



Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

Working Together to Safeguard Children and Young People across Northamptonshire:

*“From our profession to yours - Team Work is key!
Thank you to all the nursing staff who have looked after the children, you are amazing”*

*“All professionals involved pulled together to ensure the children were safe.
Their Social Worker and her Team Manager were very responsive,
kept in contact with us, were easily reachable and gave prompt feedback”*

Annual Report April 2023 – March 2024



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

NHS

**Northamptonshire
Integrated Care Board**

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Independent Chairperson foreword

Welcome to the Northampton Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) Annual Report for 2023-24. This year the safeguarding partnership has continued to develop its core purpose to work together to improve multi-agency safeguarding services for children and families. We have focused on 3 main priorities of Domestic Abuse, Neglect and Criminal Exploitation and the report describes the progress that has been made and the plans for continuing work during the coming year.



Multi-agency training delivered through the NSCP has expanded and plays a significant part in developing the practice of the range of agencies working with children and families both from the statutory services e.g Council Children's Services, schools, early years and colleges, health agencies the Police and the voluntary and community sector. Continuing to offer this range of training has contributed to our decision to establish a new website with enhanced information on safeguarding for the workforce, children and families and local communities. The agreement of partners to work together to establish a multi-agency hub to better co-ordinate work to identify and protect children vulnerable to criminal exploitation is another good example of how agencies are improving how they address safeguarding challenges in local communities.

The increased participation of schools, early years and colleges in the activities of the NSCP has come through the new Safeguarding in Education sub-group. This has been a key priority for the NSCP and we will continue to support education colleagues involvement in partnership working.

The partnership seeks to learn from local reviews of practice and national reports, through the NSCP quality assurance process and scrutiny, the impact of this learning and review is closely monitored. We intend to increase our scrutiny of ensuring this learning is resulting in changes to practice. The views of families and children will continue to be central to this process.

At the end of 2023 the Government published the revised Working Together to Protect Children statutory guidance. The NSCP is required to review its governance arrangements and multi-agency procedural arrangements by the end of 2024 and work is underway to complete this.

Finally I would to thank, on behalf of the NSCP, partner agencies, front line practitioners across education settings, police, council and children's social care, the full range of health services, probation and the voluntary and community sectors for their commitment to improving outcomes for children and families in our local area.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jenny Coles." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue horizontal line.

Jenny Coles
Independent Chairperson

1. Introduction

Demographics

Northamptonshire is located to the south of the East Midlands region, and is a county of mixed urban and rural areas, with populations focused around its larger towns, Northampton and Kettering.

As of 1 April 2021, Northamptonshire became two Unitary Authorities, known as North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire.

The population of Northamptonshire is in the region of 748,000 (approximately 44% in North Northamptonshire, 56% West Northamptonshire). Approximately 25% are Children and Young People.

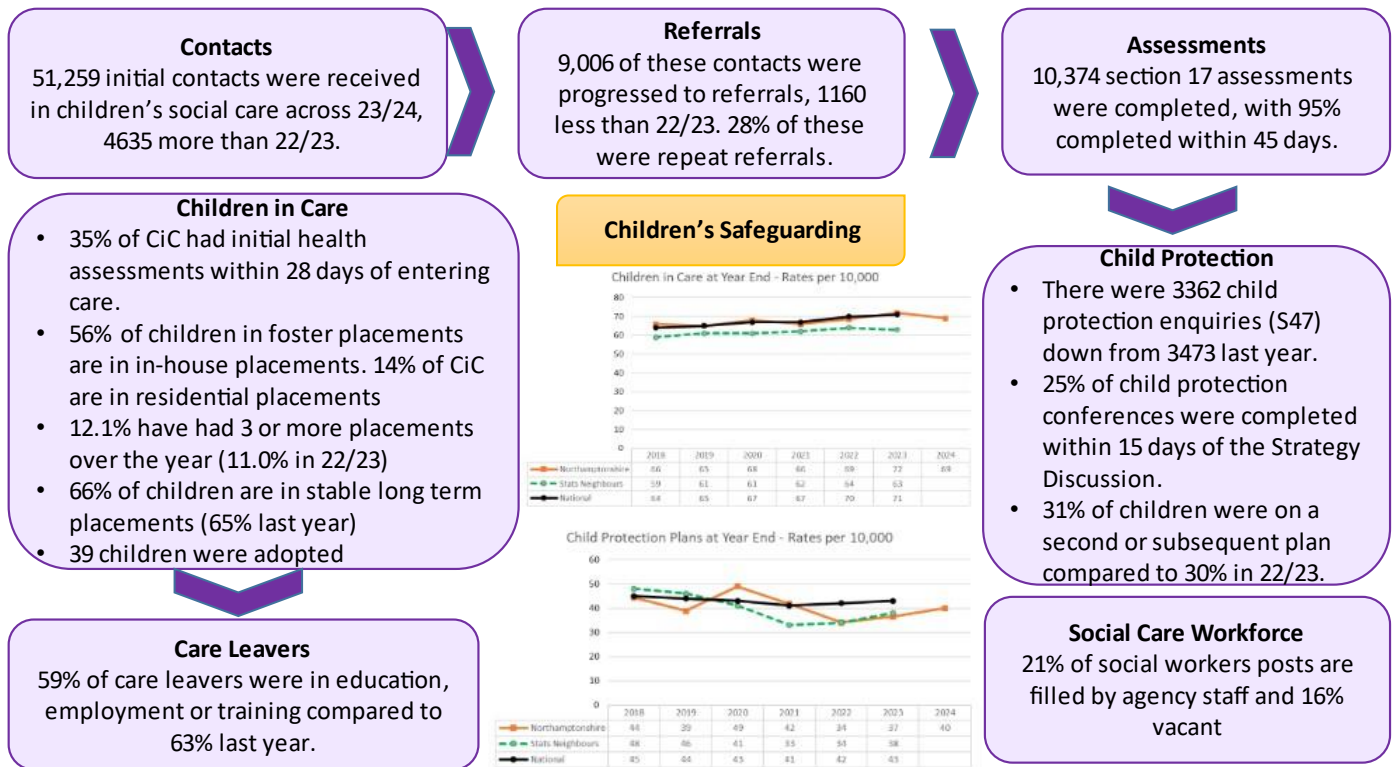
Since the previous Census in 2001 there had been an increase in non-white ethnic groups of 3.5%. It is also relevant to note a more rapid change in the number and proportion of those who describe themselves as 'White Other' becomes evident between 2001 and 2011. 'White Other' means not White British, Irish or Gypsy or Irish Traveller and therefore captures change within the predominantly 'White' European population.



2. Progress through 2023-2024

During the year, the partnership's response to safeguarding children has continued to be flexible and responsive to meet the demand, and support children and families effectively.

The below diagram sets out the numbers of contacts and referrals through Northamptonshire Children's Trust compared to the previous year:



As in previous years, data continues to show an increase in the number of initial contacts received by children’s social care through 2023-24 of 4,635 on the previous year 2022-23.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact on many families with a particular increase in the number of 16- and 17-year-olds coming into care with complex needs, whilst January 2024, saw a sharp increase to Children, Family and Support Services (CFSS) from social care due to families facing eviction.

Overall, the complexity of issues presented by families continues to increase, which then places further pressure on services. Historically, Northamptonshire has an undeveloped Early Help offer which presents additional complexity in terms of availability of the support; however, this report will evidence the significant focus and effort being done by agencies individually and collectively to improve and strengthen this area to improve early intervention and prevention.



3. Progress of the NSCP Business Plan priorities for 2023-24:

1.	Neglect: Taking positive action early enough to protect children and young people
2.	Exploitation: Ensure those children, young people and families who are most at risk are supported through robust multi-agency co-ordination, assessment support
3.	Domestic Abuse: Promote and implement a joined up multi-agency approach to protecting children and young people at risk of domestic abuse and violence

Priority 1. Neglect: Taking positive action early enough to protect children

Early Help; Providing the right support, at the right time, in the right place, by the right person, to and with children, young people and families so they can thrive.

We are committed to improving outcomes and preventing escalation of need by working collectively to deliver early intervention and prevention services.

Support works best when a whole-family approach is taken and when interventions are chosen on the strength of their evidence base and combined with direct, practical help, it will minimise the risks faced by many children, young people and their families before their problems become more significant and entrenched.

The Pan-Northamptonshire Early Help Partnership Board is committed to driving forward their Improvement strategy:

- Completion of Early Help System Guide Self-Assessment which provided an opportunity to evaluate the strengths of the current early help system and to identify areas for continuous developments. The early help system self-assessment is aligned to the Supporting Families Programme emphasising on the delivery of service transformation to ensure working practices are fully embedded across the whole early help system. Three priorities were identified as part of this work which aligned to the improvement plan of the partnership board:
 - **Leaders**, that are accountable for the early help system and the partnership infrastructure evidences a focus on early help, whole family and whole system working.
 - **Workforce**, where whole family working is the norm for all people-facing public services through a shared practice of the Early Help Assessment framework. And early help is seen as everyone's responsibility.
 - **Data**, developing and driving the use of data for the whole Early Help System to be able to measure impact and gap analysis.

There is evidence in recent inspection reports that early help is showing signs of improvement in some areas however, this remains a priority to ensure the engagement and consistent practice across all partner agencies. Northamptonshire Children's Trust Children and Family Support Service has an effective targeted early help offer working with families who present with multiple/more complex needs, providing a whole-family approach based on the principles of one early help assessment, one lead practitioner, one team around the family plan that recognises the diverse and culture needs of those that need support.

The Early Help Partnership Board actions for the year ahead will continue to drive forward improvements of the early help system to ensure that there is a clearer understanding of what the early help offer is and that it is well promoted for families to access help when they need it.

Pathways for help and support will be improved and understood, and early help services will be provided by a strong capable and skilled workforce from partners in a variety of contexts that take responsibility for the lead practitioner role, by utilising the Early Help Framework processes. There will be a focus on aligning other assessment processes in Health and Education to ensure that families are able to tell their story once.

Anonymous case study to demonstrate good practice

A referral was received for a young person who had been out of education for a period of 18 months due to concerns around mental health, self-harming, suicidal ideation. The relationship with the school had broken down and the young person had become increasingly isolated, did not have friends and was due to complete GCSE's at the end of the academic year.

A Strengthening Families Practitioner worked directly with the young person around confidence, self-esteem, self-injury, mental health as well as with the mother and young person around routines. They encouraged the young person to take their daily medication and secured them a placement at Northamptonshire Hospital and Outreach. Risk assessment completed with the school to ensure that the young person needs are met. College information was provided and 1:1 work completed around aspirations with the young person. The practitioner met with the young person in public places to improve confidence within the community and attended initial appointments at RE:Start* to help support their relationship development.

Mum has reflected that the support for this young person was critical at the time when they received it as their child would not have completed any exams and would feel depressed and stressed by their current situation. Mum has shared that she is thankful for the support and has shared it has been life changing for the family.

The young person has shared that they are now feeling happy, confident and supported. The young person shared that they finally feel that they have met people who want to spend time with them. They feel supported by school and are excited for their future.

This young person is now accessing full time education with Northamptonshire Hospital and Outreach and has completed all of their exams. They have a conditional offer for college to study Animal Welfare and is now accessing the community daily with many friends. The young person is having weekly meetings with Re:Start* and has not self-harmed for 5 months.

**RE:Start: Youth Works, on behalf of the REACH Partnership of Youth Counselling Services, commissioned to deliver support to young people transitioning from Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to Adult Mental Health Services.*

In addition, transformation across North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils to strengthen their early help offer is developing through their Family Hubs/Best Start in Life models, which will lead to a local Early Help Strategy with identified priorities.

From a Parent to their Children's Wellbeing Practitioner:

*Thank you so much for all of your work with ***! You have been incredibly helpful and have made such a difference to our family life! You are wonderful!*

From a parent to their CAMHs worker:

Thank you all so much for everything you have all done. You are all amazing and have made such a difference to mine and my daughter's life's. You gave us both hope and guidance when we needed it the most.

Family Hubs

Family hubs are built around the concept of bringing services together in a 'one stop shop' to make it easier for children aged 0-19 (up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and their families to get the support and help early when they need it to prevent needs escalating and requiring more targeted interventions.

North Northamptonshire Council was one of the 75 Local Authorities who received Department of Education funding to develop their Family Hub Model. Family Hubs are friendly and safe spaces for babies, children, young people and their parents/carers to go when they need help and support. They are a single point of contact for families with children 0-19 or up to 25 years old if they have special educational needs and disabilities.

The programme is a three-year project with a focus on the first 1001 days of life, the universal Start for Life offer includes the essential support that any new family might need: midwifery, health visiting, mental health support, infant feeding advice and specialist breastfeeding support, safeguarding and services relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Family Hubs will also deliver a range of joined-up services focussing particularly on parenting support, infant feeding support, early language support and perinatal mental health, these services form our Start for Life Offer. By connecting families with these services, we will help address their needs and enable them to build positive relationships with their children and the people delivering the services.

By March 2025 there will be four Family Hubs in North Northamptonshire.

- Wellingborough Family Hub – Opened June 2023
- Kettering Family Hub – Launching 6th September 2024
- Corby Family Hub – by March 2025
- East Northants Family Hub – by March 2025

As the funding is to transform existing services and systems, the partners are excited to be developing a Digital Front Door to North Northamptonshire Children's Services which encompasses the Family Information Service, The Local Offer, SEND Information, Advice and Support Service and the Family Hubs Start for Life Offer. Here families can access digital resources, videos and apps that have been funded by via the Family Hubs Programme grant funding or that are free to access and will in time offer the opportunity to book onto services available across the partnership.

West Northamptonshire Council have made a firm commitment to develop a network of three Family Hubs across West Northamptonshire:

- The location of the first Family Hub will be at the Forum, Towcester and work is well underway to develop the building with a proposed opening towards the end of 2024.
- The second site is likely to be Northampton and scoping possible building options is underway.
- The third Family Hub will be in the Daventry area.

The product is licenced by the NSPCC and therefore Trainers must receive a Train the Trainer course prior to delivery and practitioners are not allowed to use the GCP2 tool until they have received the training:

Evaluation and impact data from the training evidences:

- a 69% positive impact on practice
- a 92% increase in confidence in working with neglect
- 34% practitioners completing a GCP2 following the training

Examples of evidence of impact:

“A family had entirely disengaged from our involvement and we were very worried. The practitioner completed a professional reflection using the GCP2 alongside another assessment which together was able to demonstrate the threshold of our worries more objectively, this helped us better plan our next steps”

“We are currently working alongside the family to complete the GCP2. It has helped the family to gain a wider understanding of their strengths as well as areas they may need more support with. I enjoy sharing what is working well with the family as this has supported their engagement

“Parent has made positive small steps of change to improve relationships between her and her children. She is aware of other changes still required and the time frame in which to attempt to achieve – she is open to asking for help”

Achievements

- A half day Neglect / Early Help Workshop has been scheduled for April 2024 and up to the end of this reporting period, over 200 delegates had signed up to the morning that will focus on the impact of neglect, the use of GCP2 and the developments of the Early Help offer.
- Our work in addressing neglect is informed by our children and young people:
 - Young people’s voices have been gained during sessions/visits and/or from information sharing from partner agencies.
 - Observations of young people’s presentation during visits including non-verbal children (due to additional needs or age/developmental stage).
- Targeted Support Service has been referred to 76 families where neglect has been identified by the referrer as a presenting need.
- Development of new Early Help Assessment training programme – Delivery of Early Help Skills training monthly in North and West locality venues, started January 2024
- Additional resources such as tea break guides developed for practitioners, neglect training and Learning Summaries from local reviews, practice reviews and audits.
- Northamptonshire Police has refreshed both its Vulnerability Strategy and Prevention and Intervention Strategy and is delivering a series of proactive crime and intelligence analytical profiles, which will be focused on areas of high harm, as identified through force matters of priority. Preventing harm remains a cornerstone of the Vulnerability Strategy, ensuring that officers and staff across Northamptonshire Police listen to the voice of those most vulnerable.

Whilst impact on addressing Neglect is not easy to evidence here, it is better understood. Neglect is multi-faceted so many different types, different presenting features, it can and does occur in families of all different backgrounds, and one aspect certainly does not fit all.

Concerns around neglect have grown as a cost-of-living crisis has occurred, following significant issues from Covid and there is a greater understanding around destitution and poverty, more so as more families including working families fall in this category. Neglect can also be (often is) a feature in all other forms of abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse and emotional abuse).

From a Mother about her Social Worker:

She was my best Social Worker without any doubt. Whenever there was anything I was unsure of, I could rely on her to help me understand and also give me correct solutions to the situations. She would always keep me up to date with anything as soon as she knew, and I wouldn't have to chase her to find information out.

She took a lot of weight off my shoulders. She would place important phone calls for me when needed and ensured that anything I needed sorting was sorted. She also helped me when it came to moving homes twice by taking me and my son herself to the placements and ensuring the both of us was comfortable.

There still needs to be considerably more work done:

- Whilst over 300 professionals have been trained in GCP2 during this reporting period, a further 900 have been identified as required to attend the training. Courses are scheduled throughout 2024 and more trainers are now trained in delivering the training.
- Additional courses are being explored subject to trainers' capacity.
- Data around completed GCP2s is not yet available and only collatable through a manual review of post training evaluations which is not 100% accurate. Work is ongoing to identify how this can be electronically recorded and collated on individual agency systems.

Safe sleeping campaign

Safe Sleeping remains an ongoing campaign across Northamptonshire using assets produced by The Lullaby Trust.

A multi-agency working group meets on a regular basis to monitor and review feedback to ensure the materials and resources provided to families remain consistent with national and local messages.

A more intensive campaign took place around the Christmas period encouraging parents and carers to take an active role in ensuring babies get the safest sleep with assets warning parents and carers against:

- The effects of alcohol, medications and smoking on their capabilities and capacity.
- The effects of overheating, indoor/outdoor.
- Extra precautions regarding premature babies.



Front Door Review:

A peer-on-peer review was undertaken by colleagues from Hertfordshire, with a series of recommendations to transform the front door to triage and signpost enquiries and enable the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to focus on tier 4 referrals.

This is a significant piece of work, with a comprehensive Delivery Plan monitored throughout the reporting period and will be ongoing through 2024.

- A new process for RED contacts has been developed and Strategy discussions have been moved to Duty and Assessment Teams. A positive impact has been acknowledged by service and partners
- Observations held within the MASH have been looking at processes, timings and demand to create a more effective model. An interrogation of data by partners has evidenced a large amount of intel currently processed through MASH does not meet threshold.
- There is a focus on Early Help offers provided by North and West Northamptonshire Councils and an intention to integrate the councils Early Help offers into the MASH process.
- Data is being collected and fed in around school referrals and the links to Early Help Assessments across Northamptonshire to inform a preventative response. West Northamptonshire Council has set up a sub group of

its Place Board specifically around keeping families together, whilst North Northamptonshire Council has appointed a Single Point of Access Manager.

- Agreed priorities in the transformation plan for the partnership include ethnicity, voice of the child, robust application of consent and thresholds, multi-agency threshold training, quality referrals and quality assurance.

From a young person to their Social Worker:

I don't want to go through all these processes without you and talking about it all without you.

You're the only person who made me feel ready to talk and like I know I have the teachers and stuff but you helped me so much to be that strong person to talk and I just hate everything going on I hate the change you were different to everyone else.

Priority 2. Exploitation: Ensure those children, young people and families who are most at risk are supported through robust multi-agency co-ordination, assessment support

Building on the work undertaken and achieved through 2022-23, the county's response to Child Exploitation has continued to develop and strengthen.

Vulnerability and safeguarding demand has increased in most areas, however, with pockets of excellence, pioneering work across the Protecting Vulnerable Persons command in Northamptonshire Police continues to strengthen the forces approach to vulnerability. Specifically in respect of vulnerable children, as both victims and/or offenders, demand has increased.

The Observatory *and CIRV (Community Initiative to Reduce Crime) look to divert children from offending, however it is anticipated that with the increased use of social media for interactions, this will lead to more online demand; as children become more tech savvy, the ability to safeguard becomes a challenge for policing.

** The Observatory is a database of information from across partner agencies, relating to over 70,000 children, youths, and vulnerable adults. The Observatory provides the potential to diagnose the root causes behind matters of priority and identify individuals for intervention upstream, five to ten years before they become a significant issue.*

In relation to Child Exploitation and missing children, 50% of missing people related to children aged between 14-17 years. With the creation of a Child Exploitation Hub, comes a clear pathway for children at risk of child exploitation. This along with the Missing Person Investigation Unit will focus on repeat missing persons and processes in force. The force saw an increase in the total number of individuals reported missing (+4.7%); 67.2% of missing reports accounted for repeat missing persons.

As the Child Exploitation Hub develops, so too will Northamptonshire Police's approach to Child Criminal Exploitation. Further preventative work within this area will reduce demand in later years as more children at risk are diverted away from gangs and criminality. Going forward the force will have a much clearer understanding of the child exploitation picture in the County and a plan to tackle it in the same way that we manage Child Sexual Exploitation via the Reducing Incidents Sexual Exploitation teams.

It should be noted that addressing current intel gaps will be better understood through the Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation profile anticipated as part of the 2024 first quarter strategic planning cycle. Regionally, Northamptonshire are underrepresented with regards Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation offending when compared to national levels and there is a lack of organised crime group mapping in Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation. The prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation in gang culture is also poorly understood. With the introduction of new child exploitation Protecting Vulnerable Persons teams, new Early Intervention offender management and intervention hubs, Serious Violence & Combatting Drugs Partnership should improve data sharing, will likely result in increased demand.

Vulnerable Adolescents Panel

The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel is a panel that supports professionals who are working with young people who are either currently being, or are at risk of being, exploited.

The purpose of Vulnerable Adolescent Panel is to share information to aid in the understanding of risk to the young person and to develop effective actions plans. Vulnerable Adolescent Panel will accept referrals from any professional who is working with young people and will also hear cases for young people who are being accommodated in county but are being managed by other local authorities.

In the 12 months up to the end of March 2024, Vulnerable Adolescent Panel heard:

- 165 panels
- 85 individual young people
 - 79% of all cases were male
 - Mean average age was 15
 - Mode average age was 14
 - Youngest child was aged 11

Vulnerable Adolescent Panel is thriving due to the regular attendance of panel members.

- Police
- Northamptonshire Children's Trust (Safeguarding, Family support and Youth Offending Services)
- Education (North and West)
- Various Health teams (Northampton General Hospital, Kettering General Hospital, CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and RISE (Reducing Incidents Sexual Exploitation))
- Ngage
- Action for Children
- Free2Talk
- Other voluntary and community sector as applicable

In 2022, Vulnerable Adolescent Panel was very proud to receive two awards; the Centre for Child Protection's 2022 Collaboration Award and an NHS England Safeguarding Star, for its collaborative work in tackling child exploitation. More recently, VAP has been working hard to raise the awareness of using appropriate victim language surrounding young people who are being exploited and to reinforce the message that children cannot consent to their abuse.

A young person's thanks to their RISE (Reducing Incidents Sexual Exploitation) Worker:

Thank you so much for everything. You have made me feel comfortable in my own body and like myself again and this is so much more than I expected.

*I will really miss you. Really thank you for everything, you have made a big impact on my life.
100 seeds for 100 thanks*

Achievements:

- **Child Exploitation Hub** - A Child Exploitation hub has been developed with all statutory partners to co-locate agencies to address the needs of all criminally exploited children within the county, not just those at risk of or subject to Sexual Exploitation and is on target to be launched in June 2024.
- **Community of Practice** – A Child Exploitation Community of Practice has been developed to create a forum that allows multiagency practitioners from across Northamptonshire to build relationships and mutual understanding, promote best practice, share learning, and build expertise in Child Exploitation across the system. As part of its collaborative work, the Community of Practice is using the Tackling Child Exploitation Practice Principles Partnership reflective tool to begin considering the extent to which these are already present within our local response to child exploitation and extra familial harm with a review to strengthening responses and multiagency relationships. This is a non-hierarchical meeting for all professionals and continues to be a valuable resource.

- **Child Exploitation Toolkit** – Has been reviewed and refreshed.
- **Child Exploitation Assessment Tool** - A single Assessment Tool has been developed for all areas of Child Exploitation that can be used across the partnership.
- **Child Exploitation Training** – A training course for all practitioners across the partnership and including use of the new Child Exploitation Assessment Tool and an overarching set of courses around Child Exploitation.
- **Child Exploitation Problem Profile** - In July 2023, Proactive Crime and Intelligence completed a problem profile on child sexual abuse exploitation and child criminal exploitation, looking at a data period of between 01.04.2019-31.03.2023. This problem profile was produced by Northamptonshire Police in conjunction with partner agencies. The problem profile has been extremely helpful in identifying intelligence gaps and producing meaningful recommendations to improve our partnership response to child exploitation. Eleven recommendations have been made and these are being actioned and tracked through the Child Exploitation Sub Group.
- **Child Exploitation film** – The partnership commissioned the filming of ‘I’m Being Exploited’ film during the reporting period. This powerful short film, hoping to raise awareness to parents of a growing exploitation issue, was launched on 14 September 2023 with extensive promotion both internally and externally. By the end of the reporting period, the video had been viewed on the NSCP YouTube account over 120,000 and been shared and use granted with several other Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships. The film can be accessed clicking the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpqgEyRGggA>
- The Integrated Care Board designated nurse took part in a Facebook live event as part of an awareness raising event to promote new film signs that young people may be being exploited.
- Increased presence of Independent Child Trafficking Service within statutory meetings where exploitation is a risk.
- Increase in disruption work and supporting CAWN (Child Abduction Warning Notice) applications.
- RISE (Reducing Incidents of Sexual Exploitation) Team continues to have excellent rates of success (circa 80% risk reduction) and the new multi-agency exploitation hub is being built with this model in line to expand this operational success
- Information sharing at Vulnerable Adolescents Panel is enabling Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework completion to be using full multi-agency picture. There is feedback from staff saying it is useful (surveys can be supplied)
- Target Support Service has been referred to 181 families where exploitation was identified by the referrer as a presenting need.
- Targeted Support Service has worked with 450 families throughout the year, only 18 families where exploitation was still present at point of closure.

Capturing young people’s voices

- Young people's views have been sought on the design and set up of the Child Exploitation hub and throughout the process
- Young people from RISE contribute to local comms campaigns including videos telling their story
- Young people’s views have been incorporated in multi- agency safety plans
- Young people’s views around interests have been pursued/incorporated into their plans and daily lives

Priority 3. Domestic Abuse: Promote and implement a joined up multi-agency approach to protecting children and young people at risk of domestic abuse and violence

At the beginning of 2022, Northamptonshire published its new Domestic Abuse Strategy (in accordance with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Part 4 section 57(1)).

In 2023, work started towards refreshing our strategic approach to Serious Violence Duty. The strategy was therefore refreshed in January 2024. Accountability for this strategy sits with the West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Boards.

The partnership provides e-learning and commissions face-to-face webinars in Domestic Abuse and Reducing Parental Conflict, but it is recognised that stronger links need to be forged with West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Boards.

A successful bid was made by Northamptonshire Children's Trust to the Department of Work and Pensions' Reducing Parental Conflict Grant to develop packages for partners which included an element to work in partnership with police and local domestic abuse organisations to improve frontline officer awareness of the difference between parental conflict and domestic abuse. This has resulted in the development of training that enables front line officers to have greater awareness and understanding of parental conflict, the impact that it has and how to respond to it which will help to signpost to the correct services more effectively, reduce demand and supports a trauma informed approach.

Adverse Childhood Experiences *

Adverse Childhood Experiences have been included on Police Protection Notices** since March 2022 and enable the force to monitor the volume of Adverse Childhood Experiences experienced by children in the county for the first time. Across the county, one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences were identified on 37.2% of Police Protection Notices where the Adverse Childhood Experience question set was asked (accounting for 4 in 10 Police Protection Notices). In those instances, 9.9% identified the children having 10 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences.

These findings show similarities to the Adverse Childhood Experiences study conducted in May 2016 from the Centre of Public Health at Liverpool John Moore University on Adverse Childhood Experiences in Hertfordshire, Luton and Northamptonshire. Parental concerns dominate the main cause of Adverse Childhood Experiences within the dataset. Mental health concerns, as well as domestic abuse within the household also accounted for a high proportion. Child abuse measures including sexual, emotional and physical abuse were not as prevalent as household factors. 92.1% of the Police Protection Notices identifying Adverse Childhood Experiences were shared with partners, allowing for more effective partnership safeguarding.

Following an independent review, a new process has been adopted and consequently cleared the backlogs within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub. Effective safeguarding hubs will improve overtime balances following the arrival of a dedicated DCI in MASH to drive performance and build lasting relationships. High Police Protection Notices submission rates demonstrate the wider force's understanding of hidden harm, vulnerability and how to assist with future safeguarding. Enhanced information is passed on to Children's Social Care relating to children exposed to domestic abuse.

Looking ahead, irrespective of recent decreases in demand, it is expected that domestic abuse incidents are likely to remain higher in the community. Media campaigns and actions taken both locally and nationally to encourage reporting will lead to more demand being recorded.

The Domestic Abuse Bill still has some elements that need to be enacted or widely adopted. Domestic Abuse Public Order legislation will be rolled out in due time across forces and will see a fundamental shift in action taken in the coming years.

** Adverse Childhood Experience are highly stressful and potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood and/or adolescence.*

*** Police Protection Notices are an information sharing document that records safeguarding concerns about an adult or child.*

The county has seen significant growth in the past 10 years. Corby (+23.3%) saw one of the highest growths in population nationally. Whilst positive to see a reduction from Corby in the rate per 1000 population, there is the potential for an increased level of hidden demand to be seen from this area, more so than other sectors in the county.

Additionally, there will be an increase in children who will be exposed to domestic abuse, in turn being victims under the Domestic Abuse act. Forces must take the safeguarding of these vulnerable people into account as domestic abuse is known to be an Adverse Childhood Experience. By not resolving these issues, these children will have a higher probability of engaging with the Criminal Justice system.

Domestic Abuse Notification Scheme

Established in 2011, Operation Encompass is a national police scheme to ensure appropriate information sharing with schools so they may engage in early intervention to best support child victims of Domestic Abuse. The responsibility for Operation Encompass sits with the Northamptonshire Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse notification scheme has been in place since 2015 and is operated by the Police with the support of the West and North Northamptonshire Councils.

Following an incident of domestic abuse, where police have attended and children are present, the police officer will submit a Public Protection Notice (PPN) which will be screened by the police or MASH for further safeguarding concerns. The Local Authorities, North and West, receive a daily list of all these PPNs to share this information with schools.

The Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Notification scheme has been under review during 2023/24 due to a number of factors:

- Learning from national and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.
- The impact of a disaggregation of responsibilities between West and North Northamptonshire Councils.
- Feedback from schools about the quality of the information provided and some concern about the timeliness of notifications.
- The scope of the children included e.g. the exclusion of Post 16 and under Statutory School age children from the scheme.

This review has included schools, police and health colleagues and several recommendations have been identified to not only strengthen the effectiveness of this service, but also strengthen the process which is admin intensive.

Domestic Abuse Health Co-ordinator

The recruitment of the Domestic Abuse health co-ordinator, funded by the Home Office (One year project), commissioned by Standing Together and hosted by Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Services has taken place. The worker commenced in post in January 2024.

We know that domestic abuse has a massive impact on the health and wellbeing of victim survivors. We also know that there are vast opportunities across the healthcare system for professionals to identify domestic abuse, encourage disclosure and help individuals to get the right help and advice they need.

The Domestic Abuse Health coordinator post will work in the county to improve the identification of and response to domestic abuse across the healthcare system in Northamptonshire. It is intended that this project will bring domestic abuse expertise into health settings and focus on increasing staffing awareness, knowledge and confidence in responding to domestic abuse; as well as creating a system wide "How to Ask" domestic abuse initiative with the aim of embedding routine enquiry into targeted teams and settings.

In addition, the Integrated Care Board recognised that Domestic Abuse is a priority for Children and Young People and Adult safeguarding and commissioned 'safelives' to deliver level 4 training to all safeguarding leads across the health system which took place in January 2024. GP safeguarding leads have accessed training from an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor to improve skills and knowledge about recognition and response. Both acute hospitals have hospital Independent Domestic Violence Advisors who support hospital staff where domestic abuse is identified. As this is the priority of the partnership and Adult Board the Integrated Care Board have made it the focus of their annual assurance visits to main providers – resulting in improvement and action plans.

Youth Offending Service (YOS) Multi-Agency Panel

Northamptonshire Youth Justice Services were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Probation in July 2023 and received an overall rating of 'Good'.

The resettlement policy and provision were separately rated as 'Outstanding.' The Inspection reflected that the delivery of work with children was of a consistently high standard across statutory and out-of-court disposals. The

development of positive working relationships with the children, combined with the range of options for specialist referral available to case managers, meant that children positively engaged with the youth offending service and could access appropriate services to support them. Inspectors further noted the high quality of safeguarding and governance arrangements.

Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service will continue to work together with partners to further strengthen delivery of the Youth Justice Action Plan 2023-24 and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Probation Improvement Plan-2023-24.

4. Training

E-Learning Training

During 2023-24 across the partnership there was a total of 7691 E-Learning courses completed.

The table below details the national courses offered alongside some locally developed content. An additional functionality of the Booking system is the ability to develop local E-Learning courses. Six local courses have been developed in this way accounting for a further 723 completions which makes a total of 8414 course completions across the partnership.

The range of courses being completed by practitioners remains consistent with previous years with many practitioners using the system to gain initial knowledge of safeguarding children and then moving on to explore some of the other subject specific courses available within the catalogue. Education professionals continue to be the highest agency in terms of uptake of these courses.

In terms of quality of the provision:

- 91% of learners rated the course as Good or Excellent
- Delegates anticipated positive impact on practice of 89%.
- 98% identified that they would recommend the course to other people
- A three-month post course evaluation indicates that 93% of learners identified a positive impact on their practice and 63% confirmed that they had shared their learning with colleagues extending the reach of the learning further.

The table below details these figures and ratings of quality and impact from participants who have completed the E Learning programme.

Measure	2023 - 2024 End of Year
Evaluation Rate Virtual College E-Learning (Good /Excellent)	90.7%
Positive impact on practice rating after course	89.0%
Post training Evaluation 3-months number of completions	163
Return Rate 3 months evaluation	2%
Positive impact on practice post 3-month	93.3%
Course learning shared with colleagues post 3-month evaluation	63.5%

Face-to-Face/virtual Multi-Agency Training

The face-to-face offer (either virtual or in person) has increased in scope and reach and now comprises the delivery of 8 standard training courses to partners across Northants supplemented by a one-off programme of special events.

The standard courses being delivered are:

- Child Exploitation
- Graded Care Profile 2
- Early Help
- RPC awareness/RPC Toolkit
- Signs of Safety

- Disabled Children
- Thresholds
- Working Together

One off Special events include:

1. Neglect and Early Help Workshop
2. Safer internet Workshop

Face-to-face/virtual Training Offer Take Up

Measure	2023 - 2024 End of Year
Number courses in portfolio	8
Total attendance	852
Number individual courses delivered	45
Total Places offered	1071
Attendance Rate	80%
Number non-attendees	234

5. Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs)

The purpose of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally, but it has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

Three Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have been published in the reporting period and learning is taken forward through a Themed Composite Action Plan

Further information can be found under Appendix 3.

Learning Summaries are also produced where a Rapid Review is undertaken, but not progressed to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review – this supports and broadens professionals learning. A Rapid Review is undertaken when a case meets the criteria for notification to Ofsted and The Child Safeguarding Practice Review National Panel.

The aim of a rapid review is to enable safeguarding partners to:

- Gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established at the time
- Discuss whether there is any immediate action needed to ensure children’s safety and share any learning appropriately
- Consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Decide what steps should be taken, including whether or not to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

Further information regarding CSPRs can be found in the government guidance document:

[*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*](#)



6. Other safeguarding updates through 2023-2024

Suicide Prevention Package in schools

The Northamptonshire Suicide Prevention Steering Group has taken further steps in the last eighteen months to implement a variety of actions to reduce the risk of suicide in high-risk groups, ensuring the work continues as a priority at pace.

In September 2022, a refreshed Northamptonshire Suicide Prevention Strategy for 2022-2025 and action plan was launched by a variety of health, social care, and voluntary sector organisations with the aim to reduce suicide and self-harm in Northamptonshire, through a whole-county, all-age approach.

As part of the group's commitment, the first review and updated action plan have been completed and are available to view online with details of the progress made since launching the strategy. This review provides an update on the actions achieved in the last eighteen months since the launch for each of the seven key priorities and next steps.

These include:

- A deep-dive audit on local suicide data to highlight local need has been completed with findings informing tailored interventions in the action plan. Seven local high-risk groups have been identified, including: those with substance and/or alcohol misuse, self-harm and/or previous suicide attempts, adverse events in childhood, relationship breakdown, those with a physical illness or mental illness and debt/financial problems.
- A package of support for educational establishments in Northamptonshire has been developed in the event of a suspected death by suicide in a school community. The package provides a protocol and information on postvention/bereavement support, prevention support, guidance for parents/carers, teachers and school leads and more.
- Developed a media reporting framework to support safe reporting of suicide in the county.
- A real-time surveillance system is in place, with an escalation protocol and links with safeguarding boards.
- Mapping of risk locations in Northamptonshire to highlight locations that may require safety interventions and liaising with relevant asset owners to mitigate suicide risk.
- Delivery of the 'Take a Break' sofa campaign across Northamptonshire for World Suicide Prevention Day, with West Northamptonshire Council, North Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to raise awareness of Suicide Prevention and encourage residents to talk about how they are feeling.
- Development and delivery of the Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Training Framework to support those living and working in Northamptonshire to bring together training by a range of organisations to provide a coherent offer aimed at increasing understanding of, and aiding capacity to support mental health and wellbeing.

- Development of a pilot package to support call handlers, in the event of a customer in mental health crisis, to support resilience building and safe signposting.

Safeguarding Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities receive services from all teams across Northamptonshire Children's Trust. There is also a dedicated Children with Disabilities team within Children's Social Care who support children and young people with the most profound, severe and complex needs and disabilities. The majority of children are supported under a Child in Need plan; however social workers in the team also carry out all other statutory social work, tasks and interventions under Child Protection, Public Law Outline, Care Proceedings and Looked After Children's procedures thus ensuring that the children who required the specialised support of the team continue to receive them from professionals they know and trust. The team provide packages of care and support which offers short breaks to children and families. Children and young people benefit from a short break and this also provides parents and carers with a break, preventing parent carer burn out and supports children to live safely in their families. Children and young people with the most complex needs benefit from overnight residential short breaks.

West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council have both had a local area SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) inspection in the last quarter of this reporting period. The North report has been published with priority action areas identified and the West report is due for publication.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust have introduced and appointed to a new role 'Designated Social Care Officer' (DSCO), responsible for leading on SEND across the Trust.

Ensuring that the voice of the child and children's lived experiences is captured is central to the work in Northamptonshire Children's Trust and is particularly important when supporting children with disabilities and within safeguarding. A variety of communication tools and styles are used to ensure Children's voices are heard, especially if they do not communicate verbally. This was a positive area that was highlighted as part of the SEND inspections. The Disabled Children's team is almost entirely permanently staffed and children and families benefit from increased consistency and support.

Planning for transitions commences when children reach age 14 and referrals to Adult Social Care are made at 16 via a multi-agency panel, Transitions Outcome Group (TOG) which also plays a key role in identifying and addressing risks around transitions and transitional arrangements.

The Disabled Children's Team has strong relationships with colleagues in education, and health within the Integrated Care Board and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust including CAMHs (Child and Adolescent Mental Health services), Community Team for People with Learning Disability and partners with the local North and West Parent Carer forums and Northamptonshire Carers. The strength of this partnership approach increases the opportunities to safeguard and support children and young people with disabilities.

Northamptonshire carers are commissioned to complete parent carers needs assessments and they also they provide support to siblings of children with disabilities and young carers.

Safeguarding Children with Disabilities is a priority across all team and services within Northamptonshire Children's Trust and the learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews is shared and the learning is embedded. The Safeguarding Children with Disabilities training is promoted and the importance of practitioners attending is emphasised. Other training opportunities are available to Northamptonshire Children's Trust such as mandatory Oliver McGowan*.

**The Oliver McGowan Training on Learning disability and Autism is named after Oliver McGowan, whose death shone a light on the need for health and social care staff to have better training and is the government's preferred training for health and social care staff.*

We also have:

- Disability and Discrimination
- Working with Parents with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities
- PBS training
- Learning disability awareness e-learning

- Children with disability speaker day – Social Work Academy event which is open to the whole workforce.

There is also a guide on Northamptonshire Children’s Trust web pages which directs staff to training resources that are specifically linked to SEND. Staff can also access a variety of training available through Research in practice and Making Research Count.

Rapid reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews findings are shared and Northamptonshire Children’s Trust remains focussed on ensuring that the additional vulnerabilities of children with disabilities, especially in the context of safeguarding, is a key priority and area of focus.

Northamptonshire Children’s Trust delivers ‘Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews’ training for all staff which highlighted key learning themes from recent and current Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice reviews, some of this learning has specifically identified disability as a factor which was not fully considered or understood by practitioners especially when neglect was also a factor in the situation. To raise awareness training has been reviewed and developed to raise staff knowledge and understanding in this area and information has been shared with the whole workforce around key learning.



Escalation Pathway for Children and Young People with Complex Needs

There has been an increase in the numbers of young people admitted to acute hospital settings (including mental health hospitals) with complex needs, including very challenging and dysregulated behaviours or mental health issues. In response, an escalation pathway has been developed and operates in staged approach; operational, tactical and strategic and provide a system-wide, regular point of escalation for open and collaborative discussion to resolve issues and find solutions which improve outcomes for children and young people who are in an inappropriate setting .

Examples of the type of challenges we are facing:

- A significant number of children have been placed in Northants from out of area local authorities with limited or no communication on health or other needs in advance.
- Where out of area children are placed in Northamptonshire, there is often limited or no information received pertaining to their health care needs.
- There have been a number of examples where the child’s placement has given notice while the young person is in hospital which leads to extended stays on acute wards while an appropriate placement is found. This creates pressures within the system due to these highly complex needs being managed outside of suitable provision.
- There is a national and local challenge with finding appropriate placements particularly older children with complex needs including mental health or very dysregulated behaviours.
- Obtaining suitable housing or placement provision, or the high levels of community support required, has also become increasingly challenging and is preventing the discharge of medically fit children in some cases

Children and Families Fleeing Conflict

We continue to support children and families fleeing conflict from across the world, in Northamptonshire. The Home Office announced the dispersal of adult asylum seekers from contingency hotels throughout the country which led to the closure of the four contingency hotels in Northamptonshire. From April 2023 to November 2023, 24 adults from

contingency hotels were referred to Northamptonshire Children's Trust and six were assessed as children. Since December 2023 referrals from adult contingency hotels have ceased, however asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation across Northamptonshire are supported by Northamptonshire's refugee resettlement service who on occasions have contacted Northamptonshire Children's Trust where there was an age dispute with an asylum seeker. All these referrals so far have been asylum seekers previously seen when resident at one of the contingency hotels.

The numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children arriving in Northamptonshire have continued to rise due to the political changes around the world. From April 2023 to March 2024, we received 41 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children via the National transfer scheme. All were accommodated within the specified timescales to ensure they received appropriate services in a timely manner and subsequently alleviating the pressure from Kent local authority who are over their capacity due to the continued arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers across the border.

In addition, we received 45 referrals of asylum seekers who had entered the UK via lorry and arrived in Northamptonshire. 24 of those referred were accommodated as asylum seeking children and supported accordingly. We have a duty to protect and safeguard unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in our care by ensuring their welfare. Through these considerations, it is our duty to ensure we are placing similar aged individuals alongside one other. This is a matter of safeguarding and risk management, therefore age assessments are completed where there is a significant doubt regarding an individuals' claimed age. This is particularly important considering the high number of asylum seekers arriving via lorry and transferred via the National Transfer Scheme claiming to be children, as 27 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children transferred via the National Transfer Scheme were age disputed upon their arrival in the UK.

The majority of children fleeing war and conflict originate from Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran.

Education

There are numerous topics that cause concern in terms of safeguarding in schools and in particular, the challenges of keeping our children and young people safe on the internet, both in terms of the risks of exploitation and the huge risks posed to mental health and well-being when young people access harmful content online. The ever-increasing access to mobile technology poses day to day risks that simply did not exist years ago. Schools continue to work to adapt and meet this challenge and ensure that young people learn to navigate the use of the internet safely.

Schools continue to support an increasing number of pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in mainstream settings, as well as special schools. The growth both in numbers and complexity of need, has meant that teachers and school staff have adapted their practice and knowledge to be able to effectively support these pupils. This group is particularly vulnerable and is one that requires careful monitoring as pupils do not always have a conventional voice.

The recent Pandemic and lockdowns have had a lasting effect in schools and many more pupils in school present behaviour that can be challenging, and more very young children are less ready for school following limited social opportunities during this time.

The work on hearing and listening to children and young people's voices is essential in helping schools understand the needs and experiences of the pupils, and most importantly enabling school staff to engage well with partner agencies to keep them safe.

School leaders and staff have continued to strive for the very best practice in safeguarding and have been most appreciative of the support from the partnership's Safeguarding in Education Sub Group.



From a student to the Specialist School nurse:

Hi just wanted to say thank you so much for today, I felt like you really understood me more than anyone before and I felt heard, really meant a lot so thank you x

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education. An ongoing support and monitoring programme is offered to all pupils who are Electively Home Educated although there is no requirement for parents to take this up.

EHE is different to education provided by a local authority Otherwise Than At a School (i.e. EOTAS) - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school. Such children are not counted in these figures.

EHE is also different to children missing education (CME) who are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. CME includes children who are awaiting a school place and children in receipt of unsuitable education, including those children whom local authorities are supporting to place into suitable education.

Electively Home Educated Children	North	West	Commentary
May 23 Census Data (latest national comparator data per 10k)	1.5	1.4	West Northants latest Census data has a rate of EHE of 1.4 per pop. The North rate is 1.5 per pop and national average rate is 1.1 per pop.
Local Data as at Mar 24	1051 children	1090 children	North data as at Mar 2024 shows 1051 children open to Elective Home Education. This number has continued to increase over the last 3 years with 803 recorded in Mar 23. West Northants has seen an 119% increase in EHE children over the last 12 months and again the numbers continue to rise.

The top 3 reasons recorded for Parents choosing to electively home educate their children are:-

1. Mental Health
2. Philosophical or preferential reasons
3. Dissatisfaction with the school - general

Children and Young People Missing Education and Children and Young People Absent from School

The reasons for Children missing Education are varied and can include the following:

- families newly arrived in the area (from UK or abroad)
- failure to take up provision offered (at 5+, or, at usual transition stages)
- parental reluctance to utilise alternative provision following permanent exclusion
- failure of a parent to ensure that a child being home educated is in receipt of suitable provision
- a child's name being removed from a school roll in error.

It is the responsibility of both Local Authorities to ensure that: -

- All pupils who may be absent from school (including independent, academies and free schools) are located
- Support is given to external local authorities to locate missing children who may have moved into West Northamptonshire or North Northamptonshire
- Use is made of all available database systems to track children who are absent from school.
- Reasonable enquiries are made by schools, and then by Children Missing from Education teams within the local authority to locate children who are missing from school in a timely manner

Children Missing Education (CME)	North	West	Commentary
May 23 Census Data (latest national comparator data per 10k)	32.1 per 10k pop	72 per 10k pop	Based on the latest census data (May 23) West Northants had a rate of 72 per 10k population. This is much higher than the stat neighbour average of 32.1 per 10 k or the national average of 35.2 per 10k. There are known challenges with this data as not all authorities include the same cohorts therefore comparison is flawed. The DFE have published clarity in the guidance so data from the Spring 24 census should enable better comparisons
Local Data as at Mar 24	77 children	290 children	For North Northants -Children that have not turned up to school and where school are unable to trace the family (i.e. they are absent) remains consistent year-on-year: (these have usually left county or country without giving a destination). The number recorded as of 31 March 2024 is: 77 West Northants-data is 290 children. There are known challenges with this data as not all authorities include the same cohorts therefore comparison is flawed. The DFE have published clarity in the guidance so data from the Spring 24 census should enable better comparisons

Outcomes following intervention for these cases are as follows:

- Located in county and return to original school,
- Moved abroad,
- Moved to another local authority,
- EHE
- Attendance issues – referred back to school or to the attendance team,
- New student found and school allocated,
- Not located (this is a small number less than 1%)

Anonymous case study to demonstrate good practice

T was referred due to repeatedly going missing. Parents were worried that he was selling drugs and was part of a gang. T came home with nice things and gifts, and this left his parents feeling unsure about what was exactly going on. At the time of referral, they were unaware that he was drug dealing and using drugs himself.

When YPS became involved with T he was reluctant to engage with any worker. His parents told us that T really liked to feel important and loved the idea of notoriety. They said he enjoyed being a name in his local town. They also told us he enjoyed helping others, which we levered from to engage him.

One of the things we did to start helping, was to go to a local farm. T was welcomed and enjoyed the peace. He would repair fencing for the animal pens and generally help. We would spend time at the farm, and he would visibly relax and talk freely. T enjoyed putting his workers at ease and showing them how he took care of the animals. It was here we would talk about exploitation and substance misuse.

We did a lot of work on exploitation and substance misuse with both his parents and with T, and safety planned with them all. T found it difficult to view himself as a victim as this affected his self-esteem.

We secured T a place with his local gym. T built a good relationship with the trainer. We also contacted Frank Bruno foundation and T attended their 8-week program where he mentored disabled children for boxing classes. We spent a lot of time helping him to believe in himself and to shift his negative thoughts. We found a way of moving him onto topics that were more helpful for his emotional wellbeing and self-belief. Parents began doing the same and the conflict started to ease.

We decided with the family and team around them, that MST would join us to work with the family. We then turned our attention to education. We spoke about post 16 options and T said he was interested in joining the army. We looked at the requirements and one of the requirements was to be substance free. This motivated T and he stopped using cannabis overnight. T began going to the gym every day and looked so much healthier. Adults noticed, and people were praising him. This motivated T even more and a local landscaper invited T to volunteer with him, with a job offer post 16.

T loves getting up and out in the morning and often sends us pictures of work he is proud of such as decking and flower beds. He has gone to an army interview, and they have offered to put him through his English and Maths qualifications. He is invited to a 3-day residential taster weekend. He is really excited for this.

T reflects on his time in a gang and feels shame and embarrassment. He acknowledges his part as a victim and has changed his dress code and circle of friends as he no longer wants to associate himself with this world. T continued to work with us to unpick his traumatic experiences and now has a good relationship with his family, and they praise him all the time about how much he has turned his life around.

Children and Young People's Voices

- All strategic meetings now start with quotes and feedback from children and young people which is well received.
- Children and young people are engaged in consultation with all strategies developed.
- In response to feedback from the young people, the young-person friendly Inclusive Language Guidance has been developed by Northamptonshire Children's Trust; this is intended to support the use of the most respectful, inclusive, and welcoming language when speaking or writing to and about our colleagues, children, young people and families. The 2022 Equalities Survey has been used to consult with staff in the development of this language guidance and feedback has also been sought from local community groups which support inclusivity and diversity.
- New participation group developed for children subject of Child in Need and Child Protection. The feedback on social workers has been provided to the service to help them make improvements and some specific sessions

have been held on the topics that young people requested: Mental Health, Trauma, Sexual Health/Relationships, LGBTQ+, Life Skills, Job/Career (Five-year plan).

- Young people took part in a 'Mystery Shopper' exercise, where they described their experience of the first 15 steps when you entered One Angel Square and the William Knibb Centre. In response to their feedback Northamptonshire Children's Trust developed and delivered training for reception staff so they are better aware of children in care and how to communicate with them, display artwork from young people in offices, and have shared their feedback with Property Services to reflect in their strategies for the buildings.
- Northamptonshire Children's Trust organised two celebration morning and afternoon events to show our children and young people how much we value them. The day was filled with activities for the children and young people to take part in, including a climbing wall, bouncy castle and arts and crafts. Each young person was also given tokens they could spend on treats such as candy floss, ice cream and doughnuts. Children and young people were also presented with certificates, which they had been nominated for by their social workers and foster carers.

'This is the best day of my life'. (Child aged 11 at Children in Care awards)

- YOS continue their good work with their Young People's forum and following the success of last year's International Youth Day an online offer has been introduced this year. The Young People's Forum helped successfully design and implemented the "end of Order questionnaire" to be more child & young person friendly. This is being extended wider to ensure the young people's voice within the Exit from custody are collated.
- Children's voices are captured well, and suite of direct work tools have been developed to achieve this by Northamptonshire Children's Trust Disabled Children's team. Good partnership working and use of multi-disciplinary team meetings to consider needs of our disabled children.
- Voice of the young people who are care experienced is heard well - Leaving Care Council, Corporate Parenting Board and Apprentices within Leaving Care Service.
- Northamptonshire Children's Trust practitioners gather young people's feedback that captures what has worked well for them and what if anything they would have changed using Signs of Safety as Practice model.

A young person's thanks to their Personal Advisor:

I just wanna say Thank You so much for being there for me during my difficult times, your support meant so much to me, your encouragement have been a source of strength.

I can't thank you enough for everything that you have supported me with, I'm very proud to have you as my PA in the last 2 years and for everything you've done

Work of the Designated Officers* (DO's) within Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Designated Officers have continued to provide a responsive service for the whole of the children's workforce in Northamptonshire, with 2 full-time equivalent experienced Qualified Social Worker Designated Officers in post supported, when necessary, by the Child Protection Chair service. Designated Officers are available for consultation by telephone and through submission of written consultation. The Designated Officers service runs a duty system to ensure availability is optimised and work in a North / West split when this is possible, whilst allowing for cross-cover (leave etc.)

Due to increase in referrals, additional support has been in place since January 2024. This is one temporary full-time additional Designated Officer. This arrangement is in place until mid-June 2024. This appointment has made a significant and positive impact, allowing caseloads to reduce and consultations and queries to be managed in a timely manner.

Through the reporting period, Designated Officers received 722 contacts - this is a 34% increase (n184) from 2022-23 (n538).

- 40% (n295) of contacts were managed as consultations, compared with 27% (n149) in 22/23 and

- 60% (n427) were managed as referrals, compared with 72% (n389) in 22/23; these figures evidence significant and sustained increasing demand for Designated Officer involvement.

From January 2023, all Designated Officer referrals are processed through CareFirst (computer recording platform used by Children’s Social Care). This has led to a clearer pathway for managing and tracking cases.

Designated Officer business support has been recruited to and this enables improved focus on Designated Officer statutory case management. Although Designated Officer processes remain the same for external partners, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub no longer process Designated Officer referrals, as these are now processed by Designated Officer business support.

Cases continue to be resolved as quickly as possible; however Designated Officer has experienced specific delays in cases where criminal threshold is met. This is caused by the fact that some Police investigations take a considerable length of time to conclude and there is sometimes difficulty with Police attendance at Joint Evaluation Meetings (shift patterns etc.) which leads to a need to re-schedule meetings. Delays are most prevalent when digital forensics are required.

Increased referral and consultation volumes have put considerable strain on the Designated Officer service, concurrent with the introduction of a new IT system and changes to business support. This led to significant rises in caseloads, with both officers managing over 90-cases, not dropping below 70 (recommended maximum).

There is anecdotal evidence of Designated Officer receiving reports of concerns around staff mental health, and how this might impact on an individual’s working practices; this would not ordinarily be considered to meet Designated Officer threshold, but there is an increase in request for advice and support in managing this.

Significant areas of work for Designated Officers in 2023-24 have included:

Schools and children’s residential homes continue to make most referrals to Designated Officer. There has been a decrease in referrals from unregistered children’s homes, in line with changes of guidance for these organisations to proceed to regulation.

Training – training packages have been updated and delivered to a wide variety of services. This is available online and in-person. In organisations where this training is delivered, the Designated Officers have seen improved working relationships and greater understanding of Designated Officer processes, leading to more appropriate management of low-level concerns and these organisations’ referrals being more appropriate.

Training has been held for school leaders and Chair of Governors across both West and North Northants. This was attended by more than 140 people. More events like this are planned for the coming year, along with developing an NSCP “Tea-break guide” to support learning for agencies.



Anonymous case study to demonstrate good practice

Client A is a female, professional who worked in education.

Referral made by Police who were investigating client A for a crime of grooming children with the intent to abuse them.

Client A was reported to have set up a fake Facebook profile under a false name and had targeted a number of male pupils at school, making and sending inappropriate messages and intending to meet them.

At the time of her arrest, a partner of client A (extra-marital affair) committed suicide by means of a car accident. He was deemed to be a key person in relation to client A's alleged crime. Client A was married and lived with her husband and their two young children.

The referral met the threshold for investigation oversight by the Designated Officer under guidance set out in Working Together and further associated investigations by partner agencies. The investigation process was facilitated by a number of multi-agency meetings.

Supervision was used to discuss highlighted issues and associated values. Supervision was consistent with assuring public safety and promoting safeguarding through the development of a clear safeguarding plan for the children identified (including Client A's).

This case took 12-months to conclude, with immediate learning points identified throughout the process.

Embedding Learning – evidence of impact

We recognise this is an area that still requires considerable strengthening and we have put plans in place to start to look at how this can be achieved over the next twelve months.

Through this financial year:

- At the end of this reporting period, we asked agencies to reflect on recommendations from the Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews published in this financial year and provide an honest appraisal of how they had or had not embedded learning, providing evidence of impact and any barriers they had encountered. A summary will be collated through 2024-25, in conjunction with the development of the below bullet point.
- We have developed a spreadsheet collating recommendations from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews and Multi-Agency Practice Reviews against themes to allow us to start reflecting on the journey of the theme, evidence of impact and any continued gaps that need addressing. A summary will be collated through 2024-25, in conjunction with the outcome of the above bullet point.
- We want to develop actions and measures of impact at the point of identifying learning through 2024-25.
- Specific projects by our Independent Scrutineer have provided direct feedback from families accessing services.
- We have built-in three-month post evaluations against all our training to help us understand how our training supports professionals and ask for specific examples of how they have applied additional knowledge and skills into their roles.

Please see our plans for 2024-25 around embedding learning – evidence of impact.

Reflections by our Independent Scrutineer

Working Together to Safeguard Children, the statutory regulation and guidance for safeguarding children arrangements in England requires that, each year, every Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report is independently scrutinized. Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's (NSCP) 2023/24 Annual Report provides a comprehensive account of the work of the Partnership over the year. Real progress has been made against the three priorities that were set at the beginning of the year (see page 5). The priorities seek to improve the help offered to children who are neglected, those who are subject to exploitation outside of the family home and for children who experience domestic abuse. For all three of these groups of children and young people, helping early before matters escalate is critical because once a child experiences significant harm, then their life chances diminish. I

notice that the NSCP Annual Report show some evidence that early help services in the two counties are improving from a relatively low base. Inspection reports show this improvement, but they also show that further improvements are necessary (see pages 6-8).

On improvements to services for children who are or have been neglected, the Annual Report provides helpful case studies of how practitioners have made a difference to families' lives. Training has improved particularly on the use of the Graded Care Profile 2. The NSCP accepts that currently it is unable to provide data which demonstrates the efforts described on pages 8-11 to tackle neglect are making a difference to children's lives. It is notoriously difficult to generate data which shows that an intervention has had a positive effect and the NSCP is no different to other safeguarding children partnerships in that respect. There is use in considering some population measures as a means of exploring whether neglect overall is reducing. Measures like reductions in dental decay, school exclusions and suspensions alongside indicators of infants achieving their developmental milestones and more generally of children achieving at school can be useful. Ultimately, though, the NSCP is encouraged to continue its efforts to show that targeted interventions are making a difference and reducing the levels of neglect in the two counties.

Work to safeguard children and young people who are exploited outside the family home has certainly improved during the year. The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel has been recognised for its work by receipt of two national awards. Furthermore, the Northamptonshire Police in collaboration with other agencies has created a problem profile of young people who are at risk of exploitation. The profile will provide a base measure so that the NSCP can determine the impact it is having, and it provides vital information on children and young people for targeted interventions. Such targeted interventions are making a difference. This is shown on page 13, where it shows that of 450 families targeted for intervention, exploitation was present in only 18 families at the end of the service offer. This is real evidence of progress to keep children and young people in Northamptonshire safe from exploitation. The NSCP is encouraged to utilise the Observatory database held by the Police as it has the potential to transform how services are organized and delivered.

Domestic abuse blight's children's life chances and work to prevent abuse occurring and to protect children when it does happen is vital. The report shows that the police are identifying children who have experienced adverse events which are likely to harm their development (see page 14). Some of these children will have been subject to domestic abuse. Presently, there is little evidence in the Annual Report which demonstrates the impact of safeguarding services for children who have experienced domestic abuse and the NSCP is again encouraged to make further improvement in this area of its activity.

The NSCP provides a significant number of training programmes and evidence in the Annual Report show how effective this training is (see page 16-17). Learning from carrying out Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is referred to in the Annual Report but only briefly. I know that considerable work is continuing to appreciate the broader messages from these reviews.

Finally, the NSCP has improved how it listens to children and young people and the volume of this activity is now really significant (see pages 24-25). The NSCP is encouraged to demonstrate how it responds to what children are saying.

7. Plans for 2024-2025

Hearing the voices of children and young people

- Whilst significant steps have been taken for the partnership to hear the voices of children and young people, this will be developed further so we can clearly evidence where and how children and young people influence and support our work and priorities.

Raise the profile of the partnership

- Create a video on the purpose, priorities and work of the partnership.
- Create a poster, linked to the new website and partnership video, that will be printed and disseminated across the county, including all communities, to strengthen knowledge of the partnership to the public and voluntary sector organisations.

Design and launch of new NSCP Website

- A new NSCP website will be launched by the end of 2024-25 with a focus on being interactive and very easy to navigate.
- The website will be interesting and clearly defined for professionals and members of the public.
- It will include a comprehensive Learning Management System to manage our suite of training – both face-to-face and online. With the facility and opportunity to develop our own on line courses, we have set ourselves an ambitious target of twelve months, to be offering a suite of online course, totally created by local knowledge and expertise.

Engaging the Voluntary Sector

- With our new SPACE Sub Group in place, we are delighted the group includes voluntary sector organisations.
- The SPACE Sub Group will now focus on engaging the voluntary sector with local events to hear their voices and for the partnership profile to be raised and training promoted.

Create new governance arrangements for the partnership aligning to the requirements of Working Together to safeguard Children 2023

- A Working group representing the three statutory agencies will be created to develop new governance arrangements, with a focus on all agencies considered partners and developing a memorandum of understanding between all agencies.

Embedding Learning – evidence of impact

- A working group has been created to review our Themed Composite Action Plan, comprising recommendations from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews and Multi-Agency Practice Reviews. This group will review each theme to determine its journey of improvement and whether that journey has been adequate or whether more needs to be done, summarised in a comprehensive precis, that will inform future reviews.
- Each theme will have a list of measures that we are seeking and can be recorded as evidence of impact.
- Learning Summaries will evolve into bespoke online training courses with specific quizzes to identify how individuals have used the learning.
- S11 Partner Audits will be linked with agency annual reports on embedding learning.
- We will convene a Safeguarding Learning week with a series of recordings around themes identified from local reviews towards the end of 2024-25.

Strengthen Child Safeguarding Practice Review processes

- Create expectations sheets for panel members and Independent Reviewers.
- Accountable process for delays in reviews being completed.

Child Exploitation Hub

- Significant work has been undertaken to develop the Child Exploitation Hub which will be formally launched in June 2024.
- This will strengthen multi-agency training for Child Exploitation with a good understanding of the contextual aspects, strategic and operational framework.
- Further development of mapping children with repeated missing episodes, for themes, places and people of concern and share these findings across the partnership to improve the joint approaches.
- Strengthen Data intelligence and strengthen sharing information between police, education, social care and health in relation to children who go missing and are exploited to support preventative approaches and interventions.

Revise Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub/Front Door arrangements

- This is continuing from the reporting period with an aim to triage calls to free up the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to focus on Tier 4 cases, i.e. those most critical cases.

Partnership Conference / Learning week

- The partnership intends holding a Learning week March 2025 focusing on how learning from local reviews has been embedded and showcasing improvements and evidence of impact.

- The week will culminate in two half-day face-to-face conferences, including colleagues across the partnership and voluntary sector colleagues across the county.

Appendix 1 – Governance and Accountability

Statutory and Legal Context

In July 2018, [Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018](#) was published. It replaced previous versions that set out the requirements for local authorities to establish Local Safeguarding Children Boards and is in accordance with Section 13 and the objectives set out in Section 14 of the Children Act.

Working Together 2018 was published in response to The Wood Report and sets out the requirements for a system that focuses on the needs and interests of children and families and not the other way around. In such a system, practitioners will be clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together in partnership with others.

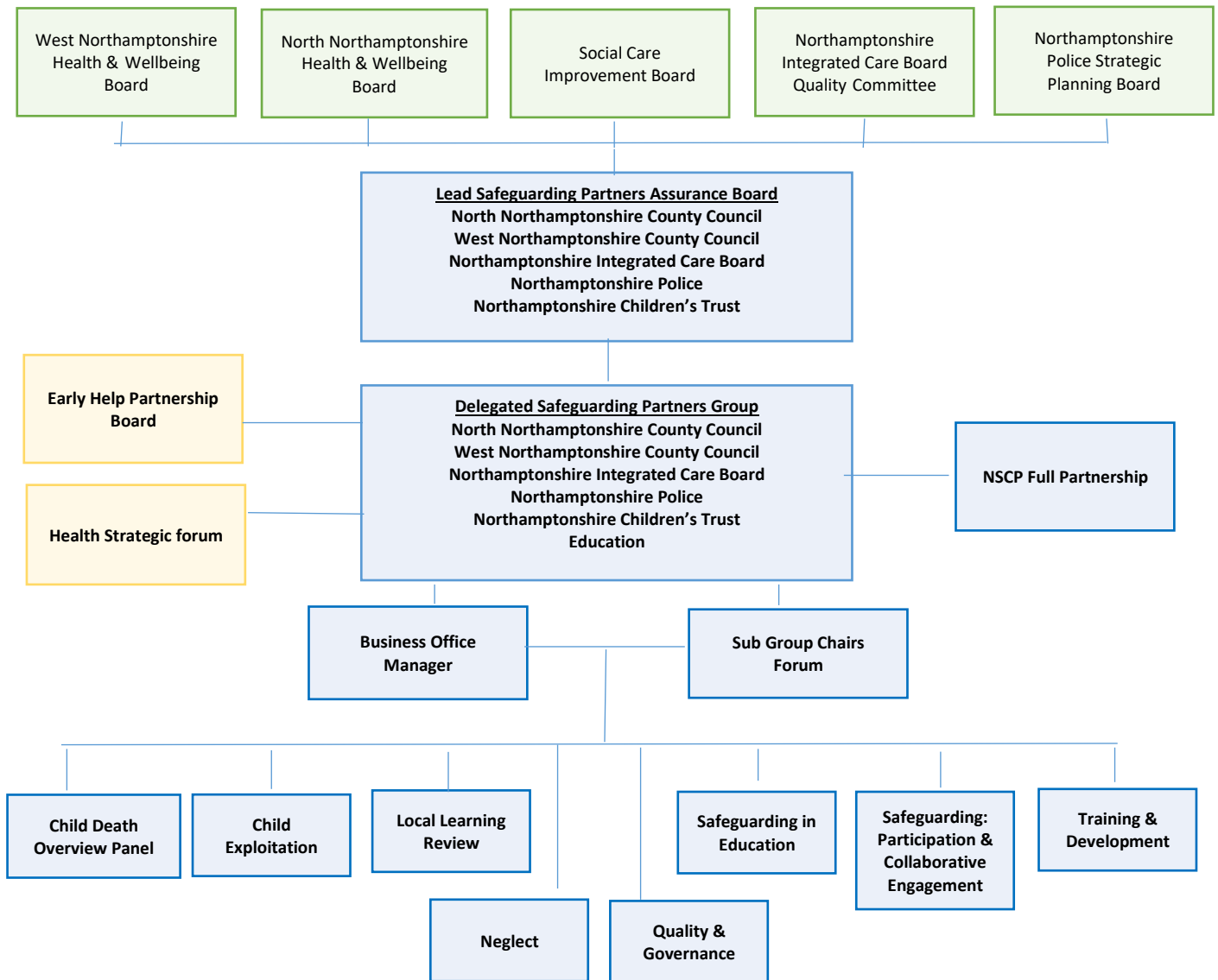
Local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The NSCP is not an operational body and therefore has no direct responsibility for the provision of services to children and their families. The NSCP's responsibilities are to hold partner agencies to account for their safeguarding arrangements and ensure the quality of those arrangements through policy, guidance, setting standards and monitoring.

The delivery of services to children and their families is the responsibility of the partners – the commissioning and provider agencies, not the NSCP itself.

[The Children Act 2004](#), as amended by the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), strengthens this already important relationship by placing new duties on key agencies in a local area. Specifically, the police, clinical commissioning groups and the local authority are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

Appendix 2 – NSCP Structure



Lead Safeguarding Partner Assurance Board *(name revised in line with Working Together 2023)*

The Strategic Assurance Board has been created and meets quarterly to have oversight of the partnership's activity.

The group consists of senior Lead Safeguarding Partners:

- Chief Executive North Northamptonshire Council
- Chief Executive West Northamptonshire Council
- Chief Executive Integrated Care Board
- Chief Constable
- Elected members
- Delegated Safeguarding Leads as set out in the below Delegated Safeguarding Partners Group

Full Partnership

The Full Partnership is scheduled to meet twice yearly.

Both meetings through 2023-24 were productive and thought provoking, reflecting on the partnership's journey so far and setting out plans to move forward.

These meetings have started by celebrating a success story regarding children / young people and have been appreciated and acknowledged to hear such heartening achievements.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners Group (*name revised in line with Working Together 2023*)

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners Group has continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis through 2023-24.

During the reporting period, Delegated Safeguarding Leads representation has remained relatively consistent:

- Interim Director of Children's Services for North Northamptonshire Council
- Interim Director of Children's Services for West Northamptonshire Council.
- Assistant Chief Constable for Northamptonshire Police.
- Chief Nurse for Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board
- Chief Executive, Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- Director of Safeguarding, Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Other members of the group are:

- Assistant Chief Constable, Northamptonshire Police
- Head of Safeguarding, Integrated Care Board
- Head Teacher, Special School
- Head Teacher, Primary School
- Head Teacher, Secondary School
- Director of Public Health, West Northamptonshire Council
- Director of Public Health, North Northamptonshire Council
- Independent Scrutineer

Attendance has remained consistent with comprehensive discussions and appropriate challenge.

As we enter 2024-25, both Local Authorities have looked to recruit permanent Directors of Children's Services, which has been successful with roles to be filled summer 2024.

Independent Scrutineer

Provides assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Northamptonshire, including arrangements to identify and review Child Safeguarding Practice Review cases. His role is objective and acts as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection to drive continuous improvement.

- Attend the Strategic Leads Group and Strategic Partnership Group.
- Review the Partnership's annual report.
- Review audits and performance data, including Section 11 and Section 175 audits.
- Determine the effectiveness of arrangements to identify and review local child safeguarding reviews.
- Involvement in the escalation and conflict resolution process.
- Have regular direct contact with frontline practitioners to receive frontline practice feedback.
- Ensure the voice of the child is at the heart of all aspects of safeguarding and receive direct feedback from children, young people and their families to monitor the effectiveness of their voice and experiences with performance and practice.
- Embed scrutiny as a positive process and measure throughout the partnership with learning as the outcome.
- Ensure informed challenge from elected Members takes place.

The Independent Scrutineer is tasked with specific themed projects and towards the end of this reporting period has started a project looking at how neglect is addressed across the partnership. The findings of this review will feature in next year's report alongside the focused activity of the Neglect Sub Group.

Sub Groups

NSCP Sub Groups have continued to meet on a virtual bi-monthly basis.

Quality and Governance

Aims to develop a culture of open, honest, and meaningful challenge and scrutiny, in order to identify areas of good practice and areas of concern and to make recommendations for action and improve safeguarding and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of single agency and multi-agency safeguarding processes incorporating audit, performance analysis and views of children, families and practitioners.

The Sub Group has processes in place to manage:

- Section 11 Partner audits (annually)
- Multi-Agency Practice Review
- Scorecard key performance data

The Multi-Agency Practice Review process has been reviewed and refreshed and a schedule developed to consider key priorities over the next twelve months.

Training and Development

Due to an increased agreed training budget for 2022-23, the sub group has developed a schedule of face-to-face training through classroom and/or virtual platforms, which will continue to develop and increase through 2023-24:

- Reducing Parental Conflict
- Working Together
- Domestic Abuse
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review for Authors
- Trauma Induced

E-Learning is under a more comprehensive management system, which will allow the creation of bespoke training courses to be accessed via the same on-line platform. These courses will focus on local learning and priorities identified through scorecard data and learning from local reviews.

Local Learning Review

Responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and protect children through individual Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, ensuring dissemination of lessons learned, and monitoring implementation of actions arising from case learning.

A focus and key achievement in the past year has been to strengthen the Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Rapid Review processes. Most reviews tend to have similar learning themes, therefore, improvements in learning against themes are clearly identified through a themed perspective. This has been reinforced by individual agencies completing reports on how their agencies have embedded learning from these reviews and through 2024-25, this process will be strengthened further to evidence improvements in practice from local learning.

Please see Appendix 3 for statistics and further information on the reporting period.

Child Exploitation

Aims to understand and reduce the prevalence of child exploitation in Northamptonshire and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating responses to tackling child exploitation by meeting the aims and objectives set out in the Northamptonshire Child Exploitation Strategy and monitored through a comprehensive delivery plan.

One of the sub group's key achievements has been the development of the Child Exploitation Hub. Once the hub launches in June 2024, the sub group will refresh and realign its priorities and next key areas of development.

Neglect Sub Group

Created in the latter part 2022-23, the sub group is now well embedded with good attendance and a focus on the Neglect Delivery Plan, drawing together learning from audits and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews to ensure relevant training and resources are available to practitioners.

As neglect continues to be an increasing concern within Northamptonshire, a half day Neglect / Early Help workshop is planned for April 2024 with a comprehensive range of speakers and topics and over 200 delegates booked.

Safeguarding in Education Sub Group

This sub group was developed during the reporting period in recognition of the importance of engaging schools in all aspects of the partnership's work.

There was significant interest in joining the group made up of head Teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads and key partners and the group is now well established with a working structure focusing on:

- Schools Audit
- Hearing the voices of children and young people
- Out of schools settings – developing resources and looking for assurance of appropriate safeguarding arrangements
- Two-way communication to feed information from the partnership to the education sector and vice versa.

Communication Sub Group

The sub group particularly focuses on the publication of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and three reviews have been published in the reporting period.

In accordance with the requirements of Working Together 2023, the group re-branded towards the end of this reporting period to the Safeguarding: Participation and Collaborative Engagement (SPACE) Sub Group to enable opportunities to include the voluntary sector and community groups to be engaged in and contribute to the work of the partnership. Membership has broadened and as we head into 2024-25, a structure of working groups developed to take forward various workstreams.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

The purpose of CDOP is to undertake a comprehensive and multiagency review of all child deaths, to better understand how and why children across Northamptonshire die, with a view to detecting trends and/or specific areas which would benefit from further consideration.

The national process of reviewing child deaths was established in April 2008 and updated in Chapter 6 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. It is the responsibility of the Child Death Review Partners to ensure that a review of every death of a child normally resident in their area is undertaken by a CDOP. Child death review partners are local authorities and any clinical commissioning groups for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

A Joint Agency Review meeting is held for all unexpected child deaths within 72 hours of the death to allow immediate learning and support for the bereaved families to be identified and provided.

All data from Child Death Reviews is submitted to the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) for the purposes of data analysis and learning at a national level.

Key partners have strengthened CDOP processes and created a new Child Death Review Co-ordinator role to co-ordinate partner sharing of information and provide a single point of contact and support for bereaved families, which has already proved invaluable to families

Please see Appendix 4 for statistics for the reporting period.

Appendix 3 – Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (like all other Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships in England) adheres to guidelines outlined in Working Together 2023, which set out three key stages in the process of learning from serious cases:

1. Serious Incident Notification to our Local Learning Review Panel (shared with Ofsted and the Department for Education)

The Local Authority knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected AND the child dies or is seriously harmed.

2. Rapid review

Gather facts

- Identify immediate learning or action
- Determine whether a Child Safeguarding Practice Review is appropriate.

Note: At this stage the chair of the rapid review panel will provide a report for the partnership strategic leads with a rationale and recommendation for whether sufficient learning has already been gleaned and therefore no Child Safeguarding Practice Review is required or whether additional learning can be extracted from a more in-depth review of multi-agency work that has taken place with the child and family. The Partnership leads will agree and sign off the decision prior to an independent author being commissioned to carry out the review.

3. Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Potential to identify improvements to practice

- Consider potential for national learning.

Exclude:

- Not abuse or neglect

- Not death or serious harm
- Learning already identified
- No potential for further learning

It has been a very busy year for Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews:

- Three Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews published in this reporting period
- Seven cases were submitted for consideration of a Rapid Review and four met the criteria

The range of safeguarding issues explored in the reviews which have been completed this year include:

- Unsafe sleeping in the context of alcohol misuse and neglect
- Risks relating to fathers or partners who are not visible to agencies
- Assessing safeguarding risks in relation to conceal pregnancies
- Managing unanticipated outcomes in care proceedings
- A range of different risk issues for vulnerable adolescents

There has been focused activity around strengthening the Rapid Review process in identifying learning which is taken forward through a Composite Action Plan combining learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Making a difference has focused on various areas of learning:

Voice of the child

- Hearing the voice of the child/young person is evident in all the reviews.
- Hearing the voice of the child/young person amplifies the learning.
- Every request for individual organisation information emphasises the importance of capturing the “voice of the child” and requests details about how practitioner know what life was like for the young person or child, what have they said about their life, how were they asked, what was observed?

Making a difference: Supporting practitioners through safeguarding topic briefings

The safeguarding children partnership has continued to produce informative, concise focused briefings on the learning identified from Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Rapid Reviews.

In addition, Tea Break guides are developed around key topics identified from the reviews to enhance practitioners' skills and knowledge. These are easily accessed through our website and are sought after as a positive learning tool, particularly by education colleagues.

Making a difference – learning from good practice

The nature of rapid reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews is that they focus on cases where typically there is a tragic outcome for a child or young person and their family, and which is immediately recognised.

Recognising effective practice and good outcomes in individual cases is harder - cases need to be monitored over time to ensure that services can engage with and support children and families, and that families can then make and sustain changes over time. Studying cases with good outcomes has a number of advantages. It is much easier to seek feedback from families and children to understand their experiences in accessing support, and what might be further improved. We can also ask practitioners what aspects of the context that they work in help them to achieve this good outcome - for example is the role designed in such a way that they can engage with families over time and build an effective working relationship? What is the impact of supervision in achieving a good outcome?

Good practice examples, including contributions by young people, remains a standing agenda item for the Local Learning Review Sub Group responsible for managing Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews.

Delays to reviews

A tracking sheet has been developed to monitor the timeliness of reviews and identify delays in process.

Embedding Learning

Recommendations from local reviews are now collated into themes.

A working group, made up of key strategic agencies, will be developed during 2024-25, to summarise the journey, improvements and impact against each theme to help inform local reviews in the future. This group will meet on a continual, regular basis made up of professionals who can effect change on the front line.

Agencies have provided individual summaries for this reporting period detailing what work they have done to address each recommendation from the three reviews published in 2023-24 and this information is informing the working group and will be developed further in 2024-25, to include learning from Rapid Reviews, as well as lining findings to local data trends.

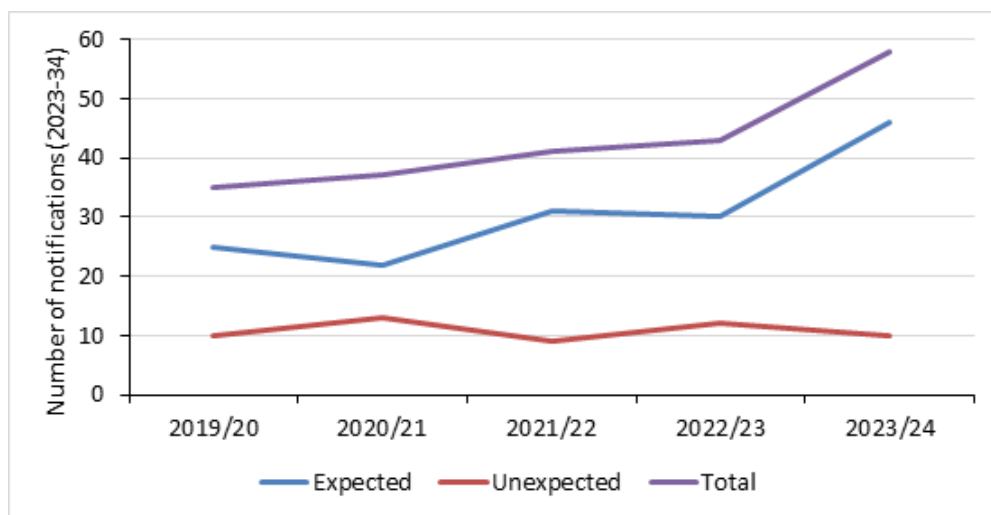
Appendix 4 – Child Death

There were 58 deaths during the 2023/24 reporting year, an increase from 2022/23 and differs from the relatively flat trend seen since 2019/20 (*Table 1 and Figure 1*). However, the trend for unexpected deaths has remained flat since 2019/20. Given the small numbers, conclusions should be drawn with caution.

Table 1. Child death notifications by year

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Expected	25	22	31	30	46
Unexpected	10	13	9	12	10
Not known	0	2	1	1	2
Total	35	37	41	43	58

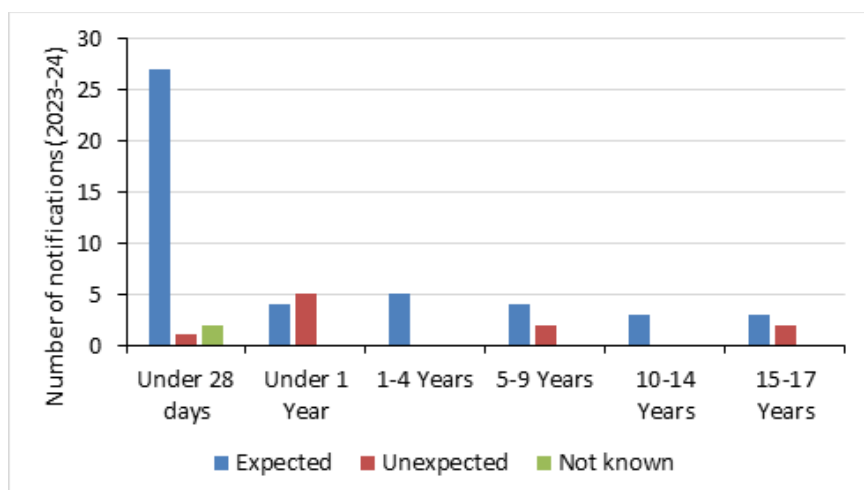
Figure 1. Five-year child death notification trends



Notifications by age

In 2023-24, 67% of child deaths across Northamptonshire occurred in the first year of life, which is similar to the proportion in England reported by National Child Mortality Database (*Figure 2*).

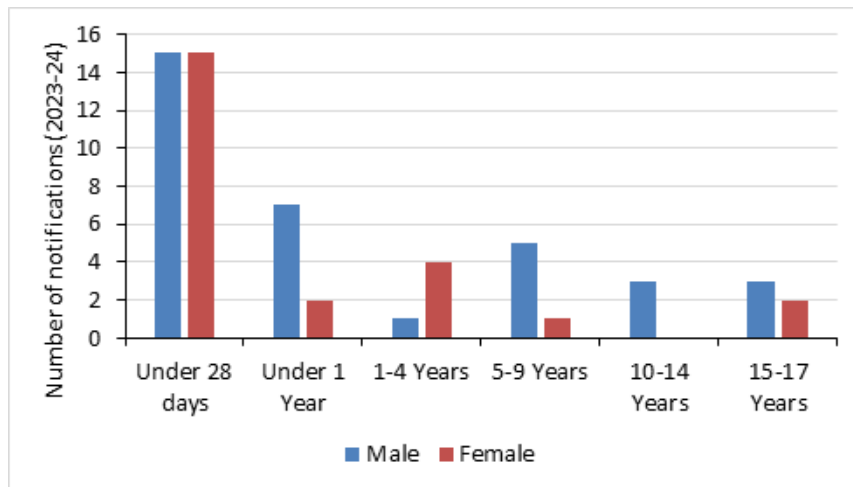
Figure 2. Child death notifications by age range



Notifications by gender

In 2023-24, 41% of child deaths were female and 59% were male (Figure 3).

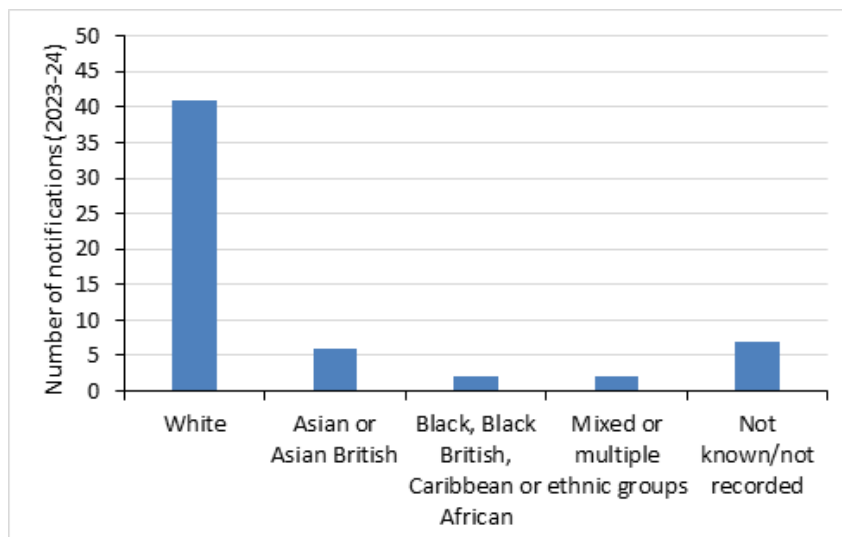
Figure 3. Child death by gender



Notifications by ethnicity

Of the 58 deaths in 2023-24, 71% were of White ethnicity, 10% Asian and 3% Black (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Child death by ethnicity



Appendix 5 – Partner Contributions for 2023-2024

Partner Income 2023/24 from Strategic Partner agencies	Annual Contribution to NSCP Budget
North Northamptonshire Council	£31,046
<i>North Northamptonshire Council DSG</i>	£33,427
West Northamptonshire Council	£31,046
<i>West Northamptonshire Council DSG</i>	£38,592
Police Funding	£43,000
Health Authority Contribution	£48,949