

Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) Yearly Report

April 2023 – March 2024

Contents

This Yearly Report captures the work of the SSCP for the period April 2023 – March 2024, which is a statutory requirement from Working Together 2023, including learning from reviews and an analysis of how effective the arrangements have been in improving the outcomes for children and families in the city. The report looks at the information that helps us to understand what life may be like for children and young people in our city and examines the activity and impact of partners working together.

Foreword by the Independent Scrutineer of the SSCP	3
SSCP Governance Structure	4
Strategic Priorities 2023 - 2026	5
The Local Authority Context	6
HIOW Constabulary and NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight	7
Financial Contributions	8
Outcome 1: The impact of Neglect	9
Outcome 2: Serious Youth Violence and Criminal Exploitation	12
Outcome 3: Child Sexual Abuse	15
Outcome 4: Participation in Education	18
Outcome 5: Right Service, Right Child, Right Time	20
Looking Forwards for the SSCP	22

Foreword from Scott MacKechnie, Independent Scrutineer

It is my pleasure to introduce the yearly report of the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) for 2023/24.

This yearly report, written in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, details the work that the SSCP has undertaken to carry out and achieve the objectives of its three-year (2023-2026) strategic plan, as well as highlighting contributions from our partner agencies.

This has been my first full year of being the Independent Chair and Scrutineer. My role has provided support and challenge to the partnership. This is an important function and one that I take very seriously. I provide independent oversight of all the work of the partnership. This provides assurance to the safeguarding partners of an independent lens being applied to safeguarding practice, analysis and any resultant recommendations.

I am very aware of the challenges ongoing within the public sector locally and nationally, particularly related to increased demand, as well as budget and workforce pressures. This is highlighted in the report particularly from the Local Authority, showing the real challenges associated with budget pressures, which they have been very transparent about with the public.

Despite this our senior leaders remained dedicated to working collectively to ensure we effectively safeguard and promote the wellbeing of our children and families, showing innovative practise to improve outcomes for children and families.

I personally meet with the senior leads from the statutory partners and the chairs of the sub-groups that drive the business of the SSCP. This supports our wide range of partners to maintain a clear focus to deliver the partnership's priorities and workstreams, but also provides a governance framework for accountability.

At the start of this reporting period, a development day was held with executive group members to review the governance and develop a [new strategic plan](#) for the 2023-2026. New governance arrangements were established, with re introduction of the Executive group and reaffirming the role of existing sub groups, but creating new sub groups to align with the strategic plan. The executive group and partnership board are updated on the key work of the sub groups at each meeting, progressing the strategic priorities of the partnership.

A significant part of my role, alongside the safeguarding partners, is maintaining a "critical friend" overview of organisational changes and inspections. This has been significant in this reporting year. The local authority was inspected by OFSTED as part of the Inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. I was delighted to see the dedication, professionalism and innovation across the local authority result in them moving up to a 'good' grading. This is good news for the city and a strength for our children and families as well as our communities across Southampton.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary also reorganised during this period and assurance was sought of their continued focus on embedding the Child Centred Policing Strategy. Our Health colleagues within NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight (Integrated Care Board), as well as NHS Solent undergoing organisational change consultation, with its progress reported on regularly at the SSCP Executive and Board, with a focus on assurance that changes will not impact on child safeguarding services and responses.

2023-24 has been a busy year for the services and agencies that are part of the SSCP multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and this report highlights some of the ongoing challenges, but also the response to and impact of the multi agency network.

The SSCP will continue to work together on agreed priorities in our strategy but will reactive to new issues as they arise, particularly relating to our statutory duties.

The introduction of Family Help and also the commencement of the [Family Safeguarding model](#) in Autumn 2024 are significant changes to organisational structures and models bring a multi disciplinary 'whole family approach'. The evidence base from other local authorities shows how the approach to working with parents; providing help and support to create lasting change, created by this model has a significant impact and this is an important and exciting time for the City. The implementation will be monitored and governed by the SSCP.

The multi-agency response to child exploitation, has resulted in the introduction of a Risk Outside the Home (ROTH) pilot. This is an innovative project that has evolved during this year and the partnership has been regularly updated on the progress. The pilot was started with a contextual safeguarding conference in October 2023 and will be evaluated by Durham University.

Serious youth violence is an ongoing challenge within Southampton, and as a result a SSCP priority, which is supported by the Violence Reduction Partnership and Safer City Partnership. You will note in the report the considerable investment and commitment to steering young people away from serious violence and the carrying and use of knives that is underway in the city.

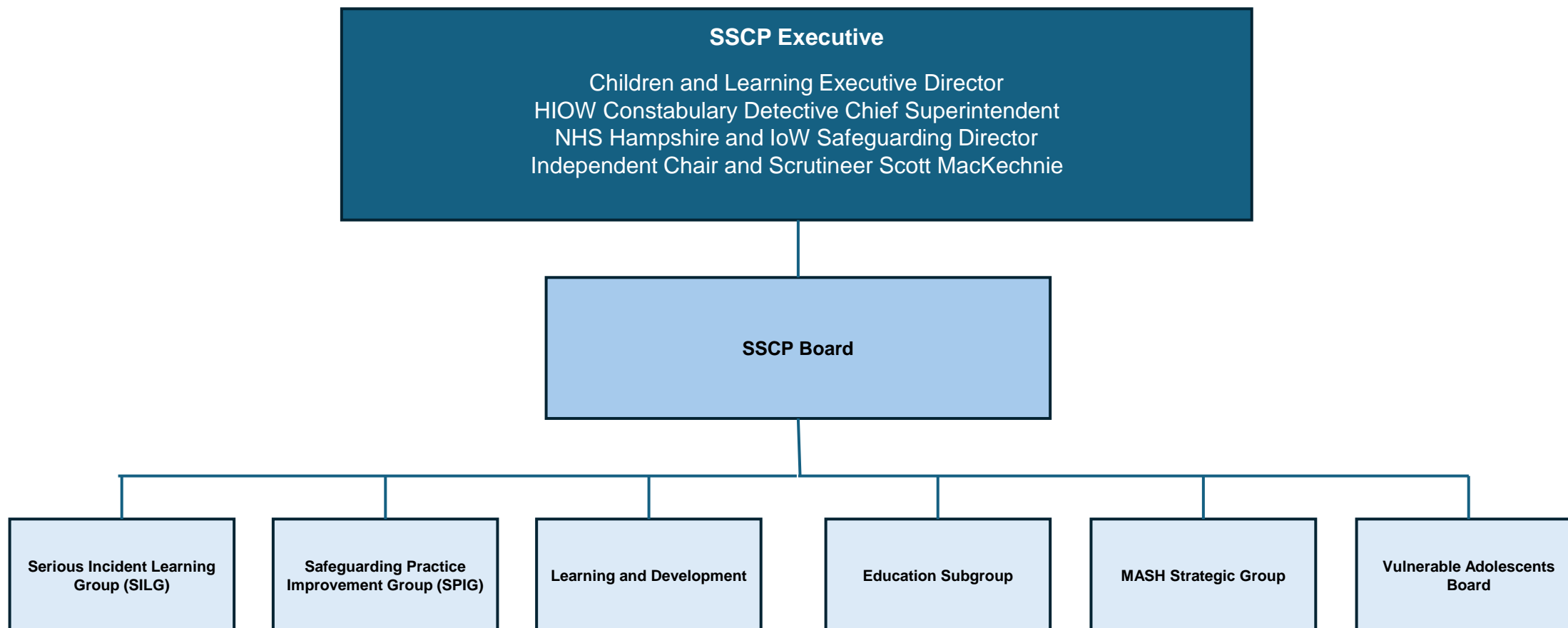
We must ensure our practitioners are supported to do their best for children and their families. The SSCP introduced a learning and development sub group in 2023, who are not provide continuous professional development for the workforce, both providing structured learning and awareness raising for the partnership network.

SSCP have published 3 CSRP's during this year's reporting period and details of each are included later in the report. Each report is significant and unique, but equally very important to the safeguarding system in the city. The recommendation from each report is summarised and part of my role is to ensure that there are plans to embed this learning and monitoring its effectiveness. This will be ongoing, but some of the impact of the implementation of each is included in the report. The voice of children and young people, their families are important to the partnership and the engagement with Uma, has provided some powerful learning for our staff and I once again thank her for her bravery and willingness to engage with the partnership team.

The engagement with Uma, and then other young people has been the catalyst to the 'Let Our Voices Be Heard' event, which will take place in October 2024. This will include learning from our reviews and audits but be provided with the support and through the lens of young people.

I would like to extend my thanks to all our partners for their continued support during the year, which I believe bears testimony to the positive and transparent relationships within the board and the extended partnership.

Governance structure of the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership



The SSCP Executive was established as the overall decision making group at the beginning of the reporting year as this had not previously been in place. The subgroup activity has been streamlined between 2023 – 2024 to ensure compliance with Working Together 2018 and more latterly 2023. The SILG is a multi-agency group which consider the Serious Incident Notifications and recommend Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) to identify learning for the partnership. Once completed, the CSPRs inform action planning for practice improvement which are evaluated through audit activity and data analysis by the multi-agency SPIG. The subgroups work together to identify Learning and Development needs across the partnership. The Education Subgroup is a relatively new subgroup with detailed activity found later in the report. The MASH Strategic Group has been re-established to ensure scrutiny of the activity at the front door for children, young people and their families and now has clear governance into the SSCP Executive. The Vulnerable Adolescents Board incorporates the Youth Justice Board and works closely with the Safe City Partnership to understand and address the areas of need in the city for the young people of Southampton.

The Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership Strategic Priorities 2023 - 2026

Outcome 1	We will address the impact of neglect and gain assurance around the embedding of the neglect strategy for all practitioners working with children and their families
Outcome 2	We will work as a partnership to support the reduction of serious youth violence and child exploitation
Outcome 3	We will promote the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and the roll out of the CSA toolkit so that children who experience child sexual abuse will receive more effective services
Outcome 4	We will focus on Children's Participation in Education across the Partnership to promote children's educational progress, for their wellbeing and for their wider development
Outcome 5	We will support the partnership with a focus on the appropriate application of the Pathways document across partner agencies to ensure the right service is provided with the right children at the right time

The Local Authority Context and what we are doing with partner organisations

The **Children's Services and Learning** operates in a challenging financial climate, with government assistance and a well-embedded financial improvement board. The service has set stretching but achievable savings targets in the context of steadily reducing demand. A transformation programme is well underway, with a focus on practice, efficiency and innovation. The service initiated a rapid redesign of its structure and function, in line with the local and national agenda.

The service also faces the challenge of yearly elections. The service has maintained a strong relationship with the elected members and the senior leadership team and has communicated its vision and priorities clearly and consistently. The service was subject to an Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in June 2023. It achieved a grade of 'Good' for the first time in the service's history, with a grade of 'Outstanding' for leadership. The Youth Justice Service piloted His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP), with an ungraded but positive outcome.

The service has improved its **multi-agency working**, with examples of **successful partnerships and projects**, including;

- Improvements in relationships with police (e.g. Prevent, strategy meetings)
- Risk Outside The Home (ROTH) contextual safeguarding conferences, evaluated by Durham University
- Strong Special educational Needs and Disability (SEND) partnership
- Voluntary sector engagement, particularly to support vulnerable young people
- Family Safeguarding partners well engaged
- Strong SSCP Serious Incident Learning Group and Education subgroup
- Multi-agency teams around the school now well established in localities
- Specific partnership projects; Careers Enterprise Company, Primary Heads inclusion group, Saints Foundation
- Targeted support meetings (absence)
- Successful holiday activity and food programme
- Early years – private voluntary and independent sector
- Health schools alliance

Our Building for Brilliance priorities (Children and Learning focus);

- Right service, right time: Family Help: Launching a larger Family Help Service, with significantly more social workers, absorbing most children in need and early help / CIN assessments
- Family Safeguarding: Reshaping Childrens Resource Service (CRS) and MASH, moving CRS to the start of a child's journey within the Family Help Service and creating a multi-agency Family Safeguarding Service, focusing on children where harm is present, side by side with adult specialist workers
- Family Networks: Extending our family group conferencing, family networks and family seeking offer to support alternative options to care
- Neglect / CSAFE (child sexual abuse in the family environment: Specialist Assessments: Increasing social worker capacity to undertake specialist assessments, without losing our excellent Specialist Assessment Team
- Quality Assurance: Strengthening our quality assurance framework, with a focus on outcomes, learning and feedback

Our key challenges;

- Financial challenges: safely reducing demand, spending less
- Co-production and participation: involving children , young people and families in decision-making and service design
- Focus on global majority communities / workforce: new strategic post to address the needs and aspirations of diverse communities and staff
 - Data and insight: improving the coordination and use of data for SEND and education
- Provision for SEND and rising exclusions: ensuring high quality and inclusive education for all children and young people
 - Workforce: building the experience and retention of our social care staff
- Sufficiency and placement instability: increasing the availability and quality of placements for children in care and care leavers

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary

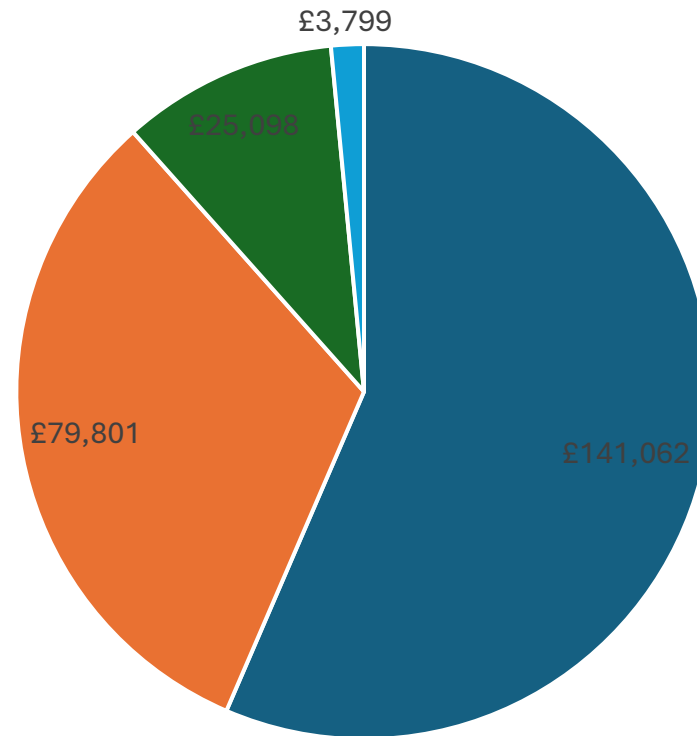
- Over the last year, since the appointment of our Chief Constable Scott Chilton, we have a new vision of keeping everyone safe by prioritising the relentless pursuit of criminals, delivering exceptional local policing and putting our victims first. There have also been changes to our operating model which continues to deliver against our vision and priorities.
- In partnership with Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton (HIPS) safeguarding children's partnerships, we have contributed to the co-creation of the HIPS Exploitation and HIPS Child Sexual Abuse Strategy to support our practitioners in identifying and tackling exploitation of children across our two counties.
- Locally, we are excited to be jointly trialling the introduction of 'custody passports' for children in Southampton custody to support their specific needs and help our custody officers gain an understanding of how to meet them.
- Internally, we have delivered a significant programme of training on a number of topics ranging from mental health, exploitation, public protection notices, child centred policing to effective information sharing with partners, roles and responsibilities of children services departments. The audience has included both our existing staff/police officers and every police officer joining the organisation as a new recruit. We have also undertaken joint training initiatives with SSCP as we recognise the value of joint understanding and sharing of resources to be most effective and efficient. The effort from these initiatives continues to influence the quality and quantity of our information sharing with partner agencies. Our robust internal audits have provided assurance about the progress made across a number of areas and in particular, the voice of the child. We recognise that we will need to continue to improve and are committed to being consistent in our delivery of these improvements.
- Externally, HMICFRS recently inspected our custody centres. There were areas that were brought to our attention where we need to do better and areas where our approach to children received positive comments. The inspectors positively mentioned the custody video book for children, the custody notification process, public protection policy for children in custody and our overall care and support of children. We are reflecting on their report and making immediate changes where necessary to ensure we deliver the best for our public.
- Operationally, we have continued to work with all our local partners to divert children away from criminality. In Southampton, our joined up approach to prioritising and focussing our efforts in a structured way has contributed to tackling some of the complex neighbourhood issues involving children. As a partnership, we are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of this approach and to understand and share the learning for future practice.

NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight

- As a safeguarding partner, the ICB have ensured health representation on the Partnership Board, Executive, subgroups and task and finish groups and supported the development of the partnership business plan and workstreams.
- This includes the chairing and organisation of the Serious Incident Learning Group and the Childrens Learning and Development Group with the support from the partnership team. The Designated professionals, named nurses and named GPs continue to support audits as part of the Safeguarding Practice Improvement Group. This has further supported the wider safeguarding business plan and its priorities for Southampton in identifying gaps and potential improvement of services across the city.
- Learning through reviews has been reflected through all subgroups, supported by the Designated professionals, named nurses and named GPs. This has supported further learning and training identified for multi-agency professionals across the city.
- The Designated professionals remain key members of the corporate parenting board, ensuring the voice of our children in care/care leavers is pertinent to any decision making. The partnership plan to develop the learning of children looked after is overseen through this board.

Financial contributions to the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership 2023 - 2024






%age contributions



■ Southampton City Council ■ NHS Hants and IoW ■ HIOW Constabulary ■ Probation

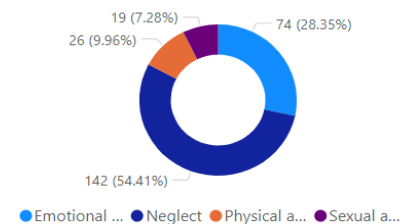
Strategic Priorities 2023 – 2026

Outcome 1: We will address the impact of neglect and gain assurance around the embedding of the neglect strategy for all practitioners working with children and their families

	In 2023 the population of Southampton was estimated to be 264,957, which is a slight increase from 263,769 in 2022
	Children between the ages of 0 – 5 make up 6.3% of the population = 16,808, which is a decrease from 17,032 in 2022
	Young people between the ages of 16 – 24 make up 18.6% of the population = 49,155, which is an increase from 40,884 in 2022
	Southampton remains ranked as the 55 th most deprived out of 317 local authorities
	34% of all pupils in state funded Southampton schools are eligible for free school meals (nat average is 23.8%), which is an increase from 30.4% in 2022

Child Protection Planning 2023 - 2024

Cases by Latest Category of Abuse



45% of CP plans that started in the last 6 months were under the category of neglect. This is less than the previous year and less than the England average, but slightly higher than statistical neighbours.

Of the 311 children subject to CP planning 51% are under the category of neglect, the highest proportion. (35% emotional abuse, 8% physical abuse, 7% sexual abuse). This is higher than 22/23 and the England average, and significantly higher than statistical neighbours.

Police data shows a steady increase in the numbers of neglect crimes reported in Southampton;

Q1 – 45

Q2 – 58

Q3 - 61

Q4 - 48

Education data includes the use of the Neglect Toolkit per school and is gathered through the self evaluation information.

What have we learnt as a Partnership?

Sometimes a child suffers serious harm or death as a result of abuse or neglect. The purpose of a child safeguarding practice review (CSPR) is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Understanding not only what happened but why it happened can help improve the response of organisations and agencies working with children and families in the future. The experiences of Stephen (not his real name) and his family led to a [CSPR](#) by the partnership. The 6 step briefing can be found on the website [stephen-6-step-briefing-final.pdf](#) ([southampton.gov.uk](#)) and has resulted in partnership activity relating to the strategic priority of neglect.

Stephen

- At the time of the circumstances leading to the decision to undertake a review into how agencies work together, Stephen was 8 years old. There was a history of involvement with services resulting from concerns of neglect, including the state of the home address, not attending school and challenges in working with the family. During a police visit for an unrelated incident, concerns were raised around the home conditions and Stephen's presentation as he was not wearing clothes. His mother told the police that he had autism and was electively home educated. Advice was given to improve the home conditions, however Stephen was taken into police protection due to concerns around neglect. Stephen later returned to his home address with support services in place and a greater understanding of the dynamics within the family. A school place was identified and Stephen has attended since that time. The impact of the period wherein Stephen was placed in foster care in the context of his additional needs is considerable and practice improvements were required to ensure that the multi-agency network developed the skills to work with families, whilst keeping the children with their families if at all possible.
- The family were able to share their views around the impact of Stephen's removal and tools and training has been provided to support practitioners. These have been shared widely in workshops and training sessions across the partnership. The use of language when working with families where engagement may be deemed to be challenging has been a focus of the Partnership and is considered in audit activity and the development of the *When Engagement is Difficult or Not Working Guidance* [When Engagement is difficult or not working](#) ([southampton.gov.uk](#)), which encourages professional curiosity around what may be happening for families. Stephen's family were concerned as to how Stephen would be viewed with his presentation, and once this was identified, the multi-agency network were able to work with the family to support them to make sustainable changes for Stephen's future. The exploration of unconscious bias is a theme which has emerged over the last 12 months, as the family were described as 'resistant' in records and this was found to have impacted on the way in which some agencies perceived them.
- The impact of partnership activity in response to findings from practice reviews is analysed through the subgroups and governance is provided through the Delegated Safeguarding Leads and Lead Safeguarding Partners.

"All DSLs have done the Neglect Toolkit training which was very useful and helped us understand the resources that were there and they found them good. It has given them an additional layer of curiosity. It is useful when we have families where we are trying to understand the level of need. The value of the launch was with the training that was offered which was really helpful."
Valentine primary school

"I think it is really user friendly and easy to navigate. I have had great feedback from staff. The case studies I found really useful as someone who delivers safeguarding training to discuss and unpick with staff. It makes things clear about who and what is out there."
Sinclair primary school

"I have used it and colleagues have used it in the past to assess our concerns to verify what we see and how we view a situation. It helps us with our decision making on how we can support families. It is something that is readily available. I am aware that it is there to underpin and support us if we need questions answered."
Holy Family Catholic School

What have we done about the findings from Stephen's review?

Neglect remains the most used category for child protection planning and a consistent theme in referrals into children's social care and is the first of the strategic priorities of the partnership. The partnership have worked collaboratively to produce the Neglect Toolkit, with practical guides and exploration of what life is like for children and their families and how agencies can work with them to understand the multiple factors impacting on family circumstances, both in the family home and in the wider community and networks. The impact of the cost of living and stressors families experience all need to be considered when working with children and their families to provide the right level of intervention that are tailored to their needs and can help to make the right changes at the right time [SSCP Neglect Toolkit \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#). The partnership identified a gap when considering the experiences of children with additional needs as a result of Stephen's review and an enhanced guide with further practical tools and support was developed collaboratively [Neglect toolkit - children with additional needs \(southampton.gov.uk\)](#). The partnership have undertaken audit activity around the use of the toolkits and the impact on children and their families with a programme of review and monitoring as part of the Safeguarding Practice Improvement Group.

The partnership undertook a deep dive audit around neglect and identified areas of good practice;

- There was evidence of actions to use the neglect toolkit in conference planning
- The voice of the child was at the centre of case recording, writing to the child and carrying out direct work utilising the toolkit and guides
- There was a real sense of focus on family's strengths rather than using victim blaming language
- Information sharing and attendance at multi-agency meetings was positive, with a clear lead to reduce multiple retelling of stories for families
- The 'day in the life of the child' section of the toolkit was very powerful

Areas for development and monitoring were also identified and these will be reviewed by the subgroup;

- The police to promote the use of the neglect toolkit and attendance at training
- All agencies to further development assurance activity and monitoring around how they analyse their response to issues of neglect and the use of the available guidance and toolkit
- Further development of capturing the voices of children and families and understanding 'how it felt for you'
- The development of additional training around protective characteristics, unconscious bias and cultural competence

Outcome 2: We will work as a partnership to support the reduction of serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation

The Vulnerable Adolescents Board is a multi-agency working group with representation from health, police, social care, primary, secondary and special schools. They report to the partnership through the Partnership Board and the overall governance is overseen by the Executive. The Executive Director for Children and Learning chairs this Board.

What has gone well? The **Vulnerable Adolescents Board (VAB)**;

- **Custody Rates.** In 2023 Southampton had the second highest custody rates in the country for children. Whilst numbers are small it was a really concerning escalation of serious violence, remand and custodial sentences. In 2023 there were 10 instances of remand, this was 7 youth detentions and 3 remand to Local Authority Accommodation comprising of 8 children. In the same year there were 11 custodial sentences. Into 2024 there has been 3 remands into custody (one for one night) and one remand to Local Authority Accommodation (the same child that was remanded for one night was then Remanded to LA the following day), and one custodial sentence. Whilst we are only part way through 2024 there are positive signs to the work achieved through providing robust alternative to custody packages and reassurance to partners around the ability to risk manage high risk children in the community
- **Development of Critical Moment Interventions Framework.** Critical Moment Interventions are evidenced based response to young people where there is suspicion of exploitation, young people are offered a critical moment interventions at key moments such as an arrest, hospital presentation re injuries which are suspected to linked to violence or exploitation or where there is a serious relationship breakdown. The interventions show care and compassion to the young person, help young people contemplate change and opportunity for the young person to share information.
- **Development of Disproportionality Champions and pilot.** Disproportionality within Youth Justice has been an area of focus in Southampton. Disproportionality was a focus of the YJS Peer review in 2023 and was a feature for those young people in custody in 2023. Driven by the VAB disproportionality champions have been established in a wide range of public services to raise awareness and tackle disproportionality. Additionally, a pilot around preventing disproportionality has been developed between Bevois Primary School and the Young People Service.
- **Development of Skills, Accreditation.** As part of the cities strategy to prevent reoffending a substantive programme of skills development have been developed and delivered from the hub at the Civic Centre. The opportunities include Maths and English Tutoring, Hospitality training and accreditation, ASDAN and Laser Awards, CSCS card for entry into the construction industry, Cycle Maintenance and Barbering. Three young sessional workers have been employed to support the delivery services and activities from the hub.
- **Edge of Care Work** – The work of the Young People Service around maintaining and rebuilding relationships within families has been particularly effective. With very few entries into care via 16 or 17 year old homelessness or family breakdowns for children over the age of 13.
- **Risk Outside the Home (ROTH),** Pilot with Durham University and Professor Carlene Furmin as example of the high esteem the work with vulnerable adolescents in the city has on national scale.

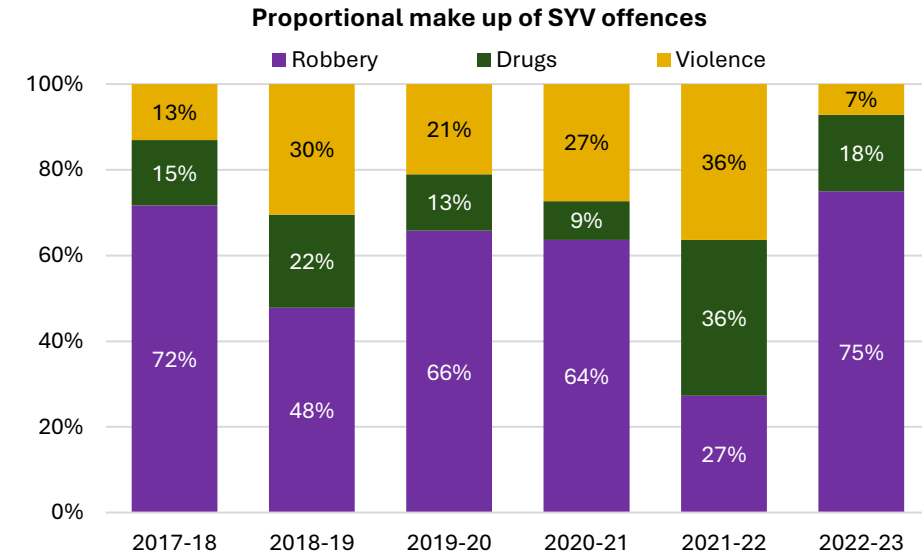
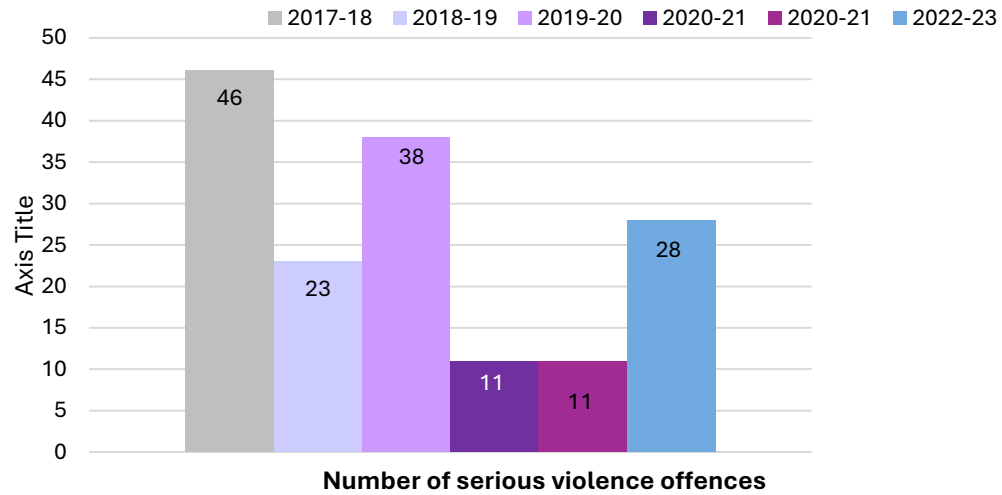
- The constabulary education partnership team have worked with engaging children in schools, particularly around inline safety, exploitation and knife crime. They have been involved in a number of safeguarding fayres hosted in schools in Southampton bringing together local services who all have the shared goal to keep children safe.

Areas of challenge and what we are doing about them;

- **Re Offending Levels** – The VAB continues to be concerned about re-offending levels in the city, these are higher than regional and most statical neighbours. This area of work is the number one focus for the Youth Justice Partnership in 2024 and 2025. The further continuation of the skills development work and supported employment opportunities and the combining of ROTH and Focused Deterrent are expected to have positive impacts on reducing reoffending. These will be evaluated through the work of the VAB and the Violence Reduction Unit and the development of a data dashboard will inform the overall governance from the Safeguarding Partnerships, including the Safe City Partnership.
- **School Exclusions** – School exclusions in the city are higher than regional and statistical neighbours. It is recognised this a feature which leads to negative outcomes such as exploitation, violence and criminal justice outcomes. The Autumn of 2024 will see closer working arrangements between the VAB, schools and SCC education colleagues to tackle this challenge.
- **Serious Youth Violence** – Serious Youth Violence is an area of concern across the city, this in line with national trends. The Focused Deterrent a Youth Endowment Fund evaluated approach to preventing Youth Violence is being developed and delivered across the city with support from the Violence Reduction Unit and Office of Police and Crime Commissioner.

Number and rate of serious violence offences – Southampton

Data refers to serious youth violence offences committed by children 10 – 17 years



Southampton		2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of SYV offences		46	23	38	11	11	28
Rate per 10,000 of the general 10-17 population		24.2	11.7	18.7	5.2	5.2	12.8
% SYV comprise of total offences		7%	5%	8%	4%	4%	9%

The impact of initiatives and partnership work

In Q4 of 2023 - 24, 66.67% of children 12+ subject to child protection / ROTH planning were assessed using the CERAF (child exploitation risk assessment framework) as the risks associated with exploitation, following the interventions, has reduced.

In Q4 of 2022 – 23, the risks associated with exploitation were found to have reduced for 37.5% of the same cohort.

There are a number of factors impacting on this reduction, including greater use of the CERAF as a tool, with reviews when new information of situations occur, and no less than 12 week frequency. When intervention is reaching the conclusion, a CERAF is completed to evidence risk reduction.

In Q4 of 2023 – 24, there was an increase of 2.73% in the number of children 12+ from ethnic minority backgrounds receiving prevention services. The reporting was based on children allocated for assessment and intervention and does not account for intervention via community based youth outreach which is developing across the city.

This remains low compared to national data of 35.4% and highlights the concerns around disproportionality within the youth justice cohort. The activity in 2024 – 25 across the partnership and specifically in the Vulnerable Adolescents Board will continue to monitor, evaluate and identify areas of development around disproportionality.

The number of children 12+ subject to child protection planning who have become children looked after by the local authority in Q4 of 2023 – 24 have reduced by 14.93% from 36.6% over the reporting year. No children subject to ROTH conferencing have become looked after by the local authority in Q4 of the reporting year.

Outcome 3: We will promote the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and the roll out of the CSA toolkit so that children who experience child sexual abuse will receive more effective services

Nationally, there has been a **steady decline** in the number of assessments recording child sexual exploitation concerns, with nearly 5,000 fewer in 2022/23 than five years earlier

Two-thirds of the 152 local authorities in England placed no or very few children on child protection plans because of sexual abuse concerns, and just seven local authorities placed five or more children per 10,000 child population. This is the **lowest number in 14 years**, and the second lowest in the 29 years this data has been published. Child sexual abuse was the reason for just 3.6% of all new child protection plans, **the lowest proportion** ever recorded

Police forces in England and Wales recorded 105,286 child sexual abuse offences during the year, 2% more than in the previous year. This small overall rise was entirely driven by a 14% increase in the recording of **child sexual abuse image offences**. Continuing a long-term trend, charges were more likely for offences of sexual exploitation and sexual grooming, and **least likely** for offences relating to **sexual activity and rape**

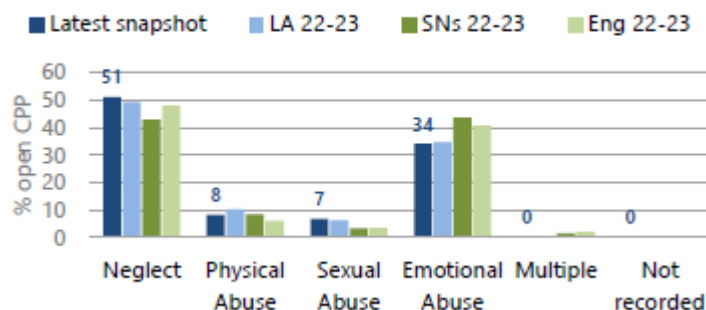
(Trends in official data – Centre of excellence for CSA 2022 – 2023)

The Southampton picture and how we are addressing the challenges

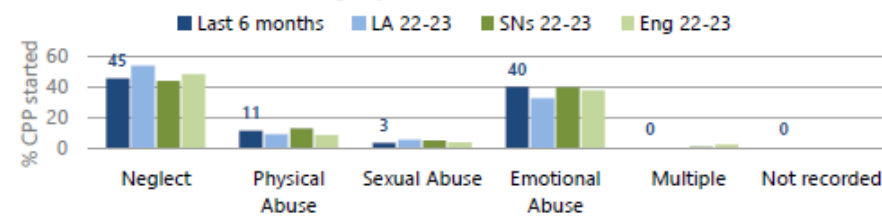
The collation of data around child sexual abuse in Southampton is in development. The police are now able to provide more detailed information which has started in July 2024 and will inform the activity of the partnership over the coming year. Health data shows the number of children who are referred for medical assessments in relation to sexual abuse concerns. The low numbers are considered in the audit activity and have informed the work of the partnership to inform greater understanding of the impact on a child's physical, emotional, social and mental health. Training provision to increase awareness is provided and an event is planned for the Autumn 2024 to reach 200 frontline practitioners to support the development of a highly skilled workforce to respond expertly to children and young people. This is further informed by the CSPRs undertaken and the powerful voice of Uma, who was involved from the start of the review and bravely shared her experiences.

2023	Number of children seen for CSA exams (without forensic sampling)			Number of children seen for CSA exams (with forensic sampling)			
	Under 13	13 – 16 yrs	16 – 18 yrs	Under 13	13 – 16 years	16 – 18 yrs	Total
Southampton and SW Hants	18	4	2	4	2	0	30

Latest category of abuse for current CP plans



Initial category of abuse for CPP started



- NHS Hampshire data
- Children and Learning Southampton data

What have we learnt as a partnership?

The SSCP published 2 Child safeguarding Practice Reviews which have informed service delivery and the provision of training and a planned event in 2024 to ensure that practitioners across the partnership are highly skilled in their responses to children and young people who may have experienced child sexual abuse, both in the family environment and in the wider community. The full reviews can be found here [Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews \(southampton.gov.uk\)](https://www.southampton.gov.uk)

Uma

- At the time of the review, Uma was 14 years of age and looked after by the local authority. Uma's courage to report their experience of rape resulted in a man previously unknown to them being convicted of rape.
- Historically, Uma experienced abuse and neglect from a young age and Uma reported sexual abuse from men subsequently joining their family. Their parents experienced difficulties with their mental health and Uma experienced domestic abuse in the home environment.
- Uma experienced several placement breakdowns and has some history of self harming and sexual exploitation on-line and in person.
- Uma worked alongside the review team and independent reviewer to share and consider their story. This collaborative process was extremely powerful and enabled the reviewer to identify system wide learning.
- The language used in professional records and the unconscious bias identified when Uma was reported missing has led to changes in practice of missing young people and timely responses with appropriate grading of the missing episodes between the police and children's services. Language is a key theme which now underpins audit activity, training and will underpin the planned immersive conference event planned for the Autumn, with participation and inclusion from young people from a local school and the Youth Commission.

The Partnership have listened to the powerful views of Uma, who informed the key lines of enquiry and had input into the review report throughout the process.

"Any child who has been sexually abused is more at risk of being groomed and abused again"

"We shouldn't be blamed for being groomed and abused."

"It was scary how quickly I was targeted and abused on-line"

"I was sure that professionals though I was a liar when they didn't take any further action about my abuse allegations"

"Do professionals understand how hard it is for kids and their ability to trust when there are lots of changes of professional?"

"I always want to know what is happening as this is my actual life"

Willow

- At the time of the review, Willow was 17 years of age and looked after by the local authority. Willow and her siblings experienced numerous assessments during their childhood in relation to concerns around physical abuse, neglect, maternal drug use and domestic abuse.
- As Willow developed through her teenage years, increasing context safeguarding concerns developed in relation to poor school attendance, cannabis use, missing episodes and her associates.
- Willow reported a number of sexual assaults against adult males she had met through friends and at a hotel.
- Willow was approached through her social worker to participate in the review. Willow explained that although she felt she would have a lot to say about her experiences of working with different professionals, she did not feel able to at the time. Willow was able to say that she did not think that professionals asked her the right questions, highlighting further the need for specialised training to upskill those working with vulnerable young people.
- In addition to the changes made from the recommendations following Uma's review, the understanding of professionals and carers of risk outside the home was raised as an area for development. In Southampton the ROTH conferencing has been successfully embedded with support from Durham University, and plans are in train to further develop this for young people who are looked after by the local authority.
- Willow's experiences have demonstrated the importance of ensuring the right professionals who know young people best are involved in planning for their safety at each stage.
- It is essential that young people's lived experiences, childhood trauma and connections are understood and inform tailored packages of support for their individual needs. The fostering team have worked closely with partner agencies and foster carers.
- The Young People's Service are working closely with education to prevent the exclusion of children who are risk of exploitation by developing a deeper understanding of their presentation and asking the right questions when there are concerns.

How do we know the impact of the learning from Uma and Willow’s experiences is embedding in frontline practice?

The multi-agency Safeguarding Practice Improvement Group undertook an audit to gain assurance of improvements made and to identify any further areas for development across the partnership.

<p>Improvements in recording and language used to describe to young people and events</p>	<p>There has been an improvement in recording across the partnership with attention to the impact of language. Social care records are now written to the child. Further consistency is required across all agencies. It is important to have a clear plan as to which professionals are the best to speak with young people. The audit found that immediate and short-term interventions were good, however further work is required to focus on the longer term impact on young people’s emotional, mental and social health, which will be included in a collaborative practice development session with expertise from all partner agencies, facilitated by an external organisation.</p>
<p>Capturing the Voice of the Child</p>	<p>There was evidence of positive interactions and recording of the voice of young people, including observations of reactions, family dynamics and young people’s wishes and feelings. The audit identified that further work is required around sibling abuse. The children and learning service’ workforce academy are planning a month of practice focus on child sexual abuse in the Autumn of 2024, which will include the voice of the child, sibling abuse and responding to presentation of young people rather than an over reliance on reporting of abuse. This will be available for partner agencies, to develop the skills of the workforce across the city.</p>
<p>Multi-agency working</p>	<p>The audit identified that a greater understanding of child protection medical assessments was required to ensure that children and young people have the right supports in place to consider their short-term and longer term emotional, mental health, social and physical health needs. Training is now available for practitioners and further education will be provided through the practice month and immersive conference event in the Autumn. The expertise of health professionals has been highlighted when explaining the process to children, young people, their carers / parents and professionals.</p>
<p>Protective Characteristics</p>	<p>The audit identified that further consideration, understanding and involvement of local networks, including faith and community groups was needed. There has been extensive developments in the use of cultural genograms and a programme of work is in progress to build relationships with community and faith groups in Southampton to increase knowledge, awareness and safeguarding discussions across the diverse demographics of Southampton.</p>
<p>The interface between police and social care when young people who are looked after by the local authority are reported missing</p>	<p>Following the experiences of Uma and Willow, the use of the Philomena protocol has been strengthened and the grading of missing episodes has been addressed by the police. There is more timely communication between the police and the young people’s service and Return Interviews are appropriately undertaken. Further work is required to ensure that the CERAF tool is used regularly and planning in place with the multi-agency network.</p>

Outcome 4: We will focus on children’s participation in education across the partnership to promote children’s educational progress for their wellbeing and their wider development

	2022 - 2023
Total overall absence – primary, secondary and special schools	7.9% of the total school population = 0.6% above the national average This reduced to 7.3% in the Autumn term of 2023 = 0.7% above the national average
Total persistent absence (over 10%) – primary, secondary and special school	23.2% of the total school population = 2% above the national average This reduced to 21.2% in the Autumn term of 2023 = 1.8% above the national average
Overall absence Primary	6.3% of the total = 0.4% above the national average. Following the Covid pandemic in 2020/21, there was an increase to 6.8% in 2022/23, which is currently reducing
Persistent absence primary	18.3% of the total = 2.1% above the national average. There was a spike in 2022 of 24%, which is currently reducing
Overall absence secondary	10.2% of the total = 1.2% above the national average. This has been a slight increase since 2022 from 9.7%
Persistent absence secondary	28.8% of the total = 2.3% above the national average. 2022 saw a spike of 29.6%, dropping to 27% in the Autumn term
Overall absence special schools	11.4% of the total = 1.6 below the national average. This is similar to 2022, with a slight increase to 11.6%
Persistent absence special schools	38.4% of the total = 0.1% above the national average. There has been a slight reduction from 40.4% in 2022
Classified as having SEN support	16.2% of primary age children = 2.9% higher than the national average
Pupils with SEN support who are also considered disadvantaged	48.9% of primary aged children = 8.7% higher than the national average 52.4% of secondary aged children = 12.2% higher than the national average
Pupils with SEN support who are classified as minority ethnic	35.8% of primary aged children = 7% higher than the national average 25.7% of secondary aged children = 3.1% lower than the national average
Pupils with SEN support who have a first language other than English	24.8% of primary aged children = 9.6% higher than the national average 14.1% of secondary aged children = 1.1% lower than the national average

The **Education Subgroup** is a multi-agency working group with representation from health, police, social care, primary, secondary and special schools. They report to the partnership through the Partnership Board and the overall governance is overseen by the Executive. The Executive Director for Children and Learning and Head of Education attends the Partnership Board and the Executive.

What has gone well?

- Development of Safer Internet Day which is now an annual event
- Audit of Safe4Me resources for schools to ensure appropriate coverage and link to the PHSE curriculum
- Creation of police referral welfare check guidance
- SSCP inclusion in school safeguarding review work
- Annual delivery of learning from CSPRs at the DSL conference by the SSCP
- Schools' safeguarding evaluation developed into a web-based format for easier accessibility to improve analysis. Early Years tool is to be developed
- Physical intervention task and finish group created guidance on language and practice and a supporting leaflet for parents and carers
- De-escalation training and physical intervention training provided by Aim with the requirement that at least one person is specifically trained to help reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions for earlier support for children and young people
- An information document has been created with support and information for staff and volunteers subject to allegations of abuse
- A policy update on the transfer of records to ensure receiving settings have the right information to support children and young people
- A focus on serious youth violence – safeguarding fayres organised and Operation Sceptre more widely publicised, including year 6 pupils, which focusses on knife crime. Choices training rolled out across schools
- CERAF (child exploitation risk assessment framework) promotion through a joint workshop to support the language used when talking about young people
- The creation of a system for Assured providers for Alternative Provision
- The creation of a system to report illegal schools on the SCC website
- Permanent exclusion guidance reviewed and updated to prevent exclusion for children and young people wherever possible
- Joint work between education and GPs to address the high levels of authorised absences which has seen a decrease

Areas for future development and how we are addressing them;

- The Partnership need to develop a greater understanding of the volume of referrals to CAMHS for assessment of neurodiversity from schools, where other factors may be an influence on presentation, to ensure that children and young people receive the right level of support to help them participate in education
- Collaborative work with CAMHS to identify children and young people who are absent from school and at risk of or experienced exclusions who are also on the waiting lists for assessment of neurodiversity
- The partnership would like to further analyse the disproportionality of children and young people excluded from schools from black Caribbean and black African backgrounds
- The Safeguarding Improvement Practice Group will be focusing audit activity on children's participation in education in the Autumn term
- The Partnership will be prioritising a focus on the voice of children and young people in Southampton to understand insight into their experiences of education in the city to understand what works well and how their views can influence service development
- A workshop is arranged with the education representative for the DfE in September to develop how the Partnership Arrangements will be compliant with Working Together 2023
- A list of all educational settings is currently being compiled to ensure they are included as relevant agencies in line with Working Together 2023 and communication links are in development
- The Educational Neglect Guidance will be completed and supported through e-learning. This will be evaluated through the measurement of data once accessible to understand the impact
- Working Together to improve school attendance is an ongoing area of activity
- The promotion of the development of the Family Safeguarding Model will continue to ensure that children and families receive the right level of intervention and support for sustainable change
- A programme of analysis of schools' self-evaluations will help to target areas for improvement

Outcome 5: We will support the partnership with a focus on the appropriate application of the Pathways document across partner agencies to ensure the right service is provided with the right children at the right time

The **MASH strategic subgroup** has been re-established and has membership from a wide range of partner agencies.

The governance of the subgroup is through the SSCP Board and the Executive.

The implementation of the Family Safeguarding Model is underway with collaboration with partner agencies.

The inclusion of adult workers with specialisms in domestic abuse, substance use and mental health will be officially launched in September 2024 and will ensure that the whole family and network is supported to empower sustainable change within families for the best outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The partnership will oversee the governance of the Family Safeguarding Model, monitoring the data and effectiveness of the model, ensuring that the right service is provided to the right children and their families at the right time.

A programme of audit activity within the MASH strategic subgroup is planned and the development of the Conversational Model at the front door will promote partnership working to strengthen the use of toolkits and guidance in identifying the appropriate interventions.

A scrutiny visit by the Independent Scrutineer was undertaken at the start of the following reporting year 2024 – 2025.

The performance data for the reporting year 2023 – 2024 can be found below to demonstrate the trends in the impact of the arrangements at the front door for children, young people and their families.

Data showing trends of contacts and referrals into Southampton Children's Social Care

Indicator	Mar 22	Mar 23	Apr 23	May 23	Jun 23	July 23	Aug 23	Sep 23	Oct 23	Nov 23	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24
Number of contacts in the month	1785	2023	1544	1828	1948	1804	1471	1532	1923	1763	1459	2018	1818	1758
Number of referrals into statutory services in the month	310	433	282	301	285	310	263	267	276	315	216	308	197	201
Number of referrals into early help in the month	327	183	131	181	154	172	162	109	139	166	142	144	129	88
Number of child and family assessments completed	322	400	309	425	283	292	259	231	222	255	216	266	200	231
Number of s47 enquiries completed	Not available	169	138	126	124	121	86	81	131	112	101	77	86	79
%age of s47 enquiries resulting in initial child protection case conferences (not already cp or in LA care)	Not available	38	34	26	43	21	45	20	20	33	12	22	21	26
Number of children in the care of the local authority	Not available	539	505	517	518	507	510	505	504	507	510	494	492	490

Looking Forwards for the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership

The Southampton Safeguarding Partnership will continue to **enhance** the existing **strong relationships** with partners to promote the wellbeing and **safeguarding** for children, young people, families and adults in the city.

The **diverse demographics** and **rich culture** of Southampton will be promoted and **celebrated** with co-design and co-production developed to shape and inform service delivery across the partnership.

There will be **greater alignment** between the Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Adults and Safe City Partnership with the recognition that to make sustainable changes for children and young people, the partnership need to consider the needs of **all residents**. This will promote a city which is **vibrant and safe** for children and young people as they develop into adulthood, with additional focus on Transitional Safeguarding.

The partnership will continue to **identify** and **oversee** the implementation of learning from **reviews** and **audit activity** and gain assurance of the embedding of developments.

There will be a focus on the implementation of **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023**; the Published Arrangements will be published by December 2024.

We will look forward to the continued development of the **Strategic Priorities** through the dynamic work of the subgroups, Systems Board and with the **overall governance** from the Executive Group.

Thank you for reading the Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership Yearly Report.

[Southampton Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

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