



Somerset Safeguarding  
**Children Partnership**

# Annual Report 2024-25



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# Introduction

This report sets out the key areas of work undertaken by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. It reviews the progress made against our priorities over the year, highlights areas of strength, identifies challenges and outlines future plans.

## Purpose

The SSCP aims to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Somerset in accordance with [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#). The SSCP comprises three statutory safeguarding partners: Somerset Council (SCC), Avon and Somerset Constabulary, and the NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB).



### Our Lead Safeguarding Partners are:

- [Sarah Crew](#) – Chief Constable, Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- [Jonathan Higman](#) – Chief Executive Officer, Somerset ICB
- [Duncan Sharkey](#) – Chief Executive Officer, Somerset Council

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 multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children, as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

The SSCP leadership is enhanced by education representation through the Education Executive role, this role supports the voice of education to be represented at a strategic level.

Together, the SSCP's Executive group provide strategic leadership for our broader safeguarding practices.

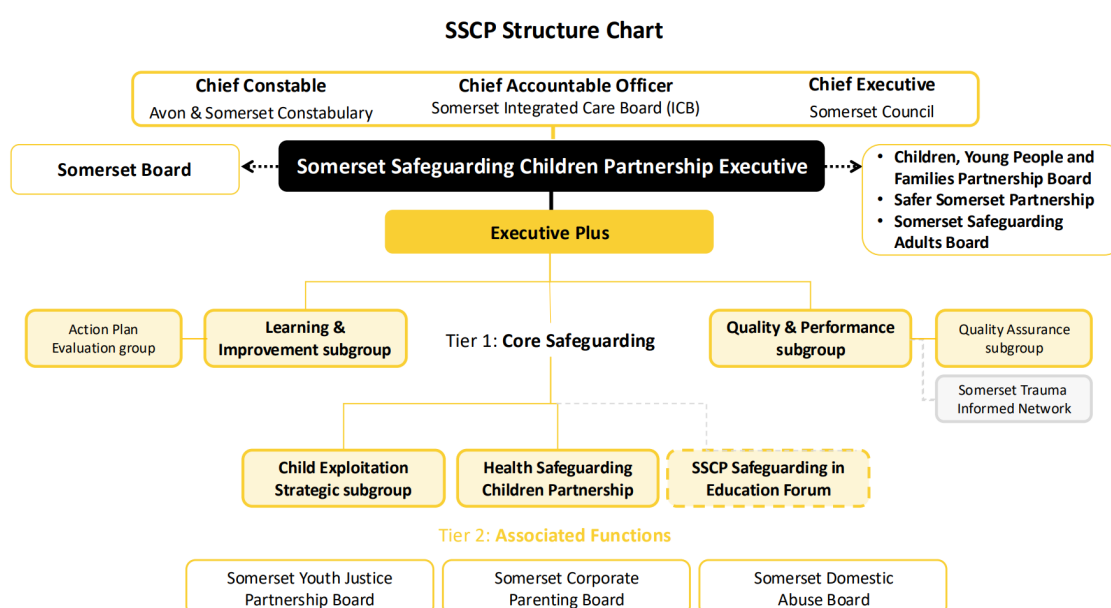
## Our Delegated Safeguarding Partners are:

- [Natalie Hanna](#) – Headteacher, The Mendip School
- [Shelagh Meldrum](#) – Chief Nursing Officer, Somerset ICB
- [Lisa Simpson](#) – Superintendent, Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- [Elizabeth Hughes](#) – Chief Superintendent, Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- [Claire Winter](#) – Executive Director Children and Families, Somerset Council (Chair)

The wider Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership includes all agencies across Somerset that provide support and services to children and young people up to the age of 18. This group represents the full spectrum of interests and stakeholders involved in children's safeguarding in Somerset. These agencies are listed in our [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#).

## Structure and aims

The strategic aims of the partnership are to ensure that effective systems are in place to promote the wellbeing of children and young people and safeguard them from harm. All subgroups and forums within the partnership are dedicated to enhancing safeguarding practices and outcomes for children and young people. The SSCP Structure Chart illustrates the connections among all subgroups and forums, as well as their links to relevant agencies and other Boards. The [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) provide detail regarding their roles and responsibilities.



In 2024- 25 the Educations Safeguarding subgroup was restructured to become the Safeguarding in Education Forum. This group has been effectively led by the Education Executive to support the links between the wider education partners and other members of the SSCP.

## Progress against statutory guidance

The SSCP was formed in September 2019 and has been developing and evolving since. The published arrangements were reviewed in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and were republished in December 2024, they are available here: [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements - Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership](#).

The partnership has worked hard to ensure that the changes outlined in Working Together 2023 have been embedded and undertook a benchmarking exercise against the requirements to ensure that changes have continued to progress and create meaningful impact. Updates against the key changes are reflected below:

### Importance of involving Education in safeguarding at operational and strategic levels:

- Rotating SSCP Executive Education representative in place to ensure that representation at the highest level of decision making.
- Efforts have been made to broaden education contribution and representation at partnership subgroups, however sustained progress with this is not expected until 2025 – 2026 due to the impact of restructures
- Safeguarding in Education Forum was established and is well attended by a range of relevant professionals, supporting the 'voice' of education to influence partnership activity

### Changes in lead and delegate safeguarding roles:

- Governance arrangements were changed to address the requirements, these include identification of Lead and Delegated safeguarding roles
- Claire Winter (Director of Children's Services) was appointed as the partnership chair for the multi-agency arrangements

### Ensure there is independent scrutiny:

- Partner contributions have continued to be utilised to fund an Independent Scrutineer role.

### Implement effective information-sharing arrangements between agencies:

- Local guidance was developed around information-sharing and consent, and this was published in 2024
- Work has been ongoing with information governance leads and partners in the region to update and broaden a partnership information sharing agreement. Progress was impacted by the uncertainty surrounding the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Work is expected to complete in 2025 – 2026.

### Publish and submit a yearly report by September 2024 and publish revised multi-agency arrangements by December 2024:

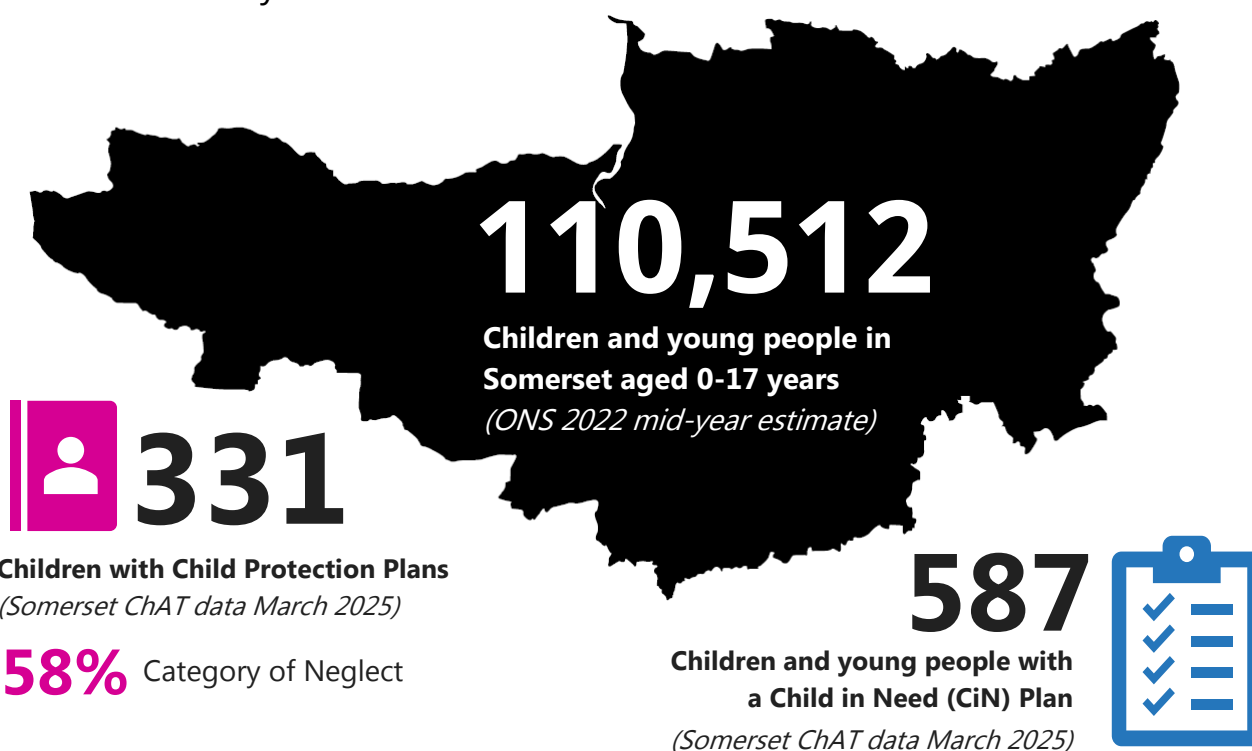
- This was completed in the timescales set.

### Ongoing areas to be addressed in 2025- 2026:

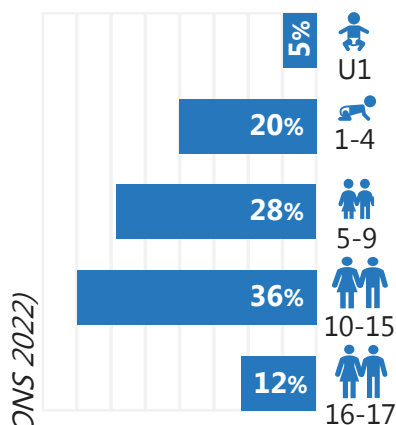
- Review partnership funding arrangements and move to equitable funding formula
- Identify where improvements may be needed to strengthen services to deliver the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families

## Local context

Somerset is a predominantly rural county with a population of approximately 576,852 (ONS 2022), of which 19.2% (110,512) are children and young people aged 0-17 years old (ONS 2022). Urban centres such as Taunton, Yeovil, and Bridgwater contrast with extensive rural areas, creating diverse service needs across the county.



Children and young people by age band by age band (ONS 2022)



616

Care Leavers (incl. UASC)  
(Somerset Council March 2024)



298

R12mth  
Number of Missing Children  
(ASC data submission March 2025)

19.2%

Children and young people (0-17 years) as a percentage of the total population  
(ONS 2022 mid-year estimate)



18.3%

Pupils classed as persistent absentees:  
Primary 11.2% | Secondary 23.8%  
(SC 2024/25)



5,725

Children and young people with Education and Health Care Plan  
(SEN2 data as at Jan 2025)



71,959

Children and young people attending state-funded schools  
(Jan 2025 school census)



1,611

Educated at Home pupils  
(Somerset Council Sept. 2023)



1,225

People with children were referred to Somerset Domestic Abuse Service  
(Somerset Council March 2025)

57%

MARAC cases in 24/25 involved children  
(Somerset Safe Lives data 2024/25)

159

Child Exploitation (CE) Cases  
(Somerset Council data as at March 2025)



264

Children open to the Youth Justice Team on any programme  
(Somerset Council 2024/25)



## Recent inspections

The following range of inspection activity has informed the partnership's activity and areas of focus during 2024 – 25.

A [Joint targeted area inspection \(JTAI\) of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Somerset](#) was carried out in May 2024. This resulted in an ungraded letter. The inspection identified some areas of strength in how the system responds when there is clear and immediate risk to children at risk of serious youth violence. There was acknowledgment of the expertise in different elements of the system and recognition of effectiveness within some local neighbourhoods who are proactively responding to local concerns and diverting children from violence. There were also a range of areas for improvement, these related to safeguarding oversight, information sharing and the provision of a training offer that supports staff to recognise and respond to serious youth violence. The high rate of exclusion from Somerset schools was also a feature that was recognised as contributing to vulnerability, especially where children have special educational needs and disabilities.

[An inspection of youth justice services in Somerset](#) resulted in an overall rating of 'Requires improvement' following an inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in March 2025.

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust - Care Quality Commission (CQC): Children and Young People service

- [Musgrove Park Hospital](#) (Good)- Date of assessment: 14 January to 11 February 2025
- [Yeovil District Hospital](#) (Not rated) - Date of assessment: 13 January to 11 February 2025.

[His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\)](#) 2023 – 2025 assessment of Avon and Somerset Police highlighted areas that are especially relevant for safeguarding children. The assessment concluded areas of strength in relation to use of police powers, public treatment and preventing crime. There was an identified need for improvement in relation to protecting vulnerable people, leadership and force management.

## Quality assurance activity

In light of learning from 2023-24, the SSCP undertook a review of our Quality Assurance Framework and scrutiny arrangements to ensure that identified



learning has impact across the system. The outcome of this review led to the establishment of the Quality Assurance Group. This group has received strong commitment from partners and has started to provide meaningful insights into how effectively the safeguarding system is operating locally.

Much of the capacity of the Quality Assurance Group has focused on the following activities in 2024-2025

#### [Insight Visit – Somerset Foundation Trust Emergency Departments:](#)

This assurance visit was conducted as part of the partnership's ongoing programme of insight visits to partner organisations. The visit aimed to assess safeguarding practices and strengthen collaborative working across agencies. In response to the JTAI inspection findings it was agreed this visit would have a particular focus on serious youth violence. Key findings highlighted effective triangulation of safeguarding messages, with Emergency Department staff demonstrating confidence in accessing relevant policies and engaging with Somerset Foundation Trust (SFT) safeguarding leads for support.

There was also strong awareness and understanding among staff regarding the indicators of Serious Youth Violence (SYV). Frontline practitioners expressed that they valued the opportunity to participate in the Insight Visit, describing the experience as both positive and inclusive. These reflections reinforce the importance of continued engagement and shared learning across the partnership to enhance safeguarding outcomes.

#### [Multi-agency Cin-ROTH audit:](#)

This audit was undertaken to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the Child in Need (CIN) Risks Outside the Home (ROTH) pathway, with a particular focus on ensuring that children supported through this process receive the same level of professional commitment as those with a Child Protection Plan. The audit identified strong engagement from both parents and children. This involvement was seen as a key strength, contributing positively to the safeguarding outcomes and reinforcing the value of inclusive practice.

The audit also highlighted a need for a more robust and shared understanding of the CIN ROTH pathway across all partner agencies, recognising that children within this pathway face significant risks and require consistent multi-agency engagement, information sharing, and intervention. Not all agencies were consistently invited to CIN ROTH meetings, which limited their ability to contribute effectively.

### Multi-agency Missing Notifications audit:

This audit was conducted to evaluate the consistency, effectiveness, and impact of collaborative working in supporting families where children have experienced missing episodes.

The audit identified several areas of strength, including a well-coordinated multi-agency response, with professionals working collaboratively to address the child's needs and ensure robust safety planning. The CIN-ROTH pathway was used effectively for one child that was selected, providing a structured framework that supported improved information sharing and joint decision-making. Areas for improvement included information-sharing between agencies and some delays in education receiving notifications. These findings informed targeted improvements to strengthen multi-agency safeguarding responses.

### Multi-agency MASH audit:

This audit was completed to provide assurance on the quality and effectiveness of the MASH. The audit confirmed that appropriate children are being consistently discussed by partners, with evidence supporting the proportionality of these discussions and the correct application of thresholds. Notably, in 100% of reviews, outcomes were unanimously agreed upon as proportionate by all reviewers. An area for improvement was around the consistent application and recording of parental consent.

### Section 11 - Practitioner Survey:

The Section 11 self-assessment audit was undertaken with neighbouring partnerships in the Avon & Somerset region (Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset) in the summer of 2024 to assess, monitor and evidence progress and achievements in relation to meeting safeguarding requirements. 2024-25 the tool took the form of a practitioner survey that was sent directly to front line practitioners to compare views of front-line professionals with the strategic organisation responses to Section 11 in 2023-24.

Key Themes that emerged from S11 self-assessments include:

| Themes                  | Key findings  |
|-------------------------|---|
| Safeguarding Leadership | While most practitioners are aware of safeguarding leads, communication methods vary, and some staff remain uninformed. |
| Policy Awareness        | High recognition of core policies like safeguarding and whistleblowing, but lower awareness of regional tools such as   |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
|                          | the Effective Support document and South West Child Protection Procedures.   |
| Training and Development | Strong uptake of SSCP training, with practitioners valuing relevant content and role clarity. Additional training needs were identified in areas such as exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour, and trauma-informed practice. |
| Supervision and Support  | 97% of practitioners reported access to safeguarding supervision, with 72% rating its quality highly.  |
| Information Sharing      | Confidence is generally high, but barriers persist, including inconsistent policies and IT systems.  |
| Listening to Children    | Practitioners demonstrated a strong commitment to capturing the child's voice, with direct observation and engagement being central to practice.   |
| Inclusion and Identity   | Responses highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity, anti-discriminatory practice, and tailored support.  |
| Regional Priorities      | Engagement with fathers including promotion of ICON messaging was identified as an area for continued focus.   |

Seven recommendations were proposed including improving internal communication, promoting key safeguarding tools (including the Family Strengths and Needs Toolkit), enhancing training oversight, and increasing awareness of ICON messaging across the system.

## Performance and data

Developments have been underway within the partnership to review how data performance indicators can be used most effectively. Partners have worked together to review what data measures are shared with one another and to review information sharing guidance to support this activity. The SSCP Business Unit have maintained the data dashboard, and the newly established Quality Assurance Group have started to utilise this data to provide insight into new safeguarding risks, issues and emerging threats in line with guidance provided by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

This year has seen the inclusion of key metrics from health partners and police that was not available previously. However, data reliability and delays in data reporting has impacted the ability to conduct analysis. There remains a need to develop capacity around data analysis within the partnership in order that there is a more developed understanding of progress with the agreed partnership priorities.

## Independent scrutiny

The partnership has continued to work with Dr Peel as Independent Scrutineer. This continuity of this arrangement has supported an in depth understanding of the local context and partnership arrangements. Dr Peel has attended some Executive meetings to act as a “critical friend” and offer reflections on progress made with priorities. In addition, Dr Peel has provided a summary report in relation to progress made against the JTAI theme of serious youth violence.

### January 2025- Scrutiny around partnership responses to serious youth violence:

Dr Mark Peel concluded that considerable progress has been made in regard to developing a strategic response to serious youth violence, however noted a disconnect with awareness with frontline practitioners understanding. Dr Peel also commented positively on the provision of learning opportunities available to support practitioners understanding of this issue. Challenge was put forward regarding the limited evidence of significant improvement around integrating the voice of the child into serious youth violence safeguarding provision and professional curiosity.

## Learning from serious incidents

This year, the partnership completed two Rapid Reviews, and one Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) has remained ongoing. The process of this CSPR review has been delayed due to criminal proceedings.

### Rapid Review themes

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Limitations in the recognition and response to intrafamilial child sexual abuse.  |
| 2 | Child death (cause unknown) where there were some limitations in information sharing alongside some effective pre-birth planning. |

### Child Safeguarding Practice Review

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Death of an infant child in a hospital setting due to non-accidental injury. Review is due for completion in autumn 2025. |
|---|---|

| Year      | Number of Rapid Reviews | LCSPR                                       |
|-----------|-------------------------|---|
| 2021-2022 | 6                       | 1 (Thematic review - non accidental injury) |
| 2022-2023 | 7                       | 0   |
| 2023-2024 | 3                       | 0   |
| 2024-2025 | 2                       | 1   |

The partnership has completed six non-statutory learning reviews. These reviews have been overseen by the Learning and Improvement Subgroup and have provided important learning around events that did not meet the criteria for a Rapid Review or Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

| Learning Review Themes |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1                      | Complexity and challenge of working with fabricated and induced illness.  |
| 2                      | Need for development around dynamic risk assessments.   |
| 3                      | Potential for improvement around effectiveness of multi -agency risk assessment for high intensity service users.                       |
| 4                      | Lack of co-ordinated early help provision and limited recognition of the impact of neglect.   |
| 5                      | Response to suspected sexual assault and missing episodes needing a more holistic assessment of risk and more trauma informed response. |
| 6                      | Missed opportunities for safeguarding during the pre-birth period through limited assessment of risk and need.                          |

Some of the common areas of learning that have emerged from reviews during this year has included the following:

- Clarity and timeliness of multi-agency communication
- Dynamic risk assessment
- Identification and effectiveness of response to concerns of child sexual abuse
- Understanding the impact of parental behaviour on vulnerable children

Action plans have been put in place in response to emerging learning from reviews, these are overseen by the relevant subgroups. Learning from reviews has also been disseminated in a range of ways, including training updates, podcasts, briefings, SSCP Learning Bulletin and single agency newsletters. Various updates have also been made to SSCP policy guidance and tools.

## Functioning of the partnership

### Partnership contributions

Partner agencies contribute to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a variety of means, including contributions to delivering training and learning activity, sharing audit findings, cascading learning from reviews, and providing 'in kind' resources such as meeting rooms.

Significant progress has been made to partnership attendance at key subgroup meetings during the year. The following agencies were represented in 100% of all executive/ subgroup meetings: ICB, Children’s Social Care, Public Health Nursing and Somerset Foundation Trust. Avon and Somerset Police and education were not represented in three meetings; however close communication has been maintained with relevant leads to ensure resolution to barriers that were impacting attendance.

### Financial breakdown

| Contributor                    | Value of Contribution |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Somerset Council               | £65,300               |
| Somerset ICB                   | £65,300               |
| Avon and Somerset Constabulary | £48,875               |
| <b>Total contributions:</b>    | <b>179,475</b>        |

The funding outlined above covers the funding for core SSCP Business Unit, the SSCP Training Team costs are wholly funded through income derived through learning and development activity delivered throughout the year. A deficit in funding of the core SSCP Business Unit has been covered through funds generated by the training team activity. There have been increased costs in 2024 – 2025 due to changes in staffing and an ongoing Child Safeguarding Practice Review.

The Executive continue to work on developing agreements for an equitable and sustainable financial plan for 2025 and beyond.

### Grant funding

Grant funding was awarded to the partnership for the implementation of changes within Working Together 2023 and to strengthen multi-agency working.

These funds were used to increase greater multi-agency partnership understanding and collaboration through engagement with training, specifically for the partnership agencies who were identified as having lower training attendance - specifically colleagues from the Police and health sectors.

## 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 772 notifications of allegations during 2024-25 (an increase from 742 notifications in 2023-24). A total of 476 notifications (61%) were assessed as not meeting the LADO criteria, representing a 2% rise from 2023-24. This trend highlights the continued need to support agencies in developing a clearer understanding of the managing allegations procedure and the appropriate application of the criteria.

The Somerset LADO Service have aligned with our regional partners and implemented LCS recording (electronic record keeping), improving oversight and data management for all notifications.

The priority areas identified for ongoing development within the LADO service include:

- Work across the region to determine support needed for Avon and Somerset Police colleagues.
- In collaboration with the SSCP, the LADO service plans to deliver four training sessions for education, health, and care home providers in Somerset regarding Allegation Management.

The LADO service will continue to focus on reviewing the quality of the service to evidence areas of strength and identify areas for service development.

The Allegations Management annual report is available [here](#).

## Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Somerset and Dorset have a joint Child Death Overview Panel to share learning. Between 01 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, there were a total of 27 child deaths (Child Death Notifications) amongst residents living within Somerset, and 28 CDOP reviews were completed. The number of Child Death Notifications has marginally decreased since 2023-24 (30).

Somerset Child Death data 2024-25:

- Child Death notifications for Somerset: **27**
- CDOP reviews completed: **28**
- Deaths under 1 year of age: **19**
- Deaths between 15-17 years of age: **5**

The Child Death Overview Panel annual report is available [here](#).



## Resolving Professional Differences (RPD)

Feedback provided throughout the year in different forums continues to indicate that most differences are resolved informally between agencies through conversations held between practitioners and their managers at Stage 1 and 2. The RPD protocol offers a clear framework for escalation and resolution of challenges. There are instances where the difference cannot be resolved at stage 1 or 2 and will therefore be referred into the SSCP Business Unit for review and further action, these are referred to as Stage 3 RPD submissions. There has been a marginal increase in numbers of Step 3 RPDs submitted to the Partnership this year.

| Year    | Number |
|---------|--------|
| 2019-20 | 23     |
| 2020-21 | 13     |
| 2021-22 | 6      |
| 2022-23 | 7      |
| 2023-24 | 21     |
| 2024-25 | 23     |

Throughout this year, the partnership has continued to strengthen practitioner understanding of the protocol through targeted communication and training initiatives. This effort has led to a marked increase in protocol usage across Health agencies, VCSE organisations, and the Police.

Despite improvements, the most frequently identified issue within RPDs remains a lack of communication or support regarding safeguarding arrangements for children.

In 2025–26, the partnership will undertake further development of the RPD Protocol, this will be guided by feedback from the annual RPD survey. Promotion of the Protocol will also remain a key priority throughout the year.

## Progress on strategic priorities

The following three priorities guided the activities of the partnership during 2024 – 2025:

**Priority 1- Safe start to life**

**Priority 2 - Safe in the community**

**Priority 3 - Positive mental health and emotional wellbeing**



## Priority 1- Safe start to life

This priority was chosen as Somerset completed 6 Rapid Reviews in 2021-22 and 4 Rapid Reviews in 2022-23 relating to non-accidental injuries to young children.

It is the aim of the partnership that practitioners provide robust support for families at the earliest possible stage, including fathers. In addition, it is

intended that the understanding of neglect amongst professionals across Somerset is enhanced.

### Areas of work progressed relating to this priority:

A pilot was carried out to provide Health Coach appointments to new fathers.

An information sharing Task and Finish group was held to inform updates to local guidance to improve practitioner clarity on consent and information sharing across agencies.

'Injuries to non-mobile babies and children policy – incl. guide to child protection medical assessments' collaboratively produced with support from Solihull Safeguarding Children Partnership and Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board. Local policy was published September 2024.

A Police Triage Post was piloted in the LSU / Front Door, to review safeguarding referrals. In May 2024 it was reported to the Learning and Improvement Subgroup that both qualitative and quantitative data demonstrates the positive impact that the triage role has had.

ICON program developed to support parents to manage infant crying.

Review of the pre-birth planning toolkit was carried out in August 2024 to update the pre-birth safeguarding plan template as a result of learning from reviews. Hospital risk assessment was added in November 2024 in response to a local learning review.

A task and finish group reviewed the pre-birth workbook to update to include Early Years and create a more agile and accessible resource.

Established an annual Somerset Nurturing All Infants Week in July 2024. SSCP Non-accidental Injuries Awareness Week' digital and social media campaign. Engagement target was exceeded by 29.3% with evidence of good multi-agency engagement with resources.



## Priority 2 – Safe in the community

This priority was chosen as local and national data indicated an increase in children deemed to be at risk of exploitation. The impact of such exploitation is known to have far reaching consequences on wellbeing and safety across a childhood and into adulthood.

It is the aim of the partnership to improve practitioner confidence in identifying and responding to risk of child exploitation and provide tools to support this work.

### Areas of work progressed relating to this priority:

Multi-agency child exploitation training was delivered.

Serious youth violence training was developed and delivered.

Child in Need Risks Outside the Home (CIN ROTH) pathway was developed and subject to quality assurance to ensure that robust support is provided to children where risks outside the home present a safeguarding risk.

Development of a children missing from home or care protocol.

Task and Finish Groups were established to review the Child Exploitation Screening tool.

Contribution towards an All Age Exploitation Needs Assessment undertaken by the Community Safety Partnership. Needs Assessment completed in May 2025 and findings presented to strategic partners. Strategic Exploitation Group to undertake the Somerset All Age Exploitation Strategy in 2025/26.

Safeguarding around children not in school or those with low attendance has been strengthened through a range of activity including the restructure of the virtual school.



## Priority 3 - Positive mental health and emotional wellbeing

This priority was originally selected due to local data highlighting higher than average self-harm and hospital admissions for substance misuse or mental health conditions

It was the aim of the partnership to ensure that children can access the right support at the right time, and access support earlier. It was intended that practitioners would be better supported to understand the services available to young people to enable them to signpost for identified support when needed.

The Executive reviewed this priority in January 2025 and felt that this priority would be responded to more effectively by activity overseen by other strategic partnerships such as the Children, Young People and Families Board. In addition, much of the action that relates to this priority also had connectivity with Priority 2 “Safe in the Community”. The decision was taken to ensure better connectivity with other partnerships / workstreams and not pursue this as a standalone priority into 2025.

## Additional key areas of work in 2024-25:

In addition to the key priorities set out above the partnership have also focused significant efforts around responding to themes that have emerged from local reviews or national reports. Some of the main areas of activity are outlined below:

| Theme   | Future plans  |
|---|---|
| Developing trauma informed approaches to working with children and families has been supported through the development of the Somerset Trauma - informed Network, delivery of trauma informed training and a series of webinars during the Forum Week in June 2024. | Further embedding of trauma informed practice across the partnership through the oversight of a trauma informed steering group.<br><br>Implementation of a trauma informed charter to secure buy in from leaders.   |
| Challenge and support have been offered to ensure that education representatives are represented during multi-agency safeguarding meetings during the school holidays schools.  | A review of this risk was undertaken during within the Quality and Performance Subgroup held in March 2025. The group agreed that updates provided around improvements in attendance at meetings and processes gave assurance that this risk has reduced.<br><br>Partners will continue to be mindful of this risk and raise within the Learning and Improvement Subgroup if this re-emerges as a risk. |
| Timeliness of adoption of Operation Encompass Notifications to ensure the sharing of domestic abuse incidents has remained a concern.   | Robotics to be implemented across the partnership to support the adoption of Operation Encompass.<br><br>Workplan being implemented and progress reviewed through Quality and Improvement Subgroup and impact being   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>monitored through the Safeguarding in Education Forum</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given to how notifications can be provided to Early Years settings.</p> |
| Local guidance and practitioner confidence in relation to identification and responding to child sexual abuse has emerged as a concern. | A Task and Finish Group has been stood up to oversee and implement a comprehensive action plan against this theme during 2025 – 2027.                             |

## Information sharing

In recognition of local and national activity that has identified how fears or uncertainty over information sharing can undermine safeguarding, the partnership has taken proactive steps to ensure clarity, consistency, and compliance across its multi-agency workforce.

Information sharing and consent guidance has been further developed and made available through the SSCP website. This guidance was produced by a multi-agency group in response to updates to the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Information Sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers, May 2024. It highlights the importance of information sharing to protect children, clarifies when consent is needed, and helps practitioners work confidently while encouraging family involvement in early support.

The launch of the new Information Sharing and Consent webpage aims to provide clear guidance around information sharing and consent to practitioners working with families. Further resources for practitioners include; FAQ's, Information Sharing PowerPoint for use in team briefings, 'SSCP Guide to Information Sharing' animation, and a special 'P-Pod' podcast episode.

## Learning and development

### Training and events

The Partnership learning and development offer includes face to face and online training, webinars, forum weeks, and e-learning.

To provide continuity of core statutory safeguarding training the SSCP took on the delivery of the Introduction to Child Protection training in 2024-25,

streamlining and progressively linking Learning Outcomes in the training offer from Basic Awareness (single agency) training, through to the Advanced Child Protection Update.

Total number of professionals attending core safeguarding training per year:

| Course                           | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Introduction to Child Protection | -       | -       | -       | 656     |
| Advanced Child Protection        | 307     | 592     | 615     | 738     |
| Advanced Child Protection Update | 411     | 634     | 745     | 663     |

Automated pre-requisite booking requirements have been established to ensure attendees are attending the correct courses. Along with a natural 2-year cycle (certification period) this is felt to account for the rise in attendees on the Advanced Child Protection training and a slight decline in Advanced Child Protection Update attendees.

Data shows continued positive engagement from education providers and Children's Social Care. In 2023-24 the Partnership set an action to increase the numbers of Police and Health professionals attending training. The 2024-25 data demonstrate a significant increase to the numbers of Police (14 to 71) and Health professionals (36 to 69) attending training. Throughout the reporting period there has also been an increase in contribution to the multi-agency training offer by all statutory safeguarding partner agencies.

In this year, alongside the core safeguarding courses, the SSCP provided fully funded courses on the following topics:

- Recognising and Responding to Neglect
- Brook Traffic Light Tool Training (relating to Reactive and Harmful Sexual Behaviours)
- Raising Awareness of Child Exploitation (delivered by Operation TOPAZ)
- Safeguarding Unborn Babies Through Multi-Agency Pre-Birth Planning
- Managing Low Level Concerns (LADO) training for school Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL)
- An Introduction to Motivational Interviewing
- Becoming Trauma Informed in Somerset

Additional eLearning was also developed / commissioned on the following topics:

- Gangs and youth violence
- Violence Reduction
- SYV understanding the mental health and vulnerability of young people
- Trauma Informed Awareness

The SSCP also held two forum weeks that involved a series of webinars led by experts on specific topics as follows:

- June 2024: Trauma informed Practice (615 attendees and 659 post event video views)
- December 2025: Online Safety (374 attendees and 248 poste event video views)

To provide a legacy from these events, webinar recordings and resources were included on the SSCP YouTube Channel and website.

We understand the impact of our training through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Each attendee is asked to evaluate themselves on a range of questions pre and post course, to measure learning gain. Two further evaluation requests are made to the attendee and attendee's manager at 3 and 6 months post course attendance to measure longer term impact of course attendance.

The learning gains for our core safeguarding courses are as follows:

| Course                              | Learning Gain (overall average) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Introduction to Child Protection    | +17.4%                          |
| 2 Day Advanced Child Protection     | + 14.6%                         |
| Update to Advanced Child Protection | + 11.2%                         |

All evaluation areas showed an increase in learning gain for all courses compared with the previous year, reflecting updates made to the training material and delivery.

The training offer also continues to receive consistent positive feedback from attendees to our training and webinars, including:

*"The course is well-led and very informative, making a tough topic accessible to everyone no matter their previous experience there was something everyone could take away. The learning environment made it easy to engage and absorb the crucial information. This course is fantastic!" - Introduction to Child Protection*



*"A very cleverly designed, practical and informative course for those working to Safeguard children and young people. Participants work as a multi-agency team on a number of case studies. We learned the perspective of and gained knowledge from different professionals which was incredibly valuable. The very knowledgeable trainer was approachable - and kept the mood at the right level - especially when tackling very challenging information."* - 2 Day Advanced Child Protection

*"X has cascaded updates to the safeguarding team and has already been more directly involved in effectively risk assessing concerns raised about children. They can now step up to case managing individual concerns and liaising with external agencies."* - Manager evaluation following staff member attending the 2 Day Advanced CP

## Communications

The partnership continues to develop a range of accessible communication channels to support learning activities and best practice. These are designed to suit different learning preferences and support engagement from a range of professionals, as well as sharing learning, and signpost to useful resources and training opportunities across the multi-agency workforce.

The methods used to disseminate learning include the SSCP Learning Bulletin, social media channels, partnership newsletters, Bitesize (7-min) Briefings, videos and podcasts. All of these have seen growth in engagement over the reporting period.

**SSCP website:** The website has seen 23,904 new users in 2024-25 with a total of 305,000 interactions (clicks) in that period and 57% returning users. Data aggregated from user feedback currently rates SSCP website user experience at 4.2 out of 5. Survey responses:

*"The SSCP website is a brilliant resource for information and tools in Somerset as a practitioner. The access to training and updates via the articles, newsletters and podcasts is great and so easy to share with colleagues. Great resource."*

*"Loads of good resources and things that we could use for staff training."*

**SSCP Learning Bulletin:** The SSCP monthly newsletter has seen a 1678.47% increase from 23/24 to 24/25, with a current total of 9,807 subscribers (06/25). Statistics tell us that we have consistent excellent subscriber engagement (May continues to have highest engagement).

**SSCP podcast:** 'The P-Pod' saw 9,509 downloads in 2024/25 (7,651- Buzzsprout and 1,858 -YouTube) from 23 episodes published. The most requested episodes were *Trauma Informed Practice Special – Dr Karen Treisman* (454), *Understanding the role of the LADO* (404), *Motivational Interviewing - part 3* (400), *Tackling Child Exploitation* (392) and *Info Sharing Update Special* (269). 74% of listeners use an app on their mobile phone (48% used Apple Podcasts) and 22% listen via their laptop.

**Social media channels:** SSCP's Facebook channel saw a 75.65% increase in reach and 112% increase in post interactions in 2024/25 (20,200 users) and 7.95% increase in new followers. In 2024/25 we closed our Twitter/X account to focus on Instagram.

**Impact of dissemination of learning from local and national reviews:** In the 2024-25 Section 11 we asked practitioners from organisations across the partnership to give examples of how learning from a local or national CSRP has impacted their practice:

*"The recent JTAI has enabled changes within our service and within our practice."*

*"Child Alex and Child Charlie LCSRPs have both influenced practice within my service. One example is an emphasis on engaging fathers in assessments and plans."*

*"Learning from LCSRP Fenestra - the need for professional curiosity, persistence and the trusting relationship that need to be developed with YP and parents/carers."*

*"In my role we disseminate any valuable learning with DSL's, usually originally obtained from SSCP for local updates and email updates."*

## Voice of the child

A range of partners have participation groups to inform their work and influence service provision, including: the Parent Carer Forum, Unstoppables, Somerset in Care Council, Somerset Leaving Care Council, Youth Forum, CAMHS, Young Parents group, Young Carers group, and Police Early Interventions Team.

Using the voice of lived experience is important in influencing and directing the work of the partnership. This year, we have engaged with the voices of children and young people in a range of ways, including:

[Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership Forum Week - Online Safety -](#)

**Somerset Youth Parliament & SSCP:** Somerset Member of Youth Parliament,

Emma Brown presented her campaign on social media to partnership colleagues at the December 2024 SSCP Forum week 'Online Safety'.

[Somerset Children and Young People's Plan 2024-2030](#) - **Youth Forum & partners:** The Somerset Children and Young People's Plan is a document co-produced by partners and children and young people across Somerset, to provide clear direction to enable us all to work better together on shared priorities in order to make the necessary changes to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families in Somerset.

[Help! My friend has asked me](#) - **Public Health & Youth Forum:** Children and young people across Somerset said they talk to their friends rather than trusted adults about the things that are worrying or concerning them. This Public Health funded project set out to find out what young people ask their friends for help with and what advice, support or information they need to be able to help their friends.

[What's so bad about fake news?](#) - **Youth Forum fed into SSCP Forum Week 'Online Safety':** Youth Forum met over Zoom to discuss the topic of fake news, misinformation and disinformation, as well as looking at generative AI, its use in media and the impact that it has on the lives of children and young people.

[Childhood to Adult Charter](#) - **The Unstoppables & ICS:** Developed from discussions of transitions into adulthood, it was decided to create a charter by the Integrated care System (ICS) Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) board and the Unstoppables were involved.

[Somerset Trauma Informed Network](#) - **Youth Parliament, Youth Forum, Somerset Leaving Care Council, Somerset in Care Council & SSCP:** A group of young people with lived experience developed a video for practitioners highlighting the importance of trauma informed practice.

'Voice of the child' is a regular item in the monthly SSCP Learning Bulletin to enable sharing of perspectives widely with a range of multi-agency frontline practitioners to influence practice and inform the work of the partnership.

The findings from this year's Section 11 Practitioner Survey reinforce the partnership's ongoing commitment to understanding the lived experience of children, highlighting that practitioners consistently demonstrate a strong dedication to capturing the child's voice, with direct observation and engagement remaining integral to their practice.



## VCFSE sector

### Future focus and priorities for 2025-26

The partnership acknowledges the significance of the forthcoming [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) and is committed to working constructively with partners to support its implementation. We recognise the potential of this legislation to enhance outcomes for children and young people across Somerset and will focus on contributing to its effective delivery.

In parallel, the partnership remains dedicated to embedding the principles and delivering the objectives of the [Families First Partnership programme \(FFPP\)](#). This initiative represents a vital opportunity to strengthen early intervention and support for families, and we look forward to sharing progress and outcomes in our next annual report.

Responding to themes identified in national reports remains a key area of work for the partnership. During this period, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published two reports: "[I wanted them all to notice - Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment](#)" in November 2024 and "[It's Silent': Race, racism and safeguarding children](#)" in March 2025. The partnership is actively working to address the recommendations from both reports and aim to provide an update on progress within the 2025-2026 annual review.

The SSCP subgroups and forums have made good progress against all the priorities during 2024-25, this work will continue into 2026. The partnership will also look to further embed the multi-agency arrangements, alongside our models of scrutiny and evaluation continuing the focus on continued improvement.

### Agreed local partnership priorities

In January 2025 the executive agreed that the following priorities would remain for 2025 – 2027:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Priority 1: Safe start to life</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establishing steering group to oversee workplan in relation to pre-birth / infants</li><li>• Evaluation of pre-birth processes</li><li>• Consideration of local responses to domestic abuse</li></ul> |
| <b>Priority 2: Safe in the community</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review child exploitation tools and pathways</li><li>• Progression of implementation of JTAI action plan</li></ul>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen assurance of oversight of vulnerable pupils</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

A range of work remains underway to oversee a workplan against each of these priorities, this work will move to being oversee by the creation of steering groups during 2025 - 26.

Inspection work in 2024/25 highlighted areas for improvement in partnership working, work is underway to improve governance arrangements and strengthen links between boards to reduce duplication. These drivers have influenced the Executive to establish new partnership priority from 2025:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Priority 3: Effective Multi-Agency Working</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance changes (incl. establishment of Lead Safeguarding Partner meetings) to improve effectiveness</li> <li>• Ongoing work to improve the voice of Education within the partnership</li> <li>• Clear identification of the primary concerns of the partnership</li> <li>• Development of quality assurance and for the Executive to have a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development</li> <li>• Good quality multi-agency training, exploring further opportunities for regional training offers and measuring the impact</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

In addition to the above priorities the partnership will ensure a responsive approach to acting on learning that emerges from quality assurance, inspection activities and local learning reviews.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Key areas for focused development:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of threshold guidance to support clarity around decision making in relation to level of need</li> <li>• Review of early help processes to support families to receive help to the earliest opportunity</li> <li>• Strengthening response to child sexual abuse</li> <li>• Understanding effectiveness of respond to domestic abuse</li> <li>• Supporting practitioners to undertake dynamic risk assessments</li> <li>• Multi-agency communication and information sharing</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## Learning and development priorities

Reflection on findings from 2024 – 2025 engagement with learning and development activities have resulted in the following being agreed for 2025-2026:

|   | Identified Need  | Action - 2025/26   |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Broaden the spectrum of learning opportunities for all agencies to include greater accessibility of material and more opportunity for delivery from multiagency partners – taking into account service pressures and capacity to attend/deliver. | Development and delivery of monthly 1hr 'Spotlight Sessions', delivered throughout the year, highlighting particular learning themes – primarily delivered by multiagency partners and supported by the SSCP Business Unit.  |
| 2 | Increase in regional training offers   | Continue to develop work underway with regional partnerships to seek and deliver training across the Avon & Somerset area in universally applicable subject areas.   |
| 3 | Increase accessibility to SSCP Training for VCFSE agencies to support changes in Working Together to Safeguard Children which highlights the requirement for Partnerships to better engage and support this sector.                              | Continued delivery of fully funded training.<br>Offering a 50% subsidised rate for all core safeguarding training.   |
| 4 | Increase and embedding of all statutory partner agencies attending SSCP multiagency training.  | Continued liaison with statutory partner agency representatives to embed positive steps made in this area in 2024-25 and enhance the breadth of roles from these agencies attending.<br>Regular reporting to Learning & Improvement Subgroup to highlight progress or needs in this area for individual agencies to action internally. |
| 5 | Increase access to training materials containing local information, including resources, policies and protocols and pathways of support for specifically targeted groups within the Education and VCFSE Sectors.                                 | Basic Awareness Cascade Packs to be made available free of charge and as a live, online resource to all attendees of the SSCP's Advanced Child Protection course through the development of a online membership platform embedded into the existing SSCP website.  |
| 6 | Continue increased quality assurance of the SSCP training offer, as well as supporting agencies/practitioners subscribed to the CPD service.   | CPD Accreditation gained in the next financial year for all existing SSCP Training Courses.  |

## Conclusion

Overall, 2024 – 2025 has seen some significant progress against the identified priority areas. The priorities for the year ahead reflect national challenges and will require long term sustained investment. Learning reviews have continued to highlight the vulnerability of infants and the need to ensure that the safeguarding system works effectively to protect children at the earliest opportunity.

Developments with scrutiny activity have supported partners to offer challenge and support to one another, this has been reflected in commitments made to progress action plans related to inspection findings. Developing how data is used to understand where improvements may be needed to strengthen services is an important areas of work for 2025- 2026. Improved use of data, clarity around messages from quality assurance and improved mechanisms for understanding the experience and voice of children and families will help the partnership in measuring impact of their work and target developments during the year ahead.

Despite pressures and challenges within agencies, all partners have improved their presence and contribution within key decision-making forums. This active participation of all partners ensures that multi-agency perspective drives improvement activity. The development of the Education Executive role and Safeguarding in Education Forum have been important steps forward to supported better inclusion of the voice of education at all levels of the partnership.

The significant changes expected during 2025 will require partners to adopt different ways of working together to safeguard children. The partnership will continue to explore opportunities to make efficiencies and evidence value for money from investments made into partnership activity. Partners are committed to close collaboration during this period of change. Closer connectivity with other partnerships will also support a lifespan approach. This will enable a constant focus on the wellbeing and safety of children whilst also considering how to reduce the impact of traumatic childhood experiences into early adulthood and beyond.