

Cheshire East
Safeguarding Children'
Partnership

Annual Report
2023/2024



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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 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. 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 2024, 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 2024/2025.

In the last year, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has continued to receive support from the DfE following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection undertaken with a focus on children at risk of exploitation. There was full acceptance from across the partnership of the findings from the inspection and some immediate changes were made to practice. We remain 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. Contextual Safeguarding continues to be a partnership area of focus moving into 2024/2025. The partnership is committed to further improving the practice around children at risk of exploitation.

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership has implemented new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. The partnership has embedded these governance arrangements to identify and respond to the needs of children in Cheshire East. We have been able to see the new arrangements providing a clear line of sight to frontline practice and there is a review of the arrangements planned to ensure we are as effective as possible to safeguarding children, and also to ensure we are compliant with Working Together 2023.

We continually review and refresh our training offer to the partnership over 2023/2024 and had a hugely successful multi agency learning week. This is the second learning week, held by the partnership and this year had an overarching theme of *'The Child's Voice and their Lived Experience'*. Around 2500 representatives from an extensive range of children's services and organisations from across the partnership took part during the week, with over 135 local 'expert' practitioners giving their time and effort to deliver topical presentations. We produced 32 programme courses, sessions and workshops to create lots of opportunities to share a vast array of useful practice resources, skills, knowledge, and ideas.

Inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS) review how effectively we support and protect children and young people within early help, child in need and child protection, vulnerable pupils, cared for children and young people, and care leavers. They also evaluate the effectiveness of leaders and managers. The inspections are focused on the **impact** we have on the lives of children and young people. Cheshire East Children's Social Care had a full ILACS inspection in February and March 2024.



Cheshire East Safeguarding
Children's Partnership



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

This year, the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership have continued to work on our three priority areas – Contextual Safeguarding, Education as a Protective Factor and Sexual abuse. The partnership is committed to considering 'even better if' in all areas and as we move into 2024, we keep hold of some current priorities. This is not to say that progress has not been made, this is evidence of the ambition of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the level of scrutiny which shows that we are not bound by time, but by level of need for children and families.

The partnership have been involved in three Rapid Reviews with two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, as reported to being underway last year, have now been concluded. These reviews have enabled us to consider our areas of focus for next year and looking forward to 2024/2025, the partnership focus areas will continue to be sexual abuse and contextual safeguarding. 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 and therefore will also be adding neglect. Neglect has been identified in a feature in the majority of the reviews which have been undertaken in 2023/2024. There is evidence that this is not always the most prominent factor of risk, however, when reflecting on the cases, this became a significant prelude factor which led to other risks for children and young people.

I am pleased to have very recently become chair of the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Having been involved since March 2024, I have already seen some evidence that the partnership works 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 am 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.

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



**Cheshire East Safeguarding
Children's Partnership**



OFFICIAL

About the Annual Report 2023/2024

Reporting requirements for our safeguarding partnership arrangements are set out in Working Together Yearly report. Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in a 12-month period. That reporting should be transparent and easily accessible to families and professionals. The focus of these reports should be on multi-agency priorities, learning, impact, evidence, and improvement. Reports must include:

- what partnerships have done as a result of the arrangements, including on child safeguarding practice reviews 38 Children Act 2004 Section 16G 41
- how effective these arrangements have been in practice 107. In addition, the report should also include:
- the contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements
- any themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, for example, reviews and scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- any updates to the published arrangement with the proposed timescale for implementation
- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle 108. Where there is a secure establishment in a local area, safeguarding partners should include a review of the use of restraint within that establishment in their report, and 42 the findings of the review should be reported to the Youth Justice Board, the Youth Custody Service, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.



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 2023. 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.

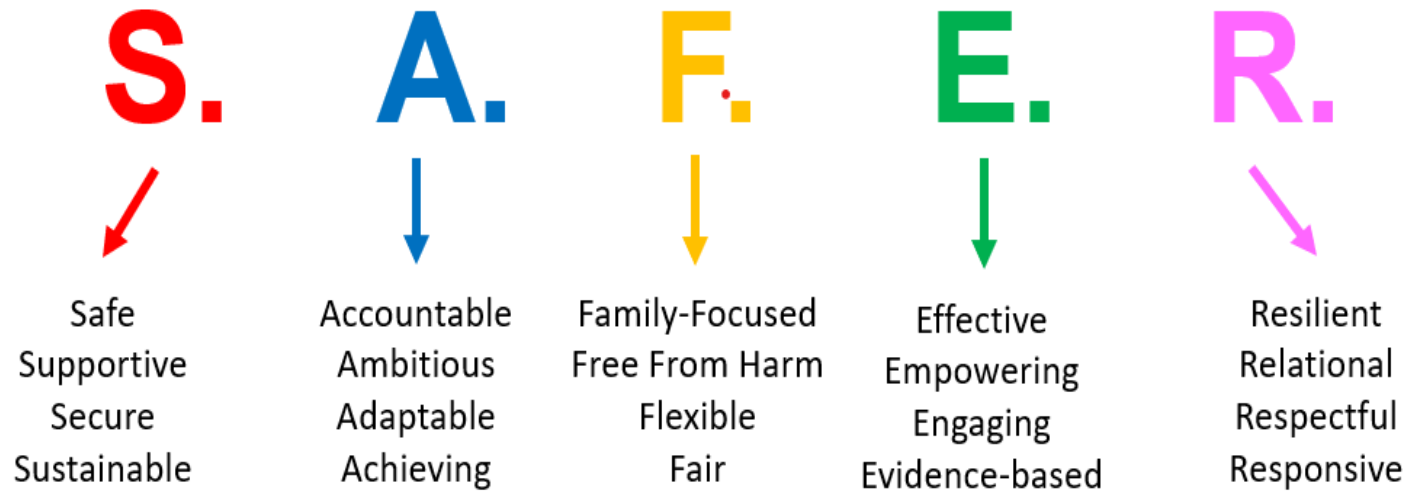
The Partnership has a wide membership of partners and 'relevant agencies', including schools, the faith and voluntary sector, probation services, public health, health providers, the police and representatives from the Local Authority. These executive members work together to keep children and young 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.



Shared vision and values to improve partnership working



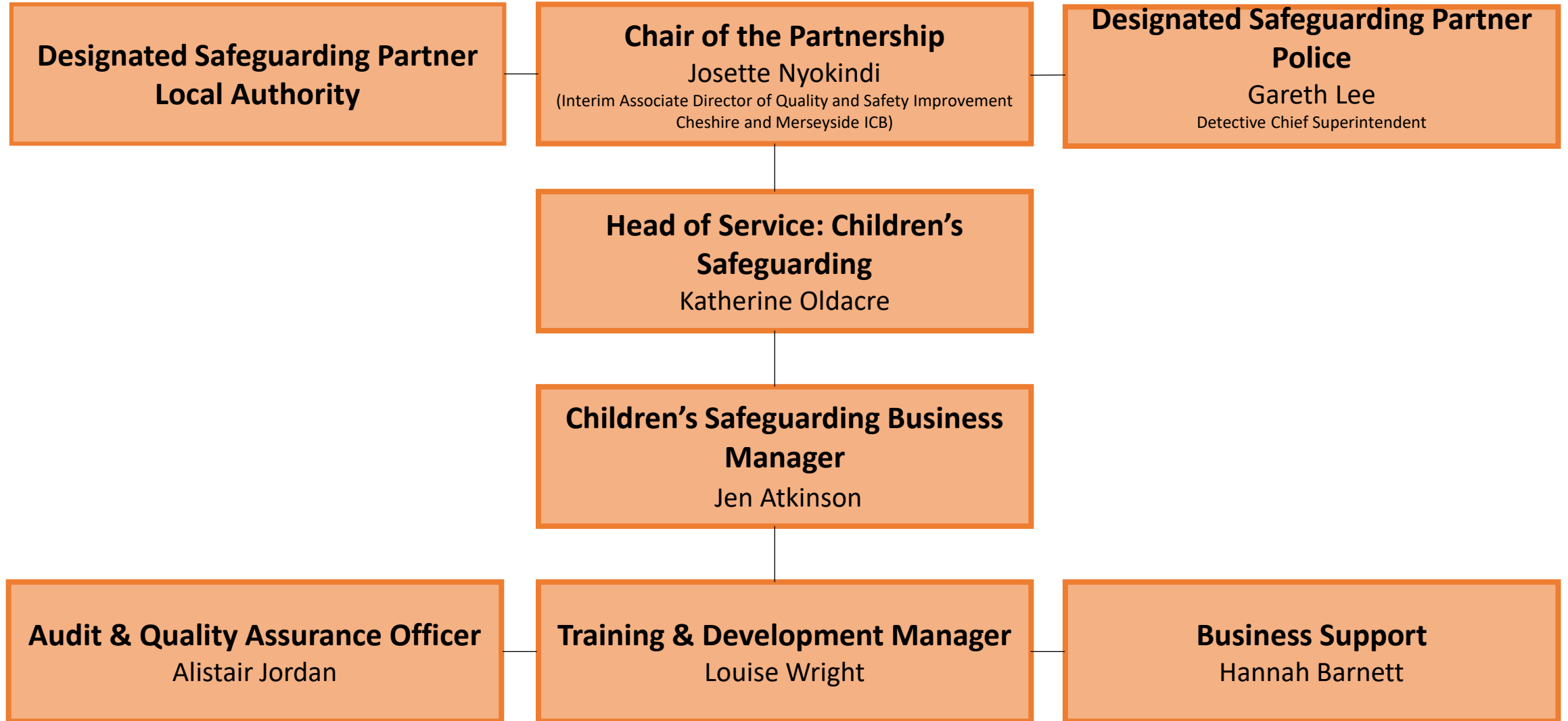
Working **TOGETHER** to make children, families and communities



In line with the revised governance arrangements, we have rebranded the partnership to complete the cycle of transformation. A communication strategy has been developed 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 remain ambitious that our partnership will enable us to work **TOGETHER** to make children, families and communities **S.A.F.E.R.**

Partnership structure





Safeguarding Children in Education Settings (SCiES) team

SCiES support schools, colleges and alternative provision safeguarding obligations.

- Provide safeguarding training programme for schools and settings.
- Write model safeguarding policies for schools.
- Provide safeguarding support and guidance.
- Support with risk management/support plans of harmful sexualised behaviours.
- Safeguarding audits/reviews of whole school/setting policy and procedures
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) meetings
- Provide supervision for Designated Safeguarding Leads and their deputies in schools.
- Advice on setting up children's safeguarding teams
- Act as the conduit between schools and a variety of multiagency meetings i.e. MARAC, Channel Panels and Child Exploitation
- Support the LADO process

It is the vision of CESCPC that in 2024/2025, SCiES and the CESCPC Business Team will be integrating services.



Partnership Budget Contributions

Working Together (2023) stipulates that the LSP should agree on 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. It is the responsibility of the LSP 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 LSP. Funding for the arrangements should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that they can meet the financial needs of the arrangements.

In 2024/2025, further work is required to ensure the partnership is funded appropriately.

Income	23/24
East Cheshire Trust	£ 5,000
PCC	£ 26,500
NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB	£ 41,091
Cheshire & Wirral Partnership	£ 4,093
HMP Styal	£ 2,400
Wirral Community NHS Trust	£ 5,500
Mid Cheshire Hospital NHS Trust	£ 6,772
CEC	£ 47,468
Schools	£ 30,000
Total Income	£ 168,824

Expenditure	23/24
Staff Salaries	£ 217,780
Training Expenses	£ 3,150
Transport	£ 1,188
Supplies & Services	£ 1,485
Professional Fees	£ 18,852
Telephone/ICT	£ 169
Total Expenditure	£ 242,624





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



In July 2022, there was a joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the **criminal exploitation** of children in Cheshire East.

The **findings of the inspection** were that the *'strategic multi-agency partners did not understand the extent and impact of the failure to protect children and drive forward plans for those who are at risk of, or are victims of, criminal and sexual exploitation. Urgent action is required to understand and address the underlying complexities and continuing risks to exploited and missing children across all agencies and services, as too many children remain in situations of risk and harm.'*

The inspection identified **3 areas of priority action** and an initial improvement plan was developed immediately following the inspection in response to the findings, which has been delivered at pace. The improvement plan was refined in October 2022, in line with the inspection letter published on 26 September 2022 and submitted as required to Ofsted in January 2023. As early as January 2023, 53% of the action plan had been completed. By April 2023, 70% was complete. In July 2023 94% of the action plan was complete. In November 2023, **all actions in the improvement plan have been completed.**

The most recent ILACS inspection in Children's Social care reported to find "**significant practice improvements in a number of key areas**" since the last inspection in 2019. This included improvements in response to the findings from the JTAI inspection in July 2022. This provides assurance that our **processes around improvement are robust** and result in improved outcomes for children. The inspection also highlighted many strengths within our services and the partnership, including the front door, family hubs, support from the virtual school.

Children's Social Care ILACS Judgements

Ofsted inspect children's services on a regular basis. Children's Social Care received an ILACS (inspection of local authority children's services) in February and March 2024. Inspections of local authority children's services (ILACS) review how effectively we support and protect children and young people within early help, child in need and child protection, vulnerable pupils, cared for children and young people, and care leavers. They also evaluate the effectiveness of leaders and managers.

The inspections are focused on the **impact** we have on the lives of children and young people.

Inspectors review how effectively we work together as a partnership to protect our children and young people.

The outcome of the inspection is as follows:

- Children who need help and protection – requires improvement
- Children in care – requires improvement
- Care leavers – inadequate
- Impact of leaders on social work practice – requires improvement
- Overall effectiveness - inadequate
- If **any** of the four areas are judged inadequate, the judgement for overall effectiveness will **always** be inadequate.
- Cheshire East's support to care leavers was found to be **inadequate**, therefore overall effectiveness was also judged inadequate - this was the **only** overall outcome we could receive.
- The other three areas were judged to require improvement to be good – this was due to the amount of **variability** in practice

The Improvement Plan

The Improvement plan responds directly to the findings in the inspection report. It is split into 2 chapters:

- Chapter 1 – addresses the 7 key areas from the report that inspectors highlighted we need to improve
- Chapter 2 – addresses the rest of the areas for development within the report

There is monthly reporting on progress and impact against the inspection findings which mirrors the successful approach we used to improve in relation to the findings from the joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) in July 2022.

Key improvements to the Care Leavers service date include:

- Contacted all 209 care leavers aged 21-25
- Reviewed the 21+ offer – now automatically offered to all young people
- Clear practice standards developed
- Dedicated training plan targeted around the inspection findings
- New management structure
- New hubs for care leavers as a safe space for young people to access support and advice

Key development areas for the partnership:

- Multi-agency decision making
- Quality of plans, and contingency plans
- Waiting lists for emotional support services, and timeliness of initial and review health assessments
- Education and EET outcomes for cared for children, and attendance in secondary school
- Preparation for adulthood
- Care leavers access to their health histories

Independent Scrutiny

Working Together 2023 outlines the functions of independent scrutiny role as follows:

- Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multiagency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that local child safeguarding practice reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.
- Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong, clear, strategic leadership.
- Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
- Evaluate and contribute to multi-agency safeguarding published arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections

Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership, in 2023/2024, has had independent scrutiny through two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (Child L and Child M). The author of Child M report has also been the independent scrutineer for the partnership area of focus around sexual abuse. The area of focus around education as a protective factor has had independent scrutiny from the DfE advisor, who has also had oversight of the multi agency JTAI improvement plan.



Our Priorities 2023/2024


Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership set these three priorities for our activity through 2023/2024.

Contextual Safeguarding

Sexual Abuse

Education as a Protective Factor





Contextual Safeguarding

It is assessed that thresholds between partner agencies have remained consistent with Children's Social Care, Health and the Police who have worked towards having similar reporting numbers for children at medium risk of exploitation. More has been understood between the partnership around how each partner records 'medium risk.' For example, the Police can flag a child who is at medium risk/emerging risk whereas social care do not flag and have only applied a flag for high risk. Children who are currently assessed at being medium risk of exploitation are now routinely reviewed at the weekly Integrated Front Door meeting – ensuring that risk is not increasing. This was method of review was brought in in Spring 2024.

HIGH RISK EXPLOITATION

Previous reporting suggests that at the end of March 2023 there were 68 children who were flagged. Clarification would be needed to understand if these were only the high-risk children. Currently (July 24) there are **39 children and young people** who are assessed as being high risk of exploitation.

The total number of children at high risk of exploitation has fluctuated over the past 12 months with a noticeable decline in Oct 23 when the number was **22 children**. The number then steadily began to increase from February 24 as the number of children rose to above **30 children** – due to the increase of children at risk in Congleton.

In April 23/April 24, **545 contacts** were received with contextual safeguarding and exploitation being a risk factor. This was for **431 children**. This is higher than **2022/2023** where the numbers were **505 contacts** for **396 children**.

278 screening tools were used which equates to **51%**. This is lower than the previous year when compared to **64%** of contacts were supported by screening tools. We are wanting to see an increase in the use of screening tools again to support understanding.

Of the **545 contacts** received:

- **366** were Info & Advice – 61% of contacts had screening tools
- **102** were new referrals – 29% of contacts had screening tools
- **77** transferred to Early Help – 32% of contacts had screening tools



Contextual Safeguarding continued...

MISSING CHILDREN

- The number of missing incidents have remained consistent with **1045** being recorded (23/24) when compared to **1145** (22/23.) Less children have been reported missing where exploitation is a feature = **239** when compared to **373** (22-23)
- However, more children have been missing for over 48 hours – **89** compared to **73** (22-23) Recently the missing from home service has been brought in house by the Local Authority which will promote learning and understanding about why and where children are going missing.
- In 2023/2024 more children are having strategy meetings relating to missing episodes (**59**) compared to the previous year (**25**) however these figures do not support an appropriate response when referring to the Pan Cheshire guidance. E.g all children who are missing over 48 hours need a strategy meeting. There is progress being made but all children missing over 48 hours should have a strategy meeting.
- There is a partnership need to revisit training and knowledge around missing children and protocols; which can help assist practitioners and professionals with understanding what to do when a child has been missing for a period of time/increased episodes. This would seek to promote the parity between professional responses to children who go missing and how this links to contextual safeguarding thus reducing risk.

CEOPS

- Children who are assessed as being high risk of exploitation continue to be heard at monthly CEOPS meetings – one for North and South. There is a distinguishable pattern for children who have EHCP's and for children who are not accessing or engaging in statutory (placement) education.

For example, in February 24 children heard at CEOPS:

- **60% of children had EHCP's**
- **27% children were NEET**
- Children who are neurodiverse and/or have social, emotion or mental health difficulties are more likely than their, 'neurotypical' peers to experience and be vulnerable to exploitation.

Contextual Safeguarding continued...

CONTEXTUAL TRAINING

- The partnership has helped facilitate Contextual Safeguarding training which has been delivered and well received by an array of professionals from health, education and charitable organisations etc. This was delivered in Feb 24 and were created and delivered by individuals across the partnership to promote and support understanding around contextual harm.
- In March 2023 Tackling Child Exploitation (TCE) Practice Principles which were launched. There has been a pause on how this can be brought to life in Cheshire East, and it should be revisited with further planned sessions in 2024. This could support the training offer to professionals around contextual safeguarding.

THEMES

- Themes including age and gender are another significant factor that plays into the narrative of how our children and young people are identified and treated as victims of exploitation. We know that criminal exploitation is happening to young people of all gender identities, though the majority that are currently being identified are reportedly male.
- Comparatively more females are being assessed at high risk of exploitation in 2024 when compared to 2023. The data trend supports some predisposition around risk and gender with more females being deemed at risk of CSE and males being at risk of CCE.
- July 23 **72% of males** were identified as high risk compared to **31% females**
- March 24 **61% of males** were identified as high risk compared to **43% females**
- There is an under representation of males at risk of CSE. Observations and sharing of information across the partnerships into access and introduction into criminal networks has found these processes are often enacted through male dominated networks, in which female participation is often temporary and peripheral. It therefore makes sense that in an environment that has a majority male cohort, the victims too will be male. Meanwhile girls are often lost in the narrative around child criminal exploitation.
- We are curious and know that girls are also victims of CCE, however they are still in the minority of identified cases and we need to continue to be interested in children who go missing, as well as their peer groups etc and what this information can tell us.
- What we have yet to establish is whether this is because girls are peripheral to the structures that are behind these offences or whether in the identification process of CCE, the criminal exploitation that girls could be experiencing is secondary to other forms exploitation being identified – notably sexual exploitation.



Contextual Safeguarding 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 area's 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

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.



Priority actions:
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

Learning Hub - Sexual Abuse continued

The partnership developed a statement for sexual abuse as follows:

“We want to create a multi agency response for prevention of sexual abuse. From disclosure and intervention, the child/young person will be at the centre. We want to see that children who are at risk of experiencing abuse are now less likely to do so because the partnership has effective awareness raising and preventative work in place across the locality. We will see an empowered workforce and community, trained together, who understand the signs and symptoms of sexual abuse and are able to respond with confidence. We will ensure that the perpetrators are identified at the earliest opportunity, held to account, and brought to justice and given an opportunity to turn their lives around with the right intervention .”

From this learning hub the multi-agency Task and Finish group on Sexual Abuse was established. The Task and Finish Group has sought to improve the multi-agency identification and response to child sexual abuse (which includes Intrafamilial child sexual abuse, Harmful sexual behaviour from one child to another and sibling sexual abuse). This has been developed through a review of working practices, policies and processes and statements of purpose have been identified to direct the work.





Education as a Protective Factor

The 2022 Joint Targeted Area Inspection by Ofsted highlighted 3 points on 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 multiagency work. Too often, children at risk of exploitation do not attend school or are engaged in minimal tuition. This increases the risk to their safety and limits their life chances. 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. Too often, placement moves result in a breakdown in education which exacerbates the risk of children being exploited. Some children told inspectors that they were bored and want to go back to school.

Following this identification the Safeguarding Children Partnership adopted Education as a Protective Factor as an area of focus 2023/2024 and agreed to carry out the learning hub model for this area.

Learning Hub – Education as a protective factor

An initial Learning Hub was held on the 12.10.23, with a subsequent meeting on the 17.04.24. Independent scrutiny for this work has been provided by Caroline O'Neill DfE advisor and Independent chair of the Improvement Board.

The partnership conducted this Learning Hub to provide a clear line of sight into practice across the landscape of provision the most vulnerable children and to support the partnership to be able to learn from practice more effectively.

Following the work of this Learning hub the partnership established what good practice looks like and to worked towards achieving this by: -

- Establishing practice guidance that promotes the good practice approach the learning hub has identified.
- Raised awareness within Education settings and other partners on the role of this as a protective factor.
- Established forums with a specific focus on education attendance and key staff have been engaged, 75% of children increased their engagement in education following these clinics.
- Featured this area of focus via the CESC learning week, partnership learning offer and discrete sessions for education and Independent Reviewing Officers.
- 9 children on Child Protection Plans and Electively Home Educated have moved back into school.



Good practice example

Head of Service contacted a Secondary school following concerns of a vulnerable young male 15 with persistent absence....

School responded to advise the support they were offering alongside the education....

School reported that the young male had recently received a 5 day suspension from school following an incident....

School identified he had a current child in need plan, was vulnerable, and that his parent would struggle with increased time at home....

In response school rescinded the suspension and put in an alternative onsite arrangement, using education as a protective factor.

Threshold of Need document

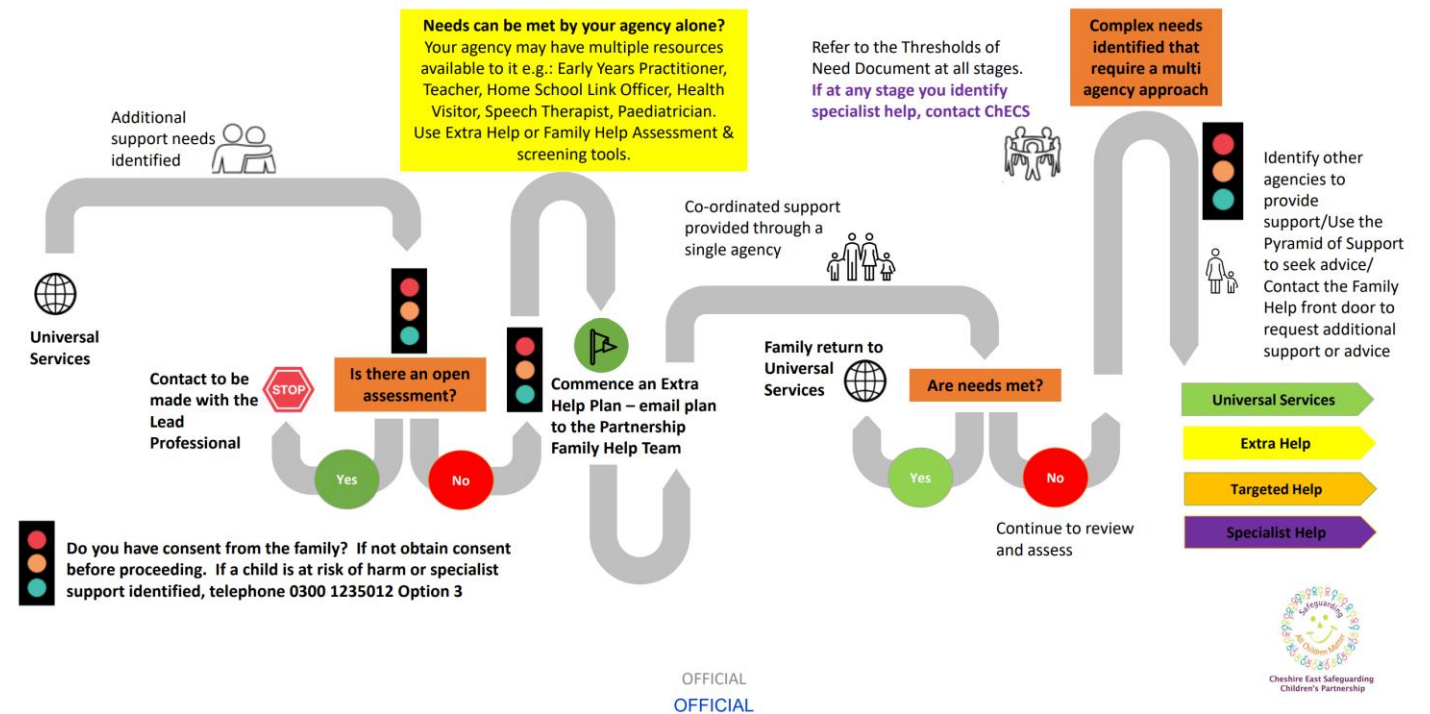
The guidance provides a framework for professionals who are working with children, young people and families, and aims to help identify circumstances when children may need additional support to achieve their potential. The stepped approach provides information on the levels of children's needs and gives examples of some of the factors that may indicate when a child or young person needs additional support or protection.

There are four different levels of need from universal services, which are available to all children and include education and health; extra and targeted help for those children who need additional support to reach their potential; and statutory and specialist help where the issues are more complex.

This multi-agency threshold framework is a guidance tool that all agencies, professionals and volunteers can use to consider how best to meet the needs of individual children and young people. This support can be provided on a single agency basis or a multi-agency basis. The stepped approach aims to reduce risk and vulnerability and meet needs at the appropriate level of support and/or intervention. Access to effective early intervention and prevention services is essential to achieving this. It is only a guide and should be used in conjunction with other assessment tools and in consultation with children, families and other professionals.

The aim of the guidance is to ensure that there is effective support for children and families in Cheshire East and that the support is delivered at the most appropriate level, at the right time.

Early Help Pathway to Support Families



Improving Quality Assurance



In 2023/2024, the partnership refreshed its quality assurance framework and activity. This is aligned to the new arrangements where quality assurance was to 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 also went alongside a refreshed partnership data set to support the scrutiny and oversight of performance aligned to the partnership areas of focus.

Our quality assurance framework recognises that audit activity forms only one key component and that our understanding of practice comes from a range of areas.

Audit Activity – A strengths-based approach to audit that interrogates practice whilst emphasizing learning for the worker and the system.

Practice Observations – An opportunity to reflect on practice, identify impact and develop workers.

Performance Data – A whole system responsibility to understand what data is telling us about our practice and to identify areas for improvement and celebration as well as to recognise areas of demand and need.

Multi-Agency Audits 2023/2024

In 2023/2024, the following multi-agency audit activity has taken place:

- ❖ Contextual Safeguarding
- ❖ Voice of the Child
- ❖ Contact Audits of the 'Front Door'
- ❖ Neglect
- ❖ Police Powers of Protection
- ❖ Scrutinised the Section 175 submissions from Cheshire East schools
- ❖ Strategy meeting audits

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

The partnership are aspiring to improve work in the areas of:

Workforce Feedback - An opportunity for our workforce to share their insight into practice; to raise themes or issues experienced in practice and identify areas of development for services, skills, or knowledge.

Leadership – To provide underpinning strength and support for the whole system in their delivery of services; to shape and embed best practice and set the vision, values, and expectations of the workforce.

External scrutiny of practice – To keep the whole system under review and ensure we are making a difference in the lives of children and their families.



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 2023/ 2024, Cheshire East Safeguarding Partnership have undertaken 3 Rapid Reviews and concluded 2 Local Safeguarding Practice Reviews. These were initiated the previous year and have only recently concluded in 2023/2024.

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



Child M – published March 2024

WHAT HAPPENED?

Child M was a 17-year-old boy. He had been known to a range of services due to concerns about his history of trauma, including experiencing domestic abuse and being physically abused by a stepfather, his resulting poor mental health, and substances misuse, leading to self-harming behaviour including several intentional and unintentional overdoses of prescription, street drugs and alcohol. In early December 2022 he was reported missing by his mother, and he was found unconscious by police, having taken an overdose of drugs. Tragically, he passed away .

LEARNING

The report concluded six findings and areas for the partnership to consider improving practice. The initial finding focused on the response to concerns about child sexual abuse and the impact a lack of a robust response can have on children's lives. Further findings related to the support available for children when they experience domestic abuse and practitioners' responses to allegations of physical abuse. A finding was made regarding appropriate support being offered to victims/survivors of domestic abuse and also what support could have been provided to the mother with care and support needs. The final finding considers the professional response to the young person's deteriorating mental health, self-harm, and substance misuse in the context of a trauma informed approach.

Child L – published May 2024

WHAT HAPPENED?

Child L, was female aged 13 at the time of the significant incident. She was subject to an Interim Supervision Order and Child Protection Plan. The incident that triggered the review was a disclosure of Rape, the perpetrator was a known Sex Offender. Child L made two disclosures of physical harm by her mother’s partner in the home. Child L made three allegations of rape and one of sexual assault outside of the home. For Child L there were reports of missing, involvement in anti-social behaviours including fire setting, cannabis, and alcohol use.

LEARNING

Child L was visible and known to a wide range of services who were involved with her and the family. A range of single-agency and specialist practitioners tried hard to engage with Child L and the family and included interventions from statutory, universal, specialist and voluntary services. Learning from this case includes appreciating the child’s lived experience and the cumulative impact of adversity, harm, and trauma. Children and young people who make disclosures of abuse and harm must be listened to with the **intent to do something** and consider other behavioural responses to harm. Children should not be blamed for their own exploitation. We learnt about the importance of identifying a trusted adult with vulnerable young people and building relationships. Recognising the safety that school can provide for children experiencing intra **and** extra-familial harm. The review considered the importance of developing a whole family /think family response to support understanding of risk where there are complex adult issues and recognised the importance of critical thinking through good reflective supervision. In addition, we recognised education is a key protective factor for children who are at risk of both intra and extra-familial harm. Identifying trusted adults and advocacy is significant where there is a risk of children being excluded and /or being moved and displaying behaviours that may reflect their distress.





Child Sexual Exploitation Learning Event

Following the Local Child Safeguarding Practice review, a learning event was held to disseminate the learning. A dedicated large multi-agency audience came together to explore the learning and recommendations from a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review, presented by the report author of 'Child L' Suzy Kitching MBE. The aim of the session was to discuss and reflect on the learning from the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review that considered the multi-agency response around child sexual exploitation, and intra-familial abuse and what happens when children and young people make disclosures of abuse and harm.

The group reflected on what partner agencies and the Safeguarding Children's Partnership can do to help other children in similar situations. What works well, what can get in the way and what you can do in your role to provide help, support, and protection.

Outcomes for the day were to:

- Strengthen and reflect on key learning about Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Support best practice when children and young people make disclosures of abuse and harm.
- Reflect on what this means for practice, agency, and the wider multi-agency system.
- Launch the Learning Brief 'What do you need to know' and Review Summary.

"Exploitation is abuse – changing the language and being confident to challenge others".

"(I now) have confidence in my professional abilities in order to advocate for service users".

"Being curious means asking questions as well as listening to answers with intent to action".

LCSPR Child L
7 point review summary

1. The review

Was commissioned to consider learning about how professionals work together to keep children safe where there are concerns about child sexual exploitation (CSE) and intra-familial harm (harm within the home by a parent or carer) and what happens when children make disclosures of harm.

Of significance was the long-standing family history and behaviours associated with domestic abuse, adult substance misuse, adult violence, and criminality.

The review included direct contact with the young person and with professionals involved at the time.

2. The young person

Was known to Child L, seen female aged 13 at the time of the significant incident. She was subject to an interim Supervision Order and Child Protection Plan. The incident that triggered the review was a disclosure of rape, the perpetrator was a known Sex Offender.

Child L made two disclosures of physical harm by her mother's partner in the home.

Child L made three allegations of rape and one of sexual assault outside of the home.

For Child L, there were reports of missing, involvement in anti-social behaviours including fire setting, cannabis, and alcohol use. There were also worries and instances of self-harm.

3. Agency involvement

Child L was visible and known to a wide range of services who were involved with her and the family. There was a multi-agency Child Protection Plan in place for over two years. A range of single-agency and specialist practitioners tried hard to engage with Child L and the family and included interventions from statutory, universal, specialist and voluntary services.

4. Practice themes

The review reflected on four key areas that helped the Partnership understand what had happened and what this meant for Child L.

This means for practice that:

- There must be a full appreciation of the **child's lived experience** that understands vulnerability, harm, and trauma and how they can make children more susceptible to grooming, abuse and exploitation.
- The **multi-agency response to disclosures of harm** must attend to possible underlying trauma and how it can impact behaviours and mental health.
- The **co-existence of adult issues** in the family home such as domestic abuse, violence, and problematic drug use significantly increases the risk of abuse and requires robust information sharing and a collaborative whole-family response to keep victims safe.
- There must be a **stronger multi-agency understanding of the vulnerabilities and risks associated with CSE**, identifying the early signs of CSE including grooming, missing, intra-familial harm and abuse. Victim-blaming language was a barrier to understanding needs.

What do you need to know?

This 5-point Learning Brief has been developed following a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) that considered the multi-agency response around child sexual exploitation and intra-familial harm, and what happens when children (used to describe children and young people under 18) make disclosures of abuse and harm.

Its purpose is to share and highlight the learning themes from the review and provide the Key Messages. Its aim is to reflect on what this means for practice and how multi-agency systems and practice can help children, and keep them safe.

Learning Themes
Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) | Responding to disclosures of abuse and harm | Page 3

Rapid Reviews

WHAT HAPPENED

The first Rapid Review in 2023/2024 took place in June 2023. The child was cared for, subject to an Interim Care Order at the time of his death, placed in the care of his parents in an assessment unit. The child was extremely vulnerable to infection. Despite a significant package of support being available to wraparound the care, it would appear that he was unable to overcome a period of illness and was also diagnosed with sepsis. Unfortunately, the child was not responding to antibiotic treatment and he was transferred to another local hospital following a cardiac arrest. He was resuscitated and it was further reported that his central line was infected, and he had 'overwhelming sepsis'. The child tragically passed away.

LEARNING

It became evident in the review that the Family Nurse Partnership should be promoted by the service; providing information as to their role and responsibility, the pathway to refer and escalation of decision, if not allocated, to the wider partnership. Furthermore, when concerns are raised around possible mental health difficulties for parents, measurable tools and assessment should be used and where appropriate, signposting should be offered to relevant services. It is recommended that training and development to be offered to all practitioners to enhance workers confidence to challenge parents on specific issues, particularly when there is contrary evidence. This recommendation is made following it being assessed that the father was continuing to misuse alcohol although he told professionals that he was not. In addition, efforts to be made by all practitioners to engage the extended family network. This is to ensure that the people around the family are appropriate and in addition, assessment to be undertaken of family members who can provide additional support.

Rapid Reviews continued

The second Rapid Review took place following an incident where one of the children has been stabbed. Following the incident, the child cycled home and was taken to hospital by his mother. Physically, he has made a full recovery and no surgery was required. Two other children were arrested for a Section 18 wounding following the stabbing.

The themes identified included peer on peer violence, listening, hearing and acting on the child's voice, possible risks around sexual abuse for one of the children, domestic abuse between parents, physical abuse for two of the children. There were also concerns raised about agencies understanding the whole family history and the impact for the child, the impact past trauma has on the child's lived experiences and the importance of school attendance and education being the protective factor.

There was **learning** identified for the Safeguarding Children's Partnership to be around strengthening practitioner skills that enable the child's voice and experiences to be listened to and responded to whether there is a verbal or non-verbal disclosure. This needs to include child observations and understanding of behaviours that may reflect harm and distress. Sexual abuse and Education as a Protective Factor are both Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership priorities.

The review recommends that child and family histories should be considered by all agencies, enabling practitioners to understand replicative patterns of behaviour and risk. Also, to ensure children are fully protected it is important that all services routinely share information about risks and harm to children. Practitioners and managers should slow their thinking down to enable a space to reflect on the information shared and ensure the information is fully considered and evaluated to inform the risk assessment for the child.

The final Rapid Review in 2023/ 2024 was undertaken following a male, mother's partner, being arrested on suspicion of up-skirting 3 juvenile females. Children's Social Care were involved previously in 2020 after one of the children made an allegation that between 2018 – 2020, the same mother's partner, would enter her bedroom naked. This happened on numerous occasions and the child reported he would pull the covers down, cover her lips with his finger and say 'shh'. This investigation had not proceeded at the time as mother, had not believed the child. Allegations of sexual touching have been made by another child family member. Following his arrest, mobile phones were seized and further upskirt images of schoolgirls have been found with an additional 150 attempted ones, in addition to other indecent images of children.

As with other reviews, the **learning** is around enabling the child's voice and experiences to be listened to and responded to whether there is a verbal or non-verbal disclosure. This needs to include child observations and understanding of behaviours that may reflect harm and distress. Cheshire East Partnership have developed a Learning Hub in respect of child sexual abuse. A Task and Finish group is ongoing to consider how to progress the priorities identified. This group is subject to Independent Scrutiny. The reports recommends that all agencies, including CAMHS, should undertake safeguarding checks with other agencies including education, when involved to ensure that relevant information is shared, and that information is validated and that we are not reliant on the single voice of the parent/s. This is to enable agencies to develop an accurate and holistic picture of the child and their lived experiences. Finally, there is learning to be undertaken around the approach to safety planning. The safety plan should be child focused and should not place any emphasis on the child to take action to protect themselves.



Learning and Improvement Subgroup Activity

The Learning and Improvement sub group has oversight of all recommendations from Local Child Safeguarding Practice reviews and Rapid Reviews. During 2022/23 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.
- ❖ Reviewed themes of escalations which have been tracked through the multi-agency liaison meeting.
- ❖ Scrutinised the Local Authority Designated Officer annual (LADO) annual report for 2021/22 and the Private Fostering Annual Report.
- ❖ Contributed to the development of the partnership priorities for 2024/2025.
- ❖ Reviewed the activity around the 2023/ 2024 partnership priorities.
- ❖ Had oversight of Children's Social Care Improvement journey and more recent newly developed plan following ILACS.
- ❖ Supported the development of the quality assurance framework.
- ❖ Contributed to the development of the partnership training programme.



LCSPR updates: Partnership essential learning for everyone

These are monthly short lunchtime session on Teams started in May 2023 with an open invitation across the partnership.

We share important 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.

Attendee Feedback

Training attended is shared by attendees at our weekly team briefings

Thanks, useful as always

Interactive sessions are really beneficial

Very interesting and informative.

LCSPR updates: Partnership essential learning for everyone

Topics Covered in 2023/2024

Criteria for a notification to the National Panel	Local Safeguarding Practice Review Child L, Rapid Review February 2024	Promoted the NSPCC case review updates	Good practice Graded Care Profile 2, use of police intelligence,	JTAI and ILACS updates	SCP Team
Thresholds Document, Supporting Families, Step Up Step Down	partnership agreed roles of note taker and chair in Child Protection Core Group meetings and Child in Need multi agency meetings	Pan Cheshire Procedure for Multi agency Professional Challenge and Escalation	Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers	Partnership Supervision Practice Principles	Ofsted s advice following serious case reviews main messages on the voice of the child and our local approach
Neglect strategy update	Emotional Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable Children priority update	2023/2024 areas of focus: Contextual Safeguarding, Education as a protective factor, Sexual Abuse	ICON	Partnership Learning Hub approach to practice development	Private fostering Awareness Day
Child Exploitation Audit July 2023	Cheshire East Safeguarding and Dignity Awards 2023	Dip sample of CiN, child protection meetings, cared for reviews and strategy meetings consultation, invitation and dissemination of minutes.	Learning week	New Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements	Safer sleeping

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.

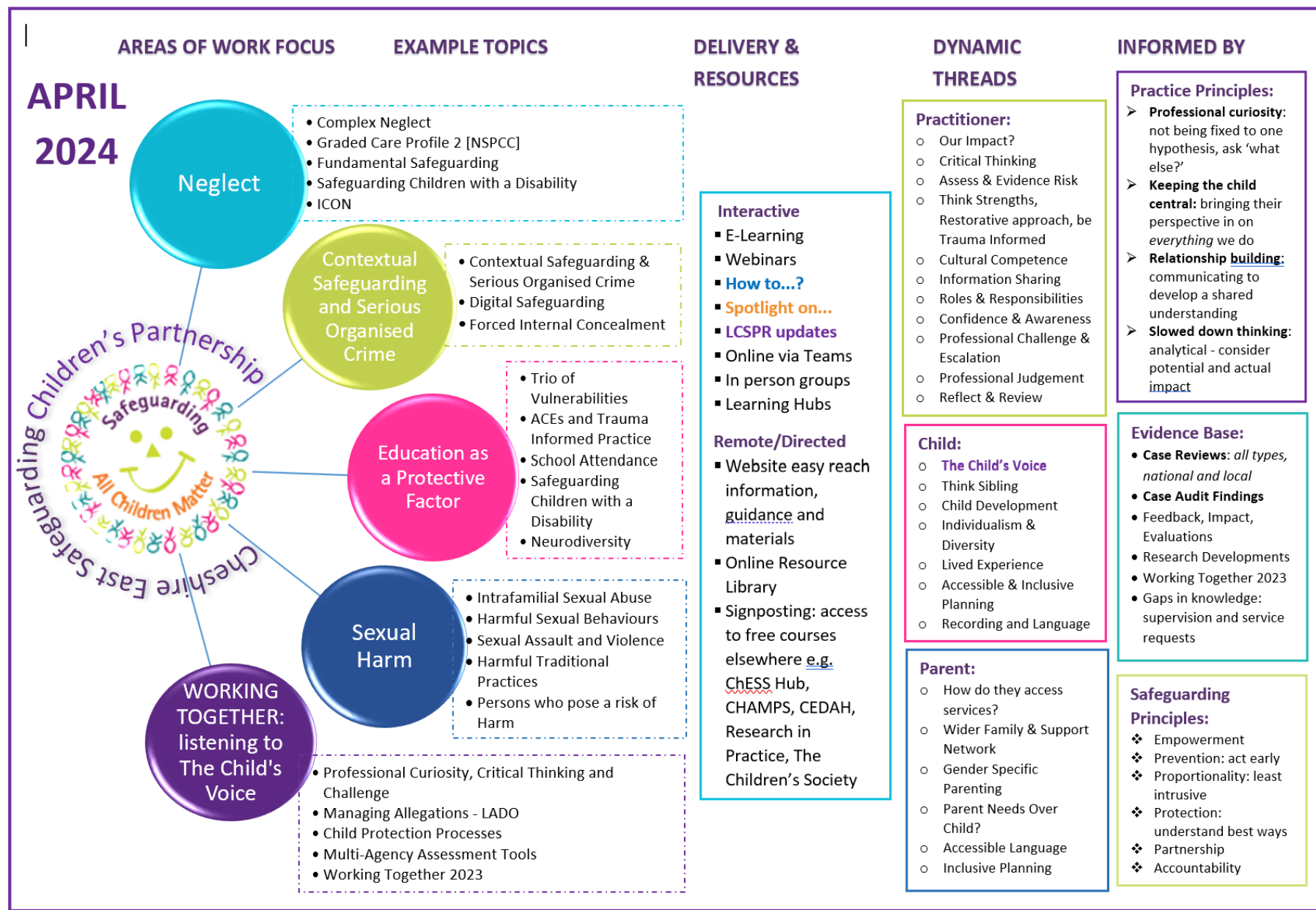
To find out more and to browse the detail of the training offer available, please follow the training link shown here:

https://form.cheshireeast.gov.uk/service/CESCP_Training_Booking_2023_24



Training Programme

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, the training plan for 2024/ 2025 has been developed.



Training Programme Attendance 2023-24

COURSE TYPES	SESSIONS DELIVERED	SESSIONS CANCELLED	ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE ATTENDEES
Totals for On-line longer Courses:	42	1	944	22
<i>Teams invite: Apr-Sept 2023</i>	18	0	335	18
<i>Webinars: Sept 2023-Mar 2024</i>	24	1	609	25
Totals for Short Sessions (monthly):	33	0	2067	63
<i>How to....</i>	10	0	997	100
<i>Spotlight On...</i>	11	0	637	58
<i>LCSPR Updates (formerly CESCO Bitesize)</i>	12	0	433	36
Totals for all On-Line:	75	1	3011	40
Totals for In-Person:	8	2	157	20
TOTALs	83	3	3168	38
LEARNING WEEK 5-9 Feb 2024				
On-line shorts (3.5 days)	25	0	1981	79
In-person courses/workshops (2.5 days*)	7	2	146	21
LEARNING WEEK TOTALs	32	2	2307	72
YEAR TOTAL:	115	5	5475	48
ATTENDEE CANCELLATIONS (approx.)	Total recorded individual cancellations: 1025 (not including Learning Week) Average drop out % per session: pre-Nov 23 = 30%, post-Nov 23 = 12%			

Learning Week 2024

The second annual Learning Week event took place from 5th – 9th February 2024 with an overarching theme of *'The Child's Voice and their Lived Experience'*. CESC ran a packed, accessible daily timetable to present an engaging series of on-line and in-person learning activities. This created abundant opportunities to share useful resources, skills, knowledge, and ideas. The variety and volume of events supported our undertaking to explore the safeguarding implications associated with ages and growth stages in a child's lifetime.

Tracking potential difficulties, risks and protective factors from pre-birth through to adulthood, we included important transitional phases and addressed diverse needs. Our chronological approach by child age meant practitioners could understand how various services intervene at certain stages and interlock their support. We considered our own roles and placement in relation to the 'child's journey', looking at the external and implicit influences on our work alongside the impact and expected outcomes of our interventions.



Feedback from Learning Week 2024

So good to see all the wonderful initiatives and partnership working groups working together in Cheshire and beyond. Great contacts made!"

Understanding each service as a whole from start to finish is really helpful as it informs us when promoting services or referring, amazing presentation!

Fabulous learning day = Partnership working! Would really encourage this to be established every year so that we can cascade this to all teams for them to attend.

The variety of start times, lengths of sessions and accessibility for a range of staff works really well.

What an amazing day! Such a fantastic buzz all day and a wonderful opportunity to meet partners and find out all the great work happening across Cheshire East. Reignites the passion and enthusiasm for the work we are doing which can only have a positive impact for the child. So proud to be a part of it



Hearing the voice of the child

This is an area identified as a focus for development for the partnership in 2024/2025. 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 and the Independent Scrutineer, children and young people will be offered the opportunity to talk about their experiences with services and 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.

In 2024/2025, 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.





Areas of focus 2024/2025

Looking forward, the partnership have identified the following areas of focus for its activity in 2024/2025. The partnership has contributed to the decision making through forums including Learning and Improvement, Multi Agency Safeguarding Operational meeting and Quality and Impact Executive Board. As a result of continued work required, the partnership will maintain an are of focus on:

- ❖ Contextual Safeguarding; this will include the implementation of the Pan Cheshire All Age Exploitation strategy
- ❖ Sexual Abuse; this continues to be an area of focus as a result of the continued theme identified through Local Child Safeguarding Practice reviews and Rapid Reviews. Independent Scrutiny will remain and the partnership plan to hold a Child Sexual Abuse Roadshow in 2024/ 2025 through the Centre of Excellence. This will further cement the learning in this area.

The safeguarding partnership will also focus on the implementation of Working Together 2023 and:

- ❖ Neglect

Key priorities for the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership in 2024/2025



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