

Cheshire East  
Safeguarding Children's  
Partnership

Annual Report  
**2022/23**

---



# Contents

---

<b><u>Page 3-5</u></b>	Foreword	<b><u>Page 34-35</u></b>	Child H and I – published 21 December 2022
<b><u>Page 6</u></b>	About the Annual Report	<b><u>Page 36-37</u></b>	Child J – published February 2023
<b><u>Page 7</u></b>	The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership	<b><u>Page 38 -39</u></b>	Child K – published February 2023
<b><u>Page 8</u></b>	Our vision for 2023/2024	<b><u>Page 40-42</u></b>	Joint Thematic Review - originally published October 2021 and updated March - July 2022
<b><u>Page 9</u></b>	Our Governance Arrangements through 2022/2023	<b><u>Page 43</u></b>	Multi Agency Training and Learning Subgroup
<b><u>Page 10-15</u></b>	The Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the multi-agency response to the criminal exploitation of children	<b><u>Page 44</u></b>	Learning Week
<b><u>Page 16</u></b>	Independent Scrutiny	<b><u>Page 45</u></b>	Partnership Conference – Contextual Safeguarding
<b><u>Page 17</u></b>	Our Priorities 2022/2023	<b><u>Page 46</u></b>	Feedback from Learning Week
<b><u>Page 18-21</u></b>	Contextual Safeguarding	<b><u>Page 47</u></b>	Training Offer
<b><u>Page 22-26</u></b>	Neglect	<b><u>Page 48</u></b>	Training Programme
<b><u>Page 27-29</u></b>	Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children	<b><u>Page 49</u></b>	Learning Hub – Sexual Abuse
<b><u>Page 30</u></b>	Quality Assurance Subgroup Activity	<b><u>Page 50</u></b>	Voice of the Child
<b><u>Page 31</u></b>	Multi Agency Audits 2022/2023	<b><u>Page 51</u></b>	Communication Activity
<b><u>Page 32</u></b>	Learning and Improvement Subgroup Activity	<b><u>Page 52</u></b>	Partnership Budget Contributions
<b><u>Page 33</u></b>	Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews – An overview	<b><u>Page 53</u></b>	Areas of Focus 2023-2024
		<b><u>Page 54-60</u></b>	Key priorities for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership in 2023/2024

# Foreword from the Chair of the Cheshire East Children's Safeguarding Partnership

I am pleased to introduce the annual report of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. The Annual Report is focused on evidencing what the partnership has done over the reporting year, the impact we have had, the learning we have identified and the steps we have taken to ensure we continue to reflect and improve. The report describes the challenges and opportunities presented to the partnership over the year, and as we move into 2023, the Annual Report also provides an opportunity to reflect on where we need to focus our efforts in the year ahead. This report recognises the work of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership throughout the year whilst being transparent about the areas of improvement that remain and that we strive to achieve in 2023/2024.

I have been in post as the Executive Director of Children's Services in Cheshire East for over 12 months now and have chaired the partnership executive board for this time. I would wish to begin by thanking all our partnership leaders, staff and volunteers for the work they have done and the sacrifices they have made whilst facing challenges that were unimaginable a few short years ago. Their hard work and determination have undoubtedly helped make many of our children safer.

That said, there is still more to do. In the last year, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has seen a Joint Targeted Area Inspection undertaken with a focus on children at risk of exploitation. This was an extremely challenging inspection which highlighted that there was more for the partnership to do to improve outcomes for children and young people in this area. We fully accept the findings from the Joint Targeted Area Investigation and made some immediate changes to practice to ensure children were more effectively kept safe. We are committed to a programme of ongoing scrutiny, oversight and assurance of our activity in this area, as well as across our safeguarding landscape for vulnerable children and young people. It continues to be important to ensure that we are in touch with our most vulnerable children to make sure they can be as safe and healthy as possible.

To support our improvement activity, we have worked alongside an independent advisor from the Department of Education and commissioned a separate Independent Scrutineer, both of whom have provided valuable oversight and scrutiny of our partnership arrangements and invited us to consider how we might wish to arrange our activity in the future. This has provided a spring board upon which the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements have been designed in preparation for roll out through 2023.



# Foreword from the Chair of the Cheshire East Children's Safeguarding Partnership

Safeguarding is everybody's business and we are strengthening our relationships as a partnership network to ensure we can be effective in fulfilling our responsibilities to safeguard children in Cheshire East. To that end, in 2022/23, we strengthened the role of education within the partnership, inviting education representatives to become members of the partnership executive. All partners have a role to play and the ambition of our arrangements is that everyone can recognise, respond and fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that children, young people, and families are effectively safeguarded, and their welfare promoted.

This year, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership have continued to work on our three priority areas – Contextual Safeguarding, Neglect and Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children. We recognise that Contextual Safeguarding remains an area of focus for the partnership and we will take this work into the forthcoming year. However, we are pleased to report we have agreed to close down the Emotional Health and Wellbeing workstream recognising that it has now achieved what it was set up to achieve and actions and learning arising from this priority work area has now become 'business as usual'. The partnership acknowledge that this will always be a priority, however scrutiny and assurance of this area has been passed back to the relevant teams. The partnership is also looking to close down the Neglect workstream in forthcoming months for similar reasons. This leaves us with an exciting opportunity to turn our attention to other areas of focus in 2023/2024.

The partnership have been involved in three Rapid Reviews with two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews also underway which will be reported on next year. A summary of learning from these reviews is provided within this report and it is this learning that has led us to identify some new focus areas for the work of the partnership. Looking forward to 2023/2024, the partnership focus areas will be sexual abuse, children missing from education, and contextual safeguarding; with the voice of the child as an overarching area of focus running through all of the partnership activity. We want to be a responsive partnership so whilst we have these areas of focus, we will also be mindful of any new or emerging areas of need that require attention.



# Foreword from the Chair of the Cheshire East Children's Safeguarding Partnership

We have reviewed and refreshed our training offer to the partnership over 2022/2023 and we have piloted our first learning hub in relation to sexual abuse. The learning hub model is a means of understanding ourselves, benchmarking our practice against known good or outstanding practice, providing assurance through audit and offering recommendations for future partnership work. This is an exciting step forward for Cheshire East and will be central to our safeguarding arrangements moving forward.

This reporting year has seen significant changes within the partnership with key leadership figures leaving for other opportunities. I would like to record my thanks to those colleagues and formally welcome our new members who have had to hit the ground running with a partnership agenda that has needed to move at pace. Their commitment to our children and their teams is evident in everything they do and I am satisfied we have the right people in the partnership to achieve the changes we wish to make.

I am of the view that, whilst this has been an incredibly difficult year, particularly following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, this has also been a transformative year for the partnership in considering how we were functioning and what we are striving to improve. The Joint Targeted Area Inspection has, in many ways, assisted in the pace of these changes.

At the time of writing this foreword, I am mindful of the growing cost of living crisis and the impact this will have on everyone. However, I am pleased to say that my engagement with leaders, at all levels reinforces my belief that we are all committed to doing whatever is necessary to support our children and their families in what are increasingly difficult times. We will work actively to protect children from abuse and maltreatment, prevent harm to children's health or development, ensure children grow up being provided with safe and effective care and will take action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes. This commitment is underpinned by our governance and oversight arrangements. Finally, I remain determined to ensure that we maintain momentum, reflect on what could, and indeed what must, be done better for our partnership to be the most effective it can be.

Deborah Woodcock  
Executive Director of Children's Social Care, Cheshire East  
Chair of the Partnership Executive



# About the Annual Report 2022/2023



Reporting requirements for our safeguarding partnership arrangements are set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children on pages 82-83 as follows: “In order to bring transparency for children, families and all practitioners about the activity undertaken, the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice”.

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s annual report for 2022/23 sets out examples of the evidence, impact, assurance and learning of the statutory safeguarding arrangements in Cheshire East. It reports on the following activity:

- ❖ The governance and accountability arrangements for the partnership.
- ❖ The context for safeguarding children in Cheshire East, highlighting the progress made by the partnership against our 2022/23 priorities.
- ❖ The lessons that the partnership has identified through the Learning & Improvement subgroup and the actions taken to improve child safeguarding and welfare as a result of this activity.
- ❖ The range and impact of the multi-agency safeguarding training delivered by the partnership.
- ❖ The priorities for the partnership going forward
- ❖ The key messages for those involved in the safeguarding of children and young people.

In line with statutory requirements, the annual report 2022/23 will be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and The What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care within seven days of being published.





# The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership is established in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and the statutory guidance issued within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. The partnership safeguarding arrangements define how safeguarding partners, relevant agencies and other organisations work together to coordinate their safeguarding services. These arrangements meet the requirements of statutory guidance and include details about how safeguarding partners will identify and respond to the needs of children, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide for independent leadership and scrutiny.

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements intend to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:

- ❖ Children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.
- ❖ Partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children.
- ❖ Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively.
- ❖ There is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats.
- ❖ Learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice.
- ❖ Information is shared effectively to facilitate accurate and timely decision making for children and families.

The Partnership has a wide membership of partners and 'relevant agencies', including schools, the faith and voluntary sector, probation services, public health, health providers, the police and representatives from the Local Authority. These executive members work together to keep children and young people safe from harm. The partnership is responsible for scrutinising the work of its partners to ensure that services provided to children and young people make a positive difference.

# Our vision for 2022/2023

---

The partnership's vision for children and young people in Cheshire East was agreed in 2019 by the three statutory safeguarding partners. The vision is that:

**“It is the right of every child and young person in Cheshire East to enjoy a healthy and happy childhood, grow up feeling safe from abuse or neglect and thrive in an environment that enables them to fulfil their potential.”**

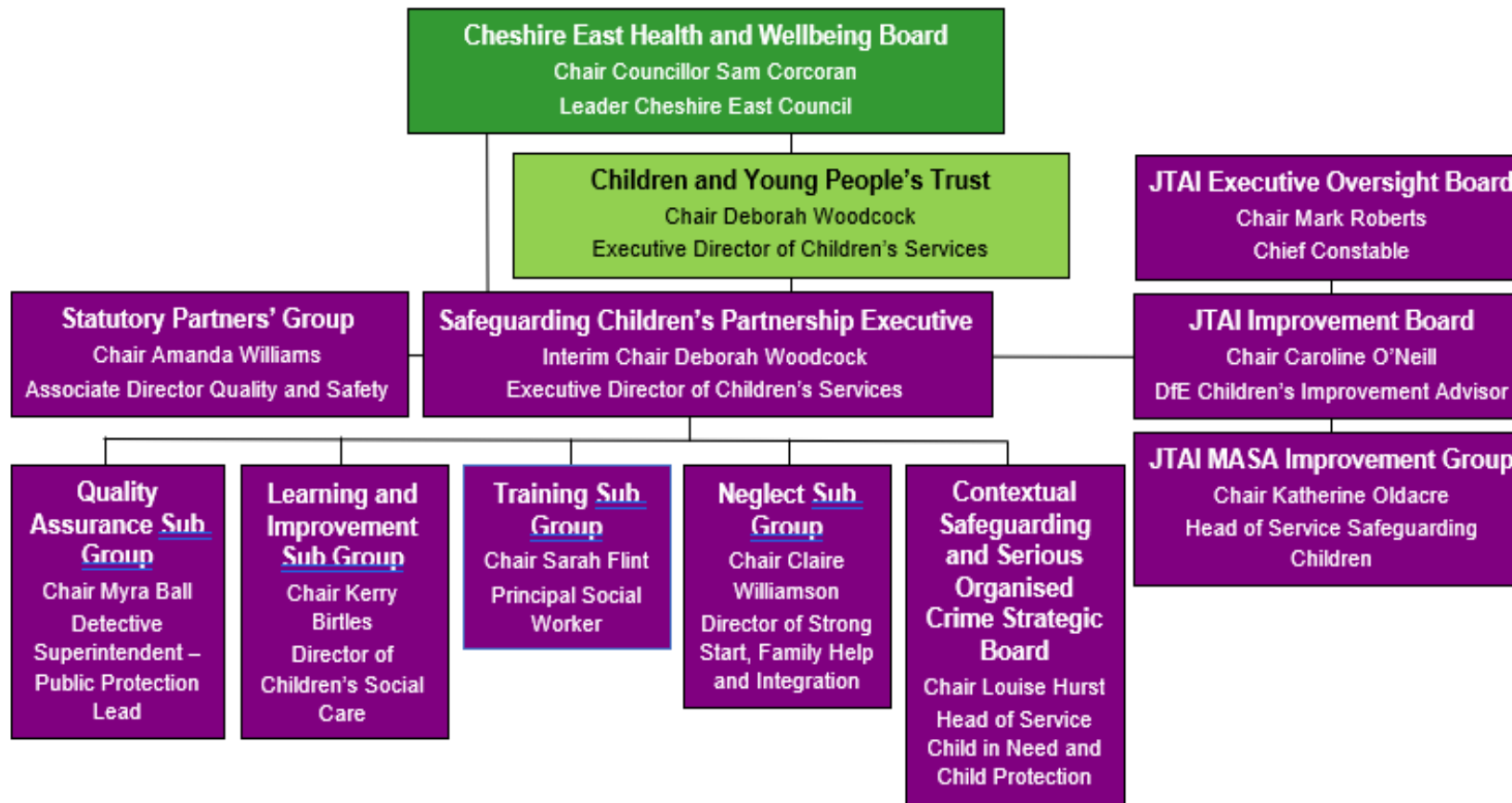
We aimed to do this through our collective commitment to:

- **strategic leadership across the partnership** – to make the safety of children and young people a priority
- **challenge** – through focused inquiries or investigations into practice or issues based on evidence, practitioner experience and the views of children and young people, for us to improve together
- **learning** – to achieve the highest standards of development and to ensure all practitioners have the skills and knowledge to be effective.

**Our vision is being refreshed as part of our new safeguarding arrangements which are due to be published in 2023.**







# The governance arrangements through 2022/2023

The partnership has organised itself using these arrangements during 2022/2023. This governance structure has been in place now for a number of years. Following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership commissioned an independent scrutineer to help evaluate the current arrangements. This has led us to refresh our governance arrangements for 2023/2024.

Further information about the independent scrutiny undertaken is available within the body of this report.



# Joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to the criminal exploitation of children

---

On the 26 September 2022, Ofsted published a report with findings from a joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the criminal exploitation of children in Cheshire East. This was undertaken by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Ofsted, and the Care Quality Commission. It formed part of a rolling programme of inspections into various areas where different agencies work together to provide support for vulnerable children. The full report can be found here: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50194535>

The inspection looked at the how each agency (police, health, and the local authority) work together to reduce the risk of harm when children and young people are missing and at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation.

The inspection found that the partnership needed to improve how it protects children and young people from criminal exploitation and those who go missing from home and care. The partnership fully accepted the findings from the inspection and recognised that there were gaps in our work and that this is not good enough.

Some improvements were made very quickly during the inspection to make sure that the children and young people that we were already working with were safe and that we were doing everything we could to make things different for them. However, the partnership recognised that further improvement work was required to ensure this vulnerable cohort of children were safeguarded appropriately within Cheshire East.

To support the partnership in completing the actions to address the report's findings, an Improvement Board was established which continues to scrutinise the work of the partnership.

The findings from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection are presented in more detail in the next few pages alongside an analysis of the improvement work the partnership has undertaken to date.

# JTAI – Main Findings

The JTAI report highlighted these points as the main findings within the inspection:

- ❖ **Senior leadership analysis and critical enquiry of the underlying complexities and understanding of the day-to-day experiences of vulnerable children.** The inspection identified that the partnership needed to improve its direct line of sight to frontline practice as although the partnership met regularly and received numerous reports, there was a lack of critical enquiry, combined with limited resources, which led to ineffective independent analysis and challenge. Consequently, despite intentions to work in partnership and collaborate, senior leaders across the wider partnership had failed to evaluate and understand exploited children's lived experiences.
- ❖ **The evaluation of multi-agency partnership work.** There needed to be independent analysis and challenge to systematically evaluate the impact of frontline work across services; instead, the inspection found there was too much focus on process. The inspection found that the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to monitor, promote and evaluate the work of the statutory partners were underdeveloped and the weaknesses were exacerbated by the absence of an independent scrutineer. Subgroups to drive the work of the partnership were not considered effective.
- ❖ **The pace of change.** Whilst the inspection noted that leaders had identified areas for improvement, this activity and the actions identified following learning activities were not prioritised leading to significant delay.
- ❖ **The quality and effectiveness of work.** The inspection reported that assessments were too highly variable with too many plans working in isolation. Contingency planning was absent for too many children and the child's voice was not consistently recorded or considered. The inspection found that some children were waiting too long to have their needs assessed and risks identified. This was exacerbated by the fact that threshold guidance for professionals had not been revised since 2018 and did not include reference to criminal exploitation or contextual safeguarding.
- ❖ **The role of education as a protective factor.** The JTAI considered that the role of education as a protective factor was not high profile enough in multi-agency work. Partners did not challenge each other or have sufficiently robust plans to address low engagement in education.
- ❖ **Children's Social Care caseloads were too high and management oversight was not consistently effective.** Senior leaders across partners did not have an accurate view of the impact of high workloads on their staff. Supervision across the multi-agency partnership concerning exploited and missing children was sometimes infrequent, with little evidence of reflection or consideration of whether plans are effective or sustaining change.
- ❖ **Children at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation are not consistently having their needs and risks considered on presentation at emergency departments.** The JTAI reported that children presenting at the emergency department of Cheshire East NHS Trust were not having their voices heard and staff needed to be more curious so that broader safeguarding needs were identified, understood and responded to quickly.
- ❖ **Police intelligence was not being shared in a timely manner.** Inspectors identified examples where crucial police intelligence concerning children at risk of exploitation was not being shared promptly enough, due to policing capacity.



# JTAI – Areas for Priority Action

---

The JTAI report advised **priority action** should be taken across three main areas:

- ❖ Leaders of the partnership should address the strategic weaknesses in the leadership, function, purpose and impact of the work of the partnership and its sub-groups. This should include gaining a full understanding of the risks of exploitation to children across the local area, and ensuring that this understanding leads to analysis, provision and commissioning of services that reduce risk for children effectively.
- ❖ East Cheshire NHS Trust should improve wider safeguarding practice in emergency departments so that risks to children with additional complex needs are identified, understood and responded to.
- ❖ Across the partnership, leaders should ensure that operational practice reduces risk of exploitation of children:
  - The police should improve the quality and timeliness of recording on systems and ensure prompt intelligence-sharing with partners about exploited children at risk of significant harm and those missing from home and care.
  - All partners in the integrated 'front door' and local authority social work teams should ensure that exploited children requiring statutory intervention receive it swiftly from all agencies.
  - Multi-agency partners need to secure appropriate education for exploited children as a protective factor.
  - Health leaders should ensure that children at risk of exploitation are identified when they attend an emergency department and their needs are consistently analysed using the approved screening tool, with findings swiftly communicated to partners.

# JTAI – What else needs to improve?

---



The JTAI also recorded that the following areas needed improvement:

- ❖ The consistent recording and analysis of children’s voices across all agencies’ records.
- ❖ Children missing from home and at risk of exploitation being quickly and consistently identified by the multi-agency integrated front door.
- ❖ The quality and effectiveness of multi-agency strategy meetings across teams and services for children at risk of exploitation.
- ❖ Planning by the multi-agency child exploitation and integrated front door weekly meetings that demonstrates reduced risks to children, evidences a review of actions and is prompt in timeliness.
- ❖ Systematic review of the efficacy of multiple safety plans, child protection plans and care planning for children in care and young people leaving care.
- ❖ The regularity, quality and impact of staff supervision and management oversight across agencies, with clearly recorded analysis by managers about whether children are safer as a result of support and intervention.
- ❖ The partnership strategic oversight and understanding about exploited children’s experiences, including through the quality, accuracy and effectiveness of audits.
- ❖ Evidence-based contingency planning, including challenge by practitioners and leaders who hold each other to account.
- ❖ Systematic reporting, recording and analysis by all leaders to increase understanding of why children go missing.
- ❖ Clarity on expected standards of practice for all staff across agencies, supported by specific multi-agency child criminal and sexual exploitation training.
- ❖ Increased staffing capacity across social work teams and in the police child sexual exploitation and missing children coordinators teams in order to respond to improve the quality of service for children.
- ❖ Fast-track health referrals for exploited children with autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to ensure that they can access appropriate support.

# JTAI – What were our strengths?

---

The inspection also highlighted some strengths that we can build upon to improve the effectiveness of the partnership:

- ❖ It was noted that partners were receptive to the feedback from this inspection and are motivated to make the necessary changes to drive the much-needed development and reform.
- ❖ The inspection found emerging evidence of targeted disruption work in the community by youth justice staff, youth workers and police officers.
- ❖ There were experienced local authority '@ct staff' with an array of relevant skills, expertise, knowledge, and passion which provided intensive support to exploited children and their family members.
- ❖ Children benefited from bespoke targeted multi-agency early help work delivered at their pace, reducing risk of exploitation to children.
- ❖ The safeguarding children in education settings (SCIES) team was considered to be highly valued by schools. School leaders found the advice and support they receive from the SCIES team beneficial in helping them make safer decisions for children.
- ❖ The inspection reported there was recognition of the links between exploited children's poor mental health, sexual health and substance misuse which had resulted in effective commissioning and collaboration across the health networks between child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), youth justice services, young person's recovery service and children in care teams.

The inspection also highlighted the commitment and dedication of the people who work directly with the partnership.



# JTAI Improvement Board

---

Our progress against the action plan for children at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation is monitored through the Improvement Board that was set up following inspection. This is supported by an independent advisor from the Department of Education who has facilitated the oversight and scrutiny of the partnership work in this area.

The JTAI action plan has been driven through partnership meetings and has driven improvement at pace. The impact of these improvements can be seen in more detail in the analysis of the partnership activity around the Contextual Safeguarding priority.



# Independent Scrutiny

---

In October 2022, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership commissioned an Independent Scrutineer. The purpose was to ensure multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Cheshire East are effective and comply with statutory guidance set out in Working Together 2018 (last updated 9 December 2020) with a particular focus on the following:

- ❖ children are safeguarded and their welfare promoted
- ❖ partner organisations and agencies collaborate, share and co-own the vision for how to achieve improved outcomes for vulnerable children
- ❖ organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively
- ❖ there is early identification and analysis of new safeguarding issues and emerging threats
- ❖ learning is promoted and embedded in a way that local services for children and families can become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- ❖ information is shared effectively to facilitate more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.

This work invited the partnership to consider the following areas:

- ❖ A different way of organising and presenting governance arrangements.
- ❖ Developing the Cheshire East quality and learning framework
- ❖ Changing the CESP approach to multi-agency auditing
- ❖ What a year long campaign might look like

The new governance arrangements have been co-produced with the partnership and quality and learning frameworks have been considered. A priority for the partnership in 2023/2024 is to implement these new arrangements alongside a new quality assurance framework and approach to multi-agency auditing. This will be coupled with a communication strategy that supports ongoing partnership campaigns and messaging to partners across different platforms and forums.





# Our Priorities 2022/2023

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership set these three priorities for our activity through 2022/2023.

Contextual Safeguarding

Neglect

Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children



125,058	154,568	95,054	124,500
125,487	56,845	97,511	125,000
124,000	110,000	99,011	154,000
105,450	150,000	99,216	95,000
86,502	35,000	101,090	154,200
	83,000	101,684	110,000
	45,000	101,962	89,000
		102,747	50,000
			68,700
			123,000



# Contextual Safeguarding

---

Since April 2022 there has been a significant amount of activity under this priority area and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and subsequent improvement plan have been key drivers in the momentum.

During the JTAI, immediate action was taken by Children's Social Care to change processes within Cheshire East's Consultation Service (ChECS) to eradicate the potential for delay in the identification of risk. This immediate change was for ALL Child Exploitation Screening Tools to be risk assessed on the day they were sent into our Integrated Front Door as opposed to waiting for the weekly screening meeting. Whilst no children were found to have been at risk of significant harm for a delayed period of time, we acknowledged that this process built in a delay and immediately sought to rectify this. This is 'business as usual' practice now.

As a partnership, we assured ourselves of the identification and risk management of ALL children who were flagged as being at risk of exploitation. This piece of work was quickly and effectively completed and remedial work for a small number of children was actioned as a priority. We have also undertaken a data cleansing exercise to ensure that only those children who are still 'assessed' as being at risk of exploitation, are flagged. We have seen the number of children reduce from 118 to 68 by the end of March 2023. This is a far more accurate number for Cheshire East.

In 2022/23, ChECS received 505 Contacts with Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation being an identified area of risk; this related to 396 children. Of those, 143 became referrals to Children's Social Care and went on to have a full Child and Families Assessment. Of the 505 Contacts, 64% were accompanied by a Child Exploitation Screening tool, to support the rationale and decision making – this is a really healthy figure.

We have also developed a 'Cheshire East Profile' regarding our highest risk children alongside our colleagues in the Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB). This identifies those children at most risk and the collective plan to protect them. It also considers how we are pursuing perpetrators and how we are proactively preparing the community to have increased resilience in this area. We understand the risk of Serious and Organised Crime in Cheshire East and can respond accordingly.

# Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime Strategic Board Activity

---

In December 2022, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership finalised the work to provide a strategy which outlines our approach to protecting children, adults and communities from exploitation and serious and organised crime across Cheshire East. This is a complex area of risk that requires the partnership, agencies and stakeholders within Cheshire East, to have clear objectives with measurable outcomes to demonstrate the **IMPACT** we are having on improving the lives of children, adults and communities from the effects of exploitation and organised crime. The specific deliverables within this strategy and supporting actions will allow the partnership to respond to the full range of serious and organised crime threats and thus make Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime '**Everybody's Business**'. This strategy is relevant for children, adults and communities and incorporates all individual agency strategies that link to Contextual Safeguarding, Complex Safeguarding and Serious and Organised Crime. This was launched at a Child Exploitation in January 2023 with Dez Holmes from Research in Practice and was extremely well received.

We have also been working closely with our colleagues in Stockport Children's Social Care to develop a dedicated Contextual Safeguarding Team. We have been able to meet together with Stockport, Greater Manchester Police and key Partners in Cheshire East to consider the best elements of their practice and how we can bring that into Cheshire East. Stockport assisted us in facilitating a Partnership session on the Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Practice Principles which were launched nationally in early March 2023. Senior Leaders and Practitioners engaged in how we can bring this to life in Cheshire East and have further sessions planned throughout 2023/24.

The Contextual Safeguarding and Serious and Organised Crime Strategic Group meet quarterly and measure success against the objective outlined within this Strategy. The Strategic Group scrutinise data through a Partnership scorecard and narrative from all of the Operational Meetings to ensure we are effectively allocating resource, delivering a high standard of practice and evidencing IMPACT. This Group reports into the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Executive Board and Safer Cheshire East Partnership.

The development of the infrastructure around Contextual Safeguarding has been achieved and we can focus on the IMPACT and quality of practice early in 2023/24.



# Impact and Success Measures

---

The strategy states we will know we have raised awareness regarding exploitation and serious organised crime when we see:

**Increased number of frontline practitioners across the Partnership accessing training regarding Exploitation** – At the point of the JTAI inspection in July 2022, there had been a significant gap in the training offer across the partnership linked to exploitation. Since this time, training has been delivered on 4 occasions to frontline practitioners across all organisations and services with over 200 attendees.

Feedback received on this Training has been positive and we are seeking further information from those attendees regarding the IMPACT this has had upon their practice since attending the training. A direct quote from a Health Professional:

*I have used this knowledge in my day-to-day work to help make better decisions and have consideration towards the experiences [of children and young people at risk of exploitation]*

**All levels of Practitioners, Managers and Senior Leaders to have an awareness of this Strategy and how this is being driven from their role** – This was achieved through the Conference in January. This was well attended with a range of Practitioners, Organisations and Senior Leaders

**Increase in the use of Exploitation Screening Tools for children at risk** – 64% of contacts which identified CSE as a risk factor were accompanied by an Exploitation Screening Tool. This is compared with 42% the year before.

**Increase in the use of National Referral Mechanism** – We are collectively working on the data report for NRM's however through manual counting we have seen a significant rise in not only the discussions around NRM but the completion of these by Agencies such as Social Care, Police and Youth Justice.



# NEXT STEPS

---

- ❖ As part of our Quality Assurance Framework, auditing of this work will take place early in 2023/24 to understand the IMPACT for our children and the improved practice in key areas identified within the JTAI relating to timeliness of risk identification and multi-agency Strategy Meetings.
- ❖ Establish an integrated Contextual Safeguarding Team across Cheshire East to respond collectively to the risk presented by organised Crime and Child Exploitation.
- ❖ PanCheshire All Age Exploitation Strategy to be launched and aligned to our CS/SOC Strategy
- ❖ Develop a shared data set across Police and Children's Social Care to support information sharing
- ❖ Continue recruitment across Health and Police to embed an integrated Contextual Safeguarding Team
- ❖ Continue to use the support of Stockport Children's Social Care to develop our approach to practice, using national guidance to embed a culture

# Neglect

---

In November 2019, Cheshire East had an Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). The inspection recognised areas for improvement specifically in relation to the cohort of children open for reasons relating to neglect. In February 2020, the partnership agreed to make neglect a priority and neglect has continued as an area of priority for the partnership in 2022/2023.

The neglect strategy was refreshed and launched in 2021. The strategy has now been embedded across organisations and services with professionals having an increased understanding of how to identify the early signs of neglect, the screening tools that can support professionals' curiosity and intervention/support for children and families as well as how to escalate to statutory services if the children continue to experience neglectful parenting and are deemed to be in need of protection.

Following the successful bid for the Family Hub Model in Cheshire East, we are looking to develop an even more localised and targeted response to those children experiencing or at risk of neglect. The Threshold of Need Guidance of 'Right Help, Right Time' will be launched in 2023 which will enhance the work of the partnership in identifying children and families that require extra help and targeted support through a co-ordinated plan.



# Neglect subgroup activity

During 2022/23 the Neglect board has progressed the following actions:

A multi-agency audit was conducted regarding sexual abuse and neglect which highlighted that

- ❖ Professional challenge was lacking across all agencies
- ❖ Some decisions were seen as a single agency action when they need to have multi-agency input.
- ❖ Practitioners were not confident in decision making around sexual abuse cases.

In response to these the escalation process was reviewed and now are now scrutinised within a multiagency operational group. Also, the partnership has reviewed and refreshed its training offer to provide specific input on neglect and the role of professional challenge is integrated into all training sessions.

Health partners now:

- ❖ Include Neglect as part of the Level 3 Safeguarding training and links to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Neglect Strategy are shared at training.
- ❖ All practitioners working with children subject to a child protection or child in need plan for neglect will receive safeguarding supervision and supervisors will refer practitioners to the neglect strategy and screening tools where appropriate.
- ❖ Reports on the number of neglect screening tools are now reported on a quarterly dashboard to Commissioners.
- ❖ The neglect strategy and screening tools have been shared as a reminder via the Safeguarding Newsletter and the partnership has continued to provide a Graded Care Profile training offer.



# Impact and Success Measures

The neglect strategy defined the following measures as a way of identifying practice improvements:

- ❖ **Safely and appropriately reduce the number of children becoming Cared For due to Neglect** – The overall number of cared for children has risen in Cheshire East for a number of reasons throughout the year with our biggest rise being our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Children becoming accommodated due to neglect has risen however only by 5 children in a year compared with a rise of 19 children the year before. This is positive.
- ❖ **Reduce the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for Neglect for a second or subsequent time to 20%** - Out of the 177 Children who went onto a plan for Neglect in 22/23, 42 were repeat plans. Out of those 42, 28 were repeat plans for Neglect . This means that children subject to a child protection plan for neglect for a second and subsequent time has reduced to 16% which is an improvement.
- ❖ **Increase the number of Early Help Assessments where Neglect has been identified as a key factor – Currently 10%.** In 22/23 this increased to 11% which is positive.
- ❖ **Education attendance will improve and the number of children who are NEET will reduce** – This has not been achieved. Absence for all pupils in Cheshire East across primary and secondary education has increased in 2022/2023, however this pattern is replicated across national figures also and relates to the impact of Covid on children’s attendance. The number of children who are NEET has also increased by 0.6% from 1.9% to 2.5% although our numbers regionally and nationally are lower by comparison.





# Impact and Success Measures

---

- ❖ **Reduction in repeat MARAC referrals** – This has not been achieved. April 21 to March 22, there was 114 repeat referrals to MARAC. In April 22 to March 23, there were 129. Whilst this is a small increase, it is still significant, and we would want to understand this in more detail through the Domestic Abuse commission and if they are seeing an increase overall in reported Domestic Abuse and their number of open cases increasing. An increase may not necessarily be a negative result, if this means that the victims are feeling more confident to report the abuse they are experiencing. It would be useful moving forward, to understand if the repeat referrals to MARAC have been children that are also on repeat Child Protection Plans and what the impact of this repeat and replicative behaviour has had upon their development to inform us of how we intervene and support.
- ❖ **Increase in the number of children receiving Universal Plus offer** – In 2021/2022, there were 908 children receiving the Universal Plus offer from the 0-19 service. In 2022/2023, there has been a significant increase with 1195 children receiving the offer in Q1, 1546 children in Q2, 1665 children in Q3 and 1738 children in Q4. Therefore an increase of 91% on the previous year of children receiving the Universal Plus offer from the 0-19 service, which evidences more families are accessing early help and support from health services.



# Next Steps

---



- ❖ Continue to promote the Graded Care Profile Training across all Partners
- ❖ Continue to increase the number of Early Help Assessments where Neglect has been identified as a key factor
- ❖ Launch the Right Help, Right Time Threshold of Need Guidance
- ❖ All partners to ensure the Neglect Strategy is continuously part of all practitioner induction programmes to support the continued improvement of early identification.
- ❖ Quality Assurance Framework to include a regular review of the progress being made regarding neglect and the impact of intervention from across the partnership on the lives of our children and families.



# Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children

The Emotional Health and Wellbeing task and finish group was established in December 2018 following a recommendation from a serious case review. The purpose of the group was to establish information sharing pathways between acute hospital providers, child and adolescent mental health services and schools. Prompt and timely information sharing pathways would both allow appropriate support for children and young people attending schools following an episode of self-harm which had required medical intervention or assessment in an emergency department by a mental health practitioner and facilitate risk assessments for the child or young person to be shared.

The task and finish group has met quarterly since December 2018 and a self-harm information sharing pathway has been introduced.

Since then, the group has ensured that the pathway has been fully imbedded in practice and has worked with public health directors contributing to the self-harm joint strategic needs analysis. The data from the group will be used to determine future service provision.

The emotional health and wellbeing group has achieved the objective of introducing a self-harm information sharing pathway. In addition to this the task and finish group has implemented a directory of mental health services supporting practitioners.

# Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children subgroup activity

---

The emotional health and wellbeing of vulnerable children subgroup have continued to work on the actions identified below:

- ❖ **Prompt and timely information sharing pathways would both allow appropriate support for children and young people attending schools following an episode of self-harm which had required medical intervention or assessment in an emergency department by a mental health practitioner and facilitate risk assessments for the child or young person to be shared** - The self-harm information sharing pathway was implemented in March 2020 to share information from Emergency Departments when there has been a self-harm episodes and Education. The launch was accompanied by an education programme for school staff who would receive a copy of the notification, a one-minute briefing for staff and a power point presentation. The information sharing pathway is now fully imbedded in practice. The data from this has contributed to the self-harm joint strategic needs analysis and to determine future service provision.
- ❖ **The impact of the self-harm pathway was reported in March 2022, and an audit of the pathway was completed.** The evaluation captured the impact of the pathway from both children and young people. An example included that a child had identified a key member of staff to have regular contact with; twice weekly calls were then made from both that member of staff and the pastoral lead for that year. The work we completed with the student has highlighted her struggles around gender identity and we are working with the family to offer advice and support. The provision of a support card was also offered to enable child to access our support room if they feel anxious.
- ❖ **A comprehensive directory of mental health services in Cheshire East was produced.** This was shared with all schools in addition to early help services and the wider multi agency through the emotional health and wellbeing group and the safeguarding children partnership executive meeting. This allowed for the early identification and intervention of mental health services for children and young people. The directory will be updated annually and is now available on the LiveWell Cheshire website.



# Impact and Success Measures

---

The following are examples of feedback from schools and other education professionals who have used the Pathway for Sharing information When a Child has Attended Hospital Following an Incident of Self-Harm

Following receipt of the self-harm notification the school completed work with a student which highlighted her struggles around gender identity and work was undertaken with the family to offer advice and support.

*“This is a brilliant initiative. Really helpful.”*

*“The information provided on the Self-harm pathway notification is professional, factual and enables me to add to our safeguarding database as a record of the incident.”*

One notification was for a child attending an independent school out of area. SCiES contacted the school to explain the initiative and shared the notification to safeguard the child.

Another notification was for a child who was electively home educated therefore the contact was shared with the manager of the Elective Home Education Officers. As a result of this, the Elective Home Education Officer contacted the family to establish a support network and to offer a visit. The parents made an in-year application to move the child back to school and a school place was found; the team then offered support for the child's transition back into a school environment.



# Quality Assurance Subgroup Activity

During 2022/23 the Quality Assurance subgroup:

- ❖ Considered the implications for Cheshire East children of the Unannounced inspection of Youth custody at Werrington Young Offenders Institution. The Youth Justice Service provided assurance that they were in close contact with children currently placed there and had advocated for placement moves. However, placement decisions are made by the national Youth Custody Service and are not local ones.
- ❖ Agreed a refresh of the scorecard that the quality assurance subgroup will scrutinise that would focus upon following areas, Contacts, Strategy meetings, Number of children placed on a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time, arrested children, Police Protection Orders.
- ❖ Undertook audits to offer assurance following Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Audits were completed on the following topics:
  - Children open for concerns relating to sexual abuse
  - Safe sleep
  - Children who are missing from home
  - Quality of work undertaken by the Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS front door) on a variety of themes
  - Contextual Safeguarding
- ❖ Scrutinised the Section 175 submissions from Cheshire East schools. 95% of schools submitted their audits. Those schools that did not submit their audits were subsequently contacted by the SCiES team. The responses were detailed and gave a clear outline of what schools have in place and what they are developing. This provided the partnership with the reassurance they needed around safeguarding practice in those schools. Actions were identified for SCiES to progress via Designated Safeguarding Leads.

# Multi-Agency Audits 2022/2023

---

In 2022/2023, the following multi-agency audit activity has taken place:

- ❖ Sexual Abuse and Neglect in May 2022
- ❖ Safe Sleep in May 2022
- ❖ Child Exploitation during the JTAI in June 2022
- ❖ Contact Audits of the 'Front Door' in January to March 2023
- ❖ Missing trigger meetings in February 2023

The outcome of these audits continue to drive partnership improvement activity in these areas.



# Learning and Improvement Subgroup Activity

---

During 2022/23 the Learning and Improvement subgroup has:

- ❖ Overseen and scrutinised the implementation of the learning from the Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews.
- ❖ Coordinated the review and update of the partnership escalation process. The multi-agency operational group now track escalations and report learning to the Learning and Improvement group.
- ❖ Received partners outline of what their services have been doing to promote an understanding amongst practitioners of ICON (abusive head trauma) and how the touch points work. This included Health Trusts providing inhouse level 3/4 training, Childrens Social Care Team Managers being briefed by the Child Death Overview Nurse and the SCIES briefing on approach ICON. ICON training was also available as part of the partnership training offer.
- ❖ Scrutinised the Local Authority Designated Officer annual (LADO) annual report for 2021/22.
- ❖ Scrutinised the Safeguarding Service returned to face-to-face child protection conferences from 1 August 2022 as part of the covid recovery journey. Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officers feedback that face-to-face conferences provide a better opportunity to support families. All requests for a fully virtual conference now must be approved by the Safeguarding Service Manager. Being able to offer agencies a chance to join virtually however has meant that meetings have been able to go ahead where they may have had to be stepped down previously. Key agencies with vital information and input have been able to participate virtually.





# Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPRs)

We are all responsible for Safeguarding!

## Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews - An overview

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (reviews) are undertaken on 'serious child safeguarding cases' to learn lessons and improve the way in which local professionals and organisations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. These reviews were previously known as Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) but were transitioned to this alternative model in July 2019. The National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has emphasised the responsibility of safeguarding partners to decide upon whether a review is needed or not.

The safeguarding partners are responsible for making arrangements to identify and review serious child safeguarding cases which, in their view, raise issues of importance in relation to their area. The safeguarding partners commission and supervise independent reviewers for these reviews. In all cases the partnership considers whether the reviewer has the following:

- ❖ professional knowledge, understanding and practice relevant to local child safeguarding practice reviews, including the ability to engage both with practitioners and children and families
- ❖ knowledge and understanding of research relevant to children's safeguarding issues
- ❖ ability to recognise the complex circumstances in which practitioners work together to safeguard children
- ❖ ability to understand practice from the viewpoint of the individuals, organisations or agencies involved at the time rather than using hindsight
- ❖ ability to communicate findings effectively
- ❖ no conflict of interests

In the period of 2022/ 2023, Cheshire East Safeguarding Partnership have undertaken 3 Rapid Reviews and separately 4 Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews. These were initiated the previous year and have only recently concluded in 2022/2023.

All of the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review reports can be found on the [partnership's website](#).



# Child H and I - published 21 December 2022

---

## WHAT HAPPENED?

The children who are the focus of this report, and referred to as Child H and Child I, are the youngest of five children; their older siblings all being adults at the time of the review. They are members of a large extended family, many of whom have also been known to agencies for several years. Agencies have had considerable levels of engagement with the family for many years and mother herself had a history of abuse as a child. Concerns for the subject children and/or their siblings are recorded from 2000. The review was prompted by the discovery of serious sexual offences which only came to light in 2021 but took place in 2013. The partnership established the review in order to identify any learning from practice at that time, and to satisfy itself that any practice deficits were no longer present within current practice. It was of concern that these offences took place within the context of extensive multi-agency involvement with the family.

Criminal proceedings re the 2013 offences were running in parallel with this review. This process was managed by West Midlands police, not the local police force. Good communication was established with the Senior Investigating Officer and consultation arrangements established with the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure neither process compromised the other. Convictions were brought against the adults of serious sexual offences and are now serving substantial prison sentences. The children were subject of Care Proceedings during the course of the Review.

## GOOD PRACTICE

Good practice was identified in the schools, who were involved with this family showed real strength in capturing the lived experiences of the children and recording their voices. They showed considerable persistence in exposing their concerns and provided a safe space for the children. There are many examples of practical support to the children and to their mother. The chronology prepared by education was particularly thorough – this was possible due to the level of detail held in their school records. The Health Visitor was also praised for her tenacity in raising her concerns about potential risks from sex offenders in the extended family is to be commended. During the course of the review, Cheshire Police undertook an internal review which was of high quality, detailed and formed the basis of further action to continue the improvements which have been evidenced.

# Child H and I – published 21 December 2022

## LEARNING

The recommendations identified that Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership should ensure that, where convicted sex offenders are in contact with children that appropriate and effective risk management mechanisms are in place. It should consider with partners the arrangement for risk assessments and safety planning where the allegation is regarding an alleged offender rather than one with convictions and agencies should work together to ensure that potential risk from sex offenders in the family network are assessed in respect of other children with whom they have contact.

Other recommendations included that Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership should continue to receive updates from the Director of Children’s Social Care regarding the completion and effective implementation of the action plans made in response to Ofsted inspection activity and that the planned review of the escalation policy is completed.

## ACTION

Following the review, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership developed an escalation tracker to feed into the Learning and Improvement Group on a quarterly basis and there is an Improvement Board in place to address actions and recommendations from Ofsted.

There are regular reviews of the Pan Cheshire Policies and procedures and the importance of specific risk assessments, such as the “Persons who Pose a Risk of Harm” tool has been reinforced. RASAC and SARC training, as well as Trio of Vulnerabilities and ACEs training is offered across the partnership. Sexual Abuse is also highlighted in training courses such as ‘Basic Safeguarding’, ‘Complex Neglect’, ‘Child Protection Processes’ and ‘Digital Safeguarding’. Additionally, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children’s Partnership are making efforts to facilitate the ‘Persons who Pose a Risk’ training.



# Child J – published February 2023

---

## WHAT HAPPENED?

Child J was less than one month old when he tragically died. At the time of his death, he was being cared for by his father and after a feed in the early hours, Child J was placed on a pillow on a sofa, where he was later found not breathing.

The review considered the professional involvement with this family in order to identify learning for the wider systems and practice in cases where safe sleep messages have not been effective, and there are risk indicators in relation to high-risk domestic abuse, alcohol use and mental health.

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership agreed to undertake a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review by considering a case to be referred to as Child J. They recognised that lessons could be learned from reviewing the practice in the case, with the aim of better safeguarding the children of Cheshire East. The Local Safeguarding Practice Review report was published in February 2023.

## LEARNING

It was recommended that the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership should seek assurance that safer sleep messaging is embedded into multi-agency safeguarding practice, includes fathers and where they provide significant care or are named in safety plans, wider friends and family. Also, assurances should be sought that fathers are fully involved and engaged in assessment and planning processes. It was recommended that the partnership should ensure that there is a robust approach to Child in Need planning and where this is not the case, professionals challenge and hold each to account. Finally, it was proposed that a multi – agency audit focussed on the impact of domestic abuse on parenting and to ensure that changes to the pathway are embedded and effective.



# Child J – published February 2023

---



## **ASSURANCE**

Evidence of progress to date is that there has been a roll out of the ICON and safe sleep training across all partners. The aim of this was to make safe sleep awareness everybody's responsibility. The Local Authority added a mandatory question in the Children and Families assessment that asks whether safe sleep and ICON has been discussed.

## **IMPACT**

There is currently a Rapid Review being undertaken by Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership which has already identified good practice in that safe sleep and ICON was discussed with both parents by a number of professionals.

# Child K – published February 2023

---

## WHAT HAPPENED?

Child K was a 17 year old child in the care of Cheshire East local authority at the time of the review. She was subject to a care order under s31 of Children Act 1989. This requires the local authority to provide accommodation for him or her, to maintain and safeguard him or her, to promote his or her welfare and to give effect to or act in accordance with the other welfare responsibilities set out in the Children Act 1989. It gives the local authority shared parental responsibility for the child and the power to determine the extent to which the child's parents and others with parental responsibility may exercise their responsibility, where this is necessary to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.


Child K was experiencing significant difficulties in her life that resulted in her being exposed to significant and serious harm. The increased concerns for the welfare of Child K included several serious and life-threatening attempts to self-harm requiring resuscitation on at least two occasions. Child K was frequently missing from placements with another child in the care of another local authority. There were increasing concerns about exposure to child sexual exploitation, substance misuse and criminal behaviour including carrying a knife. Her vulnerability was recognised by the professionals working with her, they were concerned about risks she was being exposed to, her erratic behaviour and her lack of awareness about the dangers she was exposed to. She was described as impulsive.

Her presenting behaviours made identifying and engaging an appropriate placement to meet her needs very challenging and she had somewhere in the region of nine placements during the review period, including extended stays on acute hospital wards as no suitable placement could be identified to facilitate a safe discharge.

Child K was made subject to a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DOLs) on 2 December 2021 and moved to her current placement in January 2022. She is no longer subject to a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard and is making steady progress. Risks have considerably reduced though remain present and plans are well underway to support transition to adult services.

The review considered the professional involvement with Child K and her mother to identify learning for wider systems and practice in cases where children are experiencing significant contextual safeguarding issues, including child sexual exploitation, self-harm and how these impact on placements, professionals' approach to safety plans and multi-agency management of risk.





# Child K – published February 2023

---

## **GOOD PRACTICE**

Good practice was identified as part of the review process, examples of this include the pharmacy that Child K presented to when she was missing from her placement, for her medication and the morning after pill. They realised she was a child in care and arranged for her to return the next day for her medication, they contacted her placement who were able to locate her the following day and return her to her placement. Also, the tenacity of individual workers, in locating Child K when she was missing, including her social worker going to London to try and locate her and return her to a safe placement. Local services remaining in contact with Child K, including local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) visiting when she was on an acute ward in another area. There was also good practice identified with joint working with another local authority as Child K was frequently missing and with another child who was looked after by the other local authority.

## **ACTION**

The outcome of the report was for Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership to seek assurance that when children are cared for and there are significant safeguarding risks, care planning meetings take place at a frequency that reflects the needs of the child. These meetings should involve the Independent Reviewing Officer to contribute to planning and to offer scrutiny. Professionals must challenge and hold each other to account to ensure that these meetings take place. Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership should also seek assurance that the partnership, understands each other's roles and works collaboratively to ensure the child is at the centre of all decision making. To support this, the development of a briefing or joint training that explains Mental Health Act Assessments, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, Tier 4 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Secure Welfare will help enhance practitioners understanding and enable them to hold each other to account.

It was recommended that Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership should seek assurance that whenever a child is admitted to hospital following a significant incident, a multi – agency meeting is held to formulate and agree the multi – agency safeguarding plan and holistic plan of support prior to discharge. In addition, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership should consider developing a multi -agency Team around the Team approach to support frontline practitioners who are working with high-risk children, to support reflective practice, reduce risk of vicarious trauma for practitioners and improve decision making.

# Joint thematic review – originally published October 2021 and updated March - July 2022

---

## **WHAT HAPPENED?**

Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children's Partnerships jointly commissioned a review following an incident in a public space where a group of adults and a number of young people were reported to be involved in a disturbance. The incident resulted in three adults being stabbed, one of whom ultimately died of their injuries.

The incident triggered a cross-border meeting at which it was agreed that the criteria for a Local Safeguarding Child Practice Review was met and that this would be conducted as a joint thematic review. The two Partnerships saw this as an opportunity to test the local contextual safeguarding system, specifically in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation.

## **LEARNING**

At the time of this incident Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester's Safeguarding Children's Partnerships were working within the guidance set out in the Pan-Cheshire Contextual Safeguarding Child Exploitation Pathway 2019, which contained a 'route-map' for identification, risk assessment and referral to be used by local areas when child criminal exploitation risks are suspected or known. The pathway includes a screening and assessment tool to be used where child exploitation, or the risk of it, is suspected and the pathway guides frontline practitioners to complete the tool which is then sent to the relevant local authority Children's Service 'front door'. The 'front door' reviews information and instigates appropriate next steps for example children and family single assessment, Section 47, Strategy Meetings as required. All exploitation assessments are shared with a multi-agency panel in the respective areas who make a multi-agency decision on level of risk in relation to child exploitation.

The Pan-Cheshire system was said by practitioners participating in the review to be embedded in the local areas and clearly there was benefit in the approach. However, the review found that aspects of the system require refreshing based on local conditions, particularly the increasing demand; professional and agency interpretation of risk; professional interpretation of vulnerability, and the availability of local resources to provide interventions at varying levels of risk. The issue of thresholds was also identified as a potential barrier to interventions.

## **GOOD PRACTICE**

The review highlighted that there was much good practice to commend in both areas. The review heard many examples of innovative practice, a willingness to challenge and be challenged and a workforce that, at every level, was committed to developing a specific 'whole system' approach to Child Criminal Exploitation.



# Joint thematic review

---

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Alongside commitment and willingness, the review identified that workforce development in relation to Child Criminal Exploitation should be prioritised. All the focus groups recognised that greater confidence and understanding, coupled with access to skills development and management supervision was needed to support practitioners in working effectively in identifying, assessing and providing interventions to children and families at risk of or involved in Child Criminal Exploitation.

The review recommended that the Safeguarding Children's Partnerships shared the learning from this review with the Pan Cheshire All-Age Contextual Safeguarding Task Group so that it informed and directed developments in relation to policy and practice e.g. assessment tools, workforce development and referral systems (including managing demand on the system). It was proposed that the Safeguarding Children Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships and Local Safeguarding Adult Boards should receive assurance that current work to create a PanCheshire all age Child Criminal Exploitation strategy developed at pace. Assurance needed to be sought by the partnership that the local early help offer focused and responded to known vulnerability indicators associated with Child Criminal Exploitation and that there was a shared and widely understood definition of vulnerability to Child Criminal Exploitation. The review also recommended the Safeguarding Children's Partnerships should be assured that the Child Criminal Exploitation system gives sufficient focus to the physical and mental health needs of young people at risk of or involved in Child Criminal Exploitation and that pathways, such as for ADHD and CAMHS, are appropriately linked to Child Criminal Exploitation pathways so that non-engagement is assessed in the context of potential increased vulnerability.

It was recommended that the Safeguarding Children Partnerships should work alongside the Community Safety Partnerships to communicate prevention messages to local communities and all the services that work to recognise indicators of Child Criminal Exploitation, including the police power to stop and search. Also, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships should work with the Local Safeguarding Adult Boards to seek assurance that young people transitioning to adult services are offered a transition plan and appropriate ongoing support into adulthood.





# Change

## Joint thematic review

---

### IMPACT

Since the above review took place, a Serious Organised Crime and Criminal Exploitation subgroup has taken responsibility for updating the Cheshire East strategy and creating a practice guidance document that will reflect the learning from the review. The training offer has been reviewed and Contextual Safeguarding is now offered to all practitioners across the partnership. The updated strategy is in progress and Cheshire West and Chester have been consulted. This continues to be a live action tracked through the Learning and Improvement board and will remain open until there is assurances that learning from the review has been appropriately reflected.

The current pathway is inclusive of Low, Medium and High Risk concerns and the Contextual Safeguarding meeting ensures that all children, irrespective of risk grade, are discussed. All services can refer to the Contextual Safeguarding Hub using the Pan Cheshire Screening/Assessment Tools. The Timely Support for Children and Families in Cheshire East, Guidance on Thresholds of Need document is being updated to specifically include child exploitation.

The Integrated Front Door hold weekly meeting child missing exploitation and missing from home meeting. The Child Exploitation Specialist Nurse participates in this and provides information from health providers.

In July 2022 the Integrated Front door changed its procedures to enable a speedier response to communications by telephone or email to families or professionals seeking advice or highlighting concerns about a child due to safeguarded support needs, including child exploitation.

Police stop and search has been a focus of engage with Cheshire Youth Commission and the data report around this will become part of the regular reporting in the new arrangements.

# Multi Agency Training and Learning subgroup

---

*Working Together* (2018) identifies that the three safeguarding partners have a responsibility to consider what training is needed locally and how they will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of any training they commission.

In November 2022, Cheshire East's Safeguarding Children's Partnership appointed a new, dedicated training and development manager for the partnership to refresh, strengthen and develop the training offer that is available to the safeguarding partnership in its widest sense.

We have developed a meaningful, dynamic training programme that is linked with, and responds to, current focused partnership work areas. The training programme also addresses wider issues to encourage seamless ways of working together across Cheshire East. Core topics, and consistent threads running through each subject, continue to be identified through service consultations to recognise needs and we are constantly reviewing our current programme in response to on-going audit and practice case review findings as well as emerging ideas in research.

The training subgroup have been responsible for supporting the co-ordination of the new training programme.



# Learning Week

At the end of January 2023, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership delivered its first learning week. This was a 'first of a kind' event for Cheshire East, hosted across 5 consecutive days.

The week included an 'in person' conference with an esteemed guest speaker, alongside 24, one hour, on-line, back-to-back sessions with hosts and audiences coming from across the entire partnership's range of services with invites automatically dropped into calendars from a partnership-wide distribution list.

This activity was appreciated by over 2000 practitioners who 'tuned in' with an attendance average of 85 professionals in any given session. Due to its success, another Learning Week is being planned for Spring 2024.

The learning week had five themed days, one of which was a Child Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding conference with a key note speaker from Research in Practice.

Over five days, the following training was delivered:

<b>Neglect</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding Neglect</li><li>• Single Stories</li><li>• Safe Sleep, Cold Rooms, Out of Routine</li><li>• Coercive and controlling behaviour and links with neglect</li><li>• The Child's Voice</li><li>• Household Support Fund and Holiday Activity and Food Programme</li></ul>	<b>Sexual Harm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Importance of Digital Safeguarding</li><li>• Signs and Indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation</li><li>• How to... Learning about case reviews</li><li>• Managing Sexual Behaviours</li></ul>
<b>Child Wellbeing and Mental Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managing Allegations</li><li>• Bullying</li><li>• ICON</li><li>• Impact of Parental Challenges</li><li>• School as a protective factor</li><li>• Understanding ACEs</li><li>• An overview of the wellbeing for children in education offer</li></ul>	<b>Joined Up Practice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Signs of Safety Briefing</li><li>• Recognising Child Protection in Disability</li><li>• How to... Attending a Strategy Discussion</li><li>• How to... Make a referral</li><li>• 'DadPad'</li><li>• Missing From Home Protocol</li><li>• Engaging dads to support their children</li></ul>

# Partnership Conference: Contextual Safeguarding

The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership held their first 'in person' partnership conference. The event, part of a week of learning, was held in response to the government's Joint Targeted Area Inspection of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership last year.

Around 100 staff heard from guest speaker for the morning, Dez Holmes, director of Research in Practice (RiP), a national organisation that brings together academic research, practice expertise and the experiences of those accessing services. Dez is currently the director of the 'Tackling Child Exploitation' (TCE) programme, which RiP leads in partnership with University of Bedfordshire and the Children's Society. The conference considered the eight Child Exploitation principles.

The conference also included short sessions from contributors across the partnership on:

- ❖ 'The Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime strategy objectives'
- ❖ 'School attendance – everyone's business'
- ❖ 'Forced Internal Concealment'
- ❖ 'Celebration of Successful practice (Positive interventions work!).'



# Feedback from Learning week

---

" Definitely loved invites dropped into calendar. Makes it so accessible! Many thanks."

"Loved the short snippet training options and coupled with really useable resources to take away and try with families :)"

"Have attended two sessions and it's been great. The timetable has helped to prioritise"

"I think this week has been so worthwhile and the short sessions have been great to be able to fit in around other work."

"I have a large team which will really benefit from me cascading the info from today session to them. Thank you so much. 😊"

"Threshold of LADO and professional responsibility was helpful. Ability to contact is great don't get that in every LA."

"Thank you, this week has been so useful, thank you"

"What a brilliant way of presenting training for various subjects all in one place and not having to travel to different places. Thankyou"

"Thank you - I don't work directly with children but as a Safeguarding Business Support Officer, its makes documenting notes during conferences, easier to understand the reasons why things are done 😊"

"Thank you for your time - this week of online training is a fantastic opportunity"

"I wanted to say thank you so much for all the training this week. It has been invaluable"

# Training Offer

The review of the training offer was concluded with a new training programme offer being developed for 2023. The following training offer reflects the feedback from learning around 'what works' for the partnership training programme. Topics and learning threads were identified for the training programme through consultation with services, reviewing the existing programme, exploring research and in response to audit and practice case review findings.

A highlight outcome from Learning Week has been the introduction of three separate series of short (1hour) lunchtime sessions, each held monthly throughout the training year:

- ❖ 'How to...?' are practical guides for using shared tools, policies and practices.
- ❖ 'Spotlight on...' are dedicated to opening relationship networks where service sectors and agencies have a platform for introducing themselves and sharing what they do, advertising their skills and child focused support.
- ❖ 'CESCP Bitesize' facilitate opportunities for the Partnership team to share key messages from audits and case reviews, as well as exchange news coming in and out of the Partnership such as new services or policies being launched. We also use this opportunity to share examples of good practice to build an evidence-based understanding of what is working well in multi-agency, partnership working.

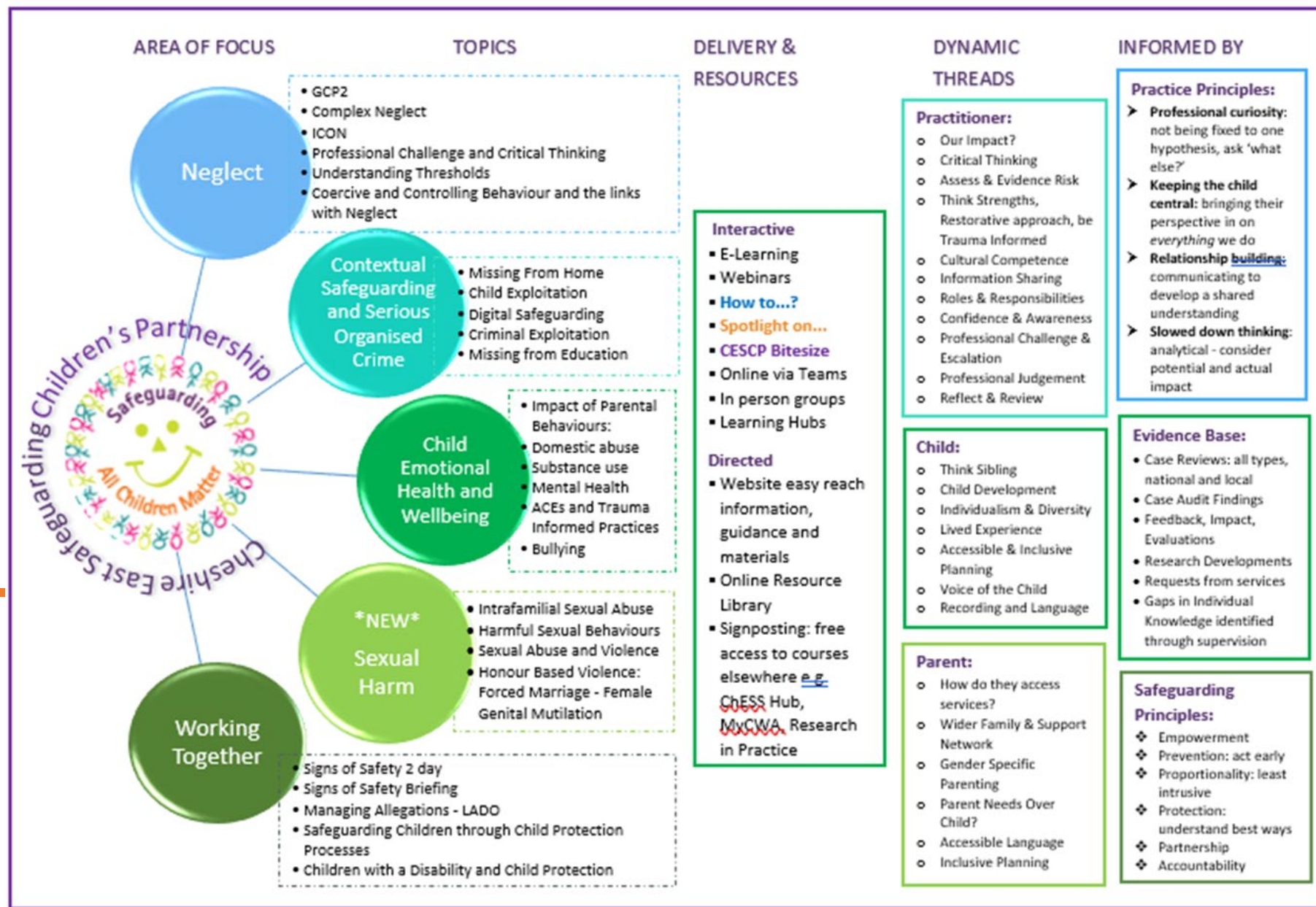
The training offer is evolving and growing in line with service need.

To find out more and to browse the detail of the training offer available, please follow the training link shown here:

[https://form.cheshireeast.gov.uk/service/CESCP\\_Training\\_Booking\\_2023\\_24](https://form.cheshireeast.gov.uk/service/CESCP_Training_Booking_2023_24)



# Training Programme





# Learning Hub – Sexual Abuse

The partnership conducted its first Learning Hub on the 22 March 2023. The aim of this was to:

- ❖ draft a partnership statement on what good should look like for Cheshire East Safeguarding practice around sexual abuse
- ❖ identify priorities for improvement in the local safeguarding practice response to child sexual abuse.

The event was held at Oakenclough Children’s Centre and had 23 professionals from across the partnership in attendance. The learning hub activity supported the partnership to adopt sexual abuse as one of its focus areas for 2023/2024.

The learning hub provided an opportunity for practitioners to benchmark current practice against national and local information and supported the attendees to draft summaries of what good looks like for the partnership to consider adopting. The learning hub identified priorities for improvement in the local safeguarding practice response to child sexual abuse. These priorities will form the activity of the partnership for our sexual abuse focus area for 2023/2024.

<b>Priority actions:</b>
Identification of risk and the undertaking assessment of risk when likelihood of sexual abuse
Good available training to support identification, managing sexual abuse and information sharing
Support for victims, both children and adults
Stronger response to single agency investigations
Practitioners are well supported to identify vulnerabilities and report abuse
Strong culture of consultation with children
Clear policy on child-on-child abuse
Develop a culture of creativity, reflection and active problem solving – building on existing strengths
Community level awareness



# Voice of the child



In 2022/2023, The partnership has developed guidance around how we capture the voice of children and young people and their lived experience with over 24 teams contributing to the research and drafting of this guidance. We know that capturing the voice of children and young people and understanding their lived experiences reduces the risk of harm and improves outcomes for children and young people.

As a partnership, we have a variety of toolkits we use for capturing the voice of children and young people and their lived experience at all stages and ages. The guidance aims to:

- ❖ ensure that we all consistently work to the same set of standards
- ❖ give professionals confidence and guidance in recording the child's voice effectively.

The partnership has also developed an annual programme for senior leaders to visit and speak to children and young people about their experiences.

The partnership starts each meeting with the voice of the child with different agencies bringing examples of a young person's lived experience of their practice to life within the meeting. This supports the partnership to reflect upon its work and the impact this has on our children and young people and helps to keep the voice of the child central to partnership activity.

# Communication Activity

Over the course of the reporting year, the Cheshire East Children's Safeguarding Partnership website attracted 19, 717 visitors to the Cheshire East Children's Safeguarding Partnership website. A further page breakdown is shown below:

Page	No. views	% views
1. Home page	2,829	11.24%
2. Professionals	1,889	7.50%
3. Learning and Development - Training	1,688	6.71%
4. Guidance on using Signs of Safety	1,346	5.35%
5. Procedures and Guidance	1,237	4.91%
6. Contextual Safeguarding	1,153	4.58%
7. About us	1,013	4.02%
8. Multi-Agency Toolkit	905	3.60%
9. Learning and Development – e-learning	796	3.16%
10. Signs of Safety	725	2.88%

With the growing use of technology and social media, all professionals need to adopt a much more sophisticated approach to their safeguarding responsibilities. They need to reflect on the changing nature of communication and how this impacts upon practice issues, particularly those focused on the identification and assessment of potential risk. To do this successfully, professionals need to recognize that children and young people do not use technology and social media in isolation. Their offline and online worlds are converged, and both need to be understood when trying to identify the type of support that a child, young person and their family might need.

To this end, Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership are ambitious in 2023 to refresh and update our website, have a more active presence on Facebook and Twitter and consider the use of apps and YouTube videos to promote partnership messages to reach more people.



# Partnership Budget Contributions

Working Together (2018) stipulates that the safeguarding partners should agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate to support the local arrangements. The funding should be sufficient to cover all elements of the safeguarding arrangements, including the cost of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Funding for 2022/23 continued in accordance with previous arrangements and had not changed for some years, with the local authority absorbing the budget deficit. The partnership recognises this is not sustainable and an increase in contributions will be sought in 2023/2024. This increase in contributions was also a recommendation from the independent scrutineer.

An internal benchmarking exercise has been undertaken to determine whether the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership's budget was in line with other partnership budgets. This supported the recommendation that contributions from across all partners, and in particular, the local authority needed to increase to support the business of the partnership.

Income	22/23
East Cheshire NHS Trust	£5,000
PCC	£25,000
Cheshire & Wirral Partnership	£4,093
NHS Cheshire CCG	£37,556
HMP Styal	£2,000
Wirral Community NHS Trust	£5,500
Mid Cheshire Hospital NHS Trust	£6,772
CEC	£47,468
Schools	£30,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£163,389</b>

Expenditure	22/23
Staff Salaries	£172,017
Car Allowances	£204
Professional fees	£27,774
<u>On line</u> procedures	£2,369
Telephone/ICT	£194
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£202,558</b>





# Areas of focus 2023/2024

---

Looking forward, the partnership have identified the following areas of focus for its activity in 2023/2024:

- ❖ Contextual Safeguarding
- ❖ Children missing from education
- ❖ Sexual Abuse

It has also been agreed that the voice of the child will be an overarching area of focus for the partnership running through all our activity in the year.

# Key priorities for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership in 2023/2024

---



Listening to and acting on the voice of the child to place them at the heart of the partnership

Embedding the new arrangements to ensure strategic oversight and line of sight to frontline practice

Improving quality assurance and routine, robust performance scrutiny and challenge

Creating a learning culture that takes action to improve practice

Ensuring there is transparent, decisive and evidence-based decision making in all partnership meetings to support improved outcomes

Create a highly effective partnership with communication based on positive relationships, shared values and clear vision



## Hearing the voice of the child



This is an area identified as a focus for development for the partnership in 2023/2024. It is our ambition that we will increase the extent to which children and young people are involved with the safeguarding arrangements in Cheshire East. With the support of the Councils Participation Team, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership business team will meet with a group of children and young people to talk about how they might become involved in the work of the partnership, be sighted on partnership arrangements and how their views can be heard to influence and shape service delivery. This needs to be routine and regular.

It is a partnership ambition that we will create a shadow partnership executive of young people to support the activity of the partnership in future years.

In 2023/2024, we are looking to hold partnership meetings in community spaces to enable children and young people to speak with the partnership on a more regular basis. This will inform the work of the partnership in a more responsive way.

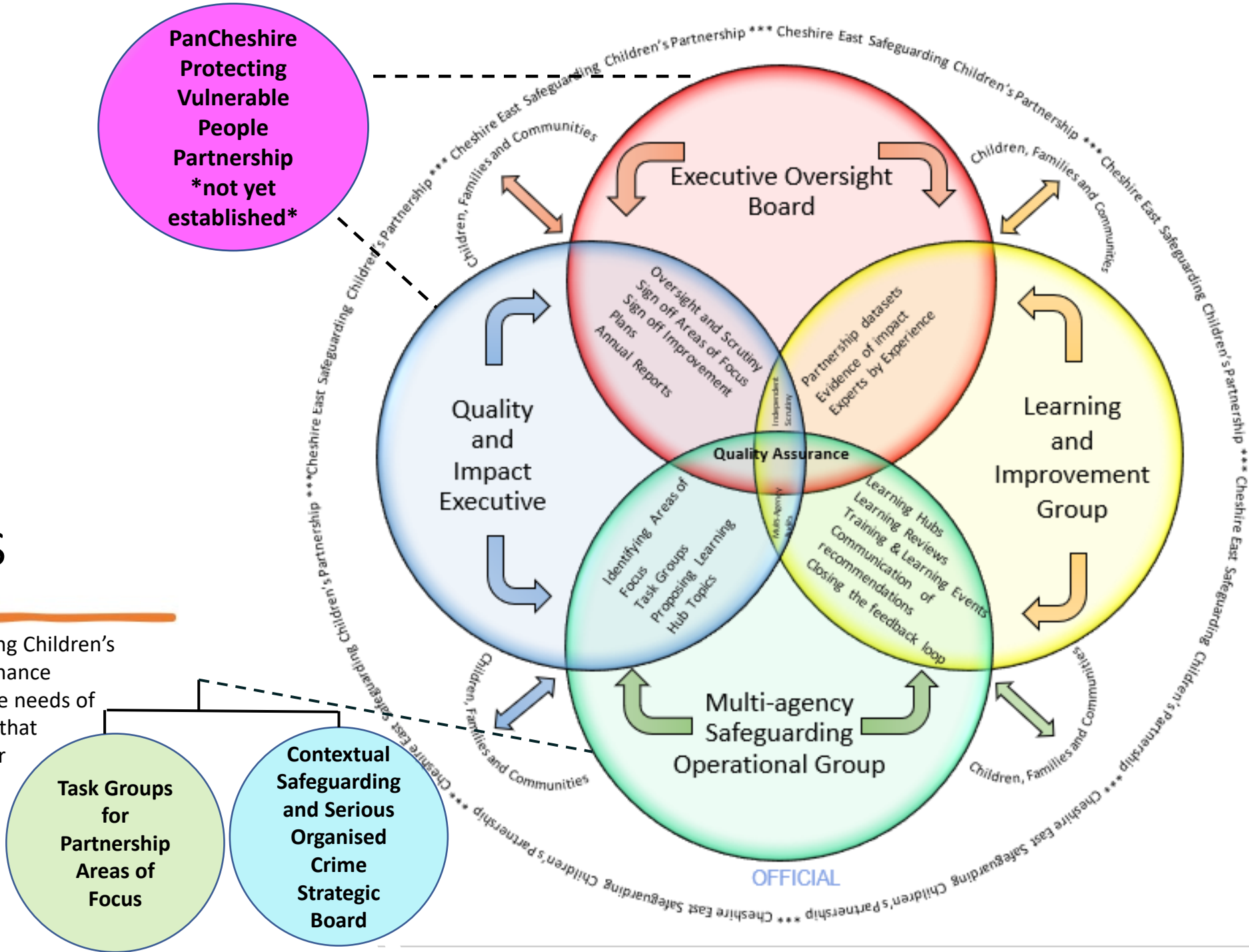
All partnership multi-agency audit activity will be ambitious to involve the experiences of children and young people to ensure there is effective triangulation of information being provided from frontline practice.





# The new governance arrangements

In 2023/2024, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's partnership will look to embed these governance arrangements to identify and respond to the needs of children in Cheshire East. We are confident that these new arrangements will provide a clear line of sight to frontline practice but we will be reviewing this routinely to ensure the arrangements are effective; this will include commissioning an independent scrutineer to provide scrutiny and oversight of the arrangements after a year.





# Improving Quality Assurance



In 2023/2024, the partnership will be refreshing its quality assurance framework and activity. This will be aligned to the new arrangements where quality assurance will be the golden thread to support all partnership work. Under the new framework, quality assurance activity can be 'stepped up' at any time in a responsive manner to support partnership understanding of any new or emerging issues as well as undertake planned quality assurance work over the course of the year that will be linked to the partnership's areas of focus as well as the learning hub process.

The refresh of the quality assurance framework will also go alongside a refreshed partnership data set to support the scrutiny and oversight of performance aligned to the partnership areas of focus.





## Creating a learning culture



In 2023/2024, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership aspires to be a learning partnership; a partnership that can 'acquire new knowledge and innovate quickly enough to survive and flourish in a rapidly changing environment' (Senge, 1990).

We are establishing a learning culture that demonstrates and encourages individual and organisational learning, and where both gaining and sharing knowledge is prioritised, valued, and rewarded. It becomes part of the ecosystem of the organisation.

Effective communication and feedback is woven throughout the architecture of the revised arrangements and will be encouraged and expected as a part of the norm to support the development of our learning culture. This will be supported by the refreshed training programme being offered to the partnership as well as the refreshed quality assurance framework where we will scrutinise audit activity and performance data to better understand our gaps and/or identify good practice.

We will then look to establish a clear learning framework in which action is taken to 'close the loop' on learning activity from audit, data, rapid reviews and local safeguarding practice reviews.

This will also include working with partners to establish the Learning Hub model within the partnership.

# Transparent decision making



In 2023/2024, we will work towards being more responsive and transparent as a partnership. We recognise that the annual report is written in retrospective and as a result is not the most effective tool to analyse and scrutinise partnership activity in the moment.

In 2023/2024, we will move to a quarterly method of partnership reporting to ensure partners understand the progress we are making against our areas of focus and agreed action plans. We will identify within this report any outstanding actions where there is drift and delay and make clear, confident decisions about how we can achieve these actions in the next quarter.

The quarterly partnership report will then support the communication of these targets and ensure there is responsibility and accountability by the partnership to drive this forward with timescales for review and measurable impact outcomes. In addition, the ambition will be to publish the quarterly reports on our social media accounts and on the partnership website to ensure that there is transparency of our activity across the year.

These quarterly updates will also support the completion of the annual report.



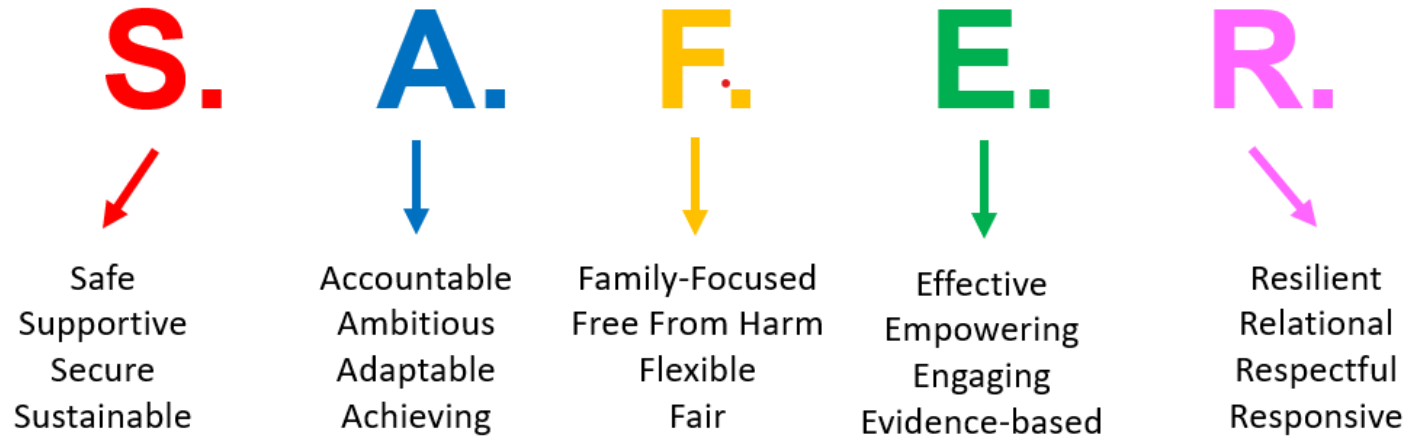


# Shared vision and values to improve partnership working



The partnership have agreed that our vision should be updated to reflect the changes that have been made as part of our new arrangements. In 2023/2024, the partnership will be...

## Working **TOGETHER** to make children, families and communities



In line with the revised governance arrangements, we will be rebranding the partnership to complete the cycle of transformation. This will include a refresh of the partnership logo, an overhaul of the partnership website and agreement of a communication strategy to enable partnership messages to be heard 'live' and in multiple formats to best meet the needs of our frontline practitioners. We recognise that an effective partnership is a partnership where frontline practitioners and strategic leaders have a symbiotic relationship. Frontline practitioners need access to the partnership to understand the strategic plan of work to improve outcomes and to drive the strategic plans on the ground and the revised partnership arrangements alongside a clear communication strategy will support this more effectively.

We are ambitious that our refreshed and rebranded partnership will enable us to work **TOGETHER** to make children, families and communities **S.A.F.E.R** in 2023/2024.