



Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)



Annual Report April 2021 – March 2022



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**



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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.

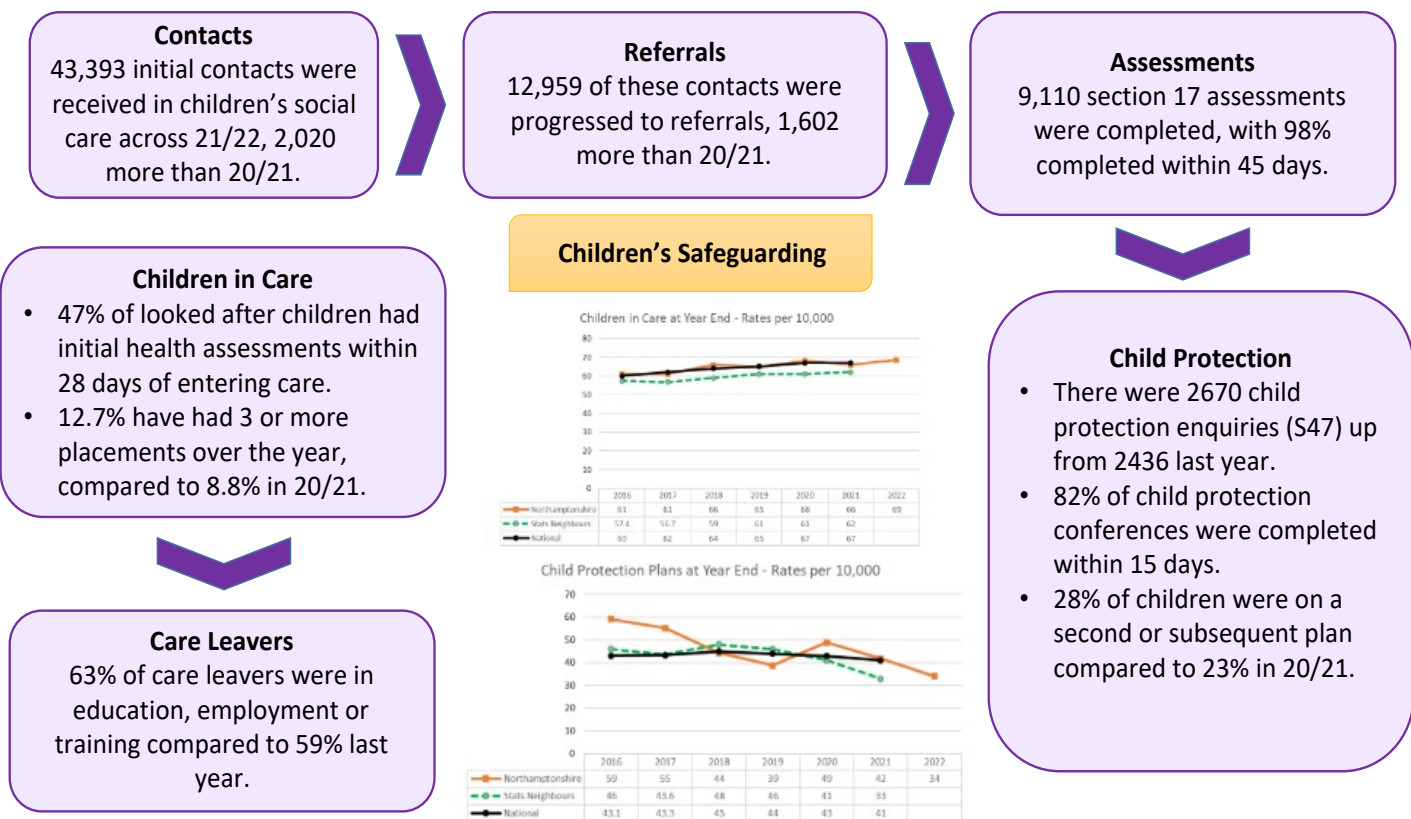
Since the previous Census in 2001 there had been an increase in non-white ethnic groups of 3.5%. It is also relevant to note a more rapid change in the number and proportion of those who describe themselves as 'White Other' becomes evident between 2001 and 2011. 'White Other' means not White British,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



2. Progress through 2021-2022

During the year, as a consequence of the continued challenge posed by the pandemic and significant global events, there has been a continued need for the partnership's response to safeguarding children 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:



Data shows a pattern of fluctuating demand experienced during covid lockdowns and school closures and as the pandemic restrictions have lifted, Northamptonshire Children's Trust has seen an increase in the number of safeguarding referrals.

43,393 initial contacts were received by children's social care through 2021-22, an increase of 2,020 on the previous year 2020-21. An increase was anticipated as the remaining pandemic restrictions were lifted. The referrals sent into the MASH present more complex issues experienced by families and children because of the impact of lockdown, combined with a reduction in support network and services available, has increased the pressure on the families and as such they have experienced greater levels of need.

In addition to that, as a direct result of Covid-19, Northamptonshire has seen the impact of poverty, anxiety, non-school attendance, poor child and adult mental health, loss and bereavement that have contributed to an increase in the number of families requiring support due to complexity of needs. The impact of the rising cost of living is also exacerbating the needs of families.

As part of an ongoing programme of review and improvement, a revised operating model was adopted to enable a better management of the contacts and referrals in the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and achieve more consistency in decision making together with better application of thresholds. An initial evaluation by our Partners in Practice (Lincolnshire), along with feedback from professionals are positive.

An increase in child protection enquiries (S47) was highlighted in 2021-22 which reflects the national trend; however, a robust partnership response is ensuring that the vast majority of the initial child protection conferences take place within 15 days with good attendance from all professionals which ensures children, young people and their families receive the multi-agency support they need at the earliest opportunity.

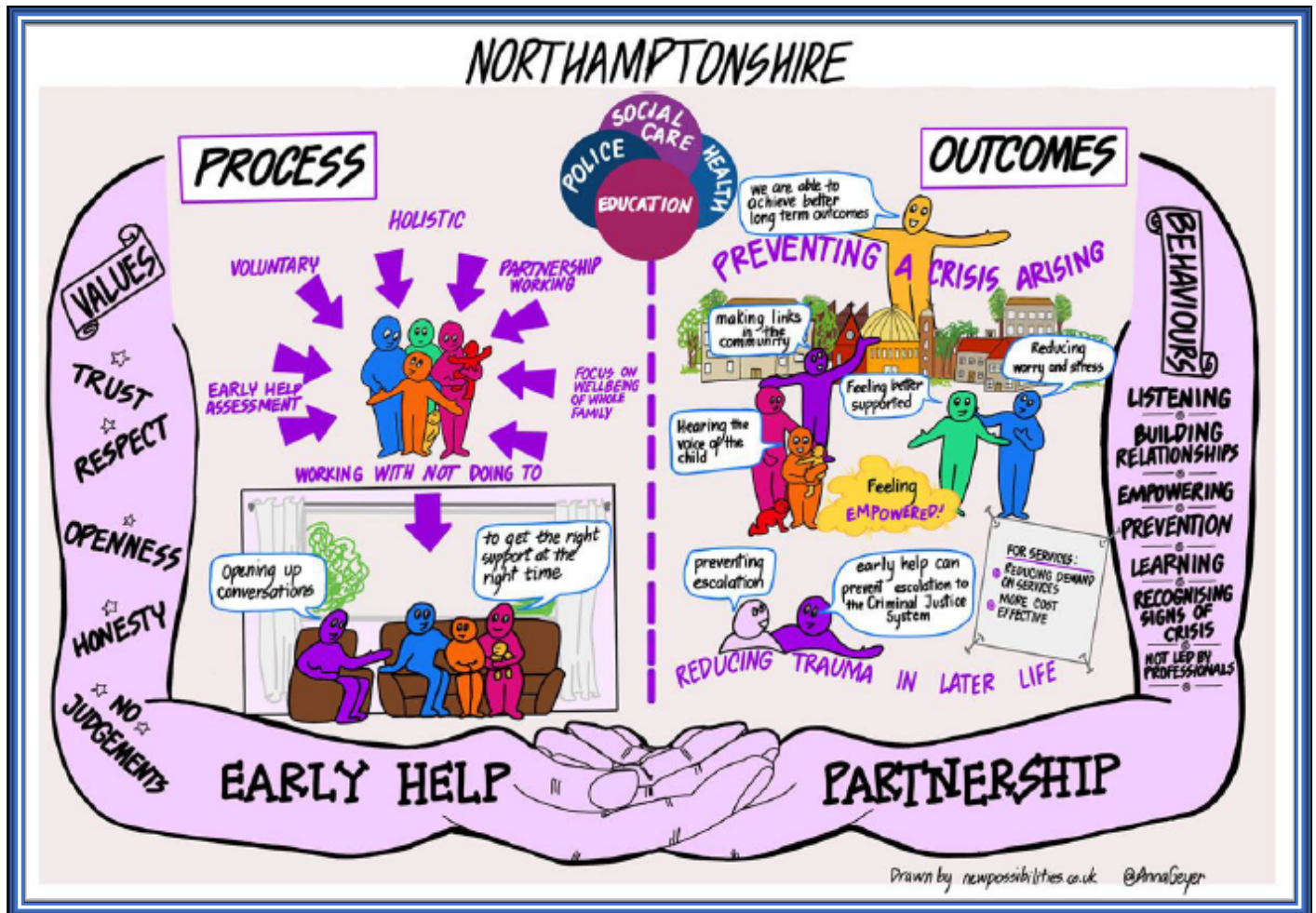


Progress through 2021-22 is set out against the partnership's three priorities:

- 1. Taking positive action early enough to protect children.**
- 2. To support children, young people, and families at risk of exploitation; and**
- 3. To work effectively as a partnership and support our staff.**

Priority 1. Taking positive action early enough to protect children

Early help is a collaboration not a service and in its simplest terms *everyone* is involved in the delivery of early help. This includes families, communities, voluntary groups, “universal” provision, schools, health and targeted support and this has been a priority area for the NSCP this year.



There has previously been an under-developed early help offer in Northamptonshire and the impact of this meant that children and families did not necessarily receive the right support at the right time and in some instances, this continues to have an impact on children’s outcomes. It also meant agencies were more likely to refer to children’s social care although a child may not be at risk of significant harm because they did not feel there was sufficient early help available. This contributed to a poor reputation for Northamptonshire which can influence our partnership working, community engagement, and attraction of social workers and other professionals.

Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) Early Help has been redesigned as Children and Family Support Services (CFSS) with a focus on developing and supporting the partnership to provide more effective early support to families. A multi-agency Early Help Partnership Board has been developed, that will be multi-agency and managed by the Trust. The Early Help Partnership Board will report to both the NSCP and Children and Young People’s Transformation Delivery Group as part of the Integrated Care System (ICS). Terms of Reference and governance arrangements are drafted ready for this board to go live early in 2023, with strategic membership in place to strengthen focus on early help provision ensuring children, young people and their families will receive earlier intervention and support.

West and North Northamptonshire Early Help Partnership networks have now been successfully established including a revised simpler early help assessment and Team around the Family Support plan.

There is strong commitment from the partnership to enable the right and timely support for families and improvements are starting to be noted. Rates of referral to Early Help have increased from 12% in November 2020 to 21% in October 2021.

Neglect

The impact of neglect in the lives of Northamptonshire children is not underestimated and neglect continues to be the main Abuse Category in Child Protection Plans and also the highest category for children who come into care.

Following the successful rollout of the Graded Care Profile 1 toolkit, and in order to support practitioners in identifying and addressing neglect, a partnership decision was made to invest in NSPCC's Graded Care Profile 2 toolkit and a suite of training will be undertaken during 2022-23 to support practitioners to use the tool appropriately and effectively.

The new Early Help Partnership board will build on the strong transformation work in Early Help. Early Help is the responsibility of all partners, and the partnership has continued to support staff to develop their knowledge, competence, and confidence by facilitating relevant training and reflective learning including:

- E-Learning introduction to neglect
- Child Development that includes impact of neglect
- Neglect training provided as part of regional events offered in early 2022
- Tea Break Guide for neglect of medical needs

In addition to the above, Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) developed shared resources that support practitioners' practice in cases where neglect is a theme:

- Using NICE guideline on child neglect and abuse
- Learning from national and local reviews
- All NCT practitioners have access to Making Research Count and Research in Practice training.

Supporting professionals to identify neglect quicker is improving responses to ensure children and young people receive more timely support. Neglect was a theme from a Child Safeguarding Practice Review published during this reporting period and implementation of the learning has focused on the Graded Care Profile 2 and strengthening professionals' knowledge and understanding of neglect for earlier intervention.

Safer Sleeping

Public Health have undertaken a broad public facing safer sleeping campaign through social media. Hits to the site around the articles published have been in their tens of thousands, showing that the message is reaching far and wide. To complement this, the NSCP continues to ensure advice and guidance on safer sleeping is available to all practitioners and is accessible on the NSCP website.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust has introduced an expectation through local guidance and recording processes that all families of all babies under 12 months, open to children's services, receive safer sleeping messages as part of normal practice, echoing and reinforcing the practices of health colleagues during pregnancy and early months of a child's life.

During this reporting period, one child death has been attributed to unsafe sleeping. A further campaign is scheduled for the Autumn of 2022, with robust multi-agency input to ensure the right, consistent messages continue to be promoted.



Priority 2. To support children, young people, and families at risk of exploitation

Safeguarding partners have been working in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire, Research in Practice, and the Children's Society to support and further develop a local partnership strategy to tackle child exploitation. Positive progress includes finalising the child exploitation strategy with a county wide partnership approach to prevention and early intervention and includes the local authorities Community Safety Partnership Boards. In addition, a countywide definition for child exploitation has been adopted. This has been driven forward by the partnership's Child Exploitation Sub Group.

Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day

On 18th March 2022 to coincide with national Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day, the NSCP held a Virtual Child Exploitation Conference, where practitioners could join throughout the day to hear speakers from a variety of professionals on different areas of Child Exploitation. Over 120 professionals logged on at its peak during the day. The sessions taking place on the day included:

- RISE and Sarah's Story
- Online Safety
- Vulnerable Adolescent Panels
- Drug and Alcohol Misuse and Exploitation
- Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Positive interaction and feedback have been received from practitioners about this event.

Vulnerable Adolescent Panel

VAP is a multi-agency information sharing and consultative process. The panel aims to ensure that as a multi-agency partnership we effectively share information to support young people who are at risk of being exploited and address extra familial harm with a view to utilising a contextual safeguarding approach to make our communities safer.

VAP was introduced in December 2020.

The positive implementation of the Vulnerable Adolescents Panel (VAP) which considers all young people who are referred with concerns about extra-familial harm, regardless of social care threshold, is echoed by the young people's feedback:

*"I am in a good place and feel I can make safe decisions and have people I can go to if I am worried about anything"
young person aged 17*

Police Community Initiative Reducing Violence (CIRV)

Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service Prevention work in partnership with the CIRV to reduce violent crime and tackle the emerging concerns in relation to gang related offending. A recent Child Safeguarding Practice Review has included the work of CIRV, and the partnership has seen evidence of the excellent work this service undertakes through the victim's reflections of their work with the service.

This work also directly links with the North and West Community Safety Partnership Boards who implemented the partnership's Critical Incident Response following a child safeguarding incident in the community, whereby key agencies and community groups come together to ensure the neighbourhood and its residents remain safe. Such a response was undertaken during the summer, following a knife crime in a neighbourhood in the county, and the reflection by the community on the response was very positive.

Children and Young People Missing

It is recognised that there is a clear link between child exploitation and children and young people who go missing. Northamptonshire partners work closely on understanding missing episodes. Northamptonshire Police has provided additional resources into its Children and Young People's Missing Team reflecting this concerning priority.

A partnership Missing Forum has been created and considers at risk children who are going missing, and the Young People's Service offers preventative support. NCT independent return interviews have been reviewed and made more robust to ensure all risks and support needs faced by children, young people and their families are considered

and that effective support plans are in place.

Priority 3. To work effectively as a partnership and support our staff

E-Learning Training

In 2020-21, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in large parts of the partnership working from home which in turn significantly increased the use of the e-learning training. During this period there was a total of 13734 course completions. The period 2021-22 has seen an expected reduction on the volume of e learning used in the previous year with **6,839** course completions.

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.

A significant piece of work undertaken by the Training & Development Sub Group during the reporting period was to review all the e-learning content to ensure it was fit for purpose and aligned with the NSCP policies and procedures. This has ensured practitioners receive the most current training content in line with national learning.

Analysis and evidence of the impact these courses have had on practice is included below: -

- 88% of delegates stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the training.
- 97% stated that they would recommend this course to other people.
- 78% stated that Participation in this e-learning course has supported me to make measurable improvements to my work practice.
- 72% of learners who completed an impact evaluation agreed or strongly agreed the course they had taken had a positive impact on practice.
- When rating improvements in knowledge, skills and confidence, all aspects recorded that 85% of learners felt there had been an increase, these scores remain broadly consistent increasing slightly (3%) with results seen in previous years.

Evaluation is consistent with previous years data and continues to show the positive impact the e-learning package is having on practice and the value learners place on its availability through the partnership.

Face to Face Multi-Agency Training

The NSCP has not offered a training programme since 2018 due to resource constraints and pandemic restrictions. However, Strategic Leads during the reporting period agreed to a more blended approach which has enabled a mix of training pool delivery and commissioned training to be delivered and extend the positive impact of multi-agency training.

This will enable a mix of training pool delivery and commissioned training to be delivered and extend the positive impact of multi-agency training. During 2021 the NSCP offered the following Face to Face Training:

- Threshold and Pathways Training – 38 sessions were undertaken with a 76% attendance, which was considered positive as several professionals cancelled their places due to sickness within their teams
- Trauma Informed Training – Due to the success and inspiring session delivered to 100 professionals, a further six sessions have been scheduled between April-September 2022
- Child Exploitation Conference

- Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews – this training has been reviewed and updated to reflect learning from a thematic perspective rather than per review undertaken. This new format was well received by colleagues within the Social Work Academy and will be further updated before broadening to a multi-agency audience.

Learning Summaries from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs)

The purpose of CSPRs, 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 CSPRs have been published in the reporting period and for each review a Learning Summary is developed as a quick guide for professionals individually or within a team setting to be informed of the local learning.

The format of these reviews has been refreshed and updated to include more context and understanding of learning, including links to local and national research. This is positively supporting professionals in identifying learning and themes to reference in their day-to-day work and ensuring earlier support is put in place for children and families.

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 they should take next, including whether or not to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

Note: further information regarding CSPRs, and Rapid Reviews can be found in the government guidance document: [*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*](#)



3. Other safeguarding updates through 2021-2022

Safeguarding Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities receive services from a dedicated team within Children's Social Care. This is a specialist long term service, supporting children with most severe and complex needs; although majority of the children are supported under a Child In Need plan, social workers in the team also carry out all other statutory children 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.

Planning for transitions commences when children reach age 14 and children's transition to Adult Social Care is managed via a panel and a referral to Adult Social Care when they are 16 years old. The team have relationships with colleagues in children's continuing health care, CAMHs, Community Team for People with Learning Disability (CTPLD) and partners with the local Parent Forum Group NPFG and Northamptonshire Carers. Northamptonshire carers are commissioned to complete carers assessments under the Care Act 2004 and, they provide support to siblings of children with disabilities and young carers.



Ofsted focussed visits have highlighted many positive areas of practice in the Disabled Children's Team, particularly how well social workers know the young people they work with, multi-agency working, and the support provided to families in terms of the multi-disciplinary approach and short breaks support which greatly benefits children and their families.

Children and Families Fleeing Conflict

Safeguarding partners have had to respond to an increase in children, young people, and families fleeing conflict. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children from Afghanistan as well as families fleeing conflict from Ukraine who have located in Northamptonshire have been supported with increased partnership collaboration to ensure they feel safe and settled.

In July 2022, the government announced the intention to introduce a scheme to support unaccompanied children from Ukraine to live in the UK with someone known to their family, with parental consent. Early indications suggest arrangements would be considered as private fostering arrangements, and that local authorities would need to approve the sponsorship arrangements. The impact on the universal targeted and specialist services is as yet unknown and agencies are developing processes to ensure these children and young people are safe and supported.

Education

Northamptonshire education staff and settings have continued to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families remain protected during the periods of Covid-19 restrictions, with an emphasis on a robust multi-agency joined up approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people.

The beginning of 2022 saw schools under immense pressure, working tirelessly to keep schools open despite surging numbers of Covid-19 cases amongst both students and staff.



Elective Home Education

This data has been broken down between West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council:

NorthNorthants Council

The electively home educated population saw an increase at the beginning of this reporting period by 26 to 874 children in April 2021, the highest number thus far. This was the third month to show consecutive record volumes. April registered the sixth successive increase, while the last three months have each posted consecutive records. By the end of April, there were 87 more electively home educated children than there were one year ago, and the current cohort comprises 147 more children than at the end of the previous academic year.

WestNorthants Council

The electively home education population saw a sharp decrease at the beginning of this reporting period from approximately 700 to 600, this number has steadily increased back to the region of 700 throughout the rest of the reporting period.

Children and Young People Missing from Education

This data has been broken down between West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council:

NorthNorthants Council

The number of children missing from education during the reporting period decreased by 21 to 253 children at the end of April, marking the lowest volume in the current academic year. The latest cohort comprises 150 children fewer than the peak of 403 children in October and 11 children fewer than this time last year. An average of 263 children were missing between February and June 2021. By comparison, an average of 283 children were missing in the last three months.

WestNorthants Council

The number of children missing from education stated at approximately 150 at the beginning of this reporting period, peaking at just over 200 in October 2021 before steadily decreasing to 123 at the end of this reporting period.

Education Health and Care Plans (EHC)

NorthNorthants Council has seen a steady monthly average increase in the number of EHC assessment, averaging 74 per month at the beginning of the reporting report increasing to an average of 80 per month towards the end of the reporting report.

WestNorthants Council requests for EHC assessment generally range between 60 to 80 during term time, peaks, and troughs during the lead up to school holidays have caused fluctuation.

Long term, work continues to take place to develop a robust graduated approach, based on early help across the four localities, with the expectation of support and provision for children in receipt of top up through a send support plan.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse now sits within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) portfolio and under that banner remains a matter of priority for the partnership and in particular, Northamptonshire Police.

It is recognised that it is always a difficult decision for victims or survivors to come forward and therefore through a partnership approach, Northamptonshire Police continue to ensure they are fully supported by strengthening existing processes such as crisis Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) which have been embedded in the Force Control room and with patrol officers at times of peak demand to improve the service offered to victims.

During this reporting period, recorded domestic abuse has dropped by 7.2% within the County and there are 6% fewer victims of domestic abuse crimes. This is not in line the national trend which has seen increases in the amount of recorded domestic abuse and it is believed that this position is because of strengthened performance.

Northamptonshire Police arrested 36% of domestic abuse perpetrators in the 12 months up to March 2022 and this is significantly above the national average of 27.3% in the same period and may help to explain the current victim satisfaction rate which sits at 90.7%. Victim satisfaction and the early arrest of perpetrators figures are very much linked.

Children and Young People's Voices

Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) has Young Inspectors are part of their Practice Week Teams. They contribute to the design of the Practice Weeks, the assessment processes and are an integral part of developing recommendations for action planning. The principle of the Young Inspectors scheme is for young people to quality assure the services and provisions available/provided for children and young people and to be able to provide positive feedback and areas for improvements, highlighting and sharing good practice.

NCT benefits from strong engagement of children and young people through our formal participation groups - Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Council and Shooting Stars (children with special educational needs and disabilities) and Young Inspectors, whose voice shapes the Trust's vision, transformation, and review of services. This has been evidenced through internal and external quality assurance, including Ofsted visits. We know that there is much more that we need to do though t ensure that the voice of the child is captured, and this feedback is used to influence change.

This has supported the development of a Children & Young Peoples Engagement Strategy which sets out a vision and strategic priorities for 2022-25. The aim of the strategy is to make sure:

- Our children and young people have a voice about decisions that affect them
- Our children and young people are given as many opportunities as we can for them to engage and participate and are supported to do so
- Our children and young people are listened to and their views help to shape our services
- Our children and young people are able to hold us to account if we are not listening and using their views to influence how we are doing things
- Using the strategic priorities for engagement, linked to our improvement plan priorities, we will develop our annual engagement action plan each year to deliver this strategy over the next 3 years.

Children and young people are engaged at an individual level. Some examples of this include;

- Roll out of confidential virtual platform for children and young people to express their views
- introduced a more child and young person friendly version of the Child in Care plan to help looked after children and young people engage more in the decisions being made about them.
- There is a successful Independent Visitors Service that matches volunteers with looked after young people to be a mentor/friend
- Developed a dictionary to assist our workforce in using language that is appropriate and meaningful to children and young people, rather than jargon or labelling language
- Children and young people are aware of the compliments, comments and complaints process and work has been undertaken with the complaints team to ensure the process is user friendly
- Created videos of some young people sharing their experiences of attending child protection conferences and what difference this has made for them
- There are some great examples of children and young people having their voices heard by the professionals working with them and this being used to inform the work done with them
- Some good examples of safety plans, care plans and pathway plans developed in conjunction with children and young people

Children and young people are engaged at a service level. Some examples of this include:

- Feedback loop form has been developed on the Young Northants website to provide a confidential anonymous space for children and young people to give feedback on services.
- Children and young people are aware of the compliments, comments and complaints process and work has been undertaken with the complaints team to ensure the process is user friendly
- Children and young people have been recruited to a Young Inspectors group and have taken part in a project on children and young people in custody working directly with the police.
- Children and young people have taken part in the commissioning of services alongside commissioners, both in helping to develop service specifications and in evaluating bids.
- Children and Young People have met with Ofsted Inspectors on several occasions to give their views

Engagement of children and young people at a strategic level. Some examples of this include:

- Well established groups for children in care, care leavers and children with disabilities mainly centred in West Northamptonshire. The Participation and Engagement team have built great positive relationships with all groups so that the children and young people feel safe and free. Weekly groups run for each as well as holiday activities.
- Excellent contribution from children and young people to NCT's Equalities Strategy on what they would like to see to improve inclusivity of participation.
- There is a programme of activity for children and young people to take part in formal participation groups, especially over the school holidays. This provides opportunity to capture the voice of the child.
- A new participation group has been set up for children and young people with a child in need or child protection plan to help us improve.
- Brilliant care leavers council, children in care council and group for children with disabilities.
- Fabulous Participation and Engagement Team who support young people to express their views.
- Starting to use social media and virtual platforms more effectively to increase our reach.

Work of the Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO)

LADO continued to work using virtual platforms in 2021/2022; this has enabled partner agencies easier access to Joint Evaluation Meetings (JEM's) and LADO-led professionals' meetings as needed. Full LADO data is not yet available for the financial year (2021/2022) as some cases have not yet been concluded.

LADO received 429 contacts in the year which is a significant reduction (32% n202) from 2020/2021 (n631). 89 contacts were managed as consultations (compared with 90 in 20/21) and 340 were managed as LADO referrals (541 in 20/21). It is likely the reduction of referrals is largely due to the closure of Rainsbrook STC part-way through the year as this organisation had previously been, by far, the most significant source of LADO referrals. This trend is

reflected in the highest number of contacts by occupation (residential workers, including Rainsbrook); whilst this reduced to 22.1% (n95) it was still the highest percentage by occupation. The other occupation with contacts in double percentage points is foster carers (10.9% - n 47). With residential workers and foster carers, this data may reflect increased pressures on homes caring for children who were in their care for more time as a result of lockdowns.

During 2021/2022 LADO worked closely with management and regulators for Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre (STC) prior to its closure in 2021. LADO has also continued to work closely with CQC and NHSE and hospital management to oversee improvement in safeguarding provision for young people placed at St Andrews specialist inpatient mental health provision in Northamptonshire. LADO has highlighted concerns about these providers' safeguarding to local Strategic Partner Leads which has enabled oversight and action. For both of these large providers, there has been significant LADO input at case level (peer-on-peer violence, allegations against staff) along with support for internal safeguarding management and wider partnership oversight of the provisions. In part, due to concerns highlighted by LADO, both providers reduced numbers of residents to improve care arrangements for those remaining whilst supporting work on systemic staff performance and training. Ultimately, Rainsbrook STC closed as it could not address these issues, including as identified by LADO. LADO continues to work with all parties to drive improvements at St Andrews Hospital.

LADO has supported the wider children's workforce through ready access to consultation and also provided training for internal and external partners on the role of LADO, particularly where this overlaps with the agency's own safeguarding duties. LADO consultation is available daily, with a 'Duty LADO' available every day to help partners identify safeguarding threshold referrals.

In early summer 2022, changes were made to how agencies access LADO support and consultation; these changes were advised through NSCP webpages and presented to multi-agency service delivery improvement group. Further improvements are underway to improve LADO recording and reporting processes, routing all referrals through MASH and onto a confidential section of the CareFirst children's database.

LADO attends Licencing forums to support partnership safeguarding duties and planning in West and North Northants Unitary authorities; this includes premises (off and on licence) and taxis. LADO is involved in making sure children's safeguarding is considered in these forums.

LADO training delivery was devised around thematic information provided in previous year's data; for example, LADO delivered training for Passenger Assistants in transport with vulnerable children (virtually) after identifying an increase in referrals and complaints in this area. This will be replicated for data from 21/22.



4. Plans for 2022-2023

Continue to strengthen our responses to the health and wellbeing of our children and young people

- **Timeliness of initial and review health assessments for children in care** - remains below target and focused work is being undertaken between Northamptonshire Children's Trust and health commissioners and providers to ensure the health needs of all children are understood and supported in a timely way.
- **Right placement in the right area for the child** – focus on stronger collaborative working with relevant partners to ensure a child is placed in the most appropriate setting to improve their experiences and outcomes.
- **Cost of living crisis** – ensuring support is readily available to newly identified vulnerable families whilst continuing to support those already known to services.

Development of new governance arrangements for the NSCP

- Creation of a Strategic Assurance Board meeting three times per annum to oversee the work of the partnership
- Commissioning of an Independent Chair of the partnership to strengthen and improve the partnership's safeguarding responses.

Creation of a Countywide Safeguarding Children structure

- The NSCP, in liaison with the Integrated Care System (ICS) and two local Community Safety Partnership Boards is developing a countywide safeguarding children structure. The main purpose is to streamline safeguarding work and activities to provide a consistent, robust response to the children, young people, and their families in our county. A draft structure was agreed by the end of this reporting period with phase two being developed for the creation of an Operational Management Group to focus on delivering priorities.
- There will also be a focus on creating a children and young people's group to create a direct line of communication for safeguarding forums to hear their voices and understand their concerns, utilising existing means.

Develop bespoke local virtual training

- Under contract with Virtual College for e-learning, the partnership now has the facility to develop its own local content training courses to be hosted on the virtual College platform.
- This will provide opportunities for local priorities and learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Strengthening the response to Child Exploitation

- **Adolescent Risk Management (ARM)** - The partnership will review its current response to young people at risk to ensure an effective pathway to identify and support children at risk of Extra-Familial Harm.
- **QLIK Data Reporting** - Northamptonshire Police has been developing the QLIK data reporting system to see how this could be expanded to include data for all agencies to map young people and / or locations where exploitation is suspected of taking place. It is hoped that the data contained within this system can then be used to highlight potential areas for intervention at an earlier stage and is hoped to be available for 2022-23.

Consistency and promotion of good practice

Review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

- Further refresh of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), developed in partnership, with an ongoing rollout of thresholds training.
- Focus and improve on the quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness of referrals into MASH with improved signposting to reduce the number of cases where no further action is required.
- Ensuring partner representation is adequate.

Public Neglect campaign

- Raising the importance and significance of neglect and this will include continuing to support professionals' knowledge and confidence in dealing with neglect, along with an understanding of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) to support workers assessments of neglect.



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.

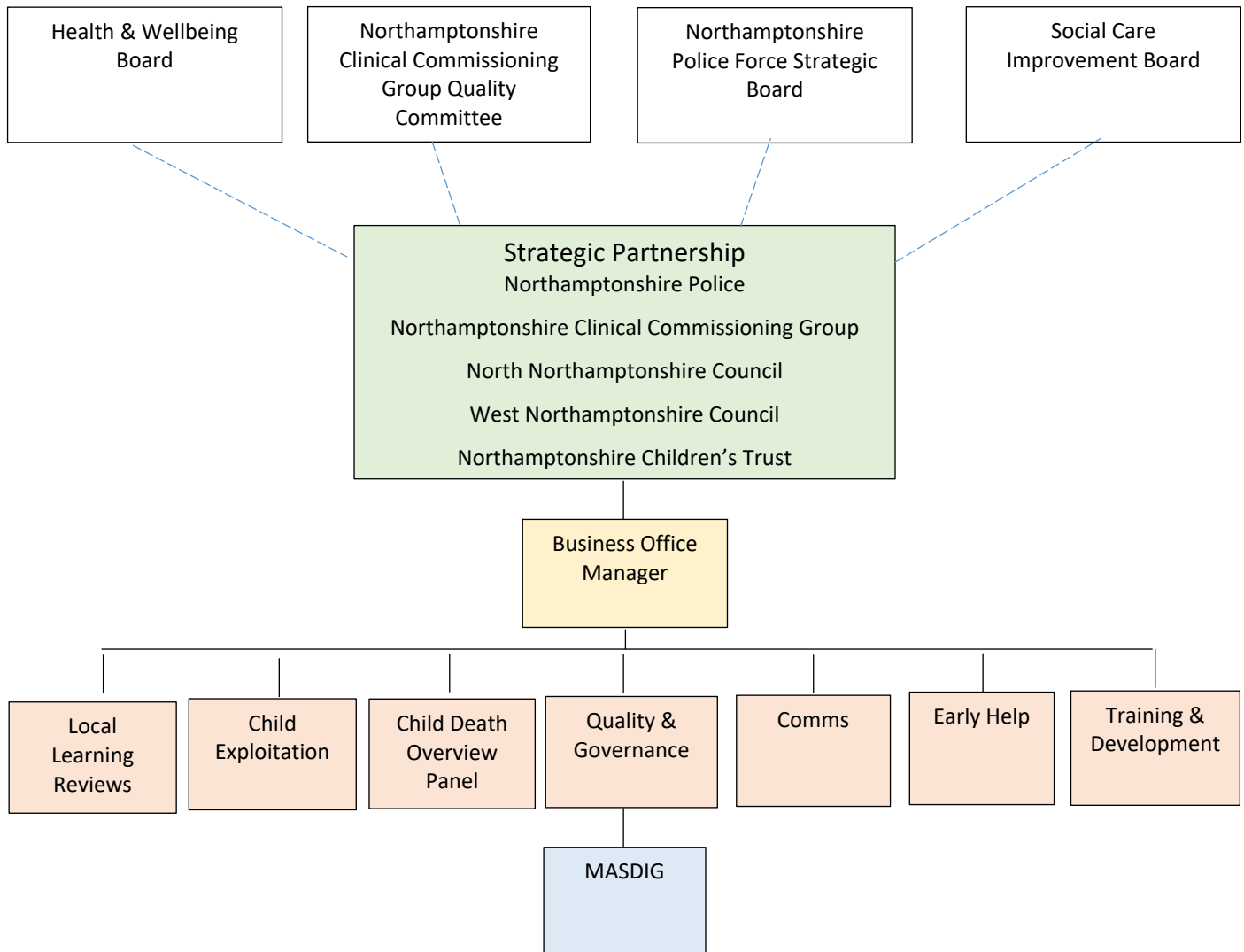
Local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services 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



Full Partnership

It was agreed that the full Partnership would meet twice yearly to review the previous six months of activity and look to the next 6-12 months to set priorities.

As Covid-19 has continued to provide concerns and difficulties through the year, there have been no full partnership meetings in this period. This has been acknowledged as a clear gap that could impact on the strength of the partnership and forms part of the ongoing discussions around the NSCP review.

Strategic Leads

The Strategic Leads Group has continued to meet on a monthly basis.

During 2021-22, the Strategic Leads representatives have changed, largely to reflect the county is now set out as two unitary authorities, therefore representation comprises:

The group comprises:

- Director of Children's Services for North Northamptonshire Council
- Director of Children's Services for West Northamptonshire Council.
- Assistant Chief Constable and Deputy for Northamptonshire Police.
- Chief Nurse and Deputy for Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Chief Executive and Deputy for Northamptonshire Children's Trust.
- Director or Safeguarding, Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- School representation as a fourth non-voting agency. This is currently a Head Teacher from a special school and Head Teacher from a primary school.

- Representative for the Office for Police and Fire Crime Commissioner.
- Independent Scrutineer

Please note from 1st July 2022, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) replaced the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

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.

The NSCP established the areas of activity for scrutiny in its initial Governance Document as follows:

- 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.

Continues to provide constructive challenge and scrutiny with Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and identifying relevant and constructive learning to strengthen services in the future. His suggestions and observations will continue to support Strategic Leads through 2022-23.

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 and Section 175
- 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 2021-22 and 2022-23, the sub group is focusing on developing a face-to-face training offer through classroom and/or virtual platforms.

E-Learning is due to move to a new management system from June 2022, 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 key achievement in the past year has been to finalise the updated NSCP suite of guidance and documents in line with Working Together 2018; to support case learning, including Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and this is now available on the NSCP website.

The sub group over the past year has been focusing on managing case learning activity. The culture of undertaking effective reviews must be an iterative process, and almost every case the sub group has worked on this year has prompted reflection and learning on how to further improve processes.

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

Early Help

Aims to understand the current Early Help Offer across the Partnership and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating strengths and gaps in the system which will inform the revision of the Early Help Strategy and work focus for the next three years.

This year the sub group has focused on refreshing the Neglect Strategy and reviewing the Early Help Strategy and action plans.

Early help provision remains a focus for the partnership, and with the launch of the Integrated Care System (ICS) due in July 2022, work has been undertaken to ensure early help's profile is heightened with the creation of an Early Help Partnership Board, that will report into the NSCP and ICS with activity reports. This will be in place from mid-2022.

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.

This sub group has not met regularly throughout 2021-22 due to unforeseen circumstances and changes in chairing the group; however, a Child Exploitation Strategy was developed and agreed towards the end of the year and an associated action plan will be created to drive forward measures and tasks through the next financial year.

Communication Sub Group

This sub group has been reinitiated to focus on working with schools and students to develop videos for young people, made by young people focusing on topics they want to learn more about. This fantastic initiative has been well received but unfortunately, the lockdown and immense pressures on schools has meant this has not been able to be launched.

The group has created a NSCP YouTube Channel in readiness for when schools have re-opened and settled to pick this great opportunity up again and a forward plan of topics has been created.

In going forward, this group will also focus on developing content for regular NSCP newsletters, theme based, that can be disseminated across the partnership.

Child Death Overview Panel – The overall purpose of Northamptonshire 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 5 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. 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. Across Northamptonshire, the Child Death Review Partners are the two Local Authorities and NHS Northamptonshire CCG and locally it has been agreed that CDOP should remain within the remit of local safeguarding arrangements and processes managed from within the Business Office.

The process for reviewing child deaths commences with Notification to the Child Death Review team and culminates in final scrutiny at the Child Death Overview Panel.

A multiagency Child Death Review meeting should be held for each child death by the professionals directly involved in the care of that child during their life and the investigation after their death. A Child Death analysis form should be drafted at these meetings and sent to CDOP for final review. The Child Death Review process integrates with the Perinatal Mortality Review Programme and the Learning Disability Mortality Review Programme (LeDeR).

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.

Please see Appendix 4 for statistics for the reporting period.

Appendix 3 – Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

For the period April 2020 – March 2021

- Seven Rapid Review were undertaken.
- Three requests for consideration of a review were deliberated.
- Two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were published in December 2021.
- A third CSPR was published in March 2022.
- Four new CSPR's were commissioned during the period first April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Some key Safeguarding themes from 2021/22:

Knife crime, gang associations and criminal exploitation have been increasingly recognised as significant concerns nationally but have not previously been the focus of case learning for the Northamptonshire safeguarding partnership.

Two of the CSPRs initiated this year are seeking to obtain learning following the deaths of young people because of knife wounds and include thematic learning from other more minor incidents. This has highlighted adolescent neglect as a contributing factor to the vulnerability of young people linked to knife crime incidents.

Co-sleeping or unsafe infant sleeping continues to be a theme, in association with additional concerns including neglect, parental alcohol misuse, and non-engagement. The confirmed or emerging findings are consistent with those identified in the National Panel's thematic review of cases of sudden and unexpected death in infants. Some of these cases continue to raise concerns about the multi-agency response to neglect.

Following the success of the one-year pilot of 'DadPad,' which was commissioned by Northamptonshire CCG to support the reduction of non-accidental traumatic head injury in babies, this project has now been commissioned for a further four year period.

DadPad is an app and book for father to be and new fathers that aims to provide them with guidance on how to develop the mind-set, confidence and practical skills needed to meet their babies' physical and emotional needs. It is also intended as a resource to assist professionals to engage and build relationships with new fathers and fathers to be.

During the first six months of the app availability, downloads equates to fifty per cent of all new births in the county. Top topics viewed included: when the crying won't stop, safe sleeping and surviving without sleep.

Disguised Compliance

There is a regularly recurring theme of disguised compliance, or very often clearly evidenced noncompliance and disengagement. There is an ongoing need to focus on how to support practitioners to safeguard children when parents do not engage or are actively hostile.

Neglect

See above section 2 – Taking Positive Action Early Enough

Supervision

The partnership has noted that the quality of staff supervision has been highlighted and therefore partners have been encouraged to review supervision policies and procedures. Processes have been strengthened to ensure professionals have opportunities to discuss their cases and, focus on those where they have concerns. This is ensuring professionals are confident in managing their caseloads and that children, young people and their families receive the level of support needed, particularly with complex families.

Invisible Parents

CSPRs and Rapid Reviews this year have once again highlighted potential risk from parents or partners who were not visible to agencies working with the mother of a child who was subsequently injured, and where the parent or partner has subsequently been charged in relation to nonaccidental injury.

This has triggered a debate about how police intelligence on adult violence, criminality and gang association can be shared in a proportionate way. This is a significantly challenging question, but case learning has demonstrated that we need a shared multi agency understanding about when such information should be sought within child protection processes, and the circumstances in which police should proactively disclose concerns about risky adults, for example when it is known that the adult is about to become a father. This will be developed further in 2022-23.

Appendix 4 – Child Death

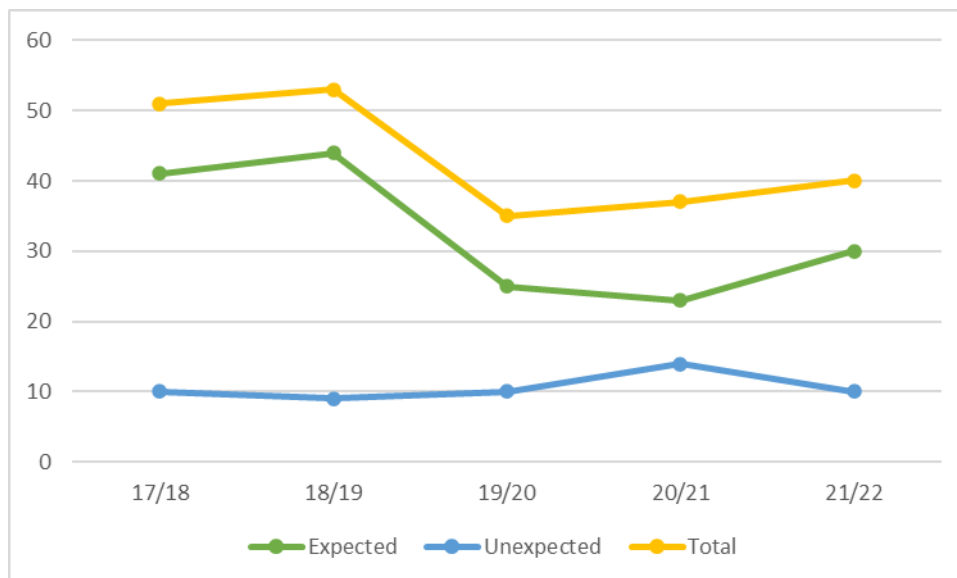
Child deaths in Northamptonshire have shown a slow increase over the past three years after falling significantly in 2019/20. However, with the exception of 20/21 when an increase was seen, unexpected deaths have remained steady over the past 5 years.

It should be noted that detailed analysis and conclusions to be drawn from the data are limited due to the fortunately small numbers of deaths that occur on an annual basis.

Fig. 2. Child death notifications by year:

	21/22	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18
Expected	30	23	25	44	41
Unexpected	10	14	10	9	10
Total	40	37	35	53	51

Fig 3. Five-year child death notification trends



70% of all child deaths across Northamptonshire occurred in the first year of life with unexpected death occurring more commonly in this age group than any other. This is in line with national figures reported by the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD).

Appendix 5 – Partner Contributions for 2021-2022

Partner Income 2021/22 from Strategic Partner agencies	Annual Contribution to NSCP Budget
North Northants Council	£24,646
West Northants Council	£26,351
Police Funding	£43,000
Health Authority Contribution	£48,949