

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Annual Report
2024/25



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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 from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This report evidences the work undertaken by the partnership throughout the reporting year and evaluates the effectiveness of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. It aims to demonstrate the impact we have had on improving outcomes for children, young people, and their families, while transparently sharing the lessons learned. The annual report also provides an opportunity to reflect on areas where we should focus our efforts in the coming year.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to all involved in the partnership for their dedication and hard work. Your wisdom and diligence have been instrumental in helping us strive to provide the best possible care for children. Your collaborative efforts across the partnership to meet the needs of all children, alongside the close attention given to children at greatest risk of harm, have resulted in increased safety.

Since joining the partnership in March 2024 and assuming the role of chair in June 2024, I have witnessed the active measures taken by the partnership to protect children from abuse, prevent harm to their health or development, and take action to enable them to achieve the best outcomes.

A considerable amount of work has been carried out to strengthen the governance, process and systems with more collaborative leadership and new systems put in place which provide greater oversight. It is important to acknowledge the Partnership has had a challenging year, with changes in DSPs and changes in governance, and agencies being on improvement journeys. Agencies have worked hard, and their commitment is underpinned by robust governance and oversight arrangements. The new governance structure affords collaborative leadership and systems that provide greater oversight. Moving forward, we have an opportunity to focus further on quality and measuring impact around how the Partnership is making a difference for children, young people and their families.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. In Cheshire East, all our partners are committed to working together to make children, families, and communities safer. This annual report highlights the extensive activities undertaken across our partnership to protect our most vulnerable children and ensure they can be as healthy as possible.

Over the past year, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has implemented new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements to identify and respond to the needs of children in Cheshire East. These new arrangements have provided a clear line of sight to frontline practice, and through our efforts this year, we are confident in our compliance with Working Together 2023.

We have continued to focus on four key areas:

- Contextual Safeguarding
- Education as a Protective Factor
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Child Neglect.

We have refreshed our training offer to the partnership for 2024/2025 and held a highly successful multi-agency learning week; our third such event which this year introduced practice observations by senior leaders.

Throughout 2024/25, the partnership has worked to strengthen the learning culture in Cheshire East. We conducted four Rapid Reviews and commissioned one Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. Within our updated governance structure, we have established a dedicated Child Safeguarding Practice Review group to focus specifically on single and multi-agency learning, ensuring it drives improved practice across the partnership.

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**Josette Nyokindi, Interim Associate
Director of Quality and Safety
Improvement, Chair of the Partnership**



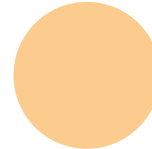
The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership is fully aware of the new reforms and the updated statutory guidance issued in December 2023: "*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023*" and the "*Children's Social Care National Framework*." These guidance documents provide clarity on how safeguarding partners, relevant agencies, and others can collaborate towards the vision of supporting children, young people, and families set out in the national strategy, "*Stable Homes Built on Love*." We have identified Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners, with Education named as the fourth statutory partner, represented at DSP level by the Director of Education.

The partnership has engaged independent scrutiny through Melanie John Ross, ensuring our core safeguarding functions are effective and subject to continuous evaluation. By reviewing current practice and adhering to multi-agency expectations, principles for working with children, young people, parents and carers, and child protection standards, we remain focused on improving outcomes for children and young people. Our commitment is to ensure that every child and young person is safeguarded, supported, and given the best possible opportunity to thrive, with our collective practice shaped by what makes the most difference to their safety, wellbeing, and life chances.

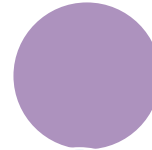
The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership



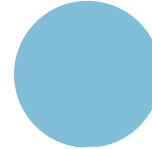
The Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements intend to support and enable local organisations and agencies to work together in a system where:



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.



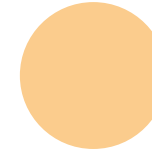
Organisations and agencies challenge appropriately and hold one another to account effectively.



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.



Shared vision and values to improve partnership working



S.

Safe
Supportive
Secure
Sustainable

A.

Accountable
Ambitious
Adaptable
Achieving

F.

Family-Focused
Free From Harm
Flexible
Fair

E.

Effective
Empowering
Engaging
Evidence-based

R.

Resilient
Relational
Respectful
Responsive

In line with the revised governance arrangements, this is our partnership vision. Our vision is firmly child centred, recognising that effective safeguarding depends on a strong, two-way relationship between frontline practitioners and strategic leaders. Practitioners are supported to understand and deliver the strategic plan in ways that improve outcomes for children, while their experiences and insights shape the partnership's priorities. These arrangements place children at the heart of our work, ensuring effective communication, stronger collaboration, and the safeguarding of every child.

We remain ambitious that our partnership will enable us to work **TOGETHER** to make children, families and communities **S.A.F.E.R.**

Governance Structure for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership

The updated structure provides clear opportunities for LSP and DSP oversight of the partnership work. The Local Authority Chief Executive holds the responsibility as the Local Authority statutory Safeguarding Partner and Social Care representative as Delegated Safeguarding representatives to take decisions

Meets 3 times a year,
LSPs and DSPs

Lead Safeguarding Partners

Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP) hold the multi-agency safeguarding responsibilities. Chief Executive of the LA, Director of Nursing and Care of the ICB and Chief Constable. Meeting three times a year. This is a pan-Cheshire meeting with other Chief Executives and DSPs to limit duplication and any join up where appropriate. Includes the DSPs as part of the Working Together 2023 requirement of challenge to the LSP.

DSPs share Chairing
on a rota

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children Partnership Board (CE SCP)

The LSPs delegate responsibilities to **Director of Children's Services, Detective Chief Superintendent, Head of Protecting Vulnerable People & Associate Director of Quality and Safety Improvement** and deliver responsibilities through the Partnership Board meeting 6-8 weekly.

Meets 6 weekly

Multi Agency Quality Assurance Group (MAQA)

The MAQA Group drives the Cheshire East safeguarding partnership responsibilities providing rigour and challenge to the system where information will feed up and be informed by the subgroups as well as directing activity to have assurance of the effectiveness of the partnership. **Attended by direct reports of the DSPs or equivalent seniority and they may request Chairs of the subgroups to attend.**

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-group

Child Death Overview Panel

Learning and Improvement Group

Strategic Safeguarding groups

Education Board

A new strategic education safeguarding group – with representatives from across the education system

The addition of the new education board. *Note – New education reps will also attend all sub-groups

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Partnership Budget Considerations



In 2024/25, in line with Working Together (2023), Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) have agreed the level of funding needed to deliver the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. This includes consideration of business and analytical support, independent scrutiny, infrastructure, and core functions including local children safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency training and learning events. LSPs have responsibility to ensure that adequate funding is allocated and spent in line with agreed priorities.

Funding contributions from the statutory safeguarding partners should be equitable and agreed by the LSPs. Funding for the arrangements are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.

In 2024/25 there was an underspend in staffing due to the vacant Business Support Officer post. In addition, the partnership had an allocated budget for 3 LCSPRs. Only one has been commissioned in 2024/25, however, due to when the work will be completed, the costs will show in 2025/26.

In 2025/26, further work is required to ensure the partnership is funded appropriately.

Expenditure	24/25
Staff Salaries	£ 235,512
Training Expenses	£ 300
Transport	£ 862
Supplies & Services	£ 4,250
Professional Fees	£ 5,254
Telephone/ICT	£ 283
Total Expenditure	£ 246,461

Income	24/25
East Cheshire Trust	£ 5,000
PCC	£ 27,825
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB	£ 44,215
Cheshire & Wirral Partnership	£ 4,093
HMP Styal	£ 2,520
Wirral Community NHS Trust	£ 5,500
Mid Cheshire Hospital NHS Trust	£ 6,772
CEC	£ 169,968
Schools	£ 50,000
Total Income	£ 315,893

OFSTED Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services

We have an improvement plan to address the findings from the [Ofsted inspection of children's services in February and March 2024](#).

This year we have:

-  Enhanced line of sight to frontline practice through a new performance framework and strengthened audit process
-  Launched new care leaver hubs and an app for the local offer for care leavers – Junction 16+
-  Recruited 5 care leaver ambassadors to represent and seek the voice of care experienced young people and ensure their views shape services
-  Created new corporate parenting governance arrangements and workstreams
-  Improved support for care leavers to access employment, education and training (EET).
-  Launched a new training offer tailored to the areas for improvement.
-  Launched a new workforce strategy for children's social care.

Significant progress continues to be made in delivering the improvement plan with almost all actions on target. **As of March 2025, 27% actions have been signed off as complete.**

External review of our services has confirmed that we are continuing to make progress, and that staff at all levels are committed to making improvements:

- **Ofsted monitoring visit in February 2025** on the front door found that pace of change had accelerated with the introduction of a new leadership team, and that there is robust senior leader oversight of practice.
- **DfE progress review in April 2025** found that the pace of improvement in the past 6 months has accelerated, there is a more consistent understanding of children's services strengths and challenges, and there is significant political and corporate commitment to children and families. It found there was a robust approach to service improvement.
- Our sector led improvement partner, North Tyneside, carried out a **review of services supporting care leavers in May 2025**, which found that the quality of practice in this area has improved since the inspection, and that care leavers are supported to make or stay in contact with their families.

Although services have improved, we know we still have more work to do to achieve consistently good quality services and this will continue to be a priority for 2025-26, and the Partnership have oversight of children's services improvement plans through the CЕСSР Board.



Children's Services Improvement Plan



CESCP Priorities 2024/25

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership set these four priorities for our activity through 2024/25.

1. Contextual Safeguarding

2. Sexual Abuse

3. Education as a Protective Factor

4. Neglect



1. Contextual Safeguarding Strategy

Aims

In 2024/2025, the Contextual Safeguarding Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Strategic Group has continued to develop a partnership strategy which will set out our ambitious vision and priorities where we, our partners and communities, will continue to work together to protect and support children and young people from exploitation and harm outside the home.

In recognition of the changing nature and scale of the harm children can experience outside of their homes, we remain committed to respond through implementing a strategic response to harm focused on relationships with children, families, and the communities in which they live.

Whilst harm outside the home can take many forms, the priority for the partnership continues to be children who are exploited.

There has been a significant increase in intelligence shared with the Police by Social Care, leading to direct action that has improved the safety and wellbeing of children. Positive outcomes include the demolition of an abandoned building in Crewe that was being used by young people, removing associated risks, and the arrest of an unlicensed tattooist who had been tattooing children, thereby preventing further harm.

There is strong evidence of a significant correlation between low self esteem and self worth in young females who experience exploitation. This underlines the urgent need to invest in targeted support that promotes emotional wellbeing, resilience, and a positive sense of self. By addressing these underlying vulnerabilities, we can reduce both the risk of exploitation and its long term impact, empowering young women to feel safer, more confident, and better able to thrive.

These examples highlight how effective information sharing and joint working are making a tangible difference in protecting children and young people

Key achievements

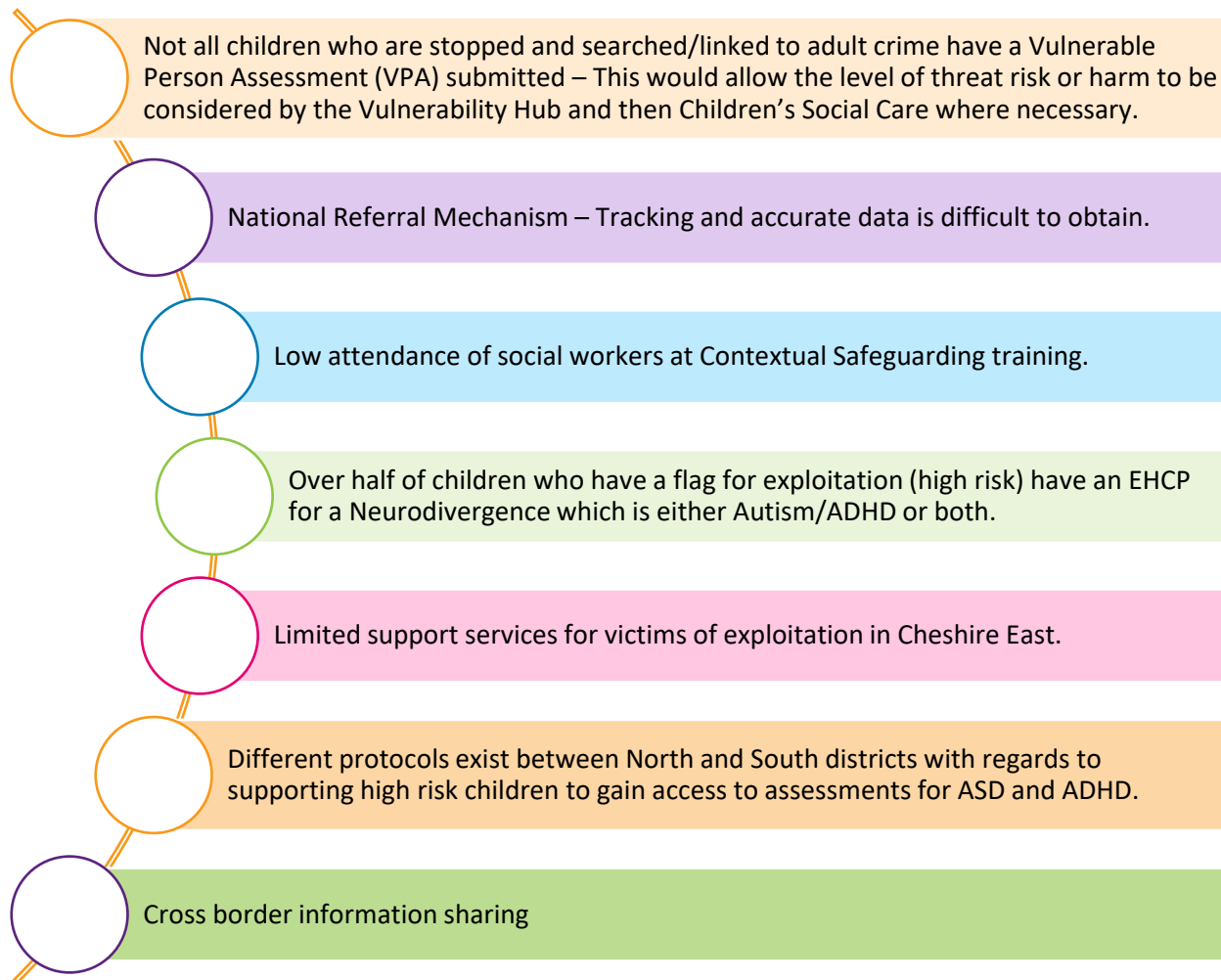
- Children missing over 48 hours (incidents) has reduced in 24/25 with a total of **63** compared to **90** in 2023/24.
- There has been a steady increase in NRM applications in 2024 highlighting a child's victim status from exploitation.
- The partnership has helped facilitate more Contextual Safeguarding training which was delivered throughout 2024 on four separate dates. This training focused on enhancing knowledge and awareness of child exploitation in Cheshire East.
- There has been a considerable increase in mapping meetings – which increased knowledge and awareness of peer groups and places of interest. In 2024/2025 there were **34** compared to **12** in 2023.
- June 2024 there were **32** children and young people flagged as high risk of exploitation with 20 at risk of CCE and 13 at risk of CSE. As of 3 June 2025, there are **53** flagged as high risk with 19 at risk of CSE and 40 at risk of CCE.
- Early identification and intervention really makes a difference – ACE support has continued to achieve fantastic changes for children who require support for harm outside the home/exploitation when open to Early Help. **There have been no re-referrals during its 2-year span.**
- The missing from home service has been brought in house by the Local Authority which has enhanced knowledge and understanding about why children in Cheshire East are going missing. This has also created additional opportunities for direct work with young people due to positive relationships with workers of this team.
- During the last 12 months (April 24 – Mar 25), average length of time children are supported is 5 months, this allows time for the relationship to be built, targeted support given, and an effective planned end.
- During the last 12 months (April 24 – Mar 25), 70% closed due to successful completion – the goals were achieved in the views of the child, parents and worker.
- During the last 12 months (April 24 – Mar 25), of the children referred where ASB was an identified indicator at the point of referral, 81% of those closed with no further involvement in ASB or criminality.



1. Contextual Safeguarding Strategy



Challenges



Priorities for 2025/26

Youth participation and partnering with parents.

Transitional safeguarding and support for care leavers (number of care leavers experiencing exploitation and harm outside the home is increasing).

Understanding the impact of neurodiversity on children/young people and how this impacts risks outside the home.

Commission an independent scrutineer to work with the Partnership around areas of improvement for contextual safeguarding.

Focus on Young People Week, 17-21 March 2025

One of the key priority work areas for Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership is 'Contextual Safeguarding and Serious Organised Crime'. This area of practice involves working to support young people who may be navigating a difficult community landscape where they are exposed to potential harm outside the home.

In tandem with Child Exploitation National Awareness Day (18 March), CESC ran a dedicated 'Focus on Young People Week'. To reach a broad audience of professionals from across Cheshire East we hosted 3 fascinating on-line webinars covering 'Financial Exploitation' and 'Making Assumptions About Gender', generously offered by The Children's Society; and 'County Lines and Cuckooing' kindly hosted by the NW Regional Organised Crime Unit with Manchester University.

We also held five incredibly motivating in-person events featuring local guest experts, some of whom spoke with qualified authority and others with important childhood lived experience to share. ***"The guest speakers were so brave and inspirational, they put practical learning from this morning into real life"***. In a variety of creative ways, all our speakers captivated and enthralled audiences whilst sharing hard-hitting facts and sometimes difficult to hear messages, ensuring the underlying concept of developing meaningful relationships shone through. ***"Hands down the most informative training I have ever attended. My mind is blown. Thank you"***.



'Lads Like Us', Holmes Chapel Community Centre



'Exploring the Teenage Brain: working with risk and building positive relationships', Middlewich Canalside Centre

2. Child Sexual Abuse

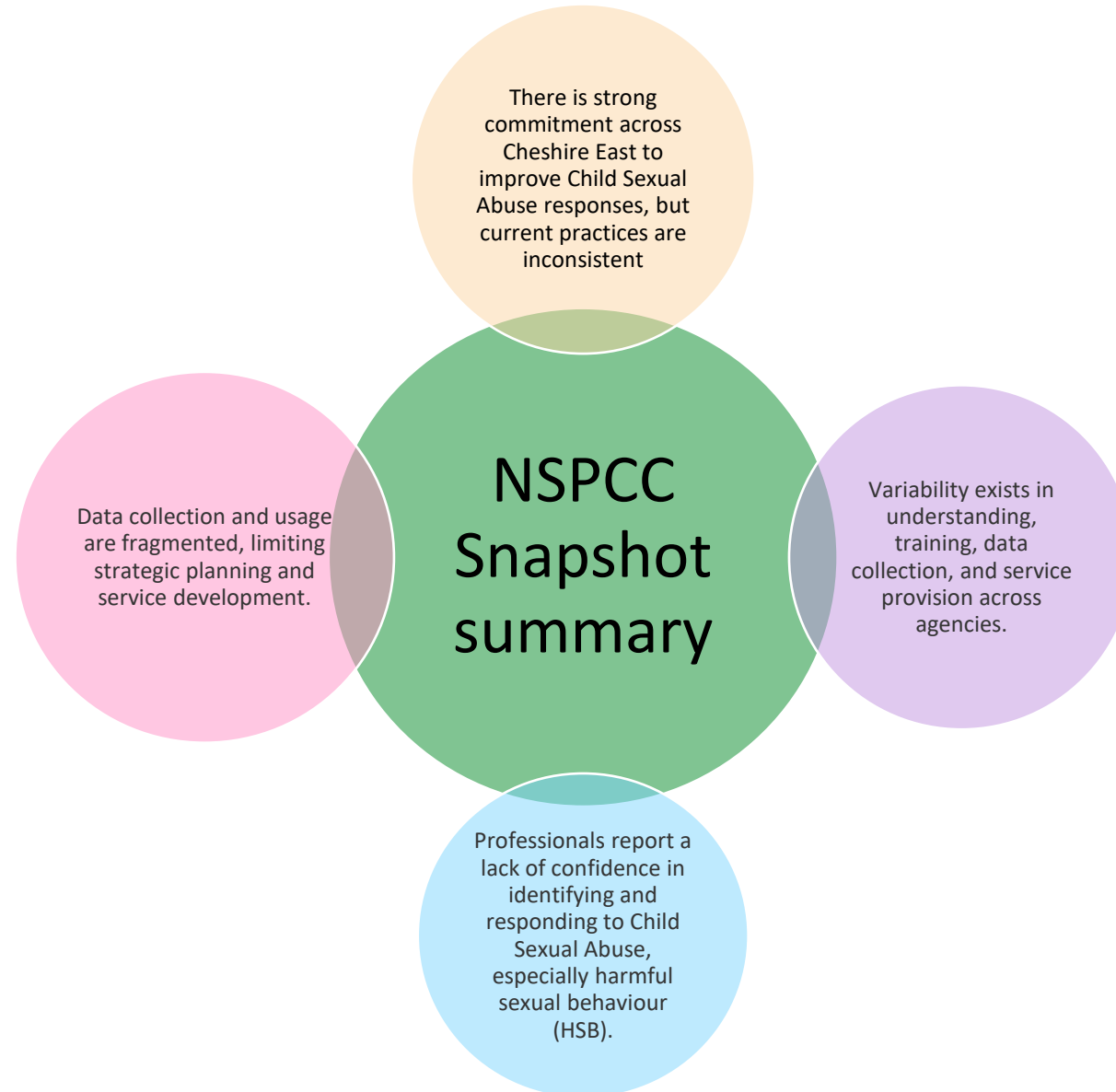
NSPCC



Aims

Last year, the partnership held a multiagency learning hub on child sexual abuse and agreed to continue prioritising this area to drive sustained improvements in practice. The focus is on building a coordinated multiagency response that prevents sexual abuse and ensures children and young people remain at the centre of all interventions. Our goal is to reduce the likelihood of children experiencing abuse through effective prevention, early identification, and awareness raising across the locality. We are committed to creating an empowered workforce and community, trained together to recognise the signs and indicators of sexual abuse and to respond with confidence, so that children and young people are better protected, supported, and able to recover and thrive.

This year, the partnership has worked closely with the NSPCC to undertake a Snapshot assessment. The NSPCC snapshot is a comprehensive system-wide review of Cheshire East's multi-agency response to child sexual abuse, facilitated by the NSPCC. It combines insights from a strategic session held in October 2024 and survey responses from 33 professionals across health, education, social care, police, and voluntary sectors. A summary of the key findings and recommendations is shown to the right.





2. Child Sexual Abuse: NSPCC Snapshot outcome

1. Awareness and Training

- Child Sexual Abuse is included in safeguarding training.
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) is a notable gap in understanding and response.
- Education and health sectors show some structured training, but early years and social care need more targeted support.
- The ERASE tool and AIM assessments are used inconsistently.

2. Data and Intelligence

- Child Sexual Abuse data is not systematically collected or shared across agencies.
- Health and education sectors collect some data, but it is not integrated or used strategically.
- There is a need for a multi-agency Child Sexual Abuse data plan to improve recording, sharing, and analysis.

3. Public and Family Engagement

- Public awareness campaigns are limited and inconsistent.
- Parents often lack understanding of Child Sexual Abuse processes and support pathways.
- Family Hubs and school websites provide some information, but access and engagement are low.

4. Prevention and Education

- Schools deliver Relationships & Sexual Education, but content and impact vary.
- Youth services and early years settings offer some targeted interventions.
- Children not in mainstream education may miss out on key messages.
- Preventative initiatives for vulnerable children and those displaying harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) are inconsistent.

5. Protection and Initial Response

- Children may not understand what happens after disclosure.
- Professionals report children often have to retell their stories multiple times.
- Referral processes are inconsistent and terminology varies across agencies.

6. Assessment and Multiagency Working

- Holistic assessments are not consistently applied.
- There is a lack of structured training and shared responsibility for assessing those who harm.
- Referral pathways and processes are unclear and not always reviewed with input from children and families.

7. Recovery and Therapeutic Support

- Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (RASASC) provides therapeutic support but is limited in capacity and scope.
- Transition to adult services is inconsistent.
- There is limited trauma-informed support and coordination across services.
- Directory of services and referral clarity are needed.

2. Child Sexual Abuse

Priorities 2025/26

NSPCC



Develop a Local Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and Framework

- Set clear priorities and actions.
- Define referral pathways and shared language.
- Clarify commissioning arrangements.

Improve Data Collection and Use

- Create a multi-agency child sexual abuse data plan.
- Share existing data more widely.
- Use data to inform workforce development and service planning.

Enhance Public and Family Awareness

- Launch targeted campaigns for parents and carers.
- Improve website content and accessibility of information.

Strengthen Training and Confidence

- Conduct a training needs analysis.
- Establish a tiered training offer, including mandatory elements.
- Promote tools like the NSPCC's *"Developing an Understanding of Child sexual abuse."*

Improve Prevention and Education for Children

- Ensure consistent, high-quality Relationships & Sexual Education.
- Address gaps for children outside mainstream education.
- Promote safe disclosure and understanding of what happens next.

Address Gaps in Harmful Sexual Behaviours Response

- Review and update harmful sexual behaviours policies.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Develop a formal multi-agency harmful sexual behaviours framework.

Expand Recovery Support

- Conduct a needs analysis for therapeutic services.
- Ensure trauma-informed, age-appropriate support.
- Improve transition planning to adult services.

3. Education as a Protective Factor



Aims

The 2022 Joint Targeted Area Inspection by Ofsted reported the following in relation to education as a protective factor:

- Multi-agency partners need to secure appropriate education for exploited children as a protective factor.
- The safeguarding children in education settings (SCIES) team is highly valued by schools. School leaders find the advice and support they receive from the SCIES team beneficial in helping them make safer decisions for children.
- The role of education as a protective factor is not high profile enough in multi-agency work. Partners do not challenge each other or have sufficiently robust plans to address low engagement in education. In addition, the impact of placement moves on children's education is not sufficiently considered by multi-agency partners.

The partnership established a Learning Hub in 2023/2024 to ensure a clear line of sight into practice across the landscape of provision for the most vulnerable children and to support the partnership to be able to learn from practice more effectively. 2024/2025 activity has been based around the outputs from the Learning Hub and putting new ways of working into practice.

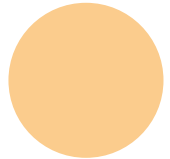
Key achievements

- Awareness raising session with GP representatives focused upon education as a protective factor, attendance and access to tuition support for children unable to access school due to ill health.
- Integrated education as a protective factor into CЕСP child protection training to reach professionals who have not signed up for the spotlight sessions
- Integrated an education lens into multi-agency CЕСP audit to ensure education as a protective factor is considered and identifies individuals, teams, services that may require targeted awareness raising and support.
- Database put in place to capture school attendance data and to identify children and young people with persistent and severe absence on child in need and child protection plans.

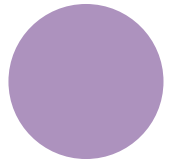
3. Education as a Protective Factor:



Evidence of impact



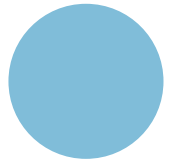
March 2024: Joined up working to ensure key Elective Home Education (EHE) principle is considered. Of the 11 children identified as being electively home educated and on child protection and child in need plans, 9 have move into onsite education provision. School actively using education a protective factor by not suspending vulnerable young person.



August 2024: Improved attendance for vulnerable children, joined up working to ensure key EHE principle is considered.

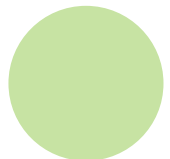
CESCP multi-agency audit of 12 children and young people on repeat child protection plans found that of the 12 children, attendance data shows:

- 8 had good attendance over 90%; 5 of the 8 had excellent attendance over 95%
- The mean average attendance of the group is 85%, the median average of the group is 96%
- 3 had persistent absence under 90%; 1 had severe absence under 50%

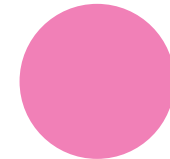


October 2024: Multi-agency partners escalating when education is not a protective factor in 2 cases:

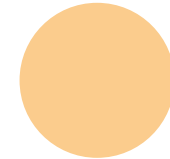
- 6 young people at medium/high risk of being exploited.
- A child on a child protection plan being offered one hour per day access to education. A SMART action plan is being developed to enable the child to access suitable full-time education. Joined up working with the school has resulted in the transition timetable being increased and the child stepping down to a child in need plan.



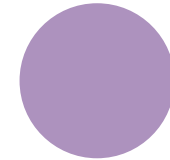
January 2025: Multi-agency focus on school attendance. Social media article by Crewe PCSO on understanding the root cause of school absence and working directly with young people and families to overcome.



February 2025: Multi-agency focus upon Elective Home Education. Case concern raised by Cheshire East IRO to Interim Head of Pupil Participation and Support of a year 11 EHE young person on a child protection plan. Resulted in swift action with alternative provision sought to build the young person's confidence in order to start at a local college in September 2025.



March 2025: Multi-agency focus upon school attendance. Vital signs attendance report card under scrutiny in the Improvement Board shares persistent absence concerns for vulnerable children on assessment and plans. This will require focus in the Education Board to drive focus around this



- Education data shared and scrutinised in CESCP scorecard
- Safeguarding children's partnership training covering education as a protective factor in termly child protection training and with spotlight sessions on attendance, elective home education, tuition and admissions.
- Oversight of vulnerable children missing education and who are electively home educated in vulnerable pupil panels.
- Oversight of escalations from the partnership to education and between partners in the Partnership Board
- Weekly opportunities to explore the barriers to attendance of young people in commissioned alternative provision

3. Education as a Protective Factor



Priorities 2025/26

Develop notification pathways with partners for children becoming Electively Home Educated

Collect themes and develop task and finish activity from CЕСP Education Board

Continue to deliver awareness raising and focused training, shaped by emerging themes from data and feedback

Termly slot on child protection training

Priorities 2025/26

Widen offer to multi-agency partners - 1 day child missing education training

Develop new offer of single agency Education as a Protective Factor session

Multi-agency audit activity

Education themed slots throughout learning week

4. Child Neglect

Aims

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 defines Neglect as the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

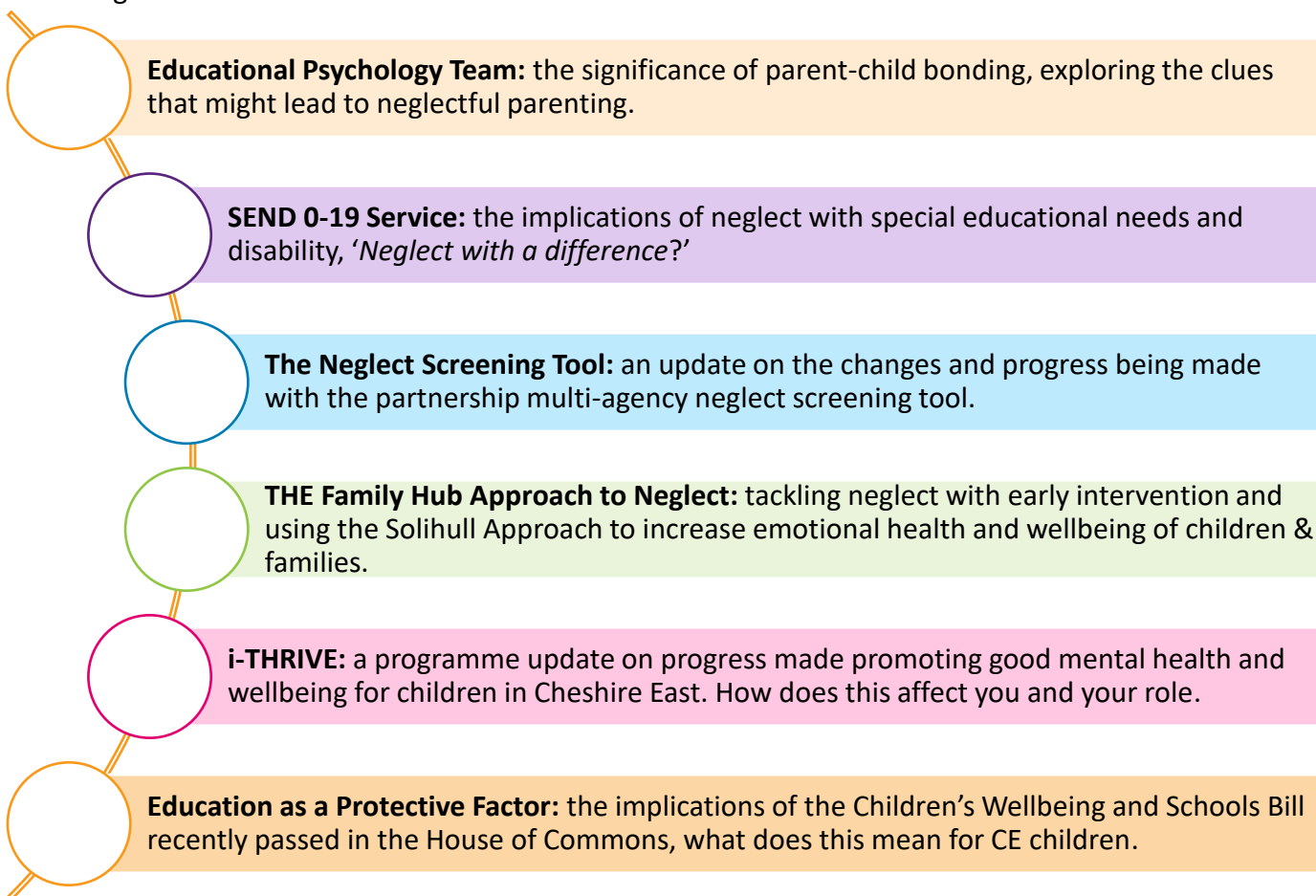
Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) previously identified child neglect as a priority in 2021/22, and last year agreed to maintain this focus for at least the next three years. This long term commitment ensures the partnership can dedicate meaningful time and resources to strengthening practice, with a particular emphasis on early identification and intervention.

We recognise that neglect can be a complex and challenging issue for both practitioners and families to understand. The terminology itself is not always restorative, which is why the partnership is promoting the use of clear, direct language to describe concerns, making them easier to recognise, communicate, and address.

To support this, a series of multiagency workshops have been delivered to build a shared understanding and consistent approach to neglect across services. This collaborative effort is designed to improve professional confidence, strengthen early support for families, and ultimately reduce the risk and impact of neglect on children's lives

Key Achievements

CESCP hosted a conference in February 2025 on Neglect, featuring the following :

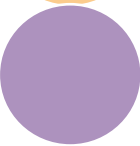
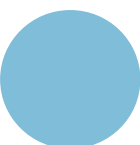
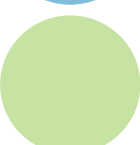


4. Child Neglect



Child Neglect Strategy

In line with the partnership priority, the partnership have collaborated to develop a Child Neglect strategy. The following principles and values guide our approach to tackling neglect:

-  **Child-Centred:** The needs and well-being of the child are at the heart of our practice. We prioritise the safety and welfare of children and young people in all our actions and decisions.
-  **Family-Focused:** We recognise the importance of supporting families to provide a nurturing and safe environment for their children. We work with families and their wider members to build their strengths and address any challenges they may face.
-  **Collaborative:** We work in partnership with children, families, their networks and other agencies to achieve the best outcomes. We value the contributions of all partners and strive to maintain open and effective communication.
-  **Evidence-Based:** Our interventions and practices are informed by research and evidence of what works from the family and, from established and respected organisations that promote government advice and guidance. We continuously seek to improve our knowledge and understanding of neglect through ongoing learning and development.
-  **Inclusive:** We ensure that our services are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of our community. We respect and value diversity and work to promote equality and inclusion in all our activities.

Priorities for 2025/26

Launch and implement the partnership child neglect strategy.

Develop a multi-agency child neglect toolkit.

Evidence impact of strategy implementation.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews



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. 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 partnership adhere to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel guidance for safeguarding partners (September 2022).

All of the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review reports can be found on the partnership's website www.cescp.org.uk

The most recent Rapid Review was held at the end of the year, where the threshold was met for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. The findings from this review will be reported in detail in the 2025/26 Annual Report.

Over the course of the year, the partnership undertook four Rapid Reviews, each offering important learning about how agencies can work together more effectively to safeguard children.

The first review concerned a teenager who tragically died as a result of unintentional suicide. Although previously briefly known to Children's Social Care following a disclosure of abuse, which was appropriately acted upon by her caregiver, at the time of her death she was being electively home educated. The review highlighted valuable reflections on how agencies might have worked in a more coordinated and joined up way to provide support.

The second and third reviews focused on very young babies who had suffered physical abuse. In one case, the child had previously been known to Children's Social Care with concerns around physical harm, while the other was only known to health services through maternity care. Both reviews reinforced the importance of professional curiosity, early identification, and clear communication across agencies to protect infants from harm.

The final review involved a child at high risk of exploitation who had experienced long standing neglect by his primary caregiver. The child had been known to multiple partner agencies throughout his life and the review emphasised the need for stronger coordination and earlier, more robust responses to neglect and exploitation risks.

Together, these Rapid Reviews underline the critical role of partnership learning, scrutiny, and challenge in driving improvements to safeguarding practice. Each review contributes to our shared commitment to strengthening multi agency working so that children in Cheshire East are better protected and supported.

The partnership also undertook one Learning Review during the year, initiated as a recommendation following a complaint made to the Local Authority. The review involved two children and generated important learning for all agencies.

Key findings reinforced the importance of:

- Strong communication between practitioners, families, and all agencies involved in a child's care.
- Exploring the wider family network to develop a holistic understanding of the child's circumstances and to inform robust planning.
- Addressing professional disagreements openly and respectfully and ensuring the escalation process is followed where concerns remain.
- Using clear, non-judgemental language, free from personal values, to avoid misinterpretation or bias in assessments and records.
- Information sharing that is relevant, contextualised, and evidence based, enabling practitioners to build a full picture of the child's needs.
- Cross referencing information across agencies to strengthen assessments and ensure decisions are well-informed and child-focused.

This Learning Review has strengthened the partnership's commitment to ensuring that professional practice is collaborative, respectful, and firmly centred on the needs and experiences of children.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group

Within the new governance structure, updated as part of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, there is a dedicated Child Safeguarding Practice Review group. The group members develop, deliver and test the impact of action plans arising from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) and to seek assurance that local CSPR pathways are efficient and effectively meeting the requirements as set out in Working Together 2023.

The group holds delegated responsibility on behalf of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners, bringing both strategic and operational perspectives from their respective organisations. Members have played an active role in discussions, providing updates on completed actions and ensuring learning is embedded within their agencies. They champion a culture of continuous improvement by disseminating information, sharing examples of good practice, and highlighting barriers to progress, demonstrating how partnership learning translates into tangible impact.

As the group continues to develop, members will be called upon to act as subject matter experts, advising on best practice and shaping partnership priorities. They will also lead or contribute to key workstreams, ensuring responsibility is shared equitably and that collective expertise drives improvement in safeguarding outcomes for children.

Closing the loop activity

- There are monthly sessions for the partnership which provide information and the learning and recommendations from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Rapid Reviews and case audits, essential learning for everyone. We consider events we know are happening across the partnership to ensure colleagues are aware of all there is to offer to update your knowledge and skills, supporting your practice and wellbeing. Feedback from the monthly session has included 'Training attended is shared by attendees at our weekly team briefings, Thanks, useful as always, Interactive sessions are beneficial, Very interesting and informative.
- 7-minute briefings are developed following every review and shared across the partnership

Key achievements

The Learning and Improvement subgroup has oversight of all recommendations from Local Child Safeguarding Practice reviews and Rapid Reviews. The Learning and Improvement subgroup has:

- Regularly reviewed the tracker which details the recommendations and learning from the Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews.
- Contributed to the progression of the partnership priorities.
- Had oversight of Children's Social Care Improvement journey following Ofsted inspection.
- Supported the development of the quality assurance framework.
- Contributed to the development of the partnership training programme.



Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews: Key achievements



Hospital safeguarding teams in the South of the borough are informing paediatric services of any young people attending the emergency department following self-harm who may be open to or on a waiting list for neurodevelopmental pathways such as autism and ADHD assessments. This enables the child to be re-triaged and seen sooner if clinically required. There is currently work to look at rolling this out in the North of the county.

SEND marketplaces have been established in family hubs to provide accessible communication of services to parent around SEND support services. Additionally SEND key workers are now based in family hubs which is improving communication with parents and professionals.

When the SEND panel decline an EHCP request for assessment or plan, they now refer into appropriate other services to support the child, recent examples have been the elective home education team, or the medical tuition service who have been able to provide support to the child and their family.

How to sessions on “How to have difficult conversations with parents” have been delivered to practitioners across the partnership

The voice of the child has been included within the audit framework and there is evidence of improvement within recent multiagency audits of the child’s voice being captured and responded to.

When decommissioning services, the importance of existing relationships with children and is being considered and responded to. Key workers from a recently decommissioned service have been moved into roles within youth support and exploitation teams to enable them to continue with those relationships.

Significant work has been undertaken with schools around child sexual abuse by the Safeguarding Children in Education team including training and awareness raising which has resulted in an increase in school utilising tools such as ERASE and the Child Sexual Abuse signs and indicators tool.

The child protection medical process has been reviewed and updated to improve the timeliness and quality of the experience for children and young people.

As part of the two-year self harm and suicide prevention action plan, over 500 professionals across the borough have attended a half day suicide prevention training session, through evaluation attendees reported feeling more knowledgeable and confident to respond than prior to the training. There has also been significant work across partnerships around the issue of domestic abuse and suicidality.

An NSPCC spotlight on Child Sexual Abuse was completed and the recommendations have been picked up by the Child Sexual Abuse task and finish group. The Signs and Indicators tool has been identified as the multiagency tool of choice and work is ongoing with developing a new Child Sexual Abuse strategy.

A spotlight session on the Family Nurse Partnership was held to raise awareness of the criteria for the service which in Cheshire East includes an enhanced offer up to the age of 25 for young parents with additional vulnerabilities.

Recent audit has evidenced that following work completed by the Safeguarding Children in Education task and finish group there has been a significant increase in the recording of lateral checks completed for children who are electively home educated and home visits are now routinely offered to these families.

New practice guidance around information sharing has been developed with our colleagues across pan-Cheshire and has been rolled out to professionals.

The Critical Incident Pathway has been redesigned and as such there is a robust multi-agency response to supporting schools and communities following incidents. Examples include the provision of community support from a number of partners following the death of a child, including police, youth support and mental health support and an immediate response to a school with multiple children self-harming within one week.

Multi-Agency Audits 2024/2025



We actively foster a robust learning culture that promotes both individual and organisational growth. As part of this commitment, we are collaborating with partners to implement the Learning Hub model across the partnership. This initiative underpins the development of a comprehensive learning framework that ensures insights from audits, data analysis, rapid reviews, and local safeguarding practice reviews lead to meaningful action, effectively 'closing the loop' on learning and driving continuous improvement.

Contact Audits of the 'Front Door'

occur fortnightly. A different theme is explored at each meeting eg, unaccompanied asylum seekers, unexplained injuries etc. The contact is scrutinised by a multi-agency panel that identifies good practice and actions to improve practice. The SCP ensure that the learning from these audits is shared across the partnership.

Contextual Safeguarding Audit, July 2024

This identified several strengths in practice. Five cases were considered in the Contextual Safeguarding forums and all the relevant professionals from services attended, the sixth was low risk.

- Strengths were identified, contextual safeguarding assessments were evident on three cases and a screening tool on one.
- Youth Justice Service (YJS) assessments were good quality with a child first approach.
- Vulnerable Person Assessments were submitted for all incidents involving a young person or reports by parents of concerns.
- Two cases had Children & Families (C&F) assessments completed, a third case was awaiting an update which was attributed to a change of social worker, areas for improvement were also identified.
- There had been no C&F assessment completed since 2022 on the Cared For young person. An EHCP had been completed, and the young person had contributed to it.
- The cared for case had minimal management oversight with supervision taking place slightly out of timescales.
- Not all children were seen on their own to ascertain their wishes and feelings by health.
- There were variable levels of safeguarding supervision, several services i.e. YYS, cared for Nurse, Police, school nurses receiving it, with a missed opportunity for specialist safeguarding nurse for child exploitation on one case.

Neglect Audit, November 2024

Several strengths in practice were identified.

- The Police, schools and 0-19 service effectively shared information during multi-agency meetings.
- Two cases had good practice examples of multiple attempts in by health practitioners to contact and share information with carer/parents.
- Health engagements with families remained child focused.
- The voice of the child is evident throughout 0-19 service, school files and child protection records informing the planning process.
- In one case there was appropriate consideration of cultural differences including the use of an interpreter.
- Health safeguarding supervision was evident in 2 out of the 3 cases that required it; the trigger process for that requires strengthening.

Several areas for improvement were also identified.

- GCP2, the assessment tool for neglect, was only evident on one case and there was no evidence of it being considered in the others.
- None of the cases had a chronology, the 0-19 service and a school could extract that from their systems if required.
- Where meetings have not taken place in timescales there was no evidence of that being escalated.

The audit identified impacts:

- A carer reported positive changes in relation to a child's lived experience. Also, school indicate that the child is presenting as more regulated in the school environment than previously.
- A case was deescalated and then closed after concerns regarding a sibling's health and the mother's approach to this have been addressed, dental health and asthma review supported by school nurse.
- Effective information sharing informed care planning decisions.

Multi-Agency Audits 2024/ 2025



Police Protection powers

Across the audit, the following were identified.

- Five incidents where the parent(s) were arrested for neglect – police have national recommendations around the use of PPO's over informal arrangements with parents where threshold is met and did not consider that it would have been possible to negotiate with parents in those situations to make alternative arrangements i.e. support from the wider family. They considered that without arresting and bailing with conditions that the parents may have gone and removed the child.
- In the period prior to the PPP Health visiting services provided evidence of professional curiosity, observations of baby parents interactions and managed most cases within their contact standards. There was no explanation for the extra visits in on one case record and a child who moved into the area would have benefited from a transfer in visit.
- Two examples of children not being brought for developmental checks, however neither were statutory. A school completed two screening tools, submitted those to CHECS and liaised with Early Help. However, the family would not engage. Early Help identified that a more robust management oversight to this was a missed opportunity to consider escalation.

Early Help cases

- In one case there was no evidence to escalate as other services involved i.e. health and tuition.
- In the second Health services were in place alongside an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor.
- There was some evidence of missed opportunities to support families which would have also benefitted from management oversight and communication with other agencies.
- It was observed that identification of support requirements in education settings can be the most effective and efficient way of escalating needs.
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust did not have of significance within their adult mental health records for any of the families that would indicate any missed opportunities to refer in or take any action prior to the PPP.



Section 175 audits

The Section 175 Report 2024 provides a comprehensive overview of safeguarding practices across education settings in Cheshire East, based on self-audits submitted by 170 schools. The audit, coordinated by the SCiES Team, evaluates compliance with statutory safeguarding responsibilities and highlights areas of strength and development.

- The **submission rate** has **increased** over the last 2 years and is now at **99%**.
- All schools who have identified ineffective/partially effective areas have made proposals to address these. The 2025 S175 will provide an update on this.
- When **SCiES** conduct a schools review they **review the s175 submission**, in **2024 11%** of the submissions.
- Changes of governors and staff mean that safer recruitment training needs to be completed in 9% of schools
- All schools keep their Safeguarding Policy up to date
- SCiES continue to remind schools, through updates and training, of the KCSiE 2024 expectations for school around filtering and monitoring and that systems are regularly monitored and tested.
- CЕСP/SCiES need to review the wording of the question 11 regarding de-escalation and positive handling to provide context.
- Actions identified in the 2023 S175 submissions have been completed.

Key Findings:

General Performance

- Most schools rated themselves as Fully Effective across safeguarding areas.
- All schools maintain up-to-date safeguarding policies.
- Safer recruitment practices are generally strong, though 9% of schools need updated training due to staff/governor changes.
- Filtering and monitoring of online activity is in place, but some systems require upgrades or more regular testing.

Areas for Improvement

- Prevent Duty Training: Some schools had staff pending training, though plans were in place to complete it.
- Safeguarding Action Plans: A few schools lacked formal written plans or alignment with CЕСP priorities.
- Supervision for DSLs: Inconsistent across settings; some rely on informal or sporadic arrangements.
- Positive Handling & De-escalation: Some schools self-rated as partially effective despite strong evidence; question wording may need revision.
- Alternative Provision (AP): 58 settings rated Fully Effective; 109 marked it as Not Applicable.
- Attendance Monitoring: Generally strong, but some schools are still refining processes and policies.

Voice of the Child

- Most schools actively gather pupil voice through various tools and strategies.
- Some settings are seeking more creative or inclusive methods, especially for neurodiverse pupils.

Actions:

- All schools that identified ineffective/partially effective areas complete their proposals to address that.
- As part of their safeguarding schools' SCiES to review individual school S175 submissions.
- The 9% of schools where changes of governors and staff mean that safer recruitment training needs to be completed do so.
- All schools to keep their Safeguarding Policy up to date
- Remind schools of the KCSiE 2024 expectations for filtering and monitoring and this is regularly monitored and tested.
- Review the wording of S175 template question 11 *"Staff are trained and respond appropriately to incidents requiring de-escalation or (more rarely); positive handling / restraint around de-escalation and positive handling to provide context."*
- Contact the one post 16 setting that used a different format to understand what the reason are and identify any further action required.
- Contact the one specialist provision did not submit a response to understand what the reason are and identify any further action required.
- Contact the 3 primary schools that did not provide evidence to understand what the reason are and identify any further action required.

Working Together 2023 Implementation Plan

Following the release of *Working together to safeguard children 2023*, statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, support and protect children, CЕСP has conducted a structured self-assessment across five key domains



Domain	Overall Rating	Key Issues Identified
A Shared Responsibility		The partnership is aware of the need to strengthen child voice, middle management engagement, and accessible communications.
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements		There is a clear governance structure in place but needs broader understanding and engagement, especially with education, which is anticipated through the Education board and additionally, the voluntary and faith sector.
Help, Support and Protection		The partnership are awaiting feedback from the Pathfinders regarding a lead practitioner model and for Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership, this is yet to be developed.
Decisive Multi-Agency Child Protection		There is a participation strategy under development which will detail how we work better with children and families to act on their views
Learning Culture		Whilst there is learning from reviews, the partnership have identified that this is not yet consistently embedded or evidenced in improved outcomes. This will be developed through the Child Safeguarding Practice Review group.



Working Together 2023 Implementation Plan

The implementation plan outlines actions aligned to each chapter of Working Together23. Key progress and evidence include:

Chapter 1: A Shared Responsibility	Chapter 2: Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	Chapter 3: Help, Support and Protection	Chapter 4: Organisational Responsibilities	Chapter 5: Learning from Serious Child Safeguarding Incidents	Chapter 6: Child Death Reviews	Key Strengths Evidenced	Areas Requiring Further Development
Training and Awareness: Multi-agency training sessions delivered; further sessions planned. Presentations developed and disseminated. Information Sharing: Guidance being updated and aligned with WT23; to be published on TriX. Think Family Approach: Paused pending further assessment by the new DCS.	Funding and Governance: Budget discussions scheduled; governance structure approved at DSP level. LSP/DSP Roles: Definitions clarified; website updates in progress; frontline visits planned to test understanding. Education and VCSE Engagement: Education board being developed; VCSE representation at the CЕСCP Board; Section 11 audits planned. Independent Scrutiny: Strategy under development; scrutiny plan required.	Thresholds and Lead Practitioner Role: Threshold document under review; training sessions scheduled; procedures being designed. Early Help: Training revised and delivered; paperwork under review; dataset development underway. Harm Outside the Home: Specific training scheduled; JSNA and multi-agency dataset to support identification. Information Sharing with Probation: Strategic Coordinating Group convened to address changes in prison release schemes. Practice Standards and Family Meetings: Standards embedded in training; family meeting model under review.	Section 11/175 Audits: Tools updated to reflect WT23; audit cycle underway.	Review Processes: Updated to reflect WT23; pathway for care leaver death notifications being developed.	CDOP Procedures: Being updated to reflect legislative changes and new guidance.	Strong commitment to training and awareness raising. Governance structures (LSP/DSP) are defined and operational at strategic levels. Engagement with education is progressing well. Independent scrutiny is embedded in governance, with plans to strengthen its impact.	Implementation of the lead practitioner model and joint pathways for early help. Embedding learning from reviews into practice and evidencing impact. Strengthening participation and engagement strategy, especially with children, families, and the VCSE sector. Finalising and publishing updated threshold documents and MASA arrangements.

Training Offer

The partnership's training offer is reviewed annually to ensure it remains responsive, relevant, and informed by participant feedback and evidence of 'what works'. Training topics and learning themes are identified through a comprehensive process involving consultation with services, analysis of the current programme, review of national and local research, and findings from audits and practice case reviews.

Our training offer continues to include a diverse range of learning formats:

- 'How to...?' sessions provide practical guidance on the use of shared tools, policies, and practices to support consistent multi agency working.
- 'Spotlight on...' sessions create space for relationship building across agencies and sectors, offering a platform for services to introduce themselves, promote their expertise, and highlight their child centred support.
- 'CESCP Learning from Reviews' sessions enable the Partnership team to share key learning from audits and case reviews, promote new services and policy developments, and highlight examples of good practice. These sessions help strengthen evidence-based understanding of effective multiagency safeguarding practice.

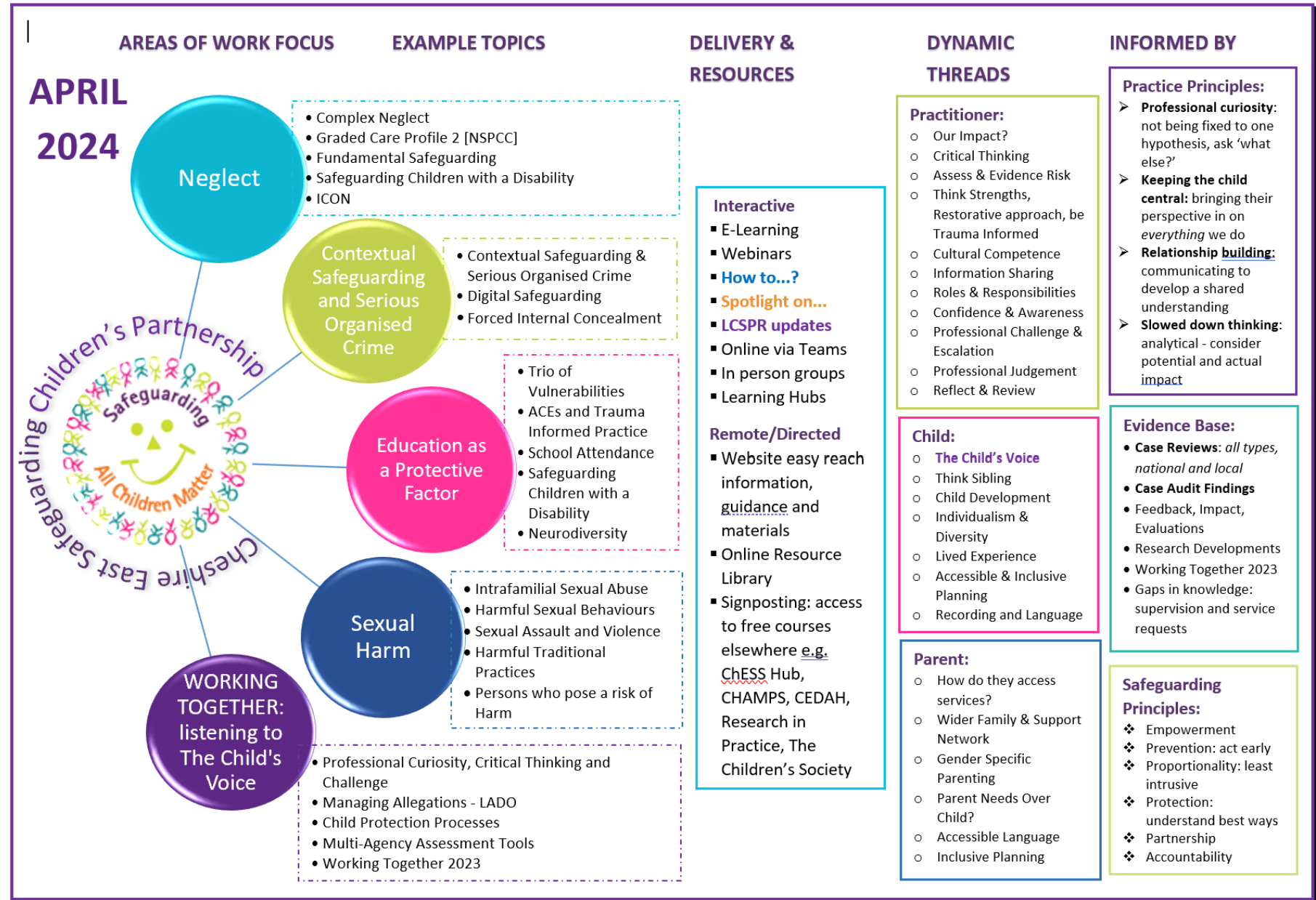
The training programme continues to evolve in response to emerging service needs. It is promoted through our monthly newsletter and website, ensuring wide visibility and accessibility across the partnership.

Up to date information is available via our website [CESCP Training web page](#)



Training Programme

The training plan for 2024/25 was developed through analysis of the previous years training offer, regular discussion across the partnership and in the Learning and Improvement group and oversight of the reviews undertaken by the partnership.



CESCP Training Offer - Programme Report 2024/ 2025



Short sessions and special events continue to be delivered at no cost to participants, the majority of whom are frontline practitioners working with children and families across Cheshire East. This accessible model supports widespread engagement and helps to embed learning across the workforce.

While the training programme has achieved several positive outcomes and strengthened multi-agency practice, significant challenges remain, particularly in relation to capacity. The programme currently operates with minimal administrative support, which limits the ability to develop, monitor, and refine key operational systems. As a result, progress in areas such as collecting and analysing evaluation data, enhancing the training website, and advancing e-learning opportunities has been reduced.

Event and attendance summary

- 170 individual 'in house' events were delivered**, showing a **46% increase on the 2023-24 programme offer**
- There were 55 external events promoted by CESCP including eight e-learning modules accessible to multi-agency professionals through the local authority Learning Lounge facility.
- The 170 in-house events attracted **6,499 multi-agency attendees**, a **28% increase** from the previous year. As in previous years, the focussed Learning & Practice Observation Week 2025 generated a huge amount of interest, again constituting almost a third of overall attendance (1,837+).
- Average attendance** has decreased in relation to online events in tandem with a greater appetite for in-person training as we move further from the post covid period. However, both styles of delivery have increased in event number to accommodate the larger variety of courses on offer, with a **60% rise for in-person events** versus a **30% rise for those delivered on-line**.
- Attendance following registered bookings averaged 84%**,
- Cancelled training events remain at a minimum** (3 this year vs 5 last year)

Effectiveness, efficiency and cost to produce:

Efficacy has been achieved through deployment of minimum working hours to manage a full and varied programme offer. The Training and Development Manager is salaried to work a 30-hour week (4 days) and, a business support officer is seconded to work most Mondays on administrative tasks. This generates the capacity to provide on average, the equivalent to one event per working day over a 42 week (active) cycle. However, in reality, the delivery pattern is not uniform. Rather, there are significant peaks which create bursts of high demand in time and effort. The Learning Week is has become an established and now expected part of the professional learning calendar in Cheshire East.

Feedback, Evaluation and Impact:

Feedback is an integral part of developing the training programme offer as it informs implementation and content. Unfortunately, evaluations currently remain at the 'classroom' level as there is no pathway for a more in-depth organisational feedback mechanism, for instance involving communicative supervision practices. Therefore, following last years' methods, feedback continues to be collected in very simplistic and direct ways, only being able to record immediate responses to events. Resources to support a more complex and analytical follow up methodology remain unavailable due to limited administrative capacity.

CESCP Training Offer - Programme Report 2024/25



Communications Plan, Newsletter & website:

Work during 2024-25, supported by the CE Communications Team included promotion of safeguarding national and local events such as the ICON week in September and Child Exploitation Awareness Day in March.

Monthly Training Newsletter developed to publicise courses. Bulletins and updates posted in between the monthly communications to boost interest. There are more than 1000 recipients on the distribution list, with a further 1000+ gaining access in schools via the SCiES team.

Having established the newsletter and created stability and reliability within the programme, delegates rightly expect the same standard of service when attempting to access information via the website. Sadly, there has been less than expected success in launching the refreshed website. This is becoming an urgent issue that may only be resolved when substantial administrative support is in place for the CESCP team.

Collaborations:

Training alignment across Cheshire East is being developed to understand the various service offers and provisions for practitioner learning as a whole. Work on collaborative projects such as cost-effective joined up course delivery and support for development days for NW trainers. Cheshire East is a proactive member in driving progress to benefit the local area eg development of shared protocol for the ERASE tool in relation to Harmful Sexual Behaviours and reducing 16 individual repeated sessions on 'Responding to Sexual Violence' in collaboration with SARC and RASASC.

Forecast for 2024-2025:

The revised Training programme Core Offer 2025-26 is attached in draft form for review and approval. Dynamic responses to LCSPR and Rapid Review outcomes will remain central to the programme alongside networking and practical learning opportunities through continued delivery of the short on-line sessions which have become an enduring positive feature of the total training offer.

Recommendations:

- Continue to consolidate and stabilise the training offer following the current programme trajectory
- Develop a transparent 'mission statement' to capture the aims of the training programme
- Reinstate administrative support to enable (as a minimum): a) improved data evaluation, b) more efficient course processing, c) follow up work re attendance, d) managing the CESCP website
- Collaboration to focus on completing the revised website as a supplementary learning tool and valuable resource for all professionals
- Develop communication loops with strategic leads for areas of work priority to create stronger training links
- Continue joined up work with pan-Cheshire and wider areas to build relationships and shared perspectives

Learning & Practice Observation Week 2025

The third annual Partnership Learning Week took place on 3-7 February 2025. The theme this year was Children's Mental Health, where together, we explored associated risks, vulnerability, safety and support in Cheshire East. We covered many key aspects of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership work priorities, including Contextual Safeguarding & Serious Organised Crime, Education as a Protective factor, Neglect and Sexual Harm.

Alongside more than 25 individual events, a further 21 practice observations took place with senior leaders, frontline practitioners, families and support teams all getting involved across a range of services to enable better understanding of current systems and processes.

Overall, over 1,600 people attended a range of online sessions and face-to-face events, including our Networking Event, the Neglect Is Child Abuse conference, and The Reign Collective.



Practice observations



Purpose

- To summarise learning from practice observations conducted between 3–7 February 2025, involving both Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SCP) representatives and Children's Services (CS) managers.

Overview of Observations

- **24 observations** were conducted: 11 by SCP representatives and 13 by CS managers.
- Activities observed included child protection conferences, home visits, supervisions, legal advice meetings, and more.
- Observers included professionals from health, education, police, housing, and local government.

Themes for Learning and Development

1. **Professional Curiosity:** Encourage deeper exploration in discussions and reviews.
2. **Legal Advice Meeting Preparation:** Develop a checklist to ensure thorough, evidence-based decision-making.
3. **Threshold Understanding:** Improve partner agency awareness of child protection thresholds.
4. **Meeting Format:** Consider when in-person vs. virtual meetings are most appropriate.
5. **Restorative Practice:** Promote respectful, relationship-based approaches and open-ended questioning.

Key Findings by Activity

Supervisions

- All five observed sessions followed up on previous actions.
- Demonstrated strong preparation, two-way communication, and reflective practice.
- One session adapted well when IT systems failed.

Cared For Reviews

- Structured, purposeful, and inclusive.
- Although children did not attend, their voices were represented.
- Observers praised the focus on the child's needs and future planning.

Home Visits

- One visit completed; well-prepared and thorough.
- Covered child's daily life, foster carer's needs, and home environment.

Legal Advice Meetings (LAM)

- Three cases observed; generally well-managed.
- Some concerns about lack of evidence triangulation and missing child background details.
- Suggested development of a LAM checklist.

Child Protection Conferences

- Professionally managed with inclusive and respectful dialogue.
- Some areas for improvement: social worker engagement, professional attendance, and clearer guidance on thresholds for child protection plans.

Front Door Screenings

- Staff were knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Some suggestions for streamlining processes.

PEP Meeting

- Well-attended and informed, but lacked the child's voice.
- Face-to-face format may have been more appropriate.

Contextual Safeguarding Meeting

- Despite IT issues, decisions were made effectively.
- Agencies were well-prepared and collaborative.

MARAC

- First meeting under new process.
- Positive engagement and prompt safeguarding actions.

Core Group Meeting

- Child-centred and well-managed.
- Virtual format enabled broader participation.

Vulnerable Person Assessment (VPA)

- Effective multi-agency collaboration.
- Fast-paced; observer questioned if more time was needed per case.

Family Group Conference

- Respectful, restorative language used.
- Strong family engagement and emotional support observed.

Direct Work in School

- Calm, nurturing interaction.
- Child-led session with creative tools, though more open-ended questions were recommended.

Feedback from Learning & Practice Observation Week 2025



"Thank you so much for such an amazing learning week! I have learnt so much and I particularly enjoyed Tuesday at Middlewich and then today (Thursday). It will definitely improve my practice and the amount of resources and signposting has been great. I have already referred one of my parents so 'Thank you' for all the hard work and to all the wonderful, knowledgeable speakers".

Really informative session and sensitively delivered. Will definitely be advising our Practitioners to utilise the suggested resources, thank you!
(Online short sessions)

Ann was fantastic, I took away so much information, I can put to good practice. The handout is brilliant, and I felt the whole afternoon was explained so well. Thank you *(JDI Youth MH First Aid workshop)*.

I feel I have a better understanding of the impact of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This includes inter-familial and extra-familial harm which has allowed me to understand the different types of abuse. I will use knowledge in practice as part of my assessment writing but also how to approach direct work/1-1 sessions with children. *(The Reign Collective)*

We really enjoyed it and one of our YP (although she is nearly 20) came along and is going to get involved with supporting other YP via the Voice and Youth Service. *(Networking Event)*

I really enjoyed the presentation from the specialist ed psychologist, that was extremely useful and I thought I learnt a lot to take forward for practice.
(Neglect is Child Abuse Conference)

Hearing the voice of the child and their lived experience



As a partnership, we are committed to meaningful engagement with children and young people, ensuring they have a genuine voice in decisions that affect their lives. To support this, the Partnership has developed a Participation and Engagement Strategy and formally adopted the Lundy Model of Participation. This model is grounded in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms that: “Children have the right to express their views freely on issues that affect them, and adults should listen and take children seriously.”

Our approach to participation is being embedded through four key principles:

Co-Involvement: Children and young people will be engaged from the outset, with clear communication about changes to services and policy. Their needs and views will be actively sought and valued at every stage of development.

Co-Design: We will work collaboratively with children and young people to shape the design of services, individual support, and policy. This ensures that children, young people, families, and professionals are all central to service development and delivery.

Co-Delivery: Services will be planned and delivered in partnership with children and young people, ensuring their voices and lived experiences are embedded and acted upon throughout the process.

Co-Evaluation: We will create regular opportunities for feedback and reflection, enabling continuous improvement. Importantly, we will provide timely, accessible feedback to children and young people, showing how their contributions have influenced change, responding in a way that is full, fast, and friendly.

Key Achievements

Young people were part of interview panels for various posts across the partnership including Executive Director of Children's Services and Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care. They received recruitment and selection training before the panel took place to ensure they were confident and prepared.

5 Care Leaver Ambassadors have been recruited to be involved in service design and improvement, they advocate and gather feedback on behalf of cared for children and care leavers. Care Leavers Ambassadors delivered training about the impact of positive relationships, also what makes a good relationship.

Participation groups are thriving and represent diverse views and experiences across the borough e.g. Cheshire East Youth Council, Jigsaw, My VOICE, Care Leaver Ambassadors and Care Leaver Cooking and Voice Sessions. Experiences and backgrounds include SEND, Care Experienced, Poor Mental Health, Home Educated, LGBTQ+, Domestic Abuse and more.

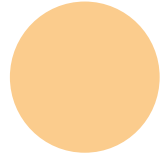
Children and young people have contributed feedback to develop the Contextual Safeguarding Screening Tool – various youth and participation groups.

Children and Young People have given feedback to inform the Drug and Alcohol Strategy – various youth and participation groups.

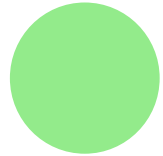
After over 7,500 11 to 18 year olds took part in Make Your Mark and voted for “Crime and Safety” as the most important topic, Cheshire East Youth Council launched a Hate Crime and Discrimination Campaign called Hate Stops Here in November 2024 helping to educate professionals and young people on safe spaces, hate crime and discrimination.

Further embedding our Voice of the Child and Lived Experience Guidance and Lundy Model Approach through training to frontline practitioners across the partnership.

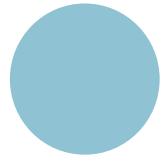
Hearing the voice of the child and their lived experience: The difference we have made



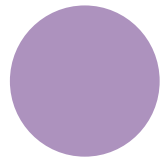
Young people are equipped with work ready skills and have the right to say who is or isn't employed in key positions. Young people feel empowered and have sense of self-worth.



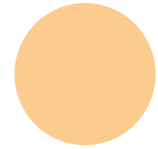
Professionals across the partnership have improved understanding of rights-based approach to participation and can use this in practice.



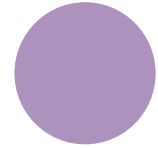
Local leaders have a better understanding and relationship with young people on how they would like to be involved in decision making.



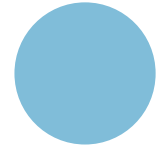
Supporting and facilitating opportunities for children and young people to lead, develop and shape their own campaigns.



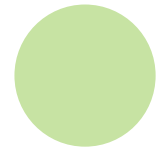
Ensuring children and young people have been part of improving the language that we use in assessments, screening tools.



Ambassadors gave positive feedback *"people are much happier with Cheshire East lately", "it's so good to be actually making things better", "things are going to actually be good"*



Providing space and opportunity for young people to have their voices heard in a range of engaging ways e.g. online, in person, group, 1-1s, digital, events, panels, boards, committees.



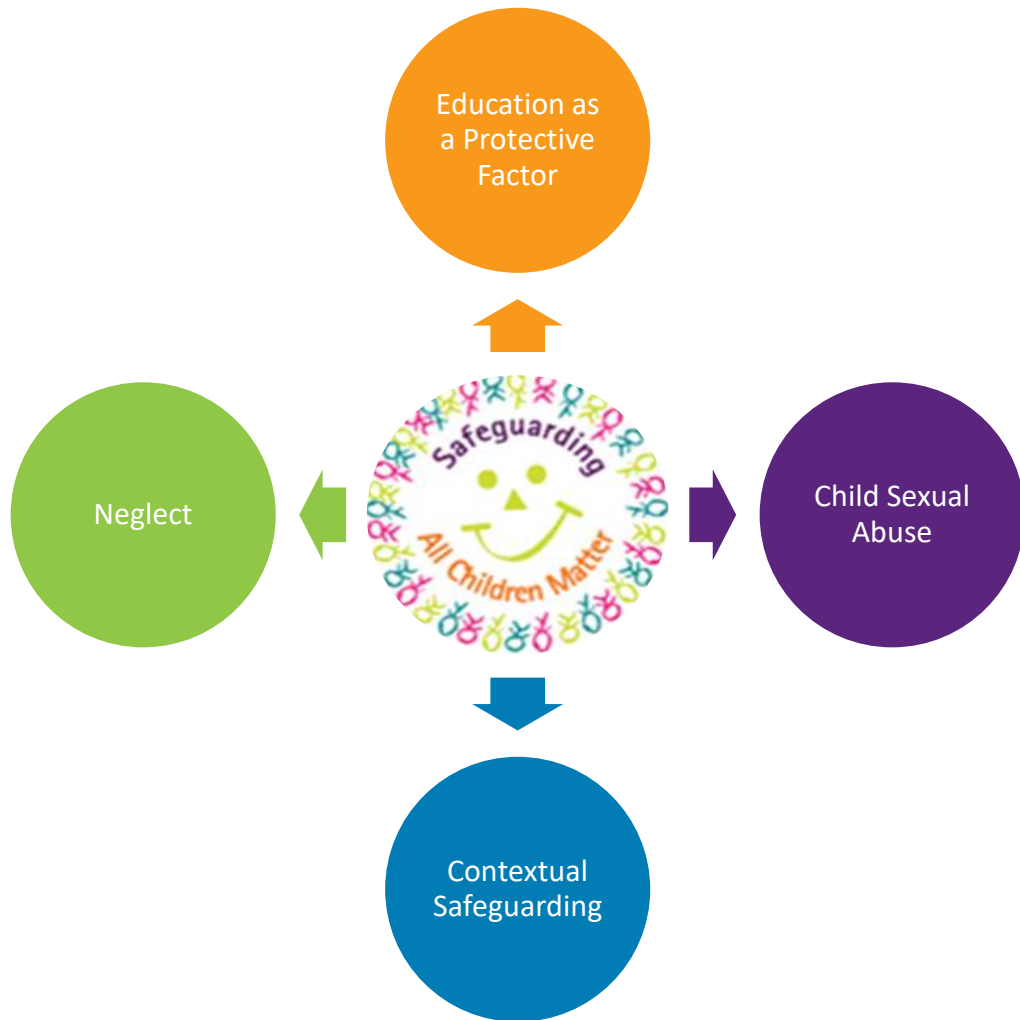
Skills for children and young people – life skills, listening, communication, confidence, self-esteem, sense of belonging, working with others, problem solving.

Partnership Priorities 2025/26

Looking ahead to 2025/26, the Partnership has identified a set of strategic priority areas that will guide its work over the coming year. These priorities have been shaped through active contributions from key multiagency forums, including the Learning and Improvement Group, Education Board, Multi Agency Quality Assurance Group, and the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board. In response to both emerging themes and ongoing challenges, the Partnership will maintain focused activity in the following areas:

- Contextual Safeguarding: Continued development and implementation of the updated Contextual Safeguarding Strategy, informed by independent external scrutiny, to better address extra familial risks to children and young people.
- Child Sexual Abuse: Delivery of a coordinated response to child sexual abuse, including the implementation of recommendations from the NSPCC snapshot report, the National Review, and emerging practice from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse.
- Education as a Protective Factor: Strengthening the role of education in safeguarding through the work of the recently established Education Board, with a specific focus on children who are electively home educated, in line with national reform and statutory guidance.
- Neglect: Roll out of an updated multiagency Neglect Strategy, supported by the development and launch of a new partnership toolkit to support consistent and early identification, assessment, and intervention.

Alongside these priorities, the Partnership will continue to embed the Participation and Engagement Strategy, working to ensure the voices of children, young people, and families are central to the design, delivery, and evaluation of services.



Key values for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership in 2025/26



All the work within the Partnership will continue to uphold the following core values:



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

Independent scrutineers report

The Independent Scrutiny Report for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) covers the period from April 2024 to March 2025. It outlines the role of the Independent Scrutineer in evaluating the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The report is framed within the context of significant national reforms, including the publication of updated statutory guidance such as Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and the Children's Social Care National Framework. These reforms aim to improve collaboration among safeguarding partners and ensure better outcomes for children and families.

Since the autumn of 2024 there has been considerable progress in reviewing and strengthening statutory safeguarding arrangements for the CESCP. Governance structures, systems and processes have been strengthened, including the appointment of a rotating chair among Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the establishment of a Multi-Agency Quality Assurance Group. The frequency of CESCP meetings have increased and the revised multi-agency arrangements were published in December 2024.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board agreed the following, dual process for independent scrutiny:

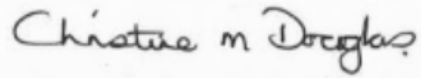
- A lead scrutineer role to provide overarching scrutiny of the CESCP across the entire system, with oversight of any/all items presented at the Board, including commissioned scrutiny activity, holding the Partnership to account and supporting effective multi agency partnership arrangements.
- Commissioned scrutiny against the Partnerships priorities, providing assurance of progress, impact and outcomes.

The timetable for commissioned independent scrutiny activities for 2024/25 have not progressed but have been carried forward into 2025/26.

The Independent Scrutineer welcomed the Participation and Engagement Strategy, introduced to amplify the voices of young people in shaping safeguarding priorities and activities. Equally, an integrated data set has been developed, which will support the Partnership to identify areas which they seek to understand and interrogate on a deeper level, informing the Partnerships quality assurance and multi-agency audit cycle. This will strengthen assurance of the quality of multi-agency practice and importantly, children's experiences of services.

There is the opportunity moving forward to strengthen multi-agency relationships, focusing more on the quality of multi-agency practice, the impact of learning and crucially, the outcomes for children and families.

Approval and signatures of the Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners



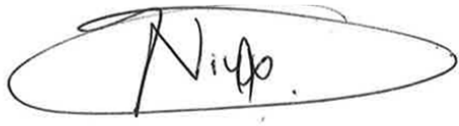
Christine Douglas MBE
Director of Nursing & Care
Cheshire & Merseyside NHS
(LSP)



Mark Roberts
Chief Constable
Cheshire Police
(LSP)



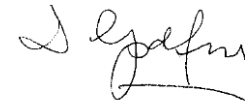
Rob Polkinghorne
Chief Executive Officer
Cheshire East Council
(LSP)



Josette Nyokindi
Interim Associate Director of
Quality and Safety Improvement,
Chair of the Partnership



Carlos Brunes
T/Detective Chief
Superintendent
Cheshire Police
(DSP)



Dawn Godfrey
Executive Director of
Children's Services
Cheshire East Council
(DSP)