



# Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

## Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

Annual Report  
April 2022 – March 2023



North  
Northamptonshire  
Council



West  
Northamptonshire  
Council

**NHS**

Northamptonshire  
Integrated Care Board

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## Independent Chairperson foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Northampton Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual (NSCP) Report for 2022-23. Many children and families have continued to face a range of challenges following the pandemic and this resulted in increased demand for support and protection across the statutory, voluntary and community sector and education settings. The NSCP fully appreciates all the hard work of staff across the children's workforce in delivering their services.

This has also been a year of development for the NSCP in order to better co-ordinate and support agencies working together to safeguard children. It has also been a time of change with the completion of the new arrangements for Integrated Care Boards confirmed for Health commissioners and providers alongside the West Northampton and North Northampton Councils. The redesign of the NSCP sub-groups and Strategic Oversight Group aims to bring greater focus on agencies working together on key areas of priority in safeguarding – Neglect; Criminal Exploitation; Domestic Abuse; and supporting schools and education settings. The NSCP also reports regularly to the Leaders, Lead Members and Chief Executives of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils, the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police & Chief Operating Officer of Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board.



In October 2022 Ofsted completed a Children's Services Inspection and the inspection report highlighted the improvements made in children's care & protection by Northampton Children's Trust, North & West Northampton Councils and the NSCP. The areas for development where multi-agency working is required form the partnership priorities for 2023-25.

The NSCP continues to offer a range of online and face to face safeguarding training for front line workers. This training programme also includes the learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews covering the vulnerability of children and babies under 1 including the risks of co-sleeping; the serious risks for young people who become involved knife crime and violence; and criminal exploitation.

For 2023-25 the Partnership priorities are: working with families to address the neglect of children; addressing the impact of Domestic Abuse for children; and further developing multi-agency working and awareness in the community of Criminal Exploitation of children and young people. We also want to have greater engagement with children and families to gain their feedback on safeguarding services and increase the involvement of the voluntary and community sector in NSCP activities.

The NSCP is not complacent about the importance of continually improving safeguarding across our local area. The Partnership will continue to actively promote agencies working together to address these challenges and support the workforce to deliver services that achieve positive outcomes for children.

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.

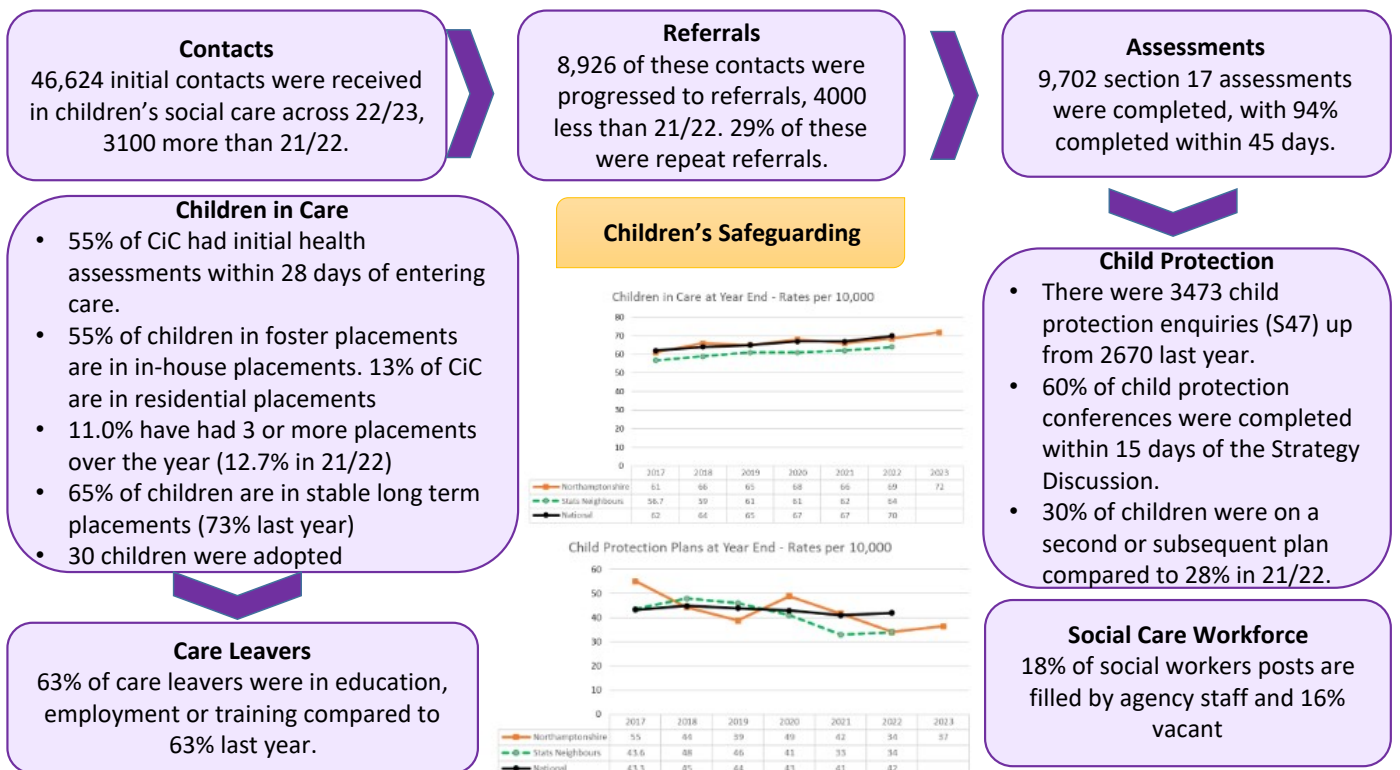
Since the previous Census in 2001 there had been an increase in non-white ethnic groups of 3.5%. It is also relevant to note a more rapid change in the number and proportion of those who describe themselves as 'White Other' becomes evident between 2001 and 2011. 'White Other' means not White British,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



# 2. Progress through 2022-2023

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:



Data shows an increase in the number of initial contacts received by children’s social care through 2022-23 of 3,100 on the previous year 2021-22.

Many families and children who have been managing just below the threshold for social care involvement have seen a reduction in support network and services available during the Covid 19 pandemic. Additional levels of need as a direct result of Covid-19, such as poverty, anxiety, non-school attendance, poor child and adult mental health, loss and bereavement have contributed to an increase in the number of families requiring support due to complexity of needs.

The pressure on these families has been further accentuated by the cost-of-living increase and as such they are likely to experience higher levels of need and risk and families presenting complex, multi-layered needs which are more acute. Whilst post-pandemic and cost of living increase are not specific to Northamptonshire, locally we have an underdeveloped Early Help offer which presents additional complexity in terms of availability of the support.



### 3. Progress of the NSCP Business Plan priorities for 2022-23:

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

#### Priority 1. Taking positive action early enough to protect children

##### Early Help

The aim is that children and families receive more appropriate help at an earlier stage, which makes a difference to their lives.

The Early Help Strategy is supported by a refreshed action plan with stronger ownership and driven by the Early Help Partnership Board. Early Help provision has been strengthened through additional staffing:

- Increased and strengthened Partnership Co-ordinator team within Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which supports the partnership Early Help response.
- All schools have a named link Partnership Co-ordinator from Northamptonshire Children’s Trust who communicates regularly and offers practical support with Early Help Assessment processes.
- Two Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Education Leads posts have been created, working directly with schools across West and North Northamptonshire, offering support and guidance

- Early Help partnership co-ordinators, Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) senior management, and partner representatives have completed multi-agency working sessions to enhance knowledge around threshold application, ensuring the right help at the right time for children and families.

### Early Help Assessments

- There has been a review of the Early Help Assessment within Northamptonshire Children's Trust to ensure it supports the Supporting Families programme for data collection and outcomes achieved; a new closure summary was introduced, and a new Family Achievement log will be implemented during 2023-2024.
- 100% Supporting Families payment by results target achieved for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

**Independent scrutiny:** *The work of the Early Help Partnership Board is critical to drive improvements in the help that is offered to children and families at an early stage when problems are first identified. The additional staff mentioned above should help with this but it is critical that everyone understands the nature of the help needed by families when problems first emerge and what the practical and emotional support is that will make a difference. Recent Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have shown that the necessary clarity about what should be offered at an early help stage is still a work in progress.*

### Neglect

Neglect continues to be the main Abuse Category in Child Protection Plans and the highest category for why children come into care.

Given the concerns relating to Neglect across Northamptonshire a key message is that Neglect is seen as a priority for the whole partnership and support this area to develop fully as we head into 2023-2024. A Neglect Sub Group has been created to monitor the extent of neglect in the county and co-ordinate a multi-agency response. The group was formed in the last quarter of the reporting period and has established a comprehensive three-year delivery plan, with identified measures of impact, in response to the issue of neglect and has established a well-attended multi-agency group and robust working group structure. A data scorecard is currently under development.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Graded Care Profile 2 toolkit continues to be rolled out across all agencies via a suite of face-to-face training facilitated by a group of trainers within the partnership to support practitioners to use the tool appropriately and effectively. Feedback from attending practitioners has been positive.

**Independent scrutiny:** *The work on neglect is a fundamental part of the NSCP's work. The score card must be outcome focused so that it measures the benefits to children and families and not just internal processes.*

### Turnaround programme

Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service has introduced the new Turnaround programme; this work provides support to the young people at the earliest opportunity to prevent further escalation into the criminal justice system.

### Housing Protocol for 16–17-year-olds

16–17-year-olds housing protocol has been refreshed and the action plan is progressed. Training on the protocol has been delivered jointly by Northamptonshire Children's Trust and Housing in North and West Northamptonshire; this has increased staff knowledge and improved joint working.

### Safe sleeping campaign

The Northamptonshire Safer Sleeping campaign was re-run over from mid-December to 31 December 2022 through social media by North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council and partners. A multi-agency group oversaw this campaign which had advice on the baby's sleeping position, planning a safe sleep space, riskier unsafe sleep situations such as parents/carers alcohol misuse and also newer advice on the cost of living and keeping warm

- Alcohol
- Drugs (both prescribed and recreational)
- Smoking
- Premature babies
- Safe Temperature

The assets were circulated on Facebook and Twitter and the following is the feedback received:

Media Platform	Reach	Post clicks	Reactions, comments
Facebook	13,467	132	23
Twitter	7,478	47	9

During the reporting period two deaths have been attributed to unsafe sleeping arrangements and the findings have been shared with the group responsible for the safer sleeping campaign to ensure messages are incorporated within the campaign.

### **Family Hubs**

The Family Hub and Start for Life Programme is a multi-million-pound project being developed by North Northamptonshire Council to improve life chances for children, young people and their families in North Northamptonshire and is moving forward at pace.

The project – which will see networks established to boost the provision of services aimed at families - has received £4million from government between 2022 and 2025 to help families build resilience and thrive.

Key areas where support will be provided are for:

- Mental health – during pregnancy and beyond
- Parenting
- Infant feeding
- Home learning – to promote early language and literacy development

The first two networks are set to be established in Wellingborough and Corby later in 2023, while further work will take place to create networks in Kettering and East Northamptonshire over the life of the programme.

Whilst North Northamptonshire Council is taking the lead in this innovative project, many other partners who deliver services to children and young people, including Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, health partners, the Police, education settings and the voluntary and community sector are fully committed and working together to launch and embed this collaborative development.

Family Hubs in West Northamptonshire are being developed by West Northamptonshire Council and work has started about Best Start in Life (BSiL) Initiatives. Whilst West Northamptonshire was not awarded any grant funding to support this development, public health is leading on this area of development which will be a top priority for 2023-2024.

Best Start in Life BSiL initiatives and development will be aligned in West Northamptonshire Council with the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), where placed based services will be brought together to best serve the community and meet the needs of children, young people and families. Whilst West Northamptonshire are leading on this area, specifically through Public Health, this is a partnership with other agencies including the voluntary sector. 2023-24 will develop this area significantly.

A Peer-on-Peer review by colleagues in Lincolnshire in May 22 found:

*‘Clear vision for improvement for Children and Families Support Services in Northamptonshire Children’s Trust and commitment from all to work with families and partner agencies. Improved partnership working, with evidence of collaborative working’*

### **Evidence of impact in addressing priority 1**

- The number of Early Help Assessments have increased indicating our Early Help offer is improving. Schools and Children and Family Support Services are the main contributors, with around 400 more by schools during 2022-23.
- Increase in children and families supported via Early Help Assessments and stepped down to Early Help.
- Zero tolerance of young people being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

- Re-referrals overall across the last quarter of 2022-23 saw increases but are overall lower than this time last year. It is anticipated that the strengthened model in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and developments in Children and Family Support Services/Early Help will continue to support appropriate reductions going forward. Steps have been taken to strengthen the Early Help partnerships with Partnership Support Team (Early Help MASH) being placed in the MASH pods and a leaner step-down process.
- Both Councils have a clear vision around developing family hubs and support families.

## Priority 2. Take positive action early enough to protect children, to support children, young and families who are at risk of exploitation and to effectively work as a partnership and support our staff

Through the reporting period, significant work has been undertaken to strengthen the county's response to Child Exploitation through various measures overseen and driven by the partnership's Child Exploitation Sub Group and its structure of Working Groups. Learning from local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews has supported and informed areas for development and strengthening our response to Child Exploitation which will continue as a priority through 2023-2024.

Findings from two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews relating to the deaths of two victims due to knife crime has supported and informed the Child Exploitation Sub Group structure, action plan and processes.

### Knife Crime

Knife crime is a priority for Northamptonshire Police. A specific Force wide operation is in place to address this concern – Op Sceptre. It is vital that professionals in Northamptonshire seek to reduce the very real risk of death and injury that knives cause within our county, and what we need to do to achieve this.

Northamptonshire Police have put measures in place to help tackle knife crime:

- Every day every Op Sceptre incident is discussed to ensure the right ownership and the right direction for the most effective way of dealing with it.
- We implemented the Knife Crime NICHE (police crime record system) template to make sure we investigate every single Op Sceptre related crime in the best way we can.
- We also developed an easy-to-use 'Op Sceptre Knife Crime Investigation Guide' which outlines the minimum expectations when dealing with any Op Sceptre related incident.
- Op Sceptre 'weeks of action' have been conducted.
- The LPAs (Local Policing Areas) identify Op Sceptre nominals at the TCG (Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group) where a bespoke, longer-term prevention and intervention plan is agreed and implemented.
- We are working on a new approach with a company called Upskill. This targets individuals who will not engage with the Police.

These measures are in direct response to tackling knife crime in the county and from findings of two local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews which sadly involved the fatalities of two young people.

### Child Exploitation Hub

A Child Exploitation hub is in development 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.

It is anticipated that the partnership will have a fully operational Child Exploitation Hub by the end of the next financial year and will ensure a joined up, co-ordinated response and package to these victims.





## Anonymous Case Study to demonstrate good practice

MG was a young person heavily entrenched in criminal exploitation with conclusive grounds National Referral Mechanism status and deemed a victim at significant risk of harm. Despite been part of a police operation deeming him as such, he could not breach the silent code of conduct which is the unwritten rule in these contexts.

Joint visits were undertaken with the police and social care to support him and his family, however, due to fear of retribution MG showed behaviours which were consistent with trauma responses and intervention at this point to reduce risk and vulnerability was not successful due to his reaction to attempted intervention. After two arrests in a matter of days for possession with intent to supply, he had a significant amount of debt bondage. When considering 'Reachable Moments' which often occurs when a young person is in hospital from being injured or in custody following arrest, MG was visited by his Social Worker and Youth Offending Service worker who reassured him that he was now safe.

Police worked closely with services and recognised the immediate risks to MG. MG was arrested in a trap house and a significant amount of Class A and monies seized. A couple of days later MG was stopped and searched, he was alone, he had 348 wraps of Class A and cannabis located in his bedroom. He was police protected. The level of risk was high because of the amount of debt bondage. MG was inconsolable and agreed to relocate with his family, sharing that he needed to be out of the area and recognised the risks he was facing. Appropriate multi-agency professionals meetings were arranged including a complex strategy meeting.

Police, Youth Offending Service, Social Care, Barnardo's were frequently in contact, and social care funded the whole family to go to a seaside town for 12 days, having positive family time and a chance for MG to recover and reflect. Family have shared how grateful they were and mother shared that it has been emotional seeing her child being able to be a child again after being exploited for so long.

Multi-agency professionals are to discuss the future care plan and how to keep the family together once they were out of the area and MG tried to rebuild his life. Professionals are still working with parents as partners. A mentor who was funded by social care remains heavily involved and has supported MG throughout this process giving him consistency and continuity and ability to speak with his primary and significant trusted adult.

## Response to Domestic Abuse

Processes have been refined to streamline how the safety of children at domestic abuse incidents is considered following their status as 'Victims' under the new Domestic Abuse Act. Under Operation Encompass, screening by Police ensures a notification is submitted, when appropriate, to schools, health services, Child and Family Support Services and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Teams where it is felt threshold for targeted Early Help is met.

***Independent scrutiny:** Assessing the impact of Operation Encompass would be helpful. Whilst information about domestic incidents is passed to agencies especially schools, the impact of this information sharing is not well known.*

## Community of Practice

A forum has been developed that allows multi-agency practitioners from across Northamptonshire to build relationships and mutual understanding, promote best practice, share learning, and build expertise in Child Exploitation across the system.

This forum uses the Tackling Childhood Exploitation (TCE) 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 multi-agency relationships.

## Lydia's story

A video has been developed to tell Lydia's story, a child sexual exploitation (CSE) survivor. Lydia provides a candid account of how she experienced child sexual exploitation as a child, and her thoughts and feelings towards

professionals. The video was split into two edits:

1. A public facing recording with Lydia's identity protected, to educate parents on spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation, and
2. An internal training tool, where Lydia has waived her anonymity in order to take part in an interview with professionals, to speak frankly about her experiences and the kinds of behaviours that professionals should be looking out for when dealing with young people at risk of child sexual exploitation.

### **Child Exploitation Film**

A new film focussing on child exploitation is being developed and filmed and due to be launched in early summer 2023. The video, primarily aimed at parents, has been specially commissioned for NSCP with funds from the Department for Education (DfE).

The film aims to highlight the signs of child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) by sharing the stories of two young people who are being criminally exploited.

It is important to understand that young people who are caught up in this type of activity often do not see themselves as victims - as those who are exploiting them make them feel important, respected, and looked after. Parenting is difficult and child criminal exploitation is complex. We want to give parents greater understanding to help them spot any possible signs of exploitation and provide details of where to access help and support.

Northamptonshire Police has led on its creation on behalf of the partnership. The video is to be promoted widely via social and digital media channels, and through NSCP and partner websites.

In addition, the film will be shared with professionals and with schools and colleges in the county, an education pack will also be developed.

### **Hotel Watch**

Continues to educate hoteliers across Northamptonshire on how to identify and report child exploitation.

### **Vulnerable Adolescent Panel (VAP)**

During 2022, a Vulnerable Adolescent Panel Co-ordinator was appointed and the role of VAP has continued to strengthen.

The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel, won the Centre for Child Protection's 2022 Collaboration Award and was also awarded an NHS England Safeguarding Star, for its collaborative work in tackling child exploitation.

Panel feedback:

*"The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel is an impressive nomination with strengths in child protection, creativity, collaboration, and impact. The panel felt that protecting and safeguarding adolescents can be powerful when derived from a peer/community-wide approach that holds the child/children in a safe extra familial space – as this nomination evidenced.*

*There is strong information sharing leading to essential decision-making, important learning, communal responsibility, common vision, and shared aims linked to emerging and existing extra-familial risks for young people. This is an innovative and outstanding example of multi-agency collaboration drawing heavily on strength-based practice with huge potential to positively impact on professional development, community understanding, and keeping young people safe".*

**Independent scrutiny:** *The work of the Vulnerable Adolescent Panel (VAP) is critical to ensure the right coordinated action is taken for those young people who are identified as being at high risk of exploitation. The external recognition of the VAP is really helpful. The case study further below on the next page shows how the VAP can be effective.*



The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel heard 124 referrals in the year to 5 April 2023.

- 51 % of these referrals were for children not open to social care
- 30% were open to a social worker and 13% were open to YOS.
- 81% referrals were for males.
- The average age of young people referred into VAP was 15 years.

Themes identified by panel have included a gendered response by professionals to criminal and sexual exploitation, a need for practitioners to understand cannabis use by young people as an indicator of exploitation and a disproportionate number of referrals for young people with neurodevelopmental disorders. A number of these themes have also been identified in a recent Child Safeguarding Practice Review and by the child exploitation peer review. These themes are reported by panel into Child Exploitation Sub Group and inform the action plan of this group. Panel continues to challenge and educate professionals about use of appropriate language and understanding of the impact of exploitation upon young people's agency.

VAP continues to have excellent representation from across the system with regular attendance from agencies including police, Children and Families Support Service, Children's Social Care, Youth Offending Service, education, health including CAMHS, Barnados, Ngage, Action for Children. Information sharing at panel facilitates a clear understanding of risk and development of effective plans for young people at risk of exploitation. Actions identified to support individual young people have included identifying appropriate disruption processes (such as child abduction warning notices) and referrals into services such as school nursing, Independent Child Trafficking Guardians, Turnaround Project, Guiding Young Minds etc. Recommendations are also made where a support need for parents/carers is identified, this has included training for care homes, referrals to Parents Against Child Exploitation and to CAMHS MBAM workshops.

VAP has made a number of case escalations and has supported Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub referrals where information shared at panel has identified that threshold has been met. Where wider contexts of concern are identified by panel, referrals are made into Community 1 groups. This may be a result of a single referral or where a theme is identified across a number of referrals and has led to disruption action directed by Community 1 such as increased police foot patrols, review of street lighting and direction of youth support resources into identified areas. Intelligence shared by VAP with Community 1 has also supported ongoing workstreams such as the arson task force. In this way, VAP is able to drive a contextual response to child exploitation in our communities as well as ensuring that individual young people at risk and their families have access to appropriate support and intervention

#### **Anonymous Case Study to demonstrate good practice**

X was a 15-year-old who is frequently missing from home and attending the address of a young adult male with a previous history of grooming young people for sexual and criminal exploitation. It is believed that this adult male is grooming X to move and sell drugs. X was not attending school and disengaged from all support agencies. As a result of information shared at panel and placed on police systems, X was police protected after being found at a property of concern. A National Referral Mechanism [NRM] referral was made which was successful. The Vulnerable Adolescent Panel recommended that a Child Abduction Warning Notice be considered, this was put in place and was effective in disrupting the relationship with the adult male of concern. Following this, support agencies were able to re-engage with X and he returned to full-time education.

## Missing Children

- Development of Missing Children Steering Group working with Children's Society using Missing Children Benchmark Toolkit to review process and improve practice. This has resulted in ten workshops reviewing our intelligence led practice and operational processes against the legislation and local protocol, which will feed into a robust action plan to inform practice improvements.
- Dedicated Missing Co-ordinator role linked to Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Police, and Single Service Delivery (Youth Support Team) of missing Home Return Interviews with 80% completed within 72 Hours.
- The Missing Steering Group meets every six weeks. It has strong partnership attendance, and the present focus is to quality assure our processes, systems, and consistency, using the Children's Society benchmarking (national) tool. The group has completed the relevant checklists and identified areas of strength and need. Areas of strength include Northamptonshire Children's Trust's timeliness of return home interviews and how we gain consent from parents. Priority areas for improving our response to missing children are our processes for data capture and information sharing, and how we complete and manage risk assessments. Additionally, our response to looked after children going missing, and work with children's homes also need improvement.

## Evidence of impact in addressing Priority 2

- The last quarter of 2022-23 saw a sharp rise in the number of Public Protection Notices submitted by the police and a spike in knife crime related incidences. This was largely following two separate high profile knife crime incidents in Northampton and reflects the increased police provision but also the multi-agency resource and response to address this increasing issue in the county.
- There are stronger working relationships with a focus on improving outcomes for children, areas of increased collaboration include:
  - i: Commitment to get better understanding and better application of thresholds supported by refreshed threshold training;
  - ii: Partnership agreements to develop CE hub and streamline processes for Child at Risk of Exploitation;
  - iii: Agreement and plans for a review of MASH to support improved productivity and efficiency.
  - iv: Improved practice is evidenced in feed-back and compliments with some good outcomes for children who have suffered exploitation.
- Reduction in the numbers of first time entrance in the criminal justice system.

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

### Training provision

The partnership contributed funding to develop and enhance the training offer available to all partners and staff. Please see Section 4 for further details.

The partnership has agreed to maintain this level of funding in 2023-24 as the requirement for bespoke training around the county's priorities is developed further.

### Local Learning

Learning Summaries are completed and disseminated across the partnership following all Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews giving practitioners local context and enhancing their knowledge.

### NSCP Newsletters

Are produced bi-monthly and disseminated to a large cohort of practitioners across the county on local and national topics to increase and promote awareness of safeguarding.

### Quality of supervision to staff in Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Good quality supervision and support to staff has been a priority for Northamptonshire Children's Trust in the last year. Improved quality of social care practice and management oversight is helping to keep children safe, as evidenced in Ofsted visits and inspections, peer reviews and NCT internal quality assurance.

## Northamptonshire Children's Trust Ofsted Inspection outcome

The Trust has continued to improve services and achieved improved experiences and outcomes for children in the last year.

*'Children in need of help and protection in Northamptonshire receive much better support than they did at the time of the last OFSTED inspection in 2019'*. (Inspecting Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS), October, 2022)

## Multi-Agency Pre-birth Assessment meetings

Tracking of pre-birth cases between health and Northamptonshire Children's Trust has led to improvements in pre-birth assessments and care planning. Joint workshops enable effective working together, supports professionals and leads to better outcomes e.g. Tier 4\* health needs and placements.

*\*Tier 4 refers to specialist services for children and families with severe and complex needs, including child protection services, inpatient child and adolescent mental health services.*

## Health Summit

A Health Summit took place towards the end of the reporting period to give professionals the opportunity to come together to discuss the key priorities across Northamptonshire and consider how these will be conveyed and addressed to and by staff.

## Youth Offending Service (YOS) Multi-Agency Panel

The Youth Offending Service has designed and implemented a multi-agency partnership panel to support prevention and diversion of young people who are on the cusp of offending; this panel facilitates appropriate support by the right agency. Attended by professionals from the Youth Offending Service, Police, Children & Family Support Service, Office for the Police and Fire Crime Commissioner and Voluntary agencies it ensures a collaborative response and supports diversionary outcomes.

- Close relationships have developed to continually improve service delivery, for example review of the use of Police Powers of Protection (PP) in weekly meetings between police and Northamptonshire Children's Trust enables a thorough understanding of the reasons for PP and encourages learning to be fed back into the service; this matter is also under the scrutiny of the strategic partners.
- The issues in Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub concerning productivity and efficiency associated with application of thresholds have been acknowledged e.g. too many contacts/ referrals/ assessments that end with NFA's. Work on this is ongoing.
- Children and Families Support Services continue to deliver Partnership Network events which focus on topical issues, the most recent session was about *substance misuse support across Northamptonshire* with over 300 professionals logged onto the two-hour sessions.
- There continues to be an Early Help Assessment training programme for all professionals to attend.
- Children and Families Support Services continue to support parenting programmes and facilitate the use of Reducing Parental Conflict resources and deliver training to parents and professionals.
- Children and Families Support Services staff are facilitators of the Neglect Graded Care Profile 2 training and will be involved in the roll out delivery to all professionals in support of the Neglect Priority Plan.

## Evidence of impact

- The NSCP digital reach has grown in terms of the monthly number of new visitors to the website and a consistent monthly total of visitors. A very broad range of subject areas have been accessed.
- There has been a positive increasing take-up in signing up to the NSCP newsletter (an additional 700 over the reporting period) which demonstrates more staff are accessing resources, support, and guidance.
- Twitter followers have increased through the NSCP 100 days of safeguarding campaign which delivered key messages across a range of issues.
- Good training offer which includes Research in Practice and Making research count.

**Independent scrutiny:** *These figures demonstrate that the NSCP has got its messages out to more people in the various agencies and this is helpful. The NSCP now needs to go further and explore whether the information provided makes a difference to how practitioners do their work.*

Towards the end of the reporting period, the NSCP has refreshed and updated its governance arrangements and Business Plan with themed priorities for 2023-25, which will be taken forward in plans 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

## 4. Training

### E-Learning Training

During 2022-23, across the partnership there was a total of 7829 E learning courses commenced, with 5960 course completions. This course completion rate and cost per course is in line with the previous year's outturn.

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.

An annual piece of work undertaken by the Training & Development Sub Group is to review all e-learning content to ensure it is fit for purpose and aligned with the NSCP policies and procedures. This review is currently in progress. The below table indicates that Education colleagues are the biggest user of the eLearning programme with early years and schools/higher education utilising 56% of the licences. This is followed by the Voluntary Sector at 19% with other sectors having smaller usage. There is no recorded usage from the Police or Probation Service which is being explored by the partners.

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

- **98% 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.**
- **93% of learners who completed an impact evaluation agreed or strongly agreed the course they had taken had a positive impact on their practice;**
- **66% confirmed that they had shared the results of the learning with colleagues**

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.

### Examples of feedback from participants in three-month post course evaluation

*We have been able to use the knowledge gained across the organisation with other key personnel also completing it. It has allowed us to become compliant with an aspect of our governing bodies requirements for safeguarding*

*Recognising signs of anxiety, stress, and more generally people behaving differently, and how to open conversations about what I have noticed. Communication, and understand when to speak and when to let others speak*

*I feel more confident in my understanding of the methods groomers use to radicalise young people as well as the signs and symptoms of a young person potentially at risk of being radicalised*

### Face-to-Face/virtual Multi-Agency Training

The partnership relaunched its face-to-face/virtual delivery training offer in the last two years after an extended period when no face-to-face offer was funded. Since 2021-22 the offer has expanded and now comprises the delivery of seven training courses to partners across Northamptonshire.

The courses being delivered are:-

1. Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Author training
2. Threshold and Pathways
3. Reducing Parental conflict
4. Domestic Abuse
5. Graded Care Profile 2
6. Trauma Informed Practice training
7. Working together to Safeguard Children

During 2022-23, 1556 practitioners attended a face-to-face/virtual course run by the NSCP. This is a 50% increase on 2021-22. Out of those courses offered the highest take-up was for the Trauma Informed Practice training, followed by Thresholds and Pathways and then Reducing Parental Conflict.

Agency take-up was positive with the Education Sector accounting for 32% of places, Northamptonshire Children's Trust with 18% of places and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust with 16% of places, followed by the Police with 13%, Early Years Providers at 7% and the Voluntary Sector at 6%. Smaller percentages were made up from the other agencies.

## 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.

Whilst no Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews have been published in the reporting period, learning from ongoing reviews has been progressed and informed work priorities.

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 2022-2023

### **Suicide Prevention Package in schools**

A school support package has been created to provide guidance for schools in Northamptonshire in the event of a suspected death by suicide in a school community. It was developed by local partners, including teachers and other staff in schools in Northamptonshire, and incorporating lessons learnt from the review of a local suicide case.

The effects of a suicide can be devastating and the impact felt by many. Schools need support to feel prepared on how to respond to a critical incident such as a death by suicide. Effective plans and actions are important to help those affected to grieve and recover and could support the prevention of further suicides.

The package offers guidance to support in decision making during this difficult time. Suicide deaths can be complex. This tailored package includes steps that can be followed in the event of suspected death by suicide in a school community. It also provides support to schools in improving emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils in the short and longer term.

### **Children and young medically fit for discharge but experiencing delays in their discharge from hospital**

The Children's Transformation Team within the Integrated Care Board has developed a multi-agency paediatric escalation group to improve the experience of children and young people who are medically fit for discharge but experiencing delays in their discharge from hospital. The aim of this group is to support professionals across the system where solutions to discharge were outside the scope of the usual internal and multi-agency escalation processes to find a timely resolution.

The multi-agency escalation group is made up of representatives from across the children's system with social care, community NHS providers and acute hospital staff including Safeguarding Designate and Named leads attending and focuses on those children and young people who are:

- In an acute hospital bed, but medically fit for discharge and there were barriers to discharge
- In an acute hospital for mental health reasons
- In an acute hospital for physical stabilisation of an eating disorder
- Escalating needs in the community and the young person was at risk of presenting to an acute hospital

The purpose of the group is to:

- To have a system view of children and young people experiencing prolonged delayed discharges from hospital.
- To help find solutions to help overcome challenges or blocks within the discharge pathway for individual children and young people to find a timely resolution.
- To provide a system-wide, regular, point of escalation when needed.



- To provide assurance to the relevant regulatory bodies within Northamptonshire that necessary actions were being taken to ensure children and young people were cared for within the safest and most appropriate settings to meet their needs.

### Anonymous Case Studies to demonstrate Good Practice

#### Case 1

Young person in Care aged 17 years. The young person had been residing in hospital since August 2022. Young person had been admitted with self-harming behaviours from a placement in Northampton, which then served notice on admission as they felt unable to continue to meet the young person's needs. The young person was the responsibility of an out of area authority and there had been very little engagement with social and health care services from the originating area. The staff on the ward felt the young person was 'stranded' with no one taking responsibility for their ongoing care.

The escalation group supported the commencement of a proactive dialogue between the multi-disciplinary teams across both areas to formulate a discharge plan. The young person was discharged back to the originating area within two months.

#### Case 2

Child aged 2 years old who had been in hospital since birth. There had been challenges to discharge due to complexity of the care package and the family situation. The group were able to trouble shoot any barriers across social care and health to ensure there was wrap around multi-agency oversight of progression at each stage of the discharge pathway that would support child to go home.

#### Case 3

Child aged 10 years old with diabetes who was admitted to hospital three times over the course of months with unstable diabetic management at home. Family and young person were unable to safely manage his diabetes at home due to a variety of reasons that eventually meant the child could no longer live at home. The escalation meetings provided a forum to look at all aspects of the child's health and care support to ensure there was a multi-agency oversight and plan in place to support a safe discharge into an appropriate setting that could meet the child's complex needs.

### 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.

In October 2022 Ofsted found that:

*Children with SEND who are supported by the Disabled Children's Team benefit from a consistent social worker who knows them well and have skills in capturing the voice of the child.*

*Practice in the disabled children's team to assess and support disabled children and their families is stronger. Social workers know their children well and use a wide variety of communication styles to gain the child's voice.*

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\* Training and events run by partners and Northampton Parent Forum Group.

*\*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.*

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.

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. This requires ongoing focus as it remains an area of some challenge and Ofsted highlighted this as an area that requires further development.

The Disabled Children's Team have strong relationships with colleagues in education, and health within the Integrated Care Board and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust including CAMHs, Community Team for People with Learning Disability (CTPLD) and partners with the local Parent Forum Group (NPFPG) 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.

With recent rapid reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews findings, 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.



### **Children and Families Fleeing Conflict**

In 2022-23 safeguarding partners have been working together to welcome and support families arriving in Northamptonshire as a result of fleeing conflict. Four Contingency Hotels have been in place for adults in the last year in Northamptonshire and several referrals were received from adults who claimed to be children (37 referrals), which resulted in a brief enquiry or age assessment being completed. Out of the 37 referrals, 8 have been assessed as being a child and have been accommodated as children in care.

The National Transfer Scheme (NTS) has been utilised for the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) to deliver a fairer and more equitable distribution of responsibility for UASC across the UK, ensuring they receive the support and accommodation they need. Since 1st Sept 2022 until end of March 2023, the National Transfer Scheme referrals in addition to spontaneous arrivals contributed to an increase in separated children being supported in Northamptonshire (267 between the age of 14 to 24 children in care or care experienced young adults at the end of March 23). The top three countries from where the young people have fled and seeking safety in the UK are Sudan, Eritrea and Afghanistan. These young people experienced trauma of losing their families and everything they ever loved and have endured long journeys to safety on their own. Some were illegally trafficked or left in the county, all these aspects requiring a prompt and collective response from professionals and communities.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched by the government on 14 March 2022. This scheme allows people living in the UK to sponsor a named Ukrainian national or family to come to live in the UK with them, providing they have suitable accommodation to offer. As part of the Government's Homes for Ukraine Schemes Northamptonshire Children's Trust undertook 1136 sponsor checks across North and West Northamptonshire and 15 social worker risk assessments in relation to the arrangements. Partners have worked together to ensure help in accessing local services, health, education and skills training, social care and learning English have been in place for these families and individual children to ensure they feel safe and settled.

### **Education**

Schools in the county continue to work extremely hard to safeguard their pupils, even though recovery from the Covid Pandemic has made things very difficult.

It seems that the achievement gap has widened in schools with our pupils from the most vulnerable families needing a great deal of extra support to catch up. The cost-of-living crisis has added to this very complex problem, as families face serious day to day pressures to meet their children's needs.

Research from across the country shows that children from more vulnerable communities frequently come into school with less developed repertoire of cognitive and linguistic skills. The number of pupils with Special Educational Needs has risen exponentially, and the Special Schools and Academies are over capacity, which leads to mainstream school educating pupils with increasingly complex needs.

There are new challenges all the time too, for example the availability of vapes to children and the ever-changing world of internet safety.

Despite these challenges, schools staff are dedicated to do all they can to ensure that children in their care are safeguarded. Across our county, leaders, teachers and support staff continue to strive for the very best outcomes in terms of resilience, life chances and academic achievement for all of our children.

Following the publication of The Care Review Implementation Plan in January 2023, the NSCP has taken the decision to include the Education sector as the fourth Statutory partner not only in anticipation of revised legislation in due course, but also recognising that education plays a critical role in keeping our children and young people safe and their contributions must be heard through every steam of the partnership's work.

It has been agreed to create a Safeguarding in Education Sub Group and plans and draft Terms of Reference are in development for the group to be in place during 2023-24.

A key objective of this group will be to gain children and young people's voices, views and thoughts about safeguarding and across the partnership's priorities.

Safeguarding in Education which works across both Local Authorities in Northamptonshire will be disaggregated from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and each Local Authority will have their own Safeguarding in Education Leads.



## Elective Home Education (EHE)

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

### North Northamptonshire Council

The number of parents electing to home educate their children has continued to increase since the last report from 705 recorded as of 31 March 2022 to 803 recorded as of 31 March 2023.

Whilst the reason for the increase is unclear, reasons are now being recorded in accordance with categories set by the Department for Education (DfE) and are set out as below:

Physical Health	31	Risk of school exclusion	1	Suggestion/pressure from the school	0
Mental Health	136	Difficulty in accessing a school place	2	Dissatisfaction with the school - general	91
Health Concerns Relating to COVID-19	36	Philosophical or preferential reasons	158	Dissatisfaction with the school - SEND	48
Did Not Get School Preference	21	Religious reasons	17	Dissatisfaction with school - Bullying	65
Permanent exclusion	0	Lifestyle choice	<b>79</b>	Parent/guardian did not give a reason	27

### West Northamptonshire Council

902 children were electively home educated in West Northamptonshire at the end of March 2023. The cohort comprises 54 more children than one year ago. 37.4% of children educated at home have been educated at home for more than two years, the lowest proportion since August 2022. In broad terms, the higher the national curriculum year group, the more children are educated at home (between years 1-11). 46.8% of children electively educated at home are in national curriculum year groups 9-11. Children in national curriculum year group 2 or below account for 9.1% of the cohort.

There are a number of reasons why parents choose to educate pupils at home. West Northamptonshire is currently analysing the current data to understand and address some of the factors that are driving these decisions. There has been a recent increase in pupils who become Elective Home Education after parents state that they don't feel that schools are meeting the pupils needs. There has also been an increase in the numbers of permanently excluded pupils being removed to Elective Home Education following parents not wishing their children to attend any of the available alternative provisions. We are exploring this, along with commissioning a broader range of Alternate Provision providers to support needs. An ongoing support and monitoring programme is offered to all pupils who are Elective Home Education although there is no requirement for parents to take this up.

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

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

### North Northamptonshire Council

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 2023 is: 120

The number of children and young people without a school place (Missing Education) due to permanent exclusion who have not yet started at an Alternative Provision has increased significantly since the previous year:

- As of 31 March 2022 - Without a school place following a Permanent Exclusion: 23
- As of 31 March 2023 – Without a school place following a Permanent Exclusion: 63

This increase reflects the current lack of availability of suitable Alternative Provisions in the county.

### West Northamptonshire Council

Data up to Dec 2022 (latest data available) indicates that there was a total of 165 absent from school on the last day of December 2023. This is an improvement on the previous year's data and there are fewer children absent from school now than at any point in the two years for which figures are available. This time last year there were more

than twice as many children absent from school. Established and robust tracking procedures are in place to locate children absent from school in West Northamptonshire.

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 West Northamptonshire Local Authority 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
- 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

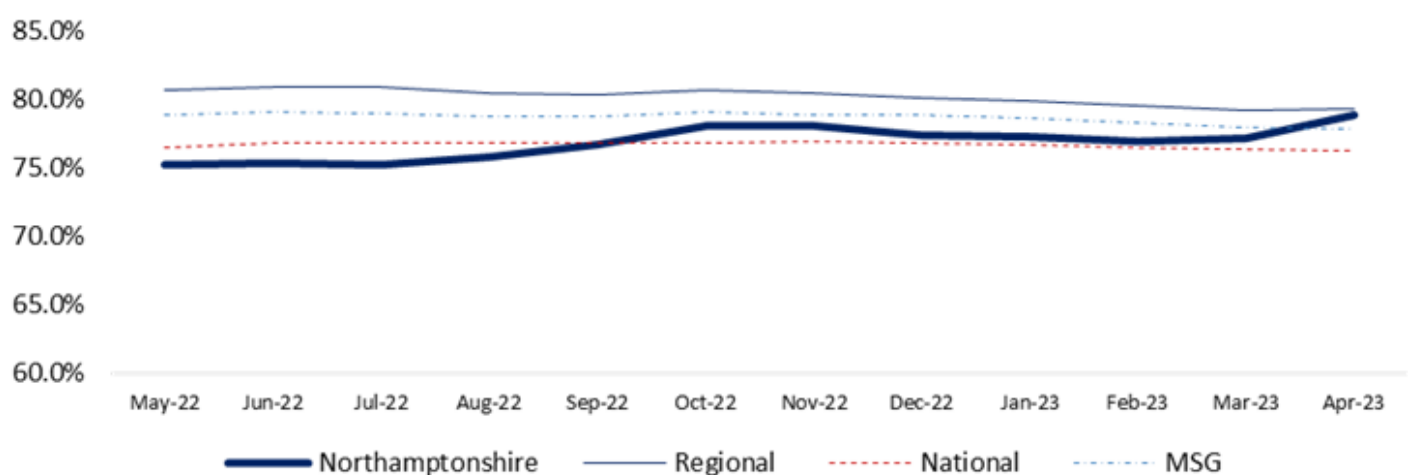
### Domestic Abuse

The partnership has recognised this is an area requiring strengthening and is in discussions with North and West Community Safety Partnerships to develop a single working group to ensure there is a proactive, consistent, joined up response to Domestic Abuse, recognising children who witness domestic abuse are also seen as victims. This is a themed priority for the partnership.

Domestic Abuse demand has continued to remain below forecasted levels as in previous years and the number of incidents continue to not follow along the seasonal variation expected given past data, 10.4% below the forecasted demand in the latest 3 months of this reporting period.

**Independent scrutiny:** *The reasons for this below expected rate need to be explored. It is possible that it represents a reduction in domestic abuse but other reasons are also plausible including a reduction in the trust victims have to report abuse and get the appropriate response.*

The Domestic Abuse conviction rate has significantly improved and in the last three months of the reporting period, Northamptonshire Police had a conviction rate of 84.1%, 8% higher than the national average.



Based on local data:

- 2022-2023 saw 403 community resolutions for domestic abuse.
- 62-71% were for standard risk offences.

- An increased use of OC8 (Community resolution) will have come from evidential difficulties outcomes more than other positive outcomes - taking some positive action.
- Analysis being conducted as to the effectiveness of a convicted criminal reoffending for domestic abuse for OC8 compared to other outcomes and this has shown promising early findings.

Other work through 2022-2023 has included:

- Changes in legislation around Domestic Violence Disclosure Schemes (DVDS) has prompted enhanced resource and activity around the stages of these Clare's Law applications.
- After a decline in performance, Northamptonshire Police's use of DVPN/DVPOs (Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders) has increased, promoting safeguarding and positive outcomes for domestic abuse cases.
- Domestic Abuse Matters training has been repeated to all officers across the force, including to all new officers in public facing roles.

### Children and Young People's Voices

- In response to feed-back 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.

**Independent scrutiny:** *The projects mentioned above to capture the voices of children and young people are commendable. The NSCP is urged to continue these efforts but with a focus on hearing the voices of children and young people who have been abuse or neglected.*

### **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 FTE 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.)

#### **In 2022/2023:**

Designated Officers received 538 contacts - this is a 25% increase (n109) from 2021/2022 (n429)

- 27% (n149) contacts were managed as consultations, compared with 21% (n89) in 21/22 and
- 72% (n389) were managed as Designated Officers referrals, compared with 79% (n340) in 21/22

When the vast majority of cases from 2022/23 have concluded and a full dataset is available, findings are expected to reflect increased volume and associated consultations and referrals from the return of pupils to schools after the Covid-19 pandemic. On initial review of incomplete data for the year, timeliness of conclusion of cases continues to be positive, with most cases completed within 12 weeks. Where cases are complex or reliant on detailed criminal investigations (e.g. Police IT analysis or historic sexual misconduct claims) there is necessary and justified delay in these cases being concluded.

Increased referral and consultation volumes has put considerable strain on the Designated Officers service, concurrent with the introduction of a new IT system and changes to administrative support.

A clear pathway for consultations has been introduced, alongside a new referral process. This commenced in January 2023 and has helped to streamline the referral process. Further developments are continuing (moving consultations to a web-based form and opportunity for real-time feedback) which will be communicated to partners.

The new Designated Officers IT system ensures that referrals are easier to process and track. Whilst there have been expected initial teething problems with the new system, Designated Officers have worked closely with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to address issues and feel there is real benefit to data management – for the Designated Officers service and for referring partner agencies.

#### **Significant areas of work for Designated Officers in 2022/2023 have included:**

Children's residential homes continue to make regular referrals.

Designated Officers have identified a number of private residential children's homes referrals in connection with solo placements, where DOLs (Deprivation of Liberty) are in use for young people with significant needs. There are high staffing ratios per child for settings which have been created around the needs of a specific young person, however, Designated Officers have found that the staff employed tend to have limited knowledge and experience of care provision for children with complex needs.

Some of these agencies have a background in adult care, or through delivery of home care packages, and the placements are often unregistered. Designated Officers recognise these placements are commissioned to meet the requirement for local resources for children and young people who have high levels of needs, however, at times the commissioned agencies are not equipped to deal with this level of need.

***Independent scrutiny: The NSCP is urged to explore how it should respond to these issues.***

## Anonymous Case Study to demonstrate Good Practice

A home was set up for a young person in Northamptonshire, placed by another authority. The agency had experience of home care packages and were registered with Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The home took on the care of a 14-year-old with complex needs including ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), mental health needs and with a Deprivation of Liberty Order (DOLS) in place. Local staff were recruited to support this young person. Subsequent referrals to Designated Officers highlighted staff being afraid of the young person and lacked experience to manage his needs, despite training being provided. The young person was relocated with a more appropriate care package in place; however, the agency is now under scrutiny to ensure standards of care are addressed.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust Designated Officers are involved in this process, as the service holds responsibility for allegations made in its area.

### **Other areas of support:**

Designated Officers are working closely with Northamptonshire Children's Trust's Independent Fostering Agency to implement training on managing allegations to both Independent Fostering Agency staff and Northamptonshire Children's Trust foster carers and are working to improve referral pathways.

Designated Officers continue to offer a responsive consultation service to the wider children's workforce so that appropriate referrals are made at the right time to support effective safeguarding management in all agencies.

*\*A Designated Officer is the person who should be notified when it has been alleged that a professional or volunteer who works with children has: behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child (possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.*



## 7. Plans for 2023-2024

### **Launch of the Child Exploitation Hub**

- To implement the recommendations from the peer review including launching of a Child Exploitation hub
- 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

### **Family Hubs**

- The partnership is committed to supporting the development and launch of Family Hubs due for launch later in 2023.



- Initially starting with two key areas and then rolling out across North Northamptonshire in a phased approach. West Northamptonshire will also be developing Family Hubs as part of Better Start in Life (BSiL) initiatives.
- The Neglect Sub Group; will link with the Family Hubs around understanding the impact of early intervention, particularly in relation to neglect.
- The partnership is committed to developing further the Early Help Offer, children and families need early support to prevent crisis and prevent escalation of need.

#### **Serious Violence Duty Partnership**

- Contribute to the development of and strengthen the new Serious Violence Duty Partnership in supporting new initiatives to prevent and support children being exploited.
- There will be additional funding provided to the Youth Offending Service to focus on violence and knife crime, working closely with Police at the point of arrest or suspects.

#### **Review of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub/Front Door arrangements**

- A review of front door arrangements is planned to review the effectiveness of processes and identify any areas to strengthen productivity and efficiencies within the statutory framework timelines to ensure timely, proportionate and appropriate responses.
- Reduce workload to appropriate levels to focus on areas of business that are relevant for front door to statutory services and improve overall performance and ensure productivity and efficiency that is outstanding with skilled and confident staff and policies/procedures/ systems that support practice.

#### **Launch of Child Exploitation video**

- The video will be launched in June/July 2023 and will be promoted widely via social and digital media channels, and through NSCP and partner websites.
- An education pack will be developed that can be shared with professionals and with schools and colleges within the county.

#### **Launch of Neglect campaign**

- The campaign will consist of two elements that will run in parallel; public facing and to enhance professionals' knowledge.
- The campaign will continue until September 2024.

#### **Missing Children**

- 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
- Data intelligence – shared information between police, education, social care, and health in relation to children who go missing and are exploited to support preventative approaches and interventions

#### **Create Safeguarding in Education Sub Group**

- The Safeguarding in Education Sub Group is already in development.
- A structure of Working Groups under the sub group will be developed to address specific areas the partnership wants to strengthen.
- This will include directly hearing the voices of children and young people through an ambitious phased approach initially through a survey for secondary children and young people to take part in.

#### **Strengthening hearing Children and Young People's Voice**

- Develop a mechanism, including focus by the Safeguarding in Education Sub Group, whereby all partnership meetings will start with a focus on a children/ren and young person/people – their experiences, feelings, wishes and thoughts

## 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.

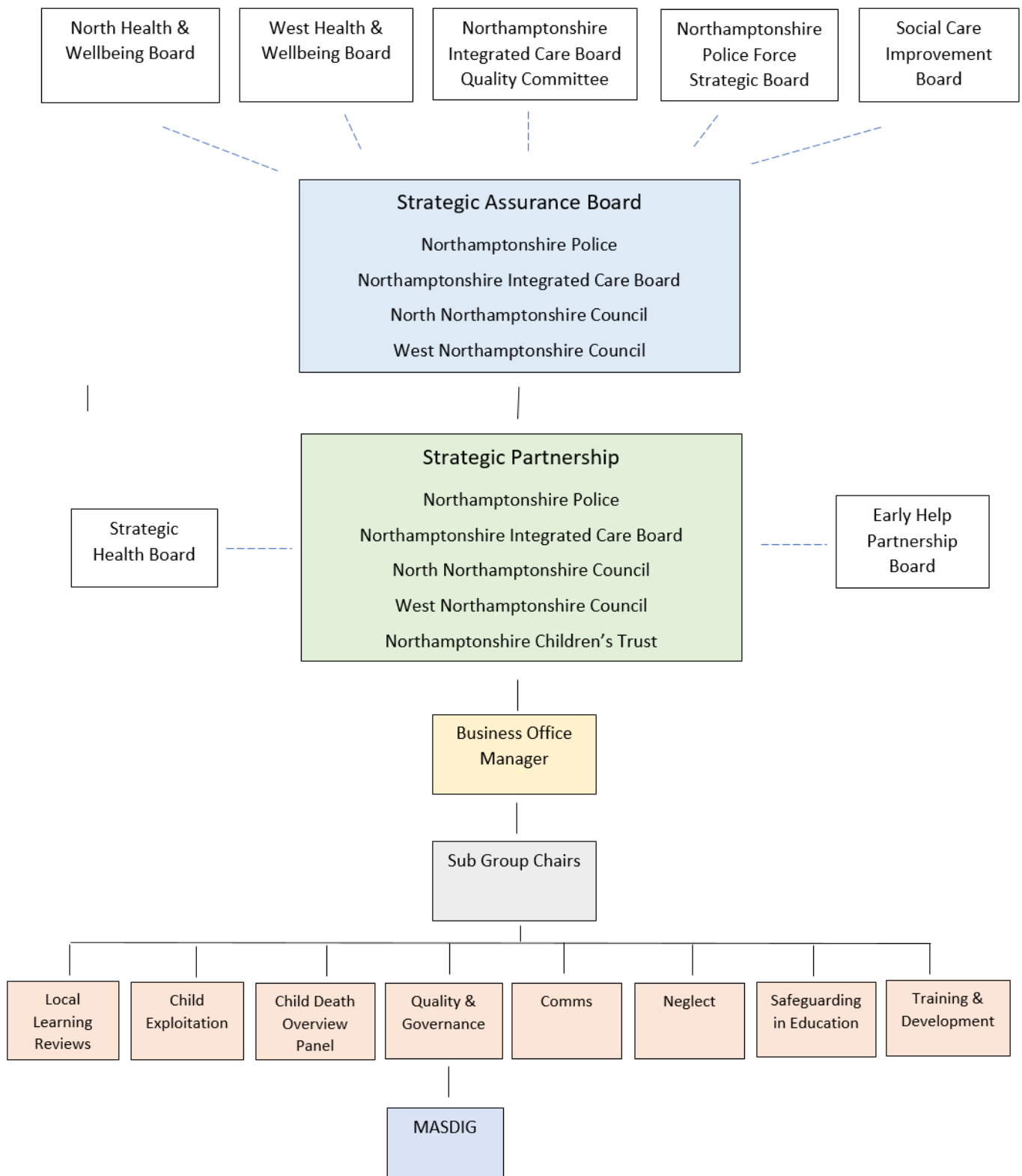
Local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services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



### Strategic Assurance Board

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

The group consists of senior Strategic Leads:

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

### **Full Partnership**

The Full Partnership is scheduled to meet twice yearly.

These meetings were postponed during the Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions; however, meetings have now resumed and a Full Partnership meeting took place in March 2023 and the next is already scheduled for September in the next financial year.

### **Strategic Leads Group**

The Strategic Leads Group has continued to meet on a monthly basis through the first half of this reporting period and then revised to bi-monthly for the second half of the year, which will continue for the foreseeable future.

During 2022-23, Strategic Leads representation has remained consistent:

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

Other members of the group are:

- Deputy Director of Children's Services for West Northamptonshire Council
- Detective Chief Inspector, Northamptonshire Police
- Head of Safeguarding, Integrated Care Board
- Head Teacher, Special School
- Head Teacher, Primary School
- Representative for the Office for Police and Fire Crime Commissioner.
- Independent Scrutineer

Towards the end of the reporting period, the decision has been made to consider education as a fourth statutory partner and as we head into the next financial year, a representative of the Secondary sector will be identified to join this group.

### **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 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 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 Rapid Review process to ensure well informed and comprehensive Rapid Review reports are created that clearly identify 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.

The sub group has focused on agreeing a comprehensive Child Exploitation Strategy supported by an inclusive Delivery Plan and Working Group structure (that sits under the main sub group).

#### Neglect Sub Group

This sub group has been newly formed towards the end of this reporting period following an increase in identifying neglect from reviews and audits.

The sub group has developed a Neglect Strategy and comprehensive two-year Delivery Plan, along with a structure of Working Groups under the main sub group to monitor and progress improvements.

A public facing campaign to increase awareness of neglect is currently being planned for the next financial year.

#### Communication Sub Group

The sub group focuses on the publication of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and a review was published in March 2023.

The group is also responsible for oversight of the NSCP Website and creation of newsletters and bulletins – two areas that the group has found difficult in gaining momentum on and will be a focus of 2023-24.

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 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.

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.

Plans for 2023-24 include strengthening the administration of the process as well as providing a single point of contact for bereaved families.

*Please see Appendix 4 for statistics for the reporting period.*

## Appendix 3 – Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

During the current review period, seven cases have been referred to the sub group for consideration of review. Four of these were agreed to meet the criteria for a rapid review. Only one of these led to the commencement of a new Child Safeguarding Practice Review within the annual review period.

This contrasts with the previous 2021/22 review, where four new Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were commissioned within that year. Additionally, at the start of the previous review period, there were a number of reviews which had commenced prior to April 2021 and were still being progressed. The challenges of managing this level of case review activity were highlighted in the previous annual report and these have to a large extent continued throughout the current review.

The position as of 31 March 2023 is that the overview report for the most recently commissioned review is still being finalised. All other reviews have been finalised and signed off by strategic partners although there are a number awaiting publication during 2023-2024.

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**

Sadly, by the nature of our work, in most of our case reviews children and young people are unable to speak directly in their own voices within our review processes.

There is an absolute expectation that the voice of the child is heard and that the child's lived experience is understood to the very best of our ability in rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews. Reports are structured in such a way as to make this mandatory. We achieve this by:

- Ensuring that front line practitioners and wherever possible family members can describe from their own experience the child or young person's personality, opinions, interests and aspirations.
- Where recordings of the child or young person's own words are available, these are highlighted within the review process.
- Critical evaluation of case records within the scope of reviews, to establish whether the voice of the child is heard, and the child's lived experiences adequately explored and understood within safeguarding practice.

### **Making a difference: Supporting practitioners through safeguarding topic briefings**

The safeguarding partnership has been producing and disseminating focused briefings on safeguarding topics for several years now. These are currently known as Tea Break Guides - with the implication that the guides can be used to support topic learning as an agenda item in team meetings or potentially in more informal discussion settings. Many of the guides have been developed by members of the LLR subgroup, based on learning from case reviews over the years.

Within the current review period the following guides were published or updated on the NSCP website:

- Cross border working
- Neglect of medical needs
- Describe non-compliance

- Cannabis

The topic guide on cannabis was updated to reflect the fact that for some young people in our communities, and the parents and adults working with them, cannabis use is very common and almost normalised. A key CSCR in progress during the current review found that there could be a lack of professional curiosity about the financial implications of significant cannabis use young person - how is the young person funding this habit, and does this put them at risk of criminal exploitation?

The updated guide on cannabis has been published in the new format which we hope is more engaging and helpful.

The LLR Sub group has recognised that we need to understand if practitioners are accessing focused safeguarding topic guidance, whether it provides them with information that helps them in their practice, and to what extent this is making a difference for children and young people that they are working with. We will be seeking feedback from practitioners to explore these issues.

### **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?

The LLR sub group has had learning from good practice as a standing agenda item for some time and several good practice cases have been presented, including some examples with contributions by young people. The subgroup will continue to encourage cases to be submitted and to support a more reflective level of analysis to better understand what works in achieving good outcomes and how this might be embedded and generalised across teams and services

### **Making a difference: Vulnerable adolescents**

Risks for vulnerable adolescents were at the heart of two of our reviews this year. One of these reviews was partially thematic in its approach, looking at the risks for a group of young people who had been victims or perpetrators of knife crime. This has allowed reflection on the wide range of risks and issues that can interact to lead to negative outcomes for young people.

These include the impact of neurodiversity, emotional well-being and mental health needs including self-harm, complex family histories and dynamics, in some cases resulting in adolescent neglect, school exclusion, substance misuse, criminal exploitation, homelessness and financial exploitation, and a culture of carrying knives amongst young people in some of our communities.

There have been a number of initiatives across the safeguarding partnership over the past year focused on strengthening the partnership response to exploitation of vulnerable adolescents, and the findings of our reviews have fed into this. A specific piece of work already completed within the LL subgroup is the previously mentioned updated Cannabis Tea Break Guide



## Appendix 4 – Child Death

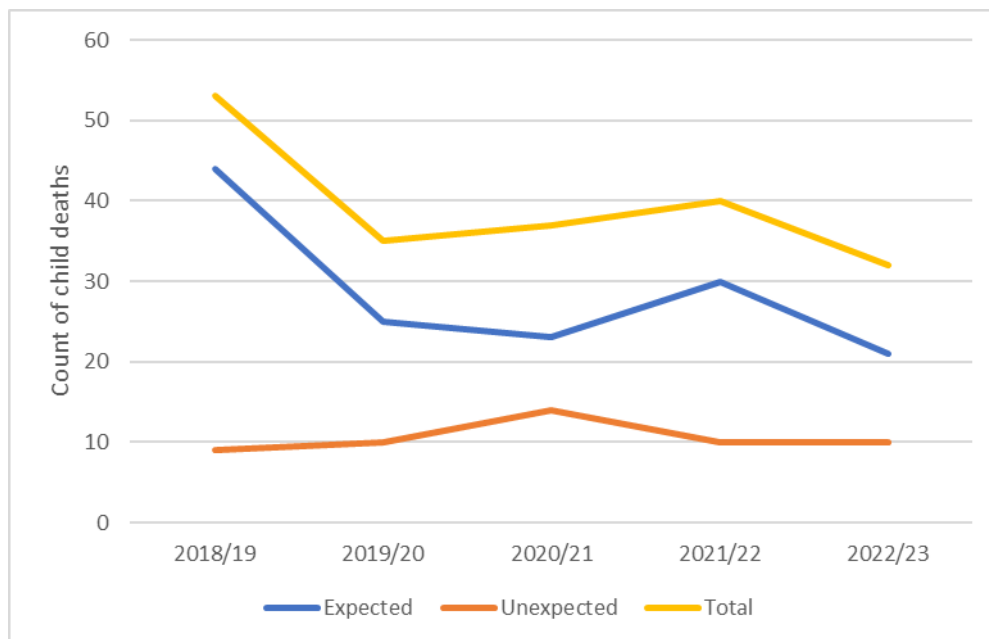
There were 32 deaths last year (2022/23), lower than the previous year and the overall trend since 2018/19 is broadly down (table 2 and figure 3). However, for unexpected deaths, the trend remains flat since 2018/19 despite increases in 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Given that there are small numbers in the data, detailed analysis and conclusions to be drawn are limited.

Table 2. Child death notifications by year

Conclusion	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Expected	44	25	23	30	21
Unexpected	9	10	14	10	10
Not known	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>

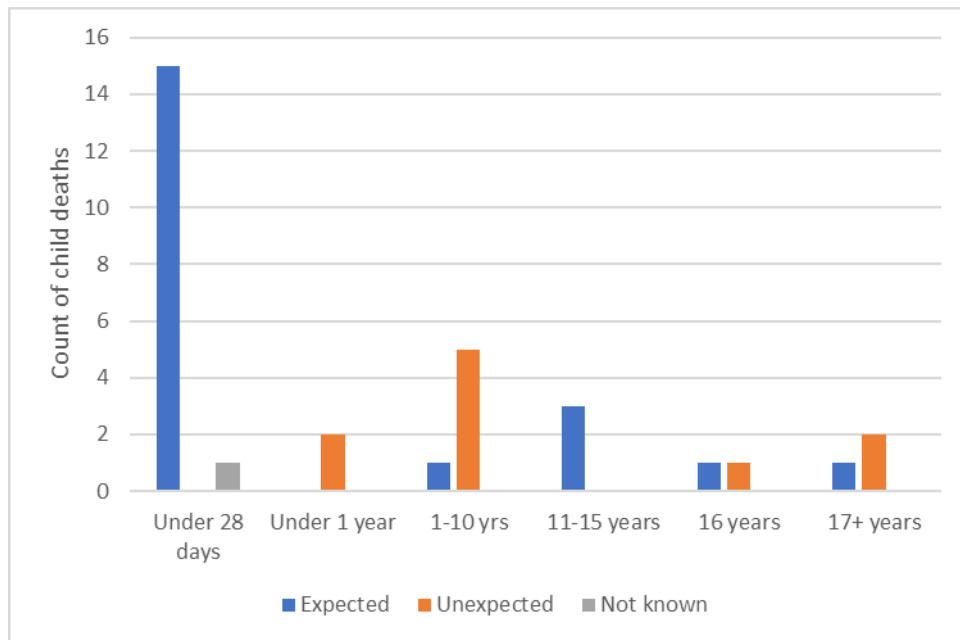
Fig 2. Five year child death notification trends



### Notifications by age

In 2022-23, 50% of all child deaths across Northamptonshire occurred in the first year of life with unexpected deaths occurring more commonly in this age group than any other (fig 3). This is as seen in national figures reported by NCMD.

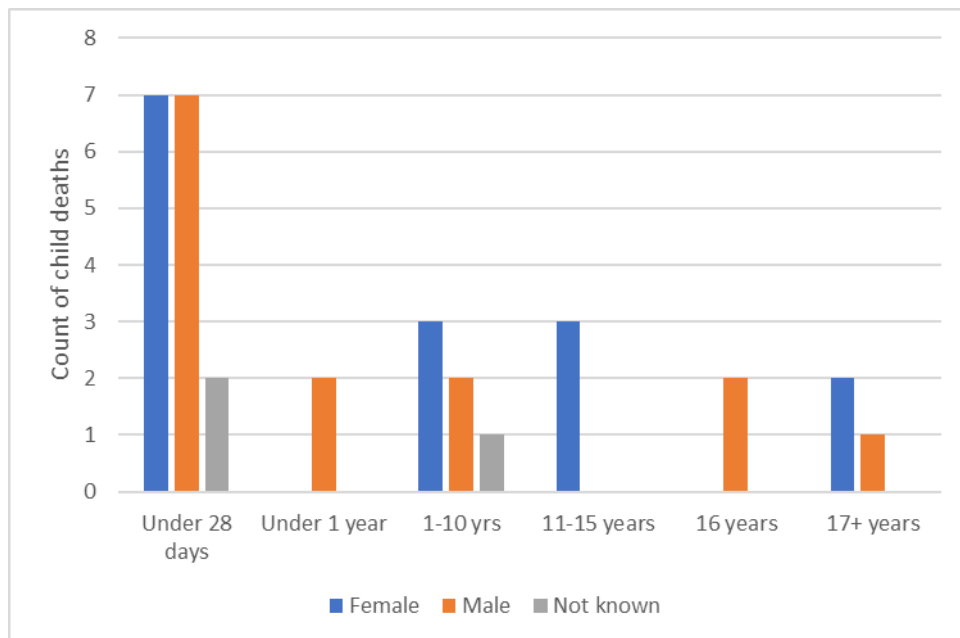
Fig 3. Child death notifications by age-range



**Notifications by gender**

In 2022-23, 47% of child deaths were female and 44% were male. There were 3 deaths where gender was no specified (fig 4).

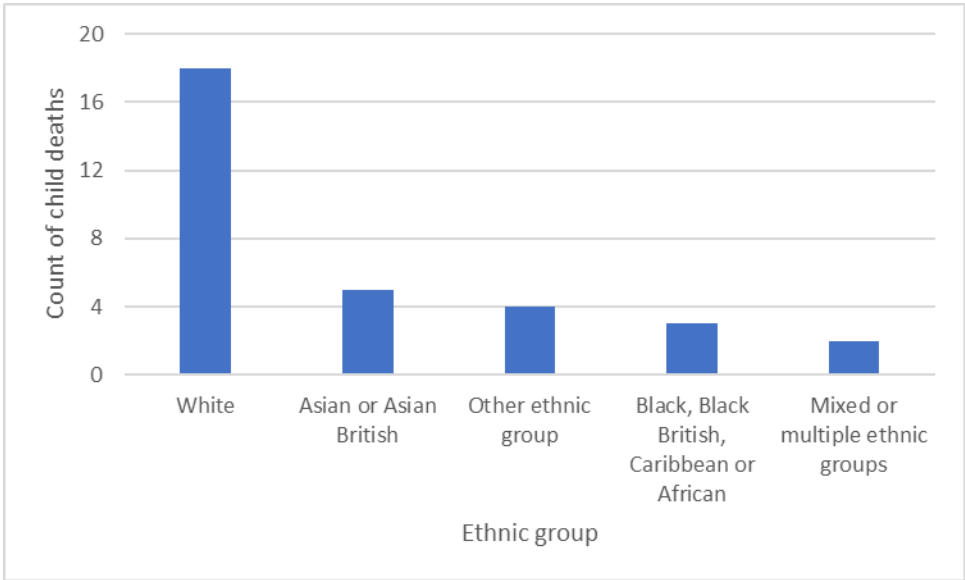
Fig. 4. Child death by gender



**Notifications by ethnicity**

Of the 32 deaths in 2022/23, about 56% were of White ethnicity, 16% Asian and 9% Black (fig 5).

Fig. 5. Child death by ethnicity



## Appendix 5 – Partner Contributions for 2022-2023

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