SSCP Effective Support Document support practitioners to identify and act on safeguarding concerns.
- Some examples of outstanding practice in terms of engaging fathers and male carers shared through a multi-agency practitioner focus group.

- Between June-December 2022, the newly commissioned Fathers Coordinator supported 21 fathers and offered 18 training sessions to promote better understanding of engaging fathers and male carers.

Whilst reducing risk of future non-accidental injuries to babies continues to be a priority of the Partnership, there was a reduction in the number of serious incident notifications we saw in 2022-2023 compared to 2021-2022. This may be an indicator of positive impact from a range of Partnership initiatives as a response to learning in 2021, although in the complex context of multi-agency safeguarding, it is challenging to attribute change across the system to a single action or initiative.

The Partnership have run a Task and Finish group to work on reducing risk of future Non-Accidental Injury in Somerset. This work has included progressing open actions on the plan, seeking assurance around the impact of completed actions and conducting a deep dive to consider trends across Rapid Reviews in terms of features of the family and agency practice. The Task and Finish group highlighted the importance of robust early help for families with additional needs during pregnancy. The group also completed some assurance work looking at hospital data and Children's Social Care data to ensure that there are robust systems in place to identify suspected non-accidental injury and discuss risks in a multi-agency strategy discussion.

Work was commissioned to implement and disseminate learning from the National Review into the deaths of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes.

Next year, the Partnership will continue to develop the quality of actions arising from learning reviews so that the impact can be more easily understood.

# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

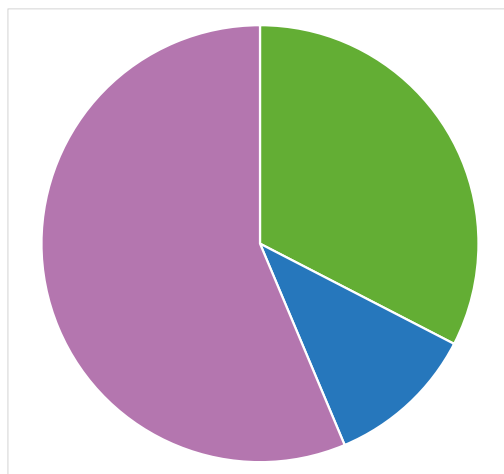
The Partnership Learning and Development offer has expanded this year, and includes our training, online webinars, e-learning, and our annual Conference.

This year, the Partnership has hosted a range of learning events, including core safeguarding training, workshops, video, animation and e-learning. The training we provide is consistently positively evaluated by attendees.

### Question:

*Now you have completed the training, how would you rate your current level of understanding of communicating and developing inter-agency working relationships to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and young people?*

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good



In 2022-23 we have seen a significant increase in demand for our core safeguarding courses:

Course	2021-22 Number Trained	2022-23 Number Trained
Advanced Child Protection 2 day	307	558
Advanced Child Protection Update	411	601

This increase has mainly consisted of Education and Social Care practitioners. We continue to seek to promote greater engagement in Partnership training from Health and Police colleagues.

Partnership work spans all areas of all organisations, from frontline practitioners to senior leaders. The different functions of the Partnership work together to identify and act on trends and feedback across the system. For instance, feedback from frontline practitioners in training about SSCP tools or challenges with multi-agency working is fed back to relevant Partnership groups and relevant action taken.

The Partnership are always striving to understand more about the impact of multi-agency training and learning activity, and developing case studies to support practitioner learning. We have introduced Good Practice Nominations, which are a formal route for practitioners to submit positive case studies which evidence the impact on children and families of Partnership training, tools or initiatives.

We will also be contacting a cohort of attendees of training 3-6 months after the event, to try to understand more about how learning from our training improves practice, and any further areas for development.

The Partnership Learning and Improvement and Quality and Performance subgroups commission and quality assure our training offer.



Our first Conference was held in March 2023. This event was well attended by over 200 practitioners from a wide range of agencies in Somerset, as well as senior leaders and Lead members of the Partnership. The day included a presentation from Sally Shearer (National Panel), workshops on different themes and a market stall event. The aim of the day was to update practitioner knowledge on aspects of child safeguarding and provide a networking opportunity for practitioners of different teams and agencies.

The event also aimed to provide a platform to emphasise the importance of the voice of the child in safeguarding work. Members of Somerset Youth Parliament also worked in collaboration with the Partnership to create a video showcasing the importance of working in Partnership to effectively engage with and improve outcomes for children. [You can watch their video here.](#)

**In work to measure the impact of the conference, the Partnership has received the following feedback:**

“The facilitators did an excellent job of providing up to date and relevant information and successfully getting across the message that we need to work as a partnership in order to be effective in safeguarding the children of Somerset”

“We have networked with several new professionals who are able to support what we have in place at school”

“It was particularly good to hear from the national panel member, this helped to dispel myths and has prompted me to consider further the recommendations and reports to date”

“Motivational interviewing was very interesting and I will be applying this to my future practice and hope to go on the additional training once available”

“It provided the opportunity to strengthen partner relationships. I particularly liked the session on professional curiosity and professional challenge which I am going to encourage within in my team”

“More open to challenge with confidence and also helped me to recognise how far down the road we are to becoming a truly trauma informed organisation”



## PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY AND MATURITY

from our Independent Scrutineer Dr Mark Peel

### An Effective Strategic Partnership

The Partnership Executive sets the tone and tempo of the SSCP. Regular meetings bring together senior officers who have the authority to speak for their respective agencies and make decisions which commit resources. The role of Chair alternates (annually) between agencies, with the Police holding that role currently.

In my view there is evidence that the SSCP Executive is working effectively because:

- Clear decisions are made on basis of robust discussion, with evidence of agencies holding one another to account. A strong audit trail is in place evidencing the statutory responsibilities of the Executive. Outcomes and priorities are well communicated with Executive members holding responsibility for cascading these within their agencies, and the SSCP Business Unit acting as a facilitating and linking device between the agencies.
- In addition, I see the strong trust-based relationships between the members of the SSCP Executive serving as a model for the range of standing working groups that translate the strategic vision of the Executive into the direct work of the safeguarding partnership, and so on into the quality of day-to-day trust and relationships between safeguarding professionals.

### An Effective Learning Organisation

A particular strength of the SSCP is the effective and creative way in which lessons learnt are translated to support and enhance future practice. A wide range of training opportunities are offered (in person and remotely) that can be directly linked back to recommendations from reviews and research. Training is well attended and reflective of all agencies with responsibilities for safeguarding.

There is room for improvement however (as is true across the Country), with regard to both the organisation and access to data within agencies and ease of direct communication between agencies. Part of the issue here is somewhat 'mechanical', with respect to by whom and how data can be accessed, but there are also enduring uncertainties in the minds of practitioners around confidentiality, consent and the degree to which they can be held liable should they make a mistake. The underlying Paramountcy Principle of the Children Act (1989) is perhaps worth reflecting upon here, in that the act specifies that what is 'in a child's best interests' has paramount consideration, over and above any other (often adult) agendas.

The fact that issues with regard to sharing of data remain such a 'hard nut to crack' strongly suggests that there are other more complex issues at play here, unlikely to be fundamentally redressed by Safeguarding Partnerships in isolation.

### Statutory Responsibilities

The working of the safeguarding review system, I would suggest, is a good litmus test of the degree to which the Partnership meets statutory responsibilities overall.

For the review system to work well, there must be a commitment to openness from the very top, along with a willingness to reflect on what could be learnt in general terms and/or improved specifically.

In all circumstances where a Rapid Review has been triggered within the SSCP these have been completed within the prescribed time period. Feedback from the National Panel though appropriately challenging at times, has been uniformly good. Partnership engagement, reflection and learning with the review process is excellent, and there is a clear link between recommendations action(s) and other learning.

I read all of the reviews produced by the SSCP, and sit in on the process from time to time or where there are particular reasons to do so. On the basis of this, I have seen the quality and consistency of the SSCP Rapid Reviews improve as the Partnership has gained more experience. Perhaps more importantly, I see the review process as genuinely reflective of the Partnership as a whole with no single agenda predominating and no defensive 'blame-shifting' behaviours.

## A 'Mature Partnership'?

Overall, there are good foundations (policies and procedures) are in place and that good relationships and trust characterise a shared commitment to safeguarding children. But what is working today cannot be taken for granted as 'inevitably so' in future. Change within agencies with safeguarding responsibilities has been endemic over recent years, with no sign that this is likely to change any time soon.

In order to comment on the 'maturity' of the SSCP, especially if confronted with serious and unanticipated circumstances that go beyond what is in place; I have to make something of an informed judgement.

The degree to which the SSCP can respond to change and challenge in future is to some extent evidenced by the way change has been accommodated to date: change in key personnel, organisational

structures, governance, oversight of safeguarding and so on.

Change has been profound across my tenure as Independent Scrutineer, not least in regard to massive changes to the way in which Health services are now organised. Key leaders have moved on and been replaced. Staff turnover means that the safeguarding workforce in 2023 is very different from that of 2020. A pandemic has changed the way in which the Partnership works forever, and this just scratches the surface.

Yet the SSCP remains effective. Trust remains high, and I see a willingness and openness to learning and improvement that is truly inspirational.



## PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

Since it has been three years since the creation of the Partnership, partners have spent time reviewing our structures and governance to ensure that we are working as effectively as possible to achieve our aims. This work included a meeting with representatives across the Partnership in March 2023 to consider the functioning of our subgroups, and as a result of this, some changes were made.

Some actions arising from learning reviews were delayed, and the impact or outcome was not being measured effectively. In light of this, we ended our Action Plan Oversight group and instead, reinstated the remit of the Learning and Improvement group to challenge any drift and delay in actions arising from learning reviews. We have set up a small group of key partners to measure outcomes from actions. We redesigned our Action Plan to improve our transparency so that our work can be scrutinised and challenged more easily, and the different subgroups can understand each other's priorities and responsibilities.

The impact of this change was smaller meetings, with a greater focus on SMART actions. Since this new system has been implemented, there has been an improvement in actions being completed in a timely way. The Partnership has a more informed understanding of the impact of actions arising from learning reviews.

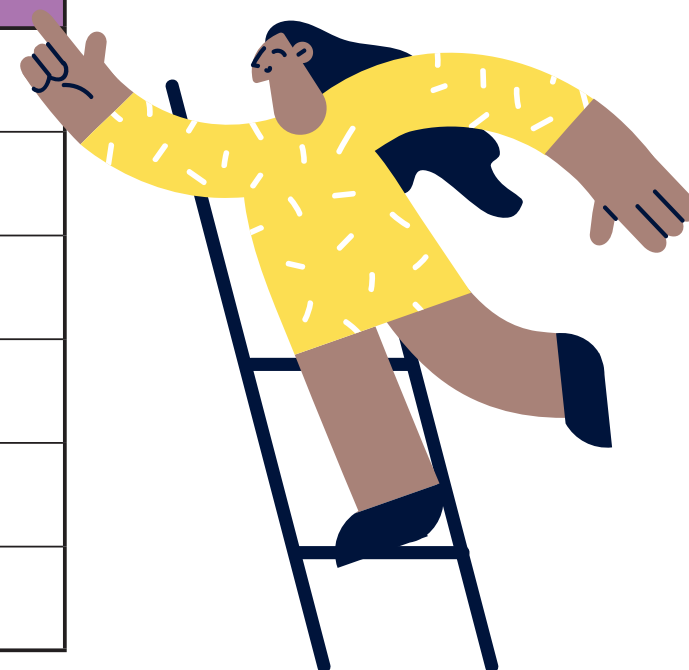
Ongoing work will be developed from 2023/24 to consider the effectiveness of the Partnership and that all partner agencies are contributing to activities. It will provide an overview of the work carried out and the quality of this work.

### This year, the range of activity which helps us to understand the effectiveness of the Partnership has included:

- Feedback from our Young People's Champion and young people's participation groups
- Feedback from parents to single agencies
- Multi-agency audit, practitioner surveys and focus groups
- Qualitative feedback from practitioners during Partnership training events
- Feedback from our Community members Penny Quigley and Kev O'Donnell
- Executive Roundtable events on the learning from National Review into the deaths of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and increased costs of living
- Scrutiny of data and arising themes, including training data
- Single agency peer review activity and inspections
- Feedback from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel on Rapid Reviews completed
- Themes across the Resolving Professional Differences process and numbers of forms submitted
- Scrutiny of the impact of actions from previous learning reviews
- A summit with our Lead Members around the planning in place to reduce risk of future non-accidental injury to babies
- Scrutiny of Partnership activity and maturity by our Independent Scrutineer, Dr Mark Peel

## AGENCY ATTENDANCE AT MULTI-AGENCY SUBGROUPS:

Name of Agency	% Attendance across SSCP multi-agency subgroups (14 meetings)
Avon and Somerset Constabulary	86%
Children's Social Care (Somerset Council)	93%
Education Services (Somerset Council)	36%
Integrated Care Board	93%
Public Health Nursing	86%
Somerset NHS Foundation Trust	100%



There are also other agencies and representatives who attend our subgroups, such as from the voluntary sector, District councils, our community members, and representatives from the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board and Community Safety Partnership.

Education services in Somerset experienced a restructure this year which created change of Education representatives across all Partnership groups. Plans have been agreed to ensure a stronger representation of the voice of Education across all Partnership groups for 2023-24.

This year, Somerset experienced structural change through the creation of the Somerset Integrated Care Board, and the creation of a Somerset Unitary Council. In Somerset, an Integrated Care System Children and Families Board was created, which in turn changed the way the Partnership works with our Early Help Board and Children and Young People's Plan.

# MULTI-AGENCY AUDIT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Partnership complete a wide range of quality assurance work, including: audit, focus groups, surveys and assurance reports submitted by agencies. Different types of multi-agency audit includes Section 11 audits, JTAI style audit, Section 157 and 175.

## Multi-Agency Audit One:

Children where an agency had requested the involvement of Children's Social Care, but no further action had been taken.

### Aim:

To explore that children are receiving the right level of support and agencies understand why Children's Social Care did not become involved.

### Good multi-agency practice identified included:

- Good awareness of family history being taken into account.
- Clear recording and communication of outcomes in a timely way.
- Good evidence of multi-agency information sharing and contingency planning.

### Key learning identified from the audit included:

- Some occurrences where the reason for requesting involvement of Children's Social Care was not clear.
- Missed opportunities to challenge the no further action outcome when the referrer disagreed with this.

### Action taken as a result of this learning included:

Sharing learning across the Partnership regarding Team Around the Family and Resolving Professional Differences processes.

## Multi-Agency Audit Two:

Children experiencing Child Exploitation

### Aim:

To understand what current areas of strengths and development across the system.

### Key learning identified from the audit included:

You can find a summary of the areas of strength and development [HERE](#), in a briefing we created for practitioners across the partnership.

### Action taken as a result of this learning included:

Work on pathways for information sharing when concerns about Child exploitation are recognised and revision of the Child Exploitation screening tool. The impact of this will be measured in 2023-24.

## SECTION 11

Multi-agency audit and Section 11 is overseen by our Quality and Performance subgroup. This year, the Partnership held a round of workshops with the Avon and Somerset region. The agencies who participated included CAMHS and the YMCA Brunel.

### Good practice highlighted included:

- Clear processes and systems around safeguarding and child protection.
- Good multi-agency information sharing and communication.
- Voice of actively engaged children and young people was evidenced.

The workshops also identified areas of learning and some agency-specific further areas for development.

We continue to work collaboratively on Section 11 work across the Avon and Somerset region to maximise opportunities to share learning. In 2023, the region will be completing a round of full Section 11 audits.



## LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS

This year, the Partnership are pleased to report the following results from inspections of our services:

- Somerset Children's Social Care rated GOOD by Ofsted (September 2022).
- Somerset Public Health services rated GOOD by CQC (September 2022).
- Avon and Somerset Constabulary rated as OUTSTANDING in Treatment of the Public and ADEQUATE in protecting vulnerable people by HMICFRS (March 2023).
- Specialist community mental health services for children and young people rated as OUTSTANDING by CQC (January 2023).

Our Business Unit is a small team which supports the Partnership to fulfil its functions. The Business Unit is made up of:

- Business Manager
- Policy and Projects Manager
- Project Support Officer
- Training Manager
- Business Support Assistant
- Training Officer (post created in 2023 to expand the Partnership learning and development offer)

## ALLEGATIONS MANAGEMENT

Somerset's Local Authority Designated Officers service (LADO) is involved in the management and oversight of allegations of harm against people who work with children in a paid or voluntary capacity.

The service managed 747 notifications of allegations during 2022-3 (an increase from 570 notifications in 2021-2). Of these, 58% were assessed as not meeting the LADO criteria, indicating an ongoing need to support clear understanding of the allegations management procedure.

In response to this identified need, the following activity is being undertaken over the next year to support best practice and robust responses to allegations:

- Allegations Management covered within Partnership core training
- The LADO service have provided a wide range of briefing sessions to agencies including registered managers, the education safeguarding team, Children's Social Care and multi-agency projects.
- A LADO representative attends a session with Local Authority foster carers as part of their safer care training.
- Development of online learning for Somerset Council staff.
- Later this year, the LADO service will be running two 'Low Level Concerns' multi-agency workshops.

[You can find the Allegations Management annual report here.](#)

## CHILD DEATH OVERVIEW PANEL

Somerset and Dorset have a joint Child Death Overview Panel to share learning. The meetings are split into deaths of infants under 1 month (Neonatal Death Overview Panel, NDOP) and older children over 1 month (Child Death Overview Panel, CDOP).

Between 01 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, there were a total of 18 child deaths (Child Death Notifications) among residents living within Somerset. During this 12-month period a total of 32 child death cases were signed off at either CDOP or NDOP, 10 cases were signed off at CDOP and 22 at NDOP.

### Somerset Child Death data 2022/23:

- There were 18 child deaths (Female 6: Male 12)
- The number of deaths in the first month of life was 4
- The number of deaths of children more than a month old and less than a year old was 3

[You can find the Child Death Overview Panel annual report here.](#)



## RESOLVING PROFESSIONAL DIFFERENCES

Resolving Professional Differences (RPD) is the name for our local escalation protocol. This year, the Partnership reviewed our protocol to ensure it is effective. Part of this involved a practitioner survey, which highlighted that the majority of practitioners are aware of the protocol and know where to find it. Where practitioners had used to protocol, the majority felt that it resulted in a positive outcome for the child.

The Partnership continue to experience low numbers of RPDs in 2022-23:

Year	Number of RPD'S
2020 - 2021	13
2021 - 2022	6
2022 - 2023	7

In analysing the reduction in RPDs over the last few years, it has become evident that whilst numbers of appropriate submissions have been stable, there have been less inappropriate submissions, therefore demonstrating the positive impact of training and promotion of the protocol on resolving concerns for safeguarding children. We have continued to build on this through developing e-learning and a range of communications about the RPD process to promote the process being used effectively to improve outcomes for children and families in Somerset.

Partnership learning review work has identified some potential missed opportunities to escalate concerns about the safeguarding planning for a child. As a result of this, the Partnership has launched a multi-agency Step Up/Step Down protocol to support smoother transitions for families. This aims to provide stronger foundations for professional challenge when the agreed process is not being followed. Work to review the impact of this will be undertaken in 2023-24.



## COMMUNICATION

This year, the Partnership have focused on improving how key learning is sustainably disseminated across the Partnership. This has included:

- Promoting our Learning Bulletin, which has resulted in an additional 567 practitioners receiving the Bulletin, enabling key learning messages to reach more of the workforce.
- Designing and launching a new website which aims to make information more accessible, which we will continue to evaluate through 2023-24.
- Developing our social media presence, with a resulting increase in followers for our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Next year, we are preparing to launch a new podcast to deliver key learning messages, explain the roles and remit of agencies within the Partnership and explore key safeguarding themes.

Through all of our work, the Partnership continues to forge links between agencies, support key aspects of multi-agency working and a better understanding of different agency roles. [Click here for an example of this, in a bite sized briefing about the health system.](#)

It remains a challenge to consistently embed the voices of parents and carers in Partnership work. In 2023, the Partnership will be linking with a fathers participation group and Parent Carer forums to seek to develop this further. The Partnership also have a project planned for 2023 to create a video with parents of children who have been exploited to raise awareness and upskill practitioners around how to best support families and systems to reduce risk.

In 2022-23 the Partnership funded a Young People's Champion to support bringing the voice of the child closer to our strategic work. In evaluating the impact of the Young People's Champion on our work, the Partnership have recognised the limitations of having one voice to be

representative of the wide range of children and young people living in Somerset. In 2023-24, rather than re-commissioning another Champion, the Partnership will be aiming to build better links with a much wider range of participation groups, in order to have a better understanding of children's experiences across Somerset.

We are also looking forward to new opportunities to hear a wide range of children and young people's voices in the work of the Partnership alongside our Partnership Youth Forum. This includes hearing from a Healthwatch young people's participation group, a new Violence Reduction Unit participation group and the Avon and Somerset Constabulary Independent Advisory Group.



## CHILD EXPLOITATION

Why this priority was chosen: Data both locally and nationally indicated an increase in children deemed to be at risk of exploitation. The Avon and Somerset area is one of the most high prevalence in the country for concerns relating to County Lines. During the pandemic, concerns about risk of child exploitation came to the fore, including being groomed online.

Aims of Partnership: to improve practitioner confidence in identifying and responding to risk of child exploitation, and provide a tool to support this work.

### Partnership activity 2022-2023:

- Promoted the newly developed multi-agency Child Exploitation Screening tool after it was launched in February 2022. In April 2023, we converted this to an online tool on our website to improve accessibility.
- Launched a practitioner survey to understand the reach and impact of the Screening tool. Responses from 130 practitioners highlighted that the majority of respondents were aware of the tool and found it helpful in identifying child exploitation in their work. Action was agreed to continue to promote the tool amongst CAMHS practitioners, as many of the CAMHS respondents identified that they were not aware of the tool.
- Held a multi-agency Forum week of online webinars in December 2022 themed around different aspects of child exploitation, which was attended by over 100 practitioners across agencies. The Partnership converted these learning events to short videos, which have been viewed over 275 times!
- Held workshops on Transitional Safeguarding, professional curiosity and trauma informed practice at our annual Conference.

- Delivered 6 sessions of Child Exploitation training to over 137 practitioners!
- Our Child Exploitation subgroup have also worked to develop a Section 17 Risks Outside the Home pathway for children experiencing exploitation and examined data relating to the picture in Somerset to consider any further training or action required.

### Practitioner feedback on the Child Exploitation Screening tool included:

*"I think it is an invaluable tool and makes practitioners think and question more about the things they see when they visit children and young people"*

*"It helps to highlight to other professionals if there is a high risk particularly when there is professional anxiety but no signs of exploitation"*

*"This tool is something that I would use without hesitation if the situation required"*

*"I use the tool with parents to highlight the concerns and suggest we need to support them further. The tool gives evidence to support this"*

### Forward Focus:

The Partnership will continue to deliver Child Exploitation training and this year will refresh our Child Exploitation Strategy to incorporate local developments. We are excited to develop a project in 2023 to create resources with parents of children who have experienced exploitation to support better awareness across agencies and a more robust response to concerns about exploitation.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Why this priority was chosen: local data indicated a higher than average prevalence of self-harm amongst children and young people. Wider impact of the pandemic included higher prevalence of poor mental health and emotional wellbeing amongst children and young people.

### Partnership activity 2022-2023:

- Delivered 4 sessions of 'Nothing Else' - a immersive theatre training event which raised awareness around the impact of the pandemic on child mental health.
- Completed a survey with over 100 frontline practitioners around their experience and approach to early help, which highlighted a perceived gap in early intervention for mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- In spring 2023 the Partnership Youth Forum looked at children and young people's mental health and wellbeing by considering what good emotional health looks like. The findings were shared with the Partnership groups and published on the website. [You can read more about their work here.](#)
- Held a Forum week of online webinars in June 2022 themed around positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. The short videos we created from this event have over 164 views!

### Forward Focus:

The Partnership will continue to work with associated groups to support a good understanding of children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

### COST OF LIVING:

This year, the Partnership recognised the significant impact which increased costs of living was having on our children, families, practitioners, services and communities. This was an area of focus across the whole Partnership.

- The Partnership Youth Forum completed a project on increased Cost of Living and how children experience it, and the findings of this were presented to groups across the Partnership to inform decision making and strategic planning. [You can read more about their work here.](#)
- The Executive group hosted a Roundtable event with a range of agencies and key stakeholders to discuss the impact of increased costs of living, explore opportunities for multi-agency sharing of resources. The presentation from the Youth Forum was used to influence the senior decision makers from each agency, and feed into actions around promoting support for families locally, as well as link to our local Connect Somerset project which is developing early help support for families.



# NEGLECT

Why this priority was chosen: learning reviews in Somerset have highlighted the importance of practitioner recognition of neglect in order to improve outcomes for children. Somerset has a high prevalence of Child Protection plans under the category of neglect.

Aims of the Partnership: to improve practitioner understanding of neglect across agencies.

## Partnership activity 2022-2023:

- Delivered training on the Family Strengths and Needs toolkit and neglect to 97 practitioners.
- Converted the Family Strengths and Needs toolkit to an interactive tool to improve accessibility.
- Delivered workshops on Motivational Interviewing and Professional curiosity at our Annual Conference.
- Held a focus group with practitioners to evaluate the impact of the Family Strengths and Needs toolkit.



The Partnership is working in 2023 to update our Neglect Strategy to continue to drive forward development in this area.

## Practitioner feedback on the Family Strengths and Needs toolkit included:

*“The name change has made a massive change to people’s reaction”*

*“I found the tool extremely useful ... The traffic light system was brilliant and families could visually see when they were in green, it was ‘Oh, yeah, I’ve got that right’, and that was really positive”*

*“When I’ve used the toolkit with families, and we’ve gone back and revisited, [using] it as a measuring tool for improvement, it did help to show improvement. That was really, really positive for the family. And actually you could see that that was encouraging them to carry on with those improvements and keep with it”*

## Forward Focus:

The Partnership will continue to roll out training on the Family Strengths and Needs toolkit and are holding an online multi-agency Forum week themed around Neglect in June 2023.

## POSITIVE COMMUNITIES

Why this priority was chosen: data around inclusion, attendance, anti-social behaviour locally has highlighted this as an area of importance. When we consulted for the new Children and Young People's Plan in 2021, young people outlined that having a safe community was a priority for them. Nationally, sexual harassment in schools has been identified as an area of concern, as outlined in the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools (2021) and IICSA report (2022).

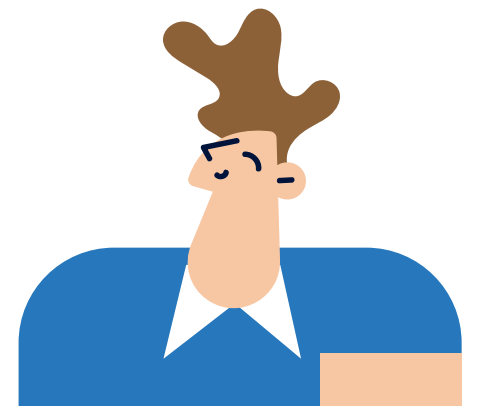
Aims of the Partnership: raise awareness of the importance of safe communities, school attendance and engage a whole-system approach to attendance being 'everyone's business'.

### Partnership activity 2022-2023:

- [The Partnership Youth Forum completed a project exploring what makes them want to go to school.](#) The young people designed a survey which was completed by 96 others. The findings of their project were presented across the Partnership, as well as a Conference of key partners, Headteachers and other stakeholders to feed into the new Education Strategy in Somerset and ensure that it reflects children's experiences and priorities.
- The Youth Forum also completed a project on Housing and how it can impact on children and young people.
- Our Young People's Champion mapped out the different awards schools can undertake to support the rights of the child, such as the Somerset Wellbeing Framework and the Unicef Rights Respecting School Award, and how these awards can support more positive and respectful school environments, with lower incidents of suspension.
- The Education Safeguarding subgroup have monitored trends in attendance and inclusion, examined the safeguarding training for school governors and multi-agency responses to sexual harassment in schools.

### Forward Focus:

Under the new 'Safe in the community' priority, the Partnership will continue to support improvements to school attendance and inclusion.



## PRIORITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR 2023-24

This year, the Partnership have agreed new priorities to frame our focus and action. These are:

### SAFE START TO LIFE

Learning from reviews in Somerset have highlighted the importance of effectively supporting families during pregnancy and in the early stages of life.

### SAFE IN THE COMMUNITY

Through data, serious incidents and feedback from practitioners, Somerset continue to identify child exploitation and inclusion as areas for focus.

### POSITIVE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

This priority is being continued from 2022-23 as Somerset is an outlier in the south west for acute self-harm.



# PLAN ON A PAGE 2023-24

## Priorities:

### 1: SAFE START TO LIFE

Babies and young children will have the best start to life, and their families will have the right support to keep them safe. Practitioners provide robust support for families at the earliest possible stage, including involving fathers.

### 2: SAFE IN THE COMMUNITY

Children feel confident and safe with inclusive education and the risks of exploitation are reduced.

### 3: POSITIVE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Positive emotional wellbeing and mental health. More children in Somerset will be resilient, have good mental health and positive transitions to adult services.

## Working in Partnership with:

All agencies in Somerset who work with children and families, Somerset Safeguarding Adult Board, Safer Somerset Partnership, Somerset Corporate Parenting Board, Somerset Youth Justice Partnership Board and more.

## Subgroups to support progressing this work:

Quality and Performance, Learning and Improvement, Child Exploitation, Education, Health.

## How we will:

### Understand challenges in the system:

Conduct learning reviews when there are serious incidents, listening to the voices of children in subgroups, practitioner focus groups and surveys, audit, examining data and themes from Resolving Professional Difference processes, work with agencies from frontline practitioners to senior leaders to support a good understanding of challenges and strengths within the system.

### Support positive change in the system:

Deliver training on specified topics, as well as webinars and other learning opportunities, develop strategies and practitioner tools to support better outcomes for children and families, drive forward actions agreed from learning reviews, share learning through a range of communication methods such as social media, learning bulletin and podcast.

### Improve partnership working:

Facilitate the Resolving Professional Differences process to support agencies effectively communicating and challenging each other, deliver multi-agency training and learning opportunities where practitioners can understand more about how other agencies work, bring together a range of agencies in subgroups to make collective strategic decisions.





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