



**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Adults Scrutiny Committee Agenda

9.30 am, Tuesday, 25 February 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT

**Members of the Public are welcome to attend this Meeting.**

1. Introductions/Attendance at Meeting (Pages 3 - 4)
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 7th January 2025 (Pages 5 - 10)
4. CQC Assurance Framework - Update – Report of the Assistant Director, Adults (Pages 11 - 16)
5. Overview of Adult Self-Neglect Reported into Darlington Safeguarding Partnership 2020-2024 – Report of the Assistant Director, Adults (Pages 17 - 40)
6. Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2024/2025 – Report of the Assistant Director, Adults (Pages 41 - 52)
7. Care Homes in Executive Strategy Measures / Arrangements – Report of the Assistant Director, Adults (Pages 53 - 58)
8. Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report - 2023/2024 – Report of the Assistant Director, Adults (Pages 59 - 96)

9. Work Programme 2024/25 – Report of the Assistant Director, Law and Governance (Pages 97 - 108)
10. SUPPLEMENTARY ITEM(S) (if any) which in the opinion of the Chair of this Committee are of an urgent nature and can be discussed at this meeting.
11. Questions



**Luke Swinhoe**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

**Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**Town Hall**  
**Darlington.**

**Membership**

Councillors Anderson, Crumbie, Donoghue, Layton, Mammolotti, M Nicholson, Renton, Storr, Tostevin and Vacancy.

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Paul Dalton, Democratic and Elections Officer, Resources and Governance Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays. Email: [paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:paul.dalton@darlington.gov.uk) or Telephone 01325 405805.

**Briefing for scrutiny committees**

Climate change can affect anyone, but some people have the potential to be more affected than others. How badly a person or group will be affected will depend not just on their exposure to the event, but on their social vulnerability – that is, how well they are able to cope with and respond to events like floods and heatwaves. People and communities experiencing multiple causes of vulnerability are the most extremely socially vulnerable.

Tackling climate change is a shared responsibility. It is deeply connected to other policy issues and local action is necessary for sustainable solutions. We need to be clear how any proposal/project impacts on our carbon emissions and how it affects our resilience. It is also important that the decisions we make do not prevent other people from reducing their own emissions or improving their own resilience.

Scrutiny has a critical role to play in these cross-cutting issues. Climate change as a stand-alone issue sits in the purview of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, but everything we do either has an impact on, or is impacted by, climate change so it is important for all scrutiny committees to also ensure that everything that comes in front of them has considered it.

The Council Plan now includes climate change as a key principle underpinning everything we do. The guidance notes for cabinet and decision papers have also been updated so the “carbon impact” box should never say no impact. Clearly, proposals or projects will differ, depending on what is being discussed, and not all of the questions below will apply to everything that comes to a scrutiny committee, but they should help to tease out how the officers have come to that decision.

**Questions for scrutiny committee members to ask**

1. Will the proposal/project result in an increase in carbon emissions?
  - How have you ensured that energy is not wasted or lost through poor insulation, heating the wrong areas or inefficient lighting?
  - Will there be an increase in business travel or commuting?
  - How easy will it be for people to travel by public transport, bicycle or walking?
  - Is there a need for travel at all?
  - Will there be an increase in waste disposal?
2. How will you reduce emissions?
  - How can you reduce energy use?
  - How can you reduce use of natural resources?
  - How can you ensure suppliers are working in a sustainable way?
  - How can you reduce waste?
  - How can you improve energy efficiency?
3. Will the proposal have any impacts on biodiversity (positive or negative)?
  - Will there be a net reduction in trees?
  - Are there opportunities for planting?
  - Are there other habitats or wildlife considerations?

4. Does the proposal incorporate/promote the development of renewable energy?
  - How can you increase the use of renewable energy in your project?
5. How can you minimise emissions from transport?
  - How can your project enable and encourage active travel?
  - How can you reduce the need for travel at all?
6. How will you make the proposal/project resilient to the impacts of climate change, such as more frequent severe weather, floods and heatwaves?
  - How can your project be designed to be resilient to these occurrences?
  - How can you ensure the building does not overheat in summer?
  - How will your service travel during these events?
  - How can communities using your service be protected?

#### Supplementary questions

- Does any procurement consider the impact on the environment?
- How does the project/proposal support the climate change strategy, tree and woodland strategy and sustainable communities strategy?
- How does the project/proposal support local businesses and employers to be sustainable?
- How can the project/proposal help develop local skills?



## ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 January 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors Anderson (Chair), Crumbie, Layton, Mammolotti, M Nicholson, Renton and Tostevin.

**APOLOGIES** – The Mayor and Councillor Storr.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillors Curry, Holroyd and Toms.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Joss Harbron (Assistant Director - Adult Social Care), Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources), Martin Short (Director of Place - North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board) and Paul Dalton (Democratic and Elections Officer).

### AD24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Anderson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute AD26 below, as an employee of the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust.

### AD25 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2024

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 22 October 2024, be approved as a correct record.

### AD26 AUTISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to update the Adult Scrutiny Committee on the progress made to date in relation to the National Autism Strategy and the subsequent actions within Darlington. The submitted report provided a joint position statement from the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust and the Council.

The submitted report defined Autism, provided an overview of the national context, outlined the priority areas of focus for the National Autism Strategy 2021-26, explained the aim of improving understanding and acceptance of Autism within society, identified the work being undertaken to prevent mental health crisis for people with Autism and the support provided to encourage more Autistic people into employment.

The submitted report also outlined the work being done across the Borough to tackle health and care inequalities for autistic people, and in terms of building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care.

Members welcomed the involvement of 'Inclusion North' in the development of the strategy, and were keen to invite representatives to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Discussion ensued on the number of residents in the North-East who had received an autism diagnosis, and how many of these residents were accessing Mental Health services. Members were also keen to know how the numbers on the waiting list for a diagnosis

compared to one year ago, and whether the number of inpatients with autism, and the number of inpatients suspected of having autism, but who did not have a diagnosis, was monitored.

Concerns were also raised in relation to the contrast between the target to reduce waiting lists alongside the increased identification of people suspected of being autistic. Members were also keen to ensure that the support for the local working group had been budgeted for in light of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**RESOLVED** – That the content of the report be noted and that progress be reviewed on an annual basis.

## **AD27 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29**

The Assistant Director, Resources, submitted a report (previously circulated), which invited Members to give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29, and forward any views, in particular those in relation to the services and finances which were specifically within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee.

The submitted report stated that the MTFP had been agreed by Cabinet on 3 December 2024 as the basis for consultation, and Members were asked to discuss and consider the overall contents of the MTFP, however, with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to those areas within their remit, and forward any views to a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, to be held on 20 January 2025, for consideration. It was reported that the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would then agree a formal response to Cabinet on behalf of all the Scrutiny Committees, as part of the consultation.

A briefing was delivered to Councillors on 11 December 2024 which provided an overview and highlighted key points in the plan. It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation, the Council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26, with an update on the draft financial settlement provided to Members.

Concerns were raised in relation to the use of reserves to balance the budget, and whilst it was acknowledged that the proposed additional funding received as part of the draft financial settlement was welcomed, it was noted that the Council's reserves would still run out prior to the end of the proposed plan should circumstances remain the same.

Members also recognised the additional pressures created by the increase in National Insurance contributions, and the concerns raised by suppliers, however noted that the Council did not have the resource to support the uplift.

Discussion ensued on the position in other authorities and Members cited examples where authorities were not in the position to budget for such a lengthy period, and speculated on the manner in which funding might be distributed in a fairer way in future.

**RESOLVED** - (a) That the report be noted, and that the Chair of this meeting, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers supporting this Scrutiny Committee, be given authority to agree the Minutes of this Ordinary Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, in order to enable the

Minutes to be considered at a Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, scheduled to be held on 20 January 2025.

(b) That the minority view of this Scrutiny Committee is that it could not support the MTFP in its current form due to the proposed use of all reserves prior to the end of the proposed MTFP.

#### **AD28 CQC ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK - UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to update Members on the CQC Assurance Framework.

The submitted report stated that the CQC Assurance Framework for Local Authorities in England, introduced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), was a structured approach to evaluating the performance of local authorities in delivering Adult Social Care services. It was stated that the Framework was aligned with the goals of the Health and Care Act 2022, which aimed to ensure high-quality, equitable, and sustainable care for individuals in need.

The submitted report updated Members on the requirements of the CQC Assurance Framework, the duties and responsibilities of the Local Authority and provided an updated timeline for the forthcoming inspection.

Members welcomed the update from the Assistant Director, Adults, and questioned the possible delay between inspection and the publication of the final report within the timeline, and whether there was any redress in terms of this.

Discussion ensued on the national context as regard to the new inspection regime, the logistics in terms of the CQC establishing the inspection structure, and the potential for reflection and targeted inspections at the conclusion of the initial inspection process. Members felt that it was encouraging that staff retention had vastly improved in Darlington, that the Council maintained a positive workforce, and hoped that this would be reflected in the CQC outcome.

Clarification was sought in relation to the selected areas for improvement or development in terms of the self-assessment, with Members advised that the self-assessment reflected the Council's own interpretation, with some specific areas prioritised for completion.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the update provided be noted.

#### **AD29 HOSPITAL DISCHARGES**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an overview of the requirements on the Local Authority to support hospital discharges and to provide an update on how Darlington is performing in terms of hospital discharges.

The submitted report stated that local authorities (LAs) played an essential role in supporting hospital discharges to ensure that people transitioned smoothly from hospital care to appropriate community or home settings. It was explained that this involved close collaboration with the NHS to prevent delayed discharges and to support people's recovery

and well-being after their hospital stay.

It was stated that LAs' involvement in hospital discharges was part of the broader health and social care integration effort in the UK, which aimed to provide joined-up, patient-centred care across settings. The key duties of LAs in this process were summarised within the submitted report.

Members reflected on the difference between services in Darlington and other areas, noting that the services provided upon discharge in Darlington were markedly better than those experienced in other areas.

Discussion ensued on the number of patients involved in delayed transfers of care (DTOC) from acute physical health settings, with Members noting that these figures were extremely low, and any such cases were as a result of systemic failures rather than by the local authority.

Further discussion took place on the progress of the work being undertaken with Housing to identify opportunities to utilise an Extra Care Housing (ECH) property, with the ability to provide short term stays for people unable to return home due to inappropriate housing, awaiting adaptations or no fixed abode, to support a period of assessment outside of a bed-based health and/or care environment to determine long term needs and next steps.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted, and that an update report be submitted to this Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

### **AD30 TRANSITIONAL SERVICES (PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH CARE AND SUPPORT NEEDS)**

The Assistant Director, Adults, and the Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the responsibilities for the Local Authority in relation to support young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in preparation for adulthood.

The submitted report stated that the Care Act 2014 placed several duties on Local Authorities in England to ensure young people with care and support needs are well-prepared for adulthood. This included young people with disabilities or those who may need ongoing care as they transition from Children's to Adult Services.

The submitted report summarised the key areas for preparing young people for adulthood and the key SEND duties of Local Authorities, both of which aimed to give young people a stable, supportive framework for moving into adult life, with a focus on well-being, independence, and meaningful community engagement.

Members entered into discussion on the process of reassessment and annual review and it was noted that there were a number of overdue adult reviews. Members were assured that a risk management approach had been adopted with those with the greatest need/complexity being reviewed first.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

### **AD31 ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES DURING COVID - UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Assistant Director, Adults, submitted a report (previously circulated) to provide an update on the recommendations submitted to this Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2024, by the Adult Social Care during the Coronavirus Pandemic Task and Finish Group.

The submitted report stated that the purpose of this Task and Finish Group was to assess the view of both Adult Social Care (ASC) staff (both Darlington Borough Council employees and commissioned staff) and end users in terms of the changes that were required due to Covid and the associated lockdowns.

It was reported that the Task and Finish Group gave consideration to the new methods of working that staff and care recipients particularly liked, so that the Council could consider whether they should continue to be used / offered as an option after the Covid lockdowns had ended. The recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, together with the actions undertaken since the final report of the Task and Finish Group was submitted to the Committee, were outlined within the submitted report.

Members noted that there were some recommendations outside the sphere of the Council's remit and were unable to directly influence care settings, however Members were pleased that the Council maintained a commitment to liaising with such settings. Members also noted the impact that the pandemic was continuing to have in terms of waiting lists.

Members received assurances that the Council's website and the Living Well website had been updated, that residents were being encouraged to access the website via the netcall service, and that those with additional eligible needs were being signposted in accordance with the Council's duty to do so.

**RESOLVED** – That the contents of the report be noted.

### **AD32 WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

The Assistant Director, Law and Governance, submitted a report (previously circulated) which requested that Members gave consideration to the Work Programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during 2024/25, and to any additional areas that Members would like to be included.

Members requested that the Council's Environmental Protection Officer be invited to the Ordinary Meeting of the Adults Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025, in relation to the item on 'Hoarding and Self-Neglect'.

**RESOLVED** – That the content of the report be noted.

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**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
25 FEBRUARY 2025**

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**CQC ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK – UPDATE**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update and inform Scrutiny on the CQC assurance framework and inspection activity January 2025.

**Summary**

2. The CQC Assurance Framework for Local Authorities in England, introduced by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), is a structured approach to evaluating the performance of local authorities in delivering Adult Social Care services. It aligns with the goals of the Health and Care Act 2022, which aims to ensure high-quality, equitable, and sustainable care for individuals in need.
3. The framework evaluates how local authorities:
  - a) Assess needs: Identify and understand the care and support needs of their population.
  - b) Provide support: Deliver timely, effective, and personalised care.
  - c) Ensure safety: Protect adults at risk from harm and ensure high standards of care.
  - d) Leadership and workforce: Exhibit effective leadership and maintain a skilled, motivated workforce.
4. Assessment Criteria: The CQC uses four key themes:
  - a) Working with people: Involves engagement with service users, families, and carers.
  - b) Providing support: Focuses on commissioning and direct service provision.
  - c) Ensuring safety: Covers safeguarding and risk management.
  - d) Leadership: Examines strategic direction, governance, and staff wellbeing.
5. Methods of Evaluation:
  - a) Data and Evidence: Review of qualitative and quantitative data from local authorities and service providers.

- b) Inspection Visits: On-site evaluations to observe practices and gather insights from stakeholders.
  - c) Stakeholder Feedback: Input from people using services, their carers, and partner organisations.
6. Outcome Ratings:
- a) Local authorities are rated on their performance, using categories such as Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, or Inadequate.
7. Improvement Focus:
- a) The framework emphasises continuous improvement by identifying strengths and areas for development, supporting local authorities to enhance service quality.

### **Conclusion**

- 8. The CQC's assurance process aims to create transparency, foster accountability, and drive better outcomes for individuals relying on Adult Social Care services.
- 9. This report seeks to update Scrutiny members on the inspection undertaken between 20 January 2025 - 24 January 2025.

### **Recommendation**

- 10. It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

### **Climate Considerations**

- 11. This report has considered climate impact and change. All consideration was undertaken with sustainability in mind and aim to reduce the carbon footprint, and re-use energy and environmental resources where possible. The feedback and evidence for CQC assurance framework has been developed electronically and shared via emails, Teams or in the main through virtual events. Adult Services have appointed practitioners to lead on climate change within the service and develop literature and information to share with people who access services.

**Joss Harbron**  
**Assistant Director of Adult Social Care**

### **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Joss Harbron: Extension: 5278



Council Plan	The report and the activity to support the preparation for regulation and inspection is aligned to the Council Plan priorities.
Addressing inequalities	This programme has no specific impact on protected groups however all inequalities are considered as part of the assessment process.
Tackling Climate Change	All consideration was undertaken with sustainability in mind and aim to reduce the carbon footprint, and re-use energy and environmental resources where possible.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Key aims with Adult Services is to deliver efficient, effective and person-centred care which supports a strength based approach aligned to the requirements of the Care Act and includes effective use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	The strategy outlined in this report will continue the Council's drive to deliver services and support that enhance people's life chances and opportunities to thrive.
S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Wards Affected	All Darlington Wards.
Groups Affected	All adults with social care needs in Darlington.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not impact on the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This report is an update.
Urgent Decision	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The proposed projects have no specific impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

12. The Care Quality Commission have undertaken an onsite inspection of Darlington Borough Council Adult Services between 20 January 2025 - 27 January 2025.
13. The inspection was undertaken by six inspectors who remained on site for three days and then undertake a further two days chairing Teams meetings with specific groups.
14. The inspection team arranged group meetings with:
  - a) Front-line practitioners from each Social Work and Occupational Therapy teams and including Commissioning, Brokerage, Contracting and Performance.
  - b) Council Members – i.e. Portfolio Holder, Shadow Portfolio Holders, and Scrutiny Chair.
  - c) Senior Leadership – i.e. Chief Executive, Director of Adult Social Services and Heads of Service.
  - d) Partners, e.g. Carers Support Services, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, Tees, Esk and Wear Valley, Integrated Care Board and Darlington Association of Disability.

- e) Stakeholders, e.g. carers and people who use Adult Services.

### **Outcome of Inspection**

15. On 30 January 2025 following the inspection CQC will provide high-level feedback to James Stroyan, Executive Director and Joss Harbron, Assistant Director. At the time of writing this report the high-level feedback meeting had not been undertaken.
16. Assessing local authorities is a new role for CQC, so they have added calibration panels as a temporary additional step in the quality assurance process. These panels will then review and validate the scores and ratings from the assessments to make sure they provide a reliable and consistent view of quality across local authorities. The panel will include both internal and external representatives.
17. A draft report will be shared with the local authority and will:
  - a) Include a short summary of the key features of the local authority.
  - b) Show CQC most up-to-date findings against the themes and for each quality statement.
  - c) Focus on people's experiences of care, including:
    - i. What people have said about their experience.
    - ii. How CQC used it in their assessments.
  - d) Include a description of:
    - i. Areas that need to improve.
    - ii. Areas of strength and good practice.
    - iii. Whether the local authority is moving in the right direction.
18. The Local Authority will be able to check the factual accuracy and completeness of evidence used in the draft report. There will be a short period between the assessment and when CQC publish the final report on our website.
19. When CQC publish the ratings, they will publish the:
  - a) Overall rating.
  - b) Score for each quality statement.
20. The score will indicate where a local authority sits within a rating, showing whether it is nearer the upper or lower threshold.
21. CQC will quality-assure their processes and reports to check that their view of quality is reliable.
22. The Department of Health and Social Care has requested that CQC include financial information in assessment reports. However, CQC do not consider this in their assessment – it is presented for information purposes only.

23. The report will make clear any areas that require improvement. CQC consider local authorities to be best placed to lead their own improvement and the assessments consider any improvement actions that Darlington Borough Council Adult Services has already put in place.
24. If CQC find that a local authority is failing to perform its functions under the Care Act to an acceptable standard, they must inform the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This duty is under section 50 of The Health and Social Care Act 2008.
25. The duty is triggered where any quality statement receives a score of 1. This applies to all quality statements except those under the [‘Leadership’ Theme](#). These do not directly map to Part 1 of the Care Act.
26. When this happens, the Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care and Integrated Care will write separately to:
  - a) The Secretary of State to explain how they made our decision.
  - b) The Chief Executive and Director of Adult Social Services at the local authority to inform them that a section 50 notification has been made.
27. Following this notification, the Department of Health and Social Care will provide guidance and co-ordinate any improvement or intervention activity. This is described in the [operational framework for adult social care intervention in local authorities](#).

## **Conclusion**

28. The final report is anticipated to be published by end of March - early April 2025.

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**ADULT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
25 FEBRUARY 2025**

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**OVERVIEW OF ADULT SELF-NEGLECT REPORTED INTO DARLINGTON SAFEGUARDING  
PARTNERSHIP 2020-2024**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an overview of self-neglect including the local picture for the period 2020-2024 as reported into Darlington Safeguarding Partnership along with the trends, themes and key learning points.

**Summary**

2. Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is aware self-neglect continues to be a challenge with numbers of reported concerns highlighting a steady increase year on year, locally, regionally and nationally. A key priority for the Partnership is to ensure multi-agency partner agencies improve awareness and understanding of adult self-neglect to ensure early identification can be achieved and, wherever possible, prevent serious injury or death of adults at risk who appear to be self-neglecting.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) Adults Scrutiny have an understanding of self-neglect and the key learning points identified by Darlington Safeguarding Partnership to date.
  - (b) To have assurance that the Safeguarding Partnership is effectively coordinating multi-agency safeguarding practice relating to self-neglect in Darlington for adults with care and support needs.

**Joss Harbron  
Assistant Director - Adult Social Care**

**Background Papers**

DSP Self-Neglect Presentation

Amanda Hugill: Extension 6450

Council Plan	N/A
Addressing inequalities	This links to the core principle of addressing inequalities of all adults in Darlington.
Tackling Climate Change	This has been considered and will be supported through advice and information to individuals in relation to impact of hoarding, self neglect or smoking/fire risks.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Joint working across partners will ensure efficient and effective use of resources
Health and Wellbeing	The health and wellbeing of all adults in Darlington are a priority within this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Adults with care and support needs at risk of crime and disorder are a priority within this report.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	N/A
Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

4. This presentation will provide an overview of the local picture of adult self-neglect as reported into Darlington Safeguarding Partnership along with details of the definition and description of self-neglect.
5. It will focus on the Safeguarding Adult Review referrals and data reported into the Partnership relating to self-neglect, which highlight there has been an upward trend, locally, regionally and nationally. It will highlight the number of reviews it has undertaken where self-neglect was a feature (71%).
6. The presentation will cover the themes, trends and key learning points identified and what Darlington Safeguarding Partnership has done to respond to the learning to support those working with adults who self-neglect.

### Outcome of Consultation

7. Not applicable.

# **Self-Neglect and Hoarding Presentation to Adult Scrutiny Committee**

**February 2025**

**Amanda Hugill, Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager**

**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults

**Overview of Adult Self  
Neglect reported into  
Darlington Safeguarding  
Partnership  
2020-2024**

The logo for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership features the organization's name in a dark red serif font, set against a light blue circular background. Below the name, the tagline 'Protecting Children and Adults' is written in white on a dark blue rectangular background.

**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults



# Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

Adult Safeguarding means' ***protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect*** .

It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, whilst at the same time supporting people to make their own choices and have control over their lives.

The following slides provide an overview of the work undertaken by Darlington Safeguarding Partnership to support multi-agency partners:

- help identify self-neglect and hoarding
- support those working with adults to reduce the risks wherever possible

# What is Self-Neglect?

The logo for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership features a large, light blue circular graphic that is partially open on the right side, resembling a stylized 'D' or a protective shield. The text is centered within this graphic.

**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults

**North East region of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) developed a 'What to do about self-neglect' animation to raise public awareness of self-neglect:**

**[Youtube Video](#)**

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**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

**Protecting Children and Adults**

## Definition of Self Neglect

There is no standard definition of self-neglect, the Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance provides the following definition:

***Self-neglect covers a wide range of behaviour: neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.***

Self-neglect is a general term used to describe how an adult may put their health, safety and/or well-being at risk.

## Definition of Self Neglect

**Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) describes self-neglect as:**

- Lack of self-care to an extent that it threatens personal health and safety
- Neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings
- Inability to avoid harm as a result of self-neglect
- Failure to seek help or access services to meet health and social care needs
- Inability or unwillingness to manage one's personal affairs

**Local Picture:  
Safeguarding Adult  
Review (SAR) referrals  
and data relating to Self-  
Neglect**

The logo for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership features the organization's name in a dark red serif font, centered within a light blue circular graphic. Below the name, the tagline 'Protecting Children and Adults' is written in white text on a dark blue rectangular background.

**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults

## **Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs)**

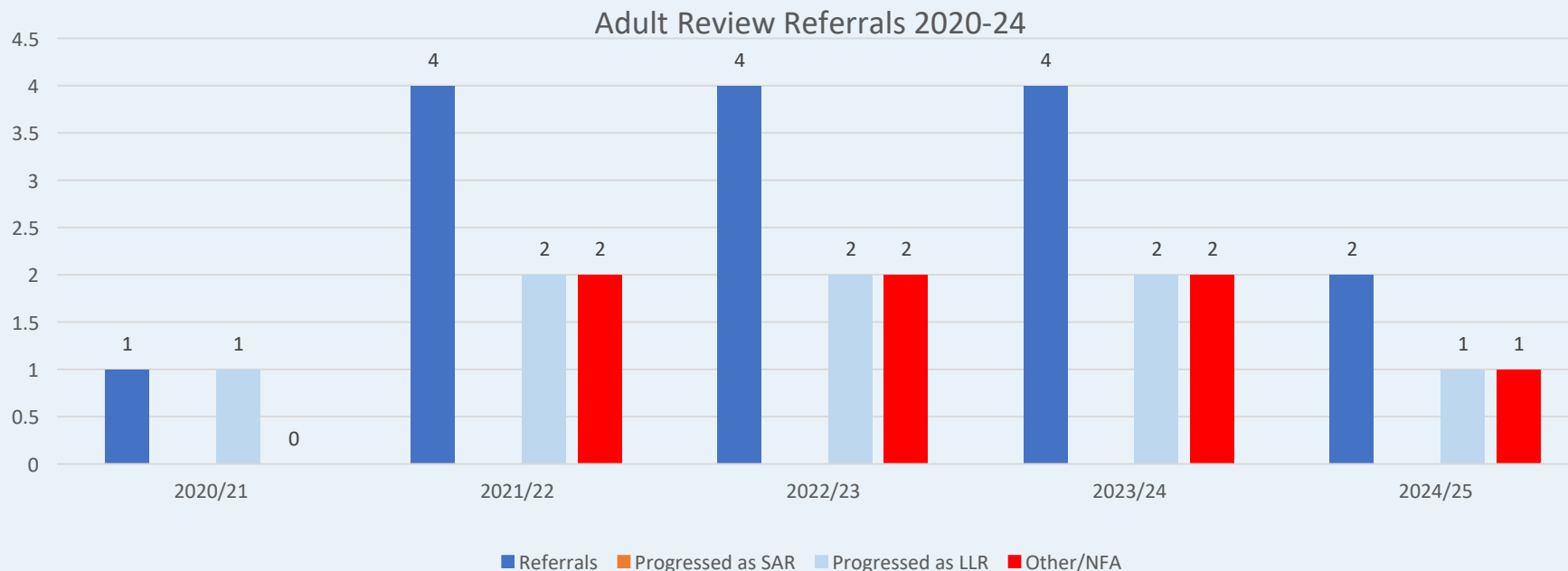
A key function for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) is to undertake Safeguarding Adult Reviews as outlined in S44 of the Care Act 2014.

Safeguarding Adult Reviews (or Learning Lesson Reviews) promote effective learning and improvement action to prevent future deaths or serious harm occurring again.

They provide invaluable insight into the way multi-agency organisations are working together to prevent and reduce abuse and neglect of adults and help to understand the practice issues and areas for improvement.

The next slides provide an overview of those review referrals into DSP along with Self-Neglect Data as reported through the annual Safeguarding Adult Collection return submitted by DBC and comparison with all England data.

## Number of Adult Review referrals into DSP 2020 to Dec 2024



From the 15 referrals received:

- there were no statutory Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs)
- 7 Learning Lesson Reviews (LLR) (46.6%)
- remaining 8 - 1 is yet to commence and 7 (53.4%) were reviewed and deemed NFA (i.e. only single agency review required or no further learning to explore).
- Of the 7 LLRs completed, 5 featured self-neglect (71%), 1 published – [Philip & Loraine](#)

Nationally Analysis of SAR's (2019-2023) has identified a marked increase in the number of SAR's undertaken for self-neglect (from 45% to 60%)

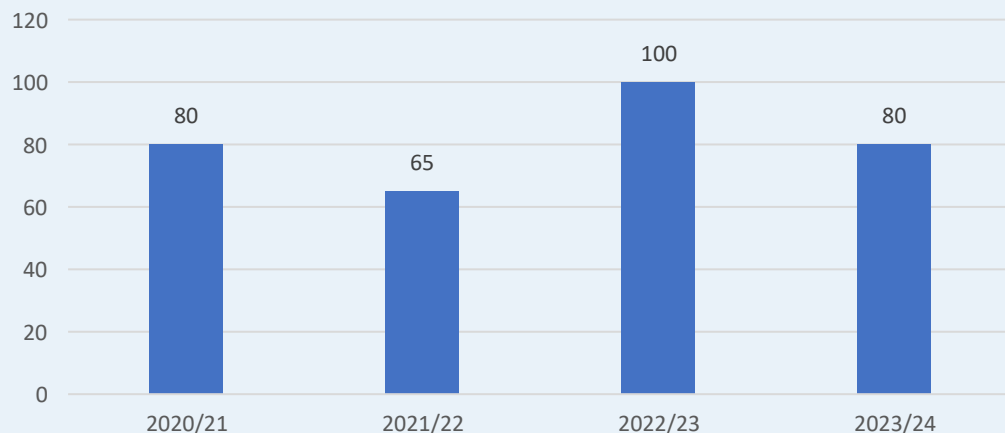




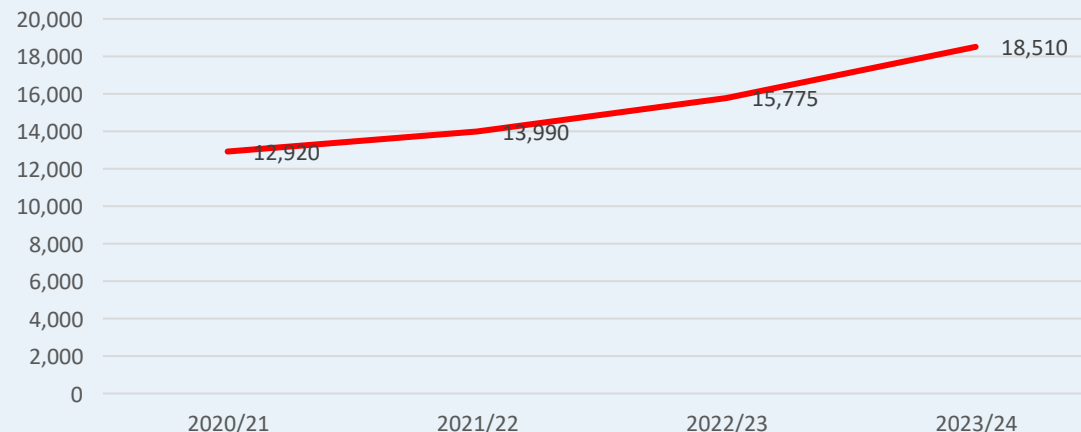
# Safeguarding Adult Data 2020-2024 (SAC return)

## Darlington and All England

S42 enquiries concluded where self-neglect identified as category of risk - **Darlington**



S42 enquiries concluded where self-neglect identified as category of risk - **All England**



This data (submitted by DBC for the annual Safeguarding Adult Collection return) highlights the number of S42 enquiries (S42 – an investigation into whether an adult is at risk of abuse or neglect) which concluded and self-neglect was identified as category of risk – **Darlington** showing a steady increase, only a downward trend reported in 2023/24.

This is a picture reflected both regionally and nationally - National data evidenced in the graph showing **All England** data – showing upward trend.

**Nature of concerns, trends  
and themes identified  
through reviews where self-  
neglect was a feature**

The logo for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership features the organization's name in a dark red serif font, with the tagline 'Protecting Children and Adults' in white text on a blue rectangular background below it. The entire text is enclosed within a light blue circular graphic element that is partially open on the right side.

**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults

## **There were a number of areas of good practice identified:**

- Some evidence agencies had worked together effectively with attempts to reduce the risk
- Good communication with concerns being raised and consistently shared with ASC
- Evidence services did go above and beyond what they were funded/signed up to do – i.e. carers, housing & GP
- Positive ASC practice of building relationship with adult first before having those difficult conversations around lifestyle and living conditions
- Fire Service engagement with adult to help them understand the benefits of making a change would be a greater benefit to something they didn't want to happen
- Family members involved and kept informed throughout

## Key learning points identified through those 7 reviews

### Self-Neglect and Hoarding Learning points:

- Recognition of self-neglect and hoarding is a complex and challenging area and is not always easily identified
- Self-neglect should not be viewed as a lifestyle choice
- Lack of understanding of Hoarding Disorder – now recognised as medical condition
- Mental health and the adult's reluctance/non-compliance with services over a period of time
- The importance of taking into account the history/trauma of the individual
- Consideration of fire safety and smoking risk when hoarding evident

## Key learning points identified through those reviews

### **Multi-Agency Practice Learning points:**

- Lack of collaborative working and coordination between agencies with practitioners often working in 'silos' - missed opportunities
- Good communication and information sharing is key when self-neglect is evident
- Importance of professional challenge and curiosity for individuals who consistently resist to engage
- Importance of multi-agency decision making in best interests of the adult
- Practice issues relating to multi-disciplinary meetings and ensuring held at earliest opportunity
- Importance of building relationships and gaining trust and keeping that dialogue open
- Need to consider flexible or creative approaches of working and engage the adult
- Cases should not be closed for those individuals who do not engage or fail to respond without discussing with senior managers within the organisation
- Often a presumption of capacity and no evidence of capacity assessments

**What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning to help practitioners working across all partner agencies to identify self-neglect and reduce the risks wherever possible?**

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**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults

## What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning?

### Identified Opportunities for Multi-Agency learning:

- **Self-Neglect and Hoarding Conference (July 2024)** focus on multi-agency practice issues and challenges of working with individuals who self-neglect and are resistant to engage
- **Provision of training and resources** – Now offer Adult Self Neglect & Mental Capacity Act Awareness e-learning, information sharing podcast and professional challenge video
- **7 Minute Briefings** –
- [DSP Learning Lessons Review Briefing on Self-Neglect](#)
- [DSP Self-Neglect and Hoarding Resources briefing for Practitioners](#)
- [Contributed to regionally published briefings on key issues around aspects of self-neglect](#)

## What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning?

### Development of guidance, resources and tools to support practitioners, which includes:

- Revision to its Multi-Agency Practice Guidance in respect of self-neglect and hoarding to include: key characteristics, challenges and risks of self-neglect, hoarding guidance including the living environment assessment (clutter rating scale)
- Provision of multi-agency self-neglect process and pathway to aid practitioners
- Provision of risk assessment tool to support practitioners as an aide to decision making
- Establish Risk Enablement Forum to discuss and manage those complex cases





## What has the Partnership done to respond to the learning?

### **Implemented Multi-Agency Quality Assurance processes for live cases**

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's Quality Assurance & Performance Management Group (QAPM) has responsibility for scrutinising and evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements through multi-agency performance data and quality assurance activity.

The QAPM will collectively discuss a number of live cases on a quarterly basis which correlate with the learning from reviews to validate and check whether practice has changed and that the change is embedded and provide assurance to Statutory Safeguarding Partners.



**Any Questions?**

The logo for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership features a large, light blue circular graphic that is partially open on the right side, resembling a stylized 'D' or a protective shield. The text 'Darlington Safeguarding Partnership' is written in a dark red, serif font across the center of this graphic.

# Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

Protecting Children and Adults

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**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
25 FEBRUARY 2025**

**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 2 2024-25**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2024-25.

**Summary**

2. This report provides performance information in line with an indicator set and scrutiny committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by scrutiny committee chairs.
3. The indicators included in this report are aligned with key priorities and the majority are used to monitor the Corporate Plan. Other indicators may be referenced when appropriate in narrative provided by the relevant assistant directors, when providing the committee with performance updates.
4. Twelve indicators are reported to the committee, eight on a quarterly basis and two annually.
5. Performance of 8 of the 12 indicators reported at the end of Quarter 2 of 2024/25:
  - (a) Two indicators are showing performance has improved in comparison to the same period last year:

ASC 002	(ASCOF 2A-2) Older people aged 65+ admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care per 100,000 of the 65+ population.
ASC 003	(ASCOF 2A-1) Adults aged 18 - 64 admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care homes, per 100,000 population.

- (b) Two indicators performance are comparable with the same time last year:

ASC 050	(ASCOF 1C (1b)) Proportion of carers using social care who receive self-directed support
ASC019	Percentage of people who have no ongoing care needs following completion of provision of a reablement package.

(c) One indicator's performance is lower than the same time last year:

ASC 049	(ASCOF 1C (1a)) Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support
---------	--

(d) Three indicators are not comparable and are reviewed as a point in time:

ASC 208	Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) started - year to date
ASC 209	Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) started - per month
ASC 211	Number of strategy meetings undertaken, i.e. concerns progressed to strategy per month

(e) The two indicators that are recorded annually are ASC054 (The proportion of people who use Adult Care services who find it easy to find information about services) and ASC055 (The proportion of people who are carers who find it easy to find information about services). 2023-24 results will be released towards the end of 2024, therefore should be available to include in the 2024-25 Quarter 3 Scrutiny report.

ASC 054	The proportion of people who use Adult Care services who find it easy to find information about services
ASC 055	The proportion of people who are carers who find it easy to find information about services

(f) Due to recent ASCOF/CLD (Client Level Data) changes there are two indicators that are no longer being reported on. The new indicators which are to be replaced are currently under development, and therefore we are unable to provide figures at this moment in time.

ASC 045	Proportion of adults with a learning disability who live in their own home or with their family
ASC 046	Proportion of adults with learning disabilities in paid employment

6. More information relating to some of the indicators referenced in this report can be found in **Appendix 1**.
7. This Scrutiny Committee performance report is compiled by Sharon Raine. All queries regarding the format of this report should be addressed to [Sharon.raine@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.raine@darlington.gov.uk)

## Recommendation

8. It is recommended that that performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with appropriate assistant directors.

**Joss Harbron**  
**Assistant Director of Adult Services**

## Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Sharon Raine: Extension: 6091

Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes with regards to Adult Social Care.
Addressing inequalities	This involves members in the scrutiny of the level to which Adult Social Care contributes to ensuring that opportunities are accessible to everyone, with a focus on ensuring a good job, home and/or social connections for all.
Tackling Climate Change	This report does not identify any issued relating to climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report allows for the scrutiny of performance which is integral to optimising outcomes and ensuring efficient use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Councils Crime and Disorder responsibilities.
Wards Affected	This report supports performance improvement across all Wards.
Groups Affected	This report supports performance improvement which benefits all groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

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**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

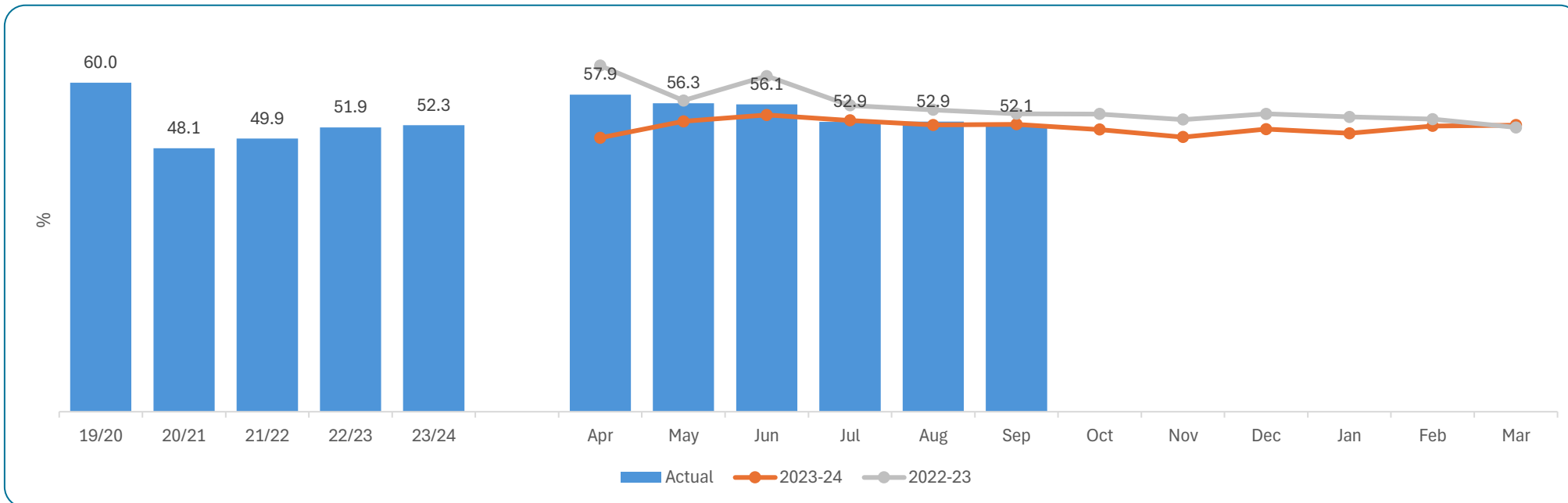
# Adult's Social Care Performance & Practice Report

**Quarter 2 (July - September 2024)**

**Scrutiny**

Independence	
<b>Definition</b>	Numerator: Of those in the denominator, those who have had a completed reablement review with outcomes of 'No services provided or identified', 'Long Term Support Ended', Universal Services/Signposted. Denominator: The total number of clients completing a reablement package during the period
<b>PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS</b>	<p>Performance for this indicator continues to remain consistent.</p> <p>At the end of Quarter 2 it was reported that 36.6% of client needs had decreased, 8.9% needs had increased and 2.3% stayed the same. The remaining 52.1% are those who no longer had ongoing care needs.</p> <p>The number of clients being referred to RIACT as part of a hospital discharge remains consistently high, with an average of 83 hospital discharges being received per month during Quarter 2 of 2024-25. Although not all of these referrals progress to receive a service it does demonstrate the increase the service area is currently experiencing.</p>

ASC 019: % of people who have no ongoing care needs following completion of provision of a reablement package at the end of the month.

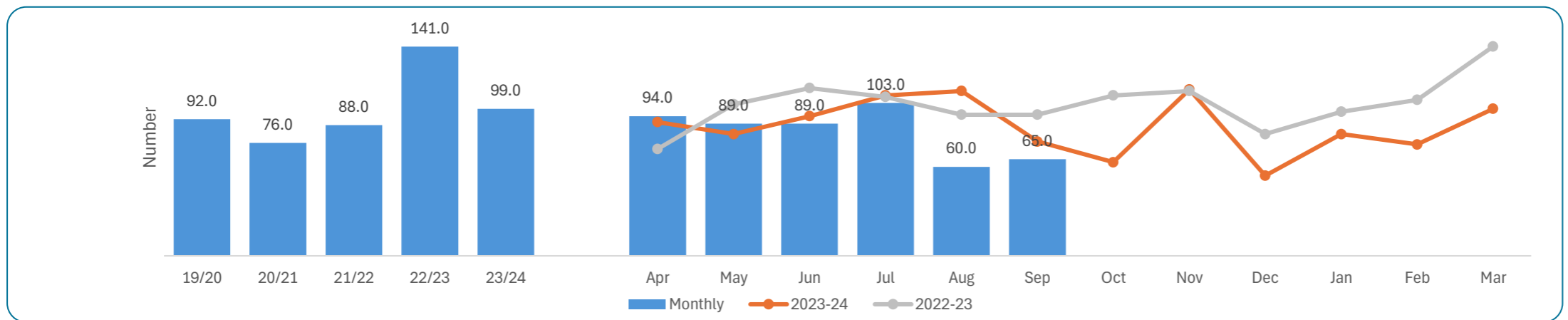


## Safety

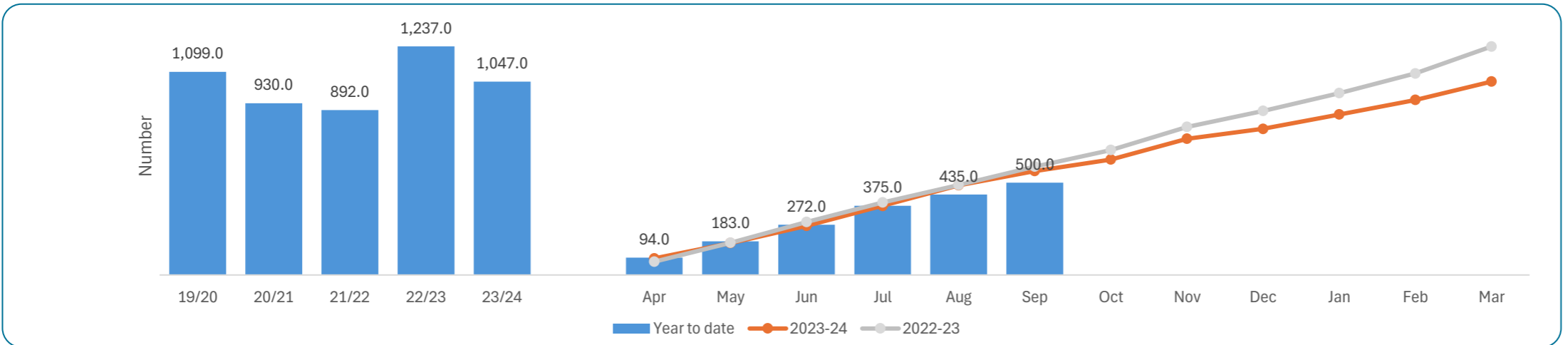
**Definition** Number of safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) started - per month

**PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS** There have been 500 safeguarding enquiries started since April. The breakdown by the team starting a safeguarding concern (initial enquires):  
 Safeguarding - 242 (48.4%)  
 Adult Mental Health - 69 (13.8%)  
 OAIT - 55 (11%)  
 ACT - 35 (11%)  
 Adult Learning Disability - 59 (11.8%)  
 RIACT - 20 (4%)

ASC 209: Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) Started - Per Month



ASC 208: Number of Safeguarding concerns (initial enquiries) Started - Year to Date

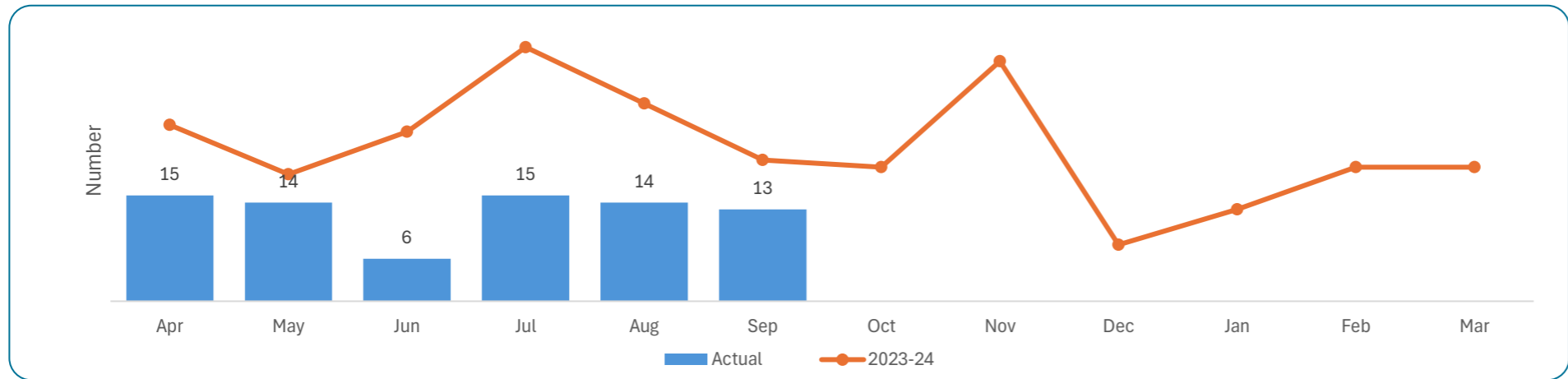


## Safety

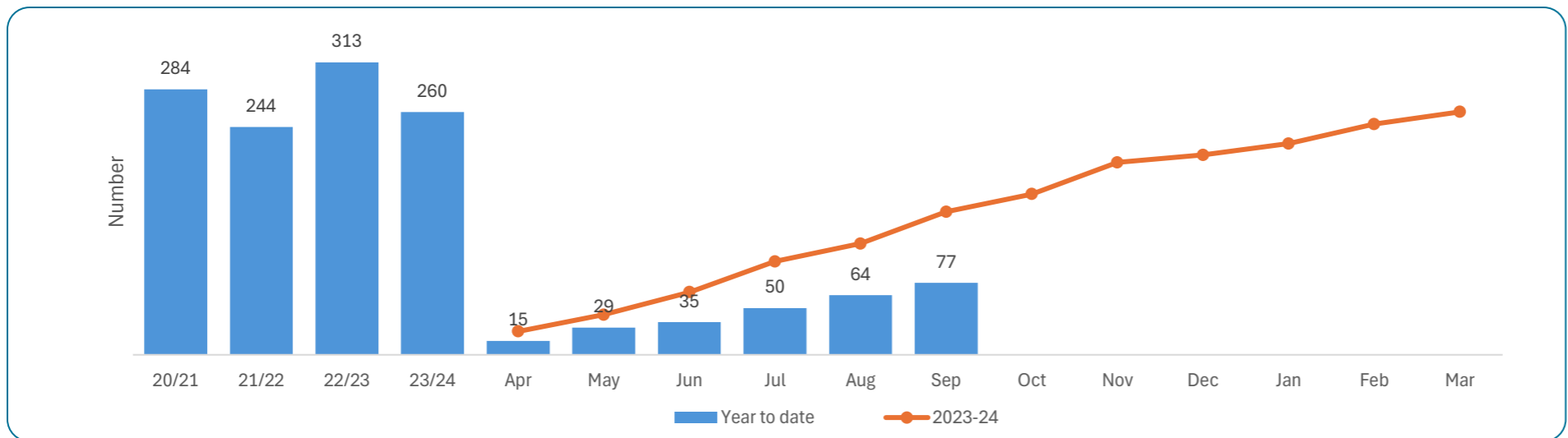
**Definition** Number of strategy meetings undertaken i.e. concerns progressed to strategy per month

**PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS** Of the 500 enquiries started since April 2024-25, 77 have progressed to a strategy meeting which represents a 15.4% conversion rate, this is a fall from the same period last year where the conversion rate was 20.9%.

ASC 211: Monthly number of strategy meetings



ASC 211a: Year to date number of strategy meetings undertaken

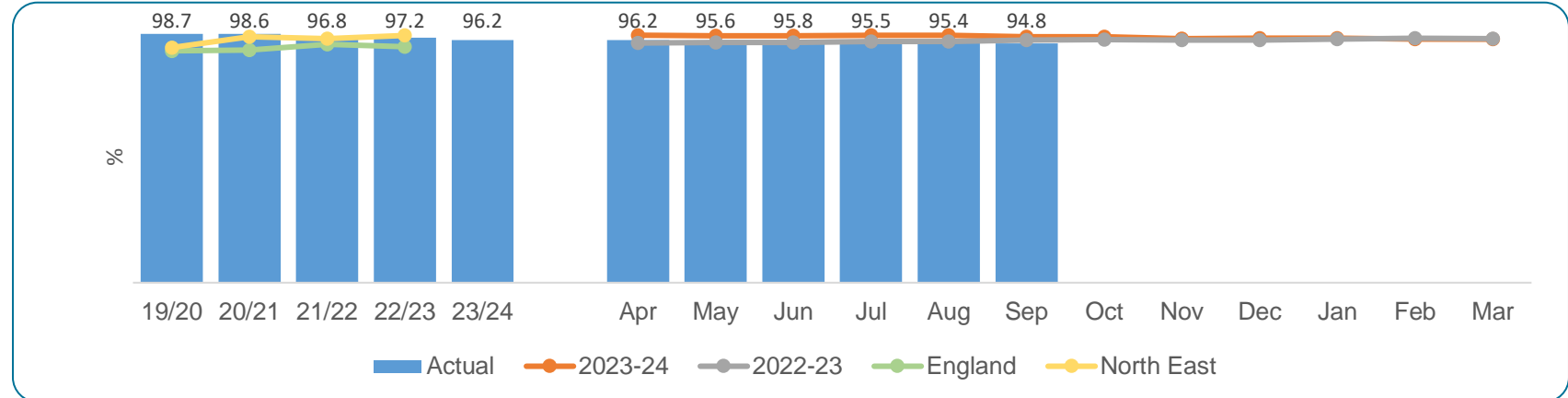


## Empowerment

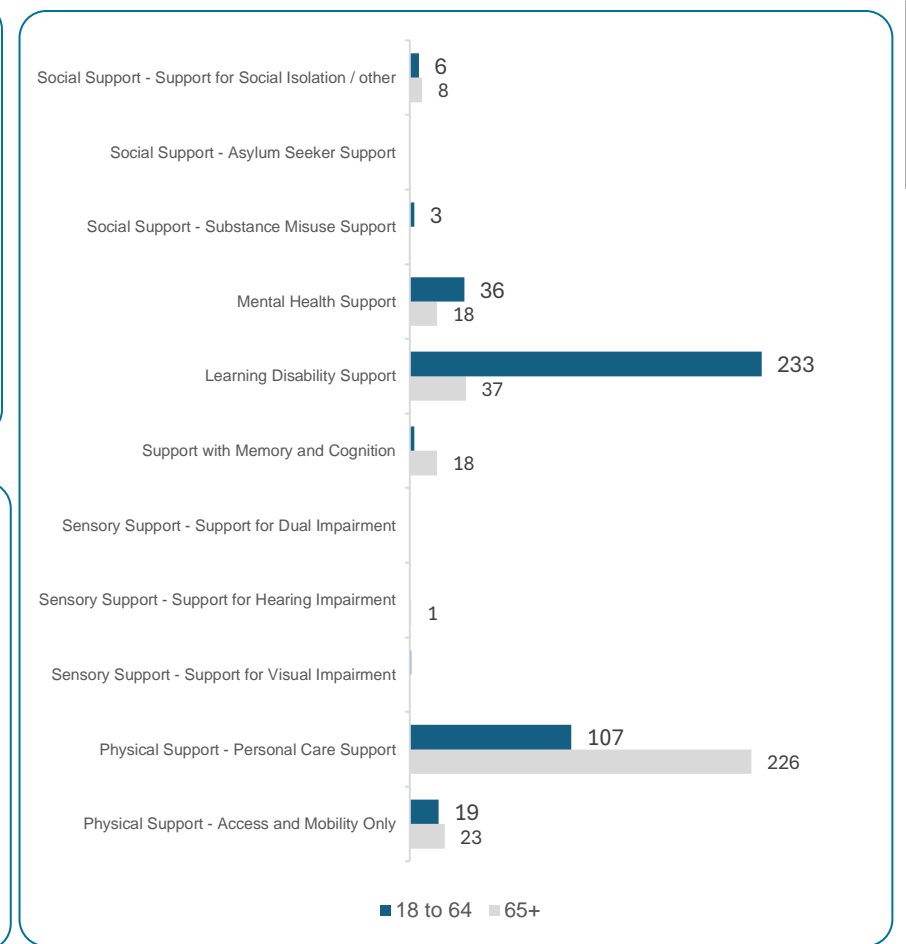
**Definition** Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support.  
 Numerator - the number of users receiving either a) Direct Payments, b) Part Direct Payments or c) CASSR managed Personal Budget at the year end. Denominator - Clients (aged 18 or over) accessing long term community support at the year end.

**PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS** The proportion of people using social care who receive self directed support is currently 94.8%, this equates to 762 individuals.

ASC 049: Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support

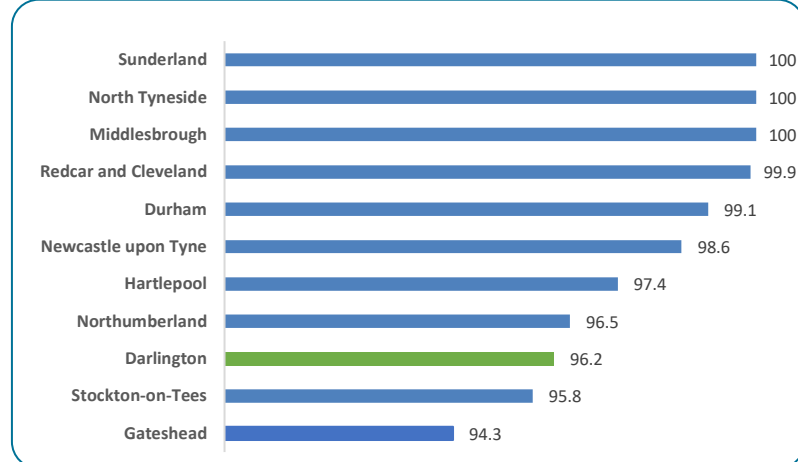


Primary Support Reason

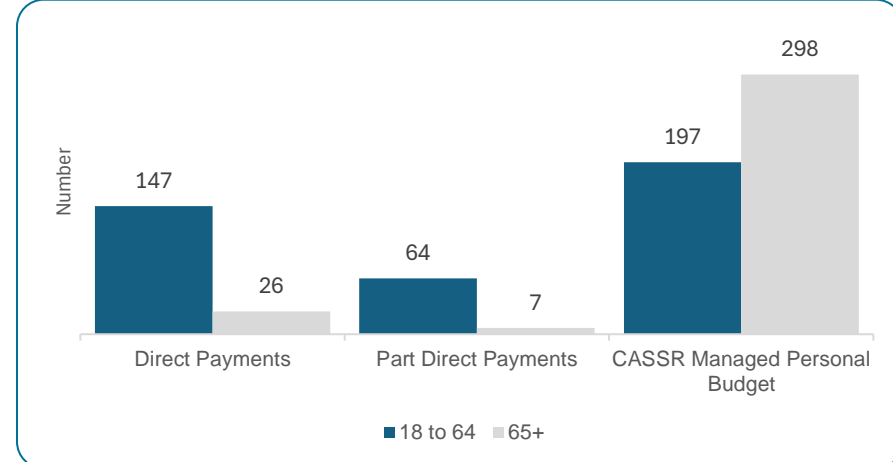


Darlington was ranked regionally for this indicator in 2023-24 - PROVISIONAL DATA

2023-24 regional results - PROVISIONAL DATA



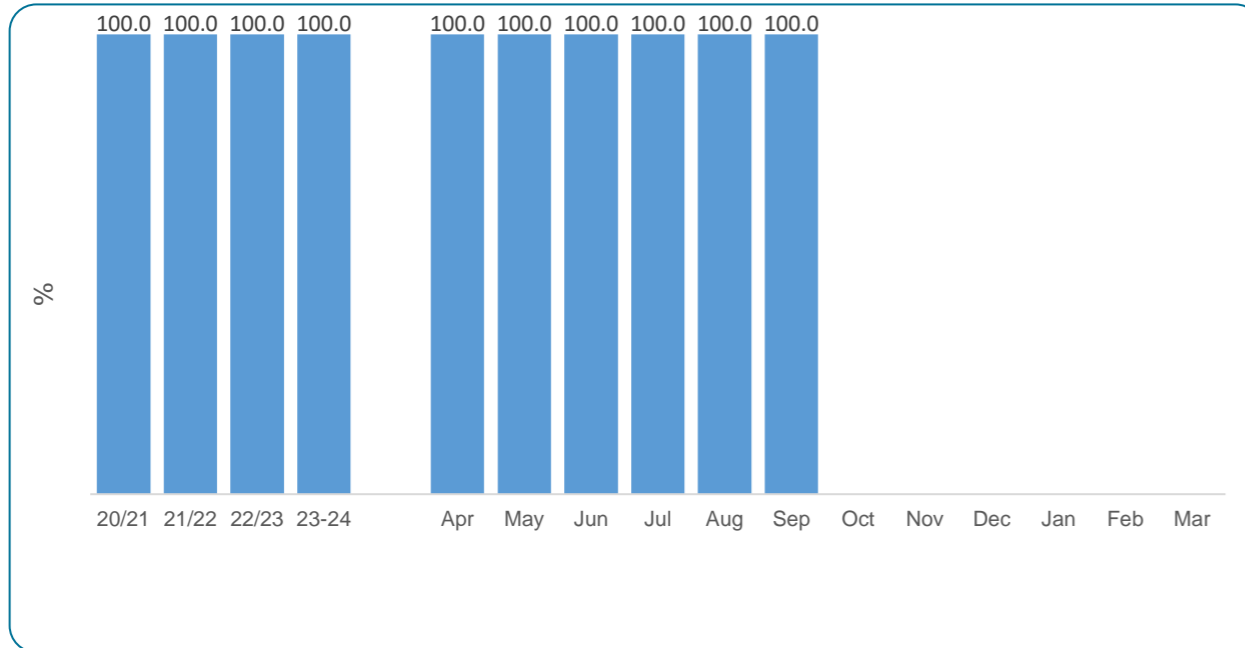
Breakdown of self-direct support



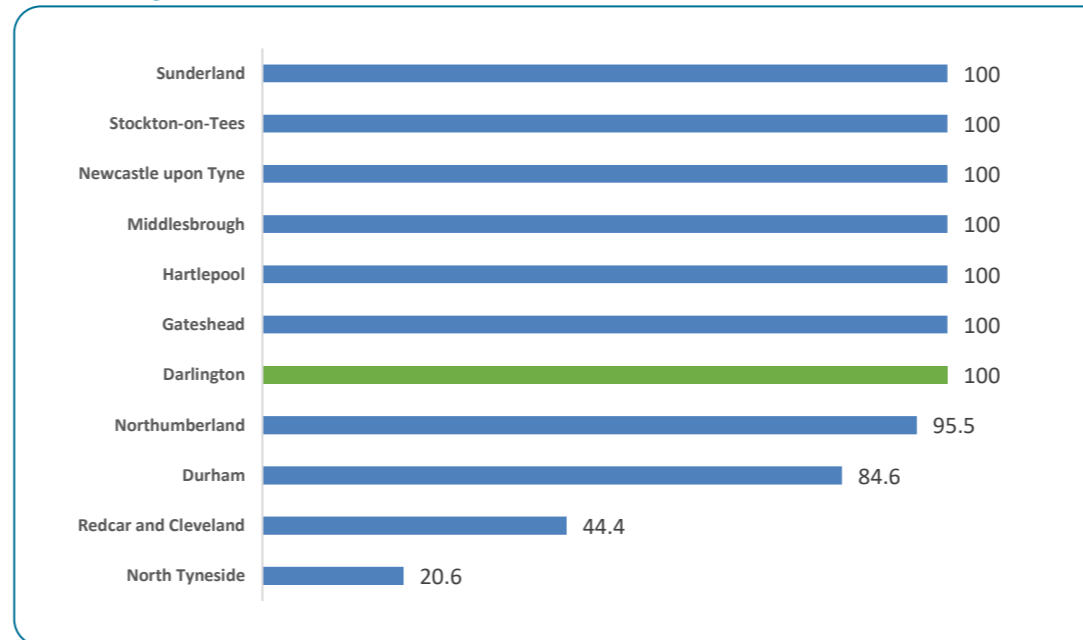
## Empowerment

**Definition** Proportion of carers using social care who receive self direct support  
Numerator: The number of users receiving either a) Direct Payments, b) Part Direct Payments or c) CASSR managed Personal Budget at the year end  
Denominator: Carers (caring for someone aged 18 or over) receiving carer-specific services at the year end

ASC 050: Proportion of carers using social care who receive self-directed support



2023-24 regional results - PROVISIONAL DATA



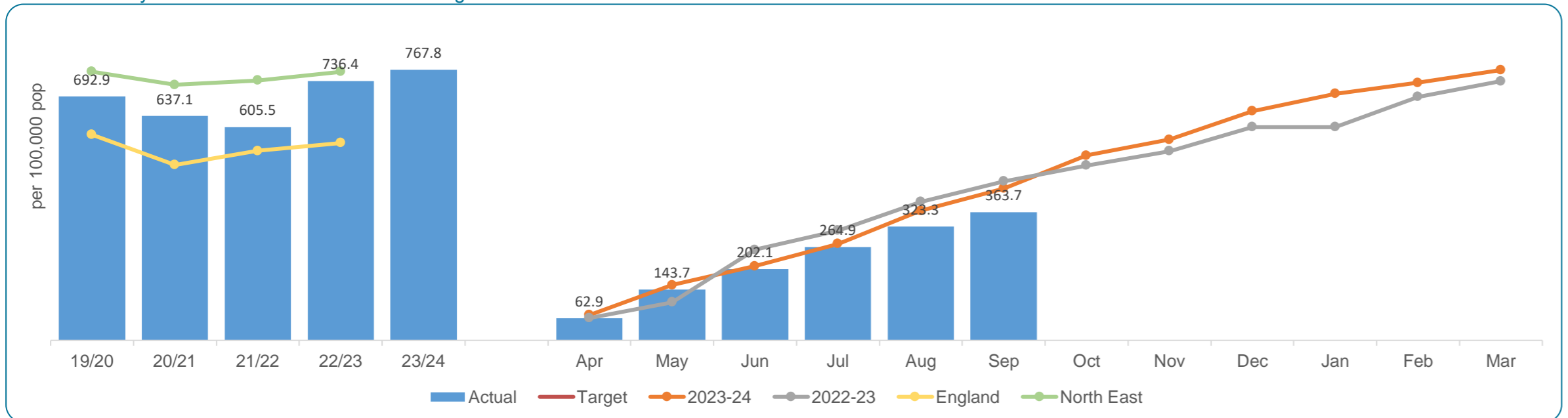
Darlington was ranked regionally for this indicator in 2023-24 - PROVISIONAL DATA

## Independence

**Definition**  
 Avoiding permanent placements in residential and nursing care homes is a good indicator of maximising independence and delaying dependency. However, it is acknowledged that for some people drawing on care admission to residential or nursing care homes can represent an improvement in their situation. This indicator also captures efficiency. Residential and nursing care are often the most expensive forms of interventions. Relying on interventions that maximise independence - where appropriate - would represent a cost saving.  
 Data source: Client level data, Office of National Statistics

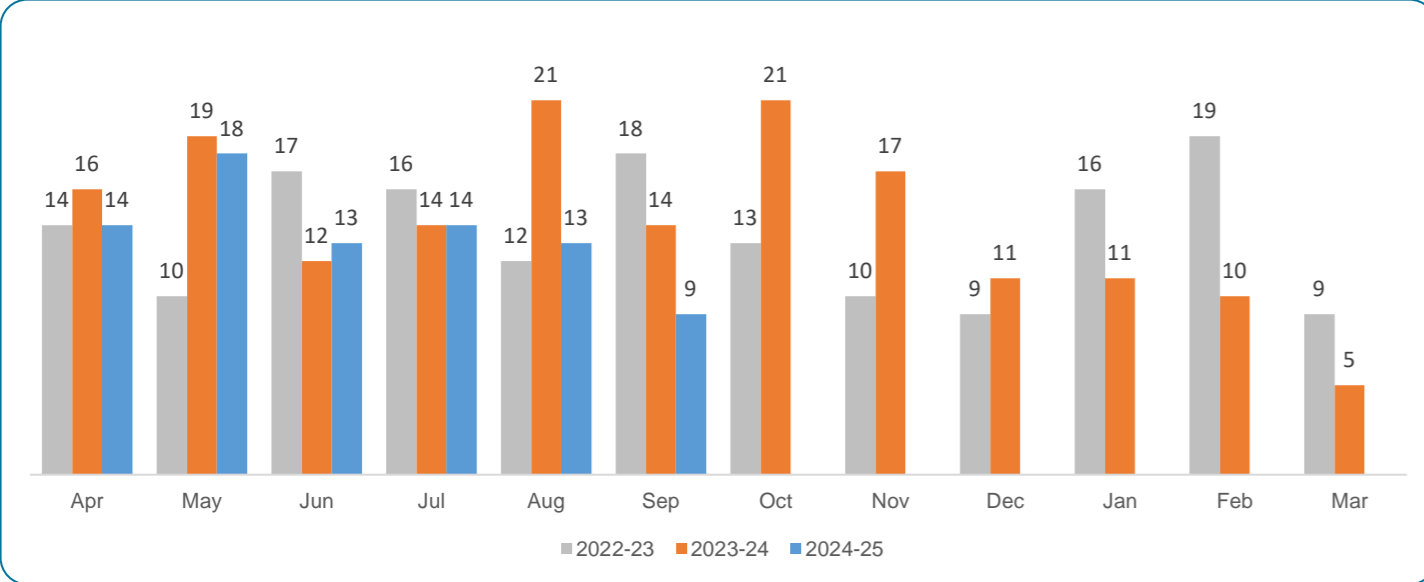
**PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**  
 As at the end of Quarter 2 2024-25 the total number of individuals who moved into permanent residential or nursing care is 81.  
 This is an decrease from 96 in 2023-24 and 87 in 2022-23. The average length of stay for those individuals currently in permanent care aged 65+ is 29 months.  
 The average age of individuals moving to permanent residential, or nursing care is 84, which is the same as the previous 2 years.  
 Since April, 70 (86%) individuals moved into permanent residential or nursing care straight from an SBS. The current average length of stay in a SBS before moving to permanent care is 15 weeks, this is an improvement on the average figure of 19 weeks for 2023-24 and 20 weeks for 2022-23.

ASC 002 (ASCOF 2C): The number of adults aged 65 and over whose long-term support needs are met by admission to residential and nursing care homes

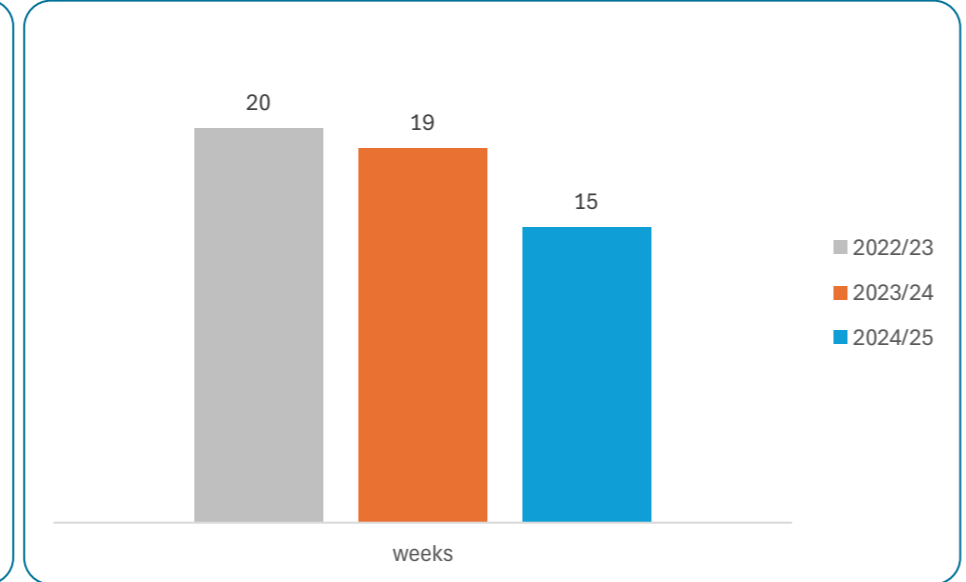


Darlington was ranked regionally for this indicator in 2023-24 PROVISIONAL DATA

ASC 002a: Number of monthly permanent admissions



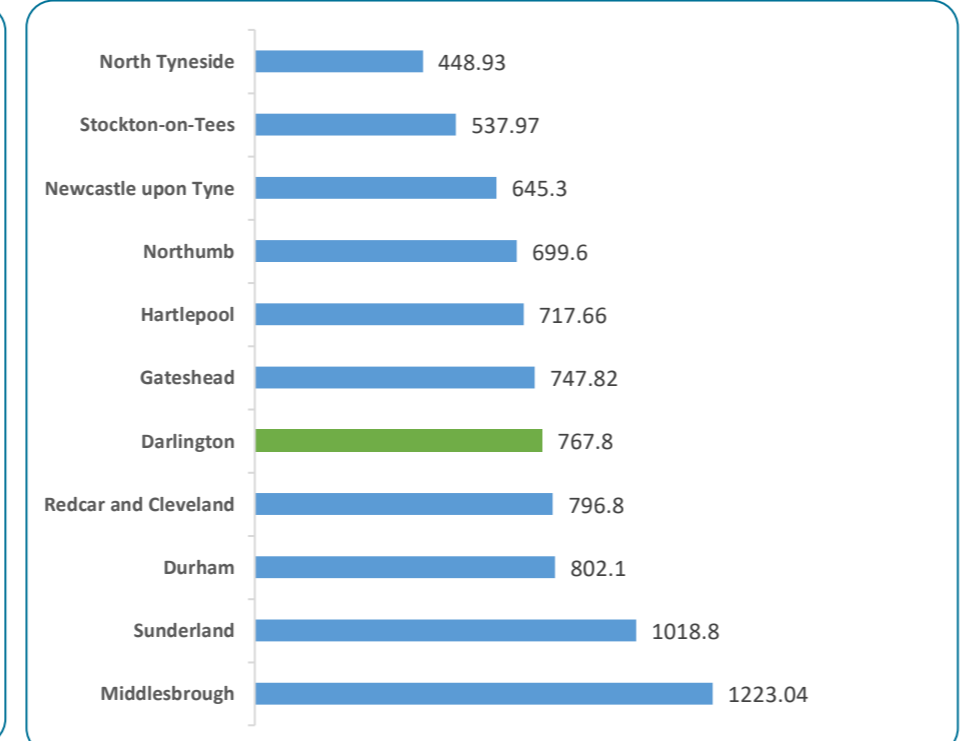
Average number of weeks in SBS prior to permanent care - YTD



Regional Performance (smaller is better) - 2023-24 Regional results - PROVISIONAL DATA

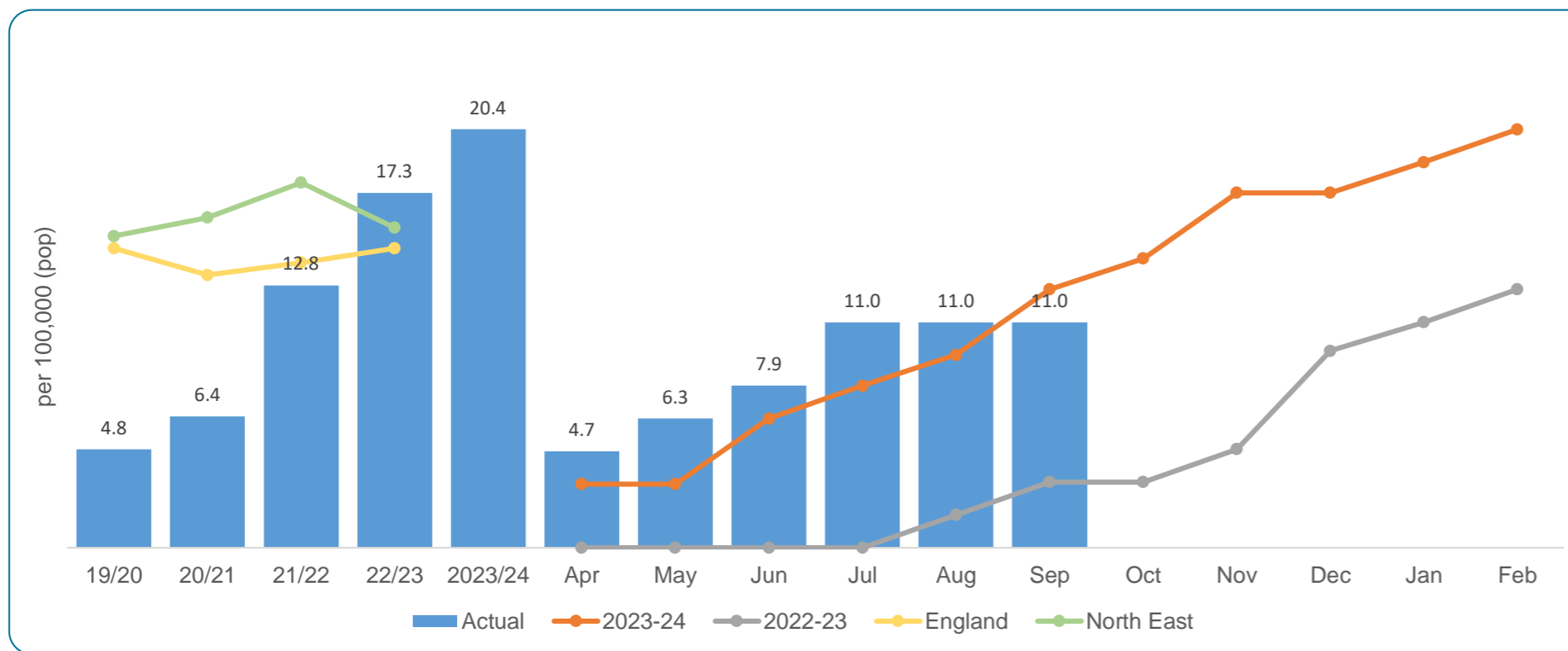


2023-24 Regional results (smaller is better) - PROVISIONAL DATA



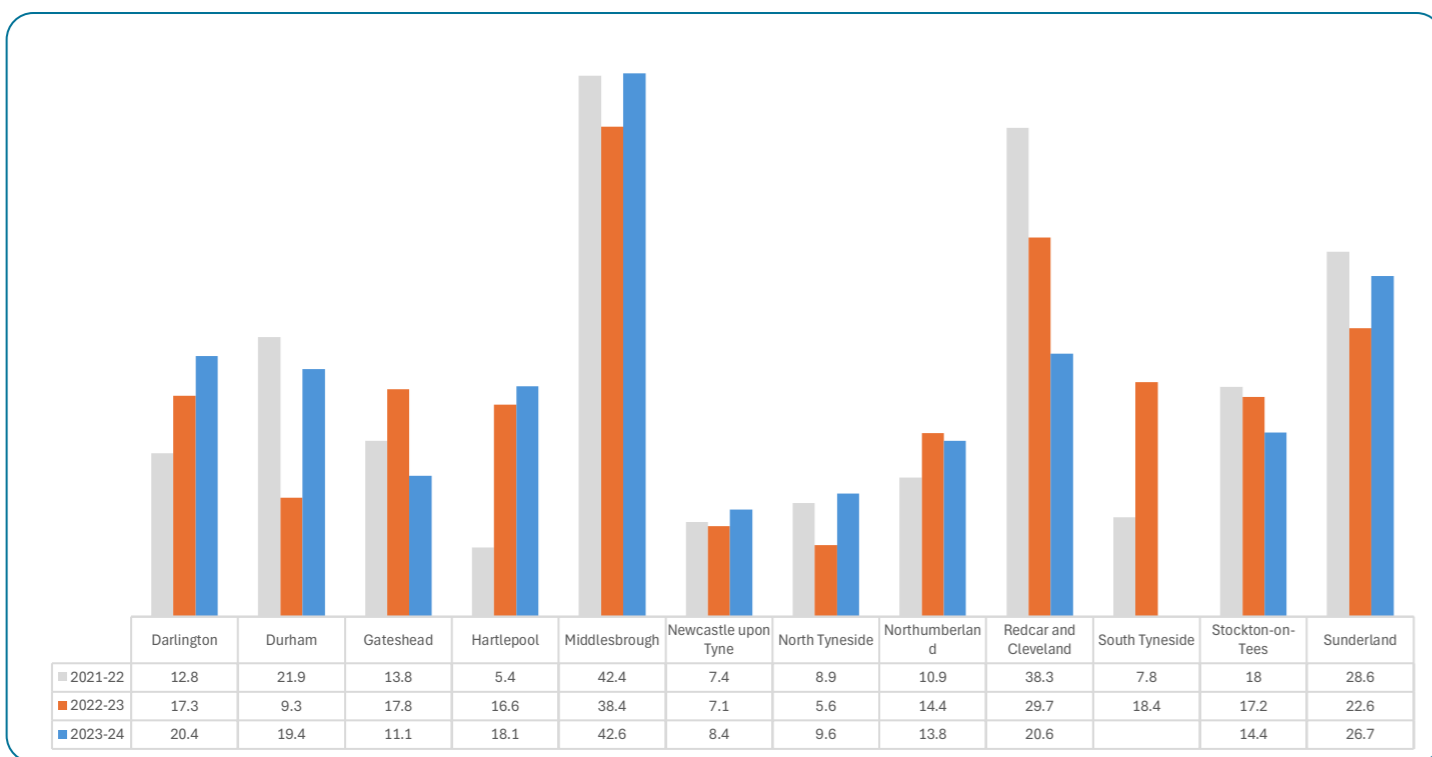
Independence	
<b>Definition</b>	<p>Avoiding permanent placements in residential and nursing care homes is a good indicator of maximising independence and delaying dependency. However, it is acknowledged that for some people drawing on care admission to residential or nursing care homes can represent an improvement in their situation.</p> <p>This indicator also captures efficiency. Residential and nursing care are often the most expensive forms of interventions. Relying on interventions that maximise independence - where appropriate - would represent a cost saving.</p> <p>Data source: Client level data, Office of National Statistics</p>
<b>PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS</b>	<p>There have been 7 18–64-year-olds who have entered permanent care since April 2024, this has resulted in the current performance figure of 11.</p> <p>Since 2019-20 the proportion of 18-64-year-olds entering permanent care has increased year on year.</p> <p>The average length of stay for those individuals currently in permanent care aged between 18-64 years old is 49 months.</p> <p>Currently the average age of 18–64-year-olds in permanent residential or nursing care is 45. This is compared to the average age being 53 during the same period last year.</p>

ASC 003 (ASCOF 2B):Adults aged 18-64 admitted on a permanent basis in the year to residential or nursing care

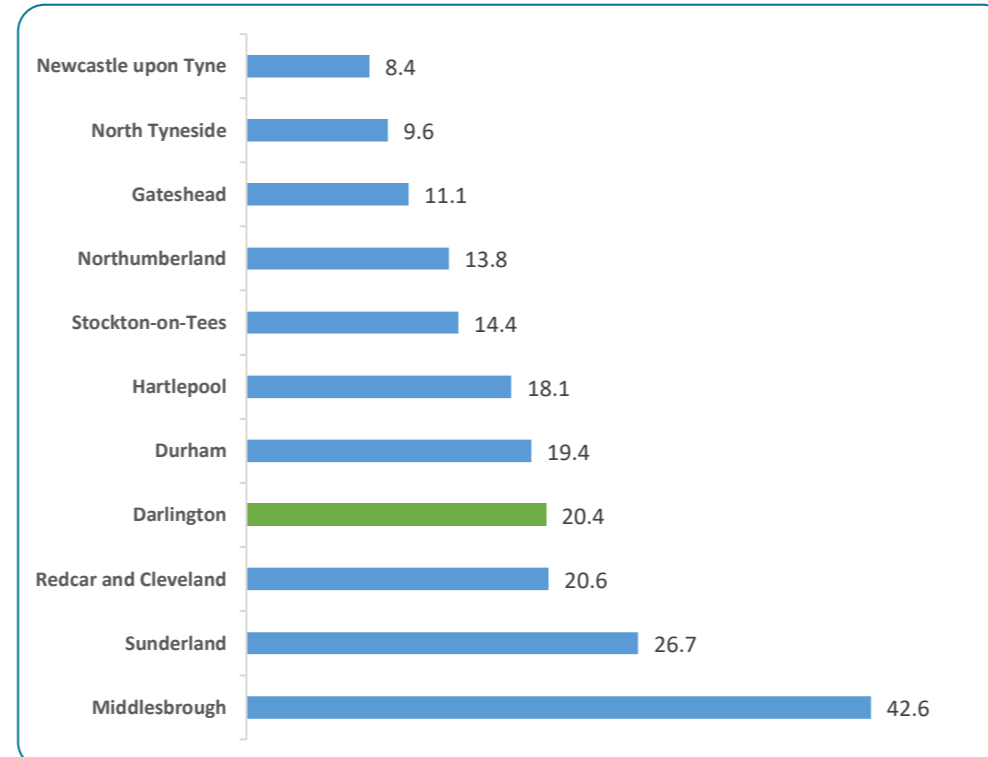


Darlington was ranked regionally for this indicator in 2023-24 - PROVISIONAL DATA

Regional Performance (smaller is better) - 2023-24 Regional results - PROVISIONAL DATA



2023-24 Regional results (smaller is better) - PROVISIONAL DATA





## **ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25 FEBRUARY 2025**

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### **CARE HOMES IN EXECUTIVE STRATEGY MEASURES / ARRANGEMENTS**

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#### **SUMMARY REPORT**

##### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Adults Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the requirements on the Local Authority to support our statutory duties regarding organisational safeguarding under The Care Act 2014.

##### **Summary**

##### **What is Executive Strategy?**

2. It is a formal process specifically designed to bring together partner agencies to support services that are struggling to meet their contractual obligation to promote the safety and well-being of those they support. For the process to conclude, appropriate and sufficient assurances need to be evidenced, which highlights sustained mitigation of risk and improvement.
3. An Executive Strategy aims to look at the overall practice of those involved. It is a strategic approach and results in clear measurable action plans for a provider. Individual Adult Protection Strategies will still be used to address the needs of each Adult at Risk involved. The usual process for individual strategies will be maintained, and relevant information will be fed back to the Executive Strategy members.

##### **Procedure considerations for Executive Strategy**

4. Darlington Safeguarding Partnership's recently reviewed and updated Executive Strategy Procedure sets out the framework for dealing with serious safeguarding concerns on a multi-agency basis whilst maintaining the focus on the adult(s) experiencing or, at risk of abuse or neglect. The purpose is to bring professionals from relevant agencies together to:
  - a) Share information and discuss concerns about a service provider, organisation or complex individual case of alleged abuse.
  - b) Consider the level of risk and agree a proportionate response.
  - c) Plan the investigative framework.
  - d) Confirm the outcomes of any investigations.
  - e) Formulate a multi-agency action plan.

- f) Conclude the process when the necessary changes/improvements have been made.

**Indicators that trigger consideration for invoking this procedure include:**

5. Serious concerns are raised following individual or multiple safeguarding enquiries/investigations.
6. Contract compliance visits identify systemic issues within a care setting and there are significant concerns about the quality of care provided and the ability of the provider to improve the service.
7. Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections result in placing services into special measures, issuing warning notices or inadequate ratings for safety.
8. Multi-agency concerns about systemic problems within a service or organisation.
9. A series of safeguarding concerns are made about the same provider indicating that the provider is not operating a safe service.
10. A safeguarding enquiry raises serious concerns about a service or organisation.
11. A number of safeguarding allegations are made against more than one member of staff.
12. A cluster of concerns are received about similar issues, e.g. pressure ulcers; individuals not properly nourished or hydrated.
13. It is alleged that a number of perpetrators are suspected of abusing or neglecting adults, experiencing, or at risk of abuse and neglect.
14. A whistle-blower makes serious allegations about the management or regime of a service.
15. An individual case of alleged abuse is serious or complex, e.g. the alleged perpetrator holds a position of authority within a care setting/organisation.
16. An individual case of alleged abuse meets the criteria for a Safeguarding Adults Review.

**Current care homes within Executive Strategy Procedures (ESP):**

17. Since the last presentation in August 2024, Darlington Borough Council (DBC) Adult Social Care (ASC) currently have x2 providers within ESP.
18. **Nursing Home A** (41 bed Nursing home). Current occupancy: 28. Nursing Home A was owned by Churchlake Care and under administration for around 18 months until recently bought over by Luxe Manor Care Group. The new owners are supporting the organisations exit from administration and establishing services within the North-East.
19. Nursing Home A entered ESP 17 December 2024 following concerns in relation to:

- a) Increased individual Safeguarding concern referrals.
  - b) Concerns relating to medication omissions following audits.
  - c) Whistleblowing concerns received.
  - d) CQC inspection identifying clinical oversight concerns.
  - e) Environmental health concerns relating to infection control and establishment hygiene.
20. Actions put into place to support immediate improvement:
- a) Recruitment to support clinical oversight.
  - b) Local Authority reviewing all DBC placed individuals and offering assessment to self-funders.
  - c) Other placing LAs and ICBs informed to undertake assessments.
  - d) Suspended placements - no new admissions.
  - e) Clinical governance and competencies to be reviewed.
  - f) Staff training programme to be outlined and implemented.
  - g) Review internal medication and audit processes.
21. Due to being a nursing home, many reviews are planning jointly with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) due to Funded Nursing care and joint funding agreements.
22. **Residential Care Home A** (Residential care Home 27 beds). Current occupancy: 13. Residential Care Home A is owned by Saluten Care. Entered ESP November 2023 at that time occupancy was 23. Most residents were placed from out of area and needs derived from Mental Health and many individuals subject to s117 aftercare. Concerns were in relation to:
- a) Increased individual Safeguarding concern referrals.
  - b) Concerns relating to medication omissions following audits.
  - c) CQC inspection identifying clinical oversight concerns.
  - d) Environmental health concerns relating to infection control and establishment hygiene.
  - e) Concerns relating to self-neglect and acts of omission.
  - f) Concerns held around the lack of care planning, risk assessments and physical safety.

23. At the time there had been a high level of staff turnover and limited management oversight.
24. Although the service remains in ESP, the provider has undertaken improvements across the last 14 months and is currently progressing with the action plan with the local authority and partner agencies to make the necessary improvements.
25. Suspensions were lifted but under conditions that admissions were not supported out of hours.
26. Commissioning have reviewed the charging framework as part of the wider review to enable the provider to employ appropriately skilled and experienced staff and have sufficient staff on duty to meet need.

### **Next steps**

27. In relation to Nursing Home A, we continue to work closely with CQC and our contracting and commissioning partners both DBC and ICB as well as the provider to support ongoing improvements.
28. In relation to Residential Care Home A a further ESP meeting to be arranged to inform whether these improvements are now sustainable with clear embedded governance processes before closing to ESP.

### **Recommendation**

29. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The committee note the detail within this report.
  - (b) Scrutiny is updated on a six-monthly basis on care homes/services in executive strategy measures.

### **Climate Considerations**

30. There should be no impact or increase in carbon emissions in relation to the actions of this report.
31. The proposal will have no impacts on biodiversity.

**Joss Harbron**  
**Assistant Director of Adult Social Care**

### **Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Barbara Beadle: Extension: 5125

Council Plan	This report and activities are consistent with the aims of the council plan.
Addressing inequalities	This report and actions aim to address inequalities.
Tackling Climate Change	No impact within this report but will continue to be considered.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The report and activities will consider the effective and efficient use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	The objectives an executive strategy process is to support and safeguarding the wellbeing and safety of adults within Darlington and is therefore aligned to the Health and Wellbeing Priorities.
S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	People with care and support needs residing in Eastbourne Care Home and Ashleigh House, Family Carers.
Budget and Policy Framework	No impact on budget currently.
Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

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**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
25 FEBRUARY 2025**

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**DARLINGTON SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT – 2023/2024**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to enable Adults Scrutiny Committee to receive and comment upon the Annual Report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) for the period 2023/24, **see Appendix A.**

**Summary**

2. Local Safeguarding Partnerships are required to produce an Annual Report to account for the Partnerships achievements over the previous year and make an assessment of the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within the local area. The report summarises and reflects on the work of the Partnership over the 2023/43 period.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the Adults Scrutiny note and comment on the DSP Annual Report for 2023/24 which has been published on the DSP website.

**Reasons**

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
  - (a) Adults Scrutiny have an understanding of the Partnership's work to date.
  - (b) To challenge and scrutinise the work of the DSP and raise any challenges as appropriate with the Independent Chair.
  - (c) To have assurance that the Safeguarding Partnership is effectively coordinating multi-agency safeguarding practice in Darlington and promoting the welfare of children and adults with needs for care and support.

**Joss Harbron  
Assistant Director - Adult Social Care**

**Background Papers**

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report – 2023/2024

Amanda Hugill: Extension 6450

Council Plan	The work of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership complements the priorities in One Darlington Perfectly placed.
Addressing inequalities	DSP works to ensure that all groups are considered within their safeguarding agenda
Tackling Climate Change	There are no implications arising from this report.
Efficient and effective use of resources	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	The health and wellbeing of all adults in Darlington are a priority within this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Adults with care and support needs at risk of crime and disorder are a priority within this report.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All
Budget and Policy Framework	N/A
Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. The Annual Report summarises and reflects on the work of the Partnership over the period 2023/24, drawing upon a range of data and information, to outline the progress made and to illustrate the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding partnership arrangements across Darlington.
6. The Partnership continues to ensure there are effective arrangements in place to help keep adults with care and support needs safe and protected from abuse and neglect. There has been a great deal of activity over the year to ensure the partnership meets its statutory responsibilities and this is outlined within the report.
7. Self-neglect continues to be a challenge with numbers of reported concerns highlighting a steady increase year on year. A key priority for the Partnership is to ensure all partner agencies improve awareness and understanding of adult self-neglect to ensure early identification can be achieved.
8. The report outlines the strengths and impact of multi-agency working to help keep everyone safe in Darlington with a continued focus on ensuring local multi-agency safeguarding practice remains effective for all our children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

### Outcome of Consultation

9. Not applicable.





**Darlington  
Safeguarding  
Partnership**

Protecting Children and Adults

# Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report

2023-24



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# 1. Introduction

## Foreword by Statutory Safeguarding Partners and Independent Scrutineer

Darlington Borough Council, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, Durham Constabulary and many other organisations together form the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP). We are a joint children's and adults' partnership, focussing on specific issues as well as a whole family perspective.

We welcome you to our annual report covering work for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. The report provides a transparent overview of the year's multi-agency safeguarding activity and reflects on the hard work and dedication of all our partner agencies as they've worked together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults with care and support needs across Darlington.

A key part of our statutory responsibility is to undertake reviews of cases where a child or adult has died or been seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect and there is reasonable cause for concern as to how safeguarding partners worked together to safeguard that child or adult. In 2023-24 we published our very first Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review in respect of Family H. A summary of learning from this case is outlined in section 8 of the report along with important learning points identified through a number of adult learning lessons reviews.

Self-Neglect continues to be a challenge with numbers of reported concerns highlighting a steady increase year on year. Self-neglect is a key priority, and a multi-agency task and finish group has been established to lead on the development of guidance, resources and tools to support practitioners working with the challenges of individuals who self-neglect and are resistant to engage.

We will continue to remain focused on ensuring local multi-agency safeguarding practice remains effective for our children, young people and adults with care and support needs during any changes that may arise from new legislation.

The year ended with the publication of new Working Together statutory safeguarding guidance, and we recognise there is much change ahead. We will implement the requirements relating to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and consider how the impact of these changes will affect Darlington as we want to retain the benefits of having a joint partnership.

The report also includes a review of our priorities for 2023-2026 as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

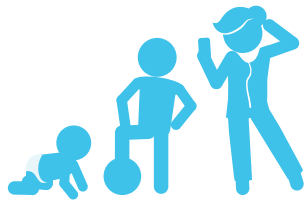
We hope you enjoy reading our annual report and that it gives you assurance about the strength and impact of multi-agency working to keep everyone safe in Darlington. We will continue to challenge ourselves to deliver better services, support those who are vulnerable in our communities and further develop the strengths of the multi-agency partnership arrangements.

We remain grateful to all our partners and their dedicated front-line staff for their support and steadfast commitment to safeguarding all of our children and adults.

<b>Ann Baxter</b> Independent Scrutineer/ Chair	<b>James Stroyan</b> Group Director for People, Darlington Borough Council	<b>David Ashton</b> Detective Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary	<b>Chris Piercy</b> Director of Nursing and Quality, North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
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# 2. Local Picture

Darlington Borough Council is a Unitary Authority in the Northeast of England which covers 200 square kilometres. Darlington is part of the Tees Valley Combined Authority.



Children and young people under the age of 25 years make up **28%** of the population, the number of children and young people under the age of 18 living in Darlington is **22,627** which equates to **21%** of the current population.



The number of people aged over 65 years old in Darlington is estimated at **21,700**

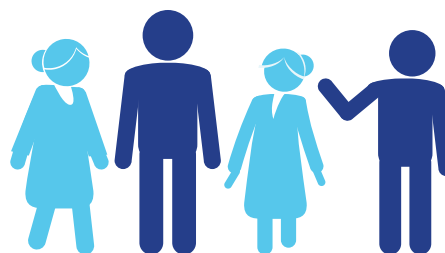
The Health of People in Darlington is varied compared with the England average and **20%** of children live in low income families.



As of 2021 Darlington has a population in excess of **107,000** individuals who live in around **48,475** households.



Of this population **64,800** are of working age (16-64 years old).



In terms of ethnicity, the 2021 Census reported 94.4% of Darlington's population as White and **5.6%** from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.



In County Durham and Darlington the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) community form the largest single ethnic minority group, the proportion of Darlington residents who identify themselves as GRT (2021 census) is **0.3%** which is three times higher than the national average.

Overall, comparing local indicators with England averages, life expectancy for both men and women is lower. The health of people in Darlington is varied, about 20% of children live in low-income families.



# 3. Partnership Governance and Structure

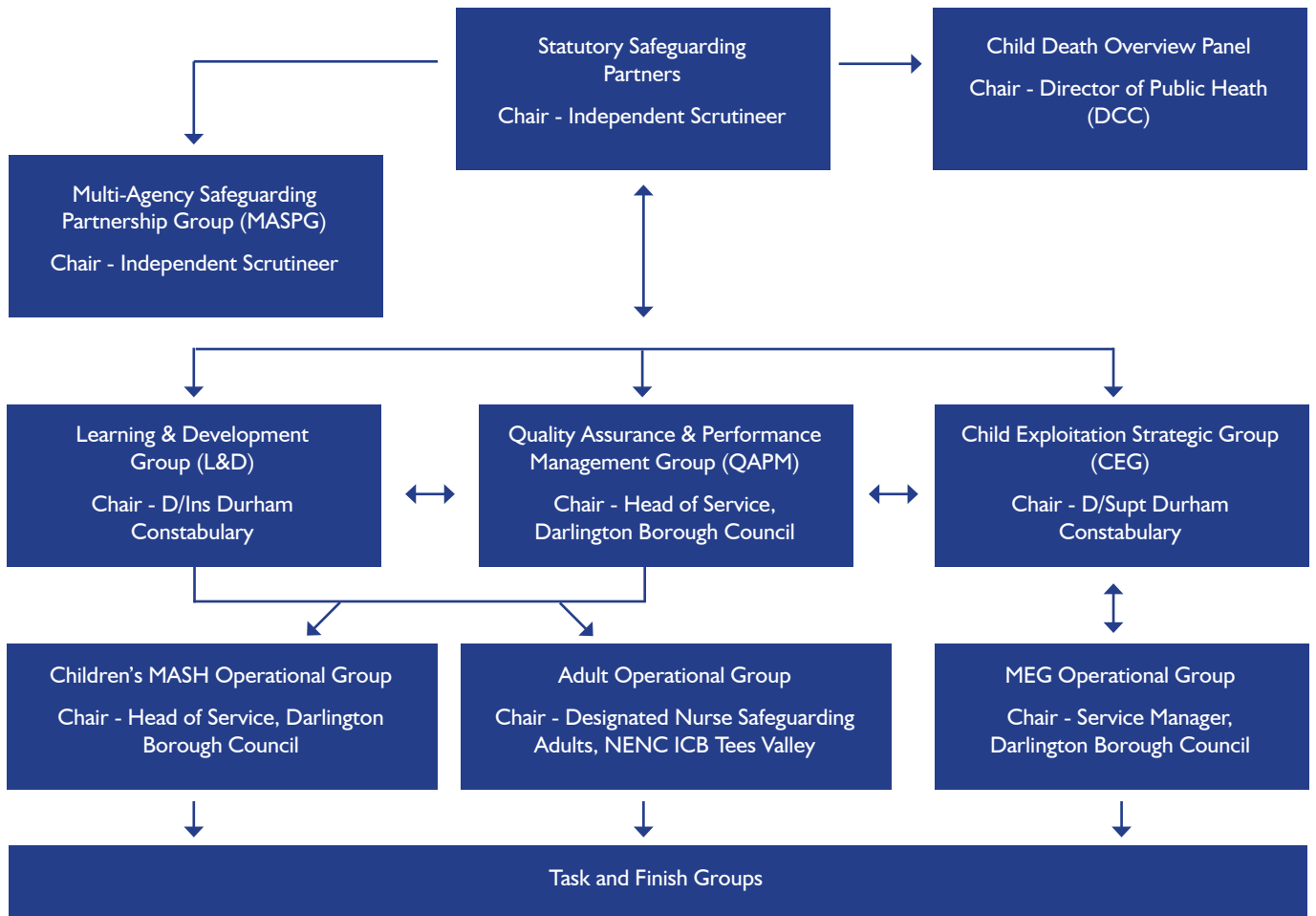


The DSP revised its governance arrangements in 2022/23 and set out the role and responsibilities of the sub-groups. The sub-groups engage in the safeguarding priorities and explore the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of organisations are represented on the Partnership groups and include senior leads, details are outlined in Appendix 2.

<p><b>Statutory Safeguarding Partners Group</b> <b>Chaired by Independent Scrutineer/Chair</b></p>	<p>The Statutory Safeguarding Partners and Independent Scrutineer have a strong collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements to ensure fulfilment of statutory obligations.</p> <p>The Partners commission the strategic and operational groups to ensure the priority areas of the Strategic Plan are delivered and ensure effective scrutiny arrangements are in place.</p>
<p><b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group</b> <b>Chaired by Independent Scrutineer/Chair</b></p>	<p>This multi-agency group has a wide membership of key strategic leads from agencies, organisations and people who use services. Meetings are themed and focus on local and national safeguarding priorities areas are identified by data, audits and reviews.</p>
<p><b>Quality Assurance and Performance Group (QAPM)</b> <b>Chaired by Head of Service, Darlington Borough Council</b></p>	<p>This is a strategic group and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding work across partner agencies and commissioned organisations.</p> <p>The group has responsibility for audits and monitoring safeguarding data to be assured that both child and adult safeguarding systems are robust, effective and identifies areas for improvement to share with the Learning &amp; Development Group.</p>
<p><b>Learning and Development Group (L&amp;D)</b> <b>Chaired by Detective Inspector, Durham Constabulary</b></p>	<p>This is a strategic group and is responsible for oversight of learning and improvement, multi-agency training and learning opportunities and policy and procedure.</p> <p>It has governance responsibility for all reviews undertaken, reviewing the learning outcomes and suggested recommendations for improvement. It establishes process for dissemination of learning and identifies any training need requirements. Any improvements identified through reviews are taken forward and shared with the Quality Assurance &amp; Performance Management Group.</p>

<p><b>Child Exploitation Group (CEG)</b></p> <p><b>Chaired by Detective Superintendent, Durham Constabulary</b></p>	<p>This is a strategic group and is responsible for overseeing, monitoring, evaluating and improving responses to tackle children missing from home, care and education and for the reduction of child exploitation across County Durham and Darlington.</p> <p>The group ensures the action plan is delivered and monitors data and intelligence to better understand the picture of exploitation across County Durham and Darlington and directs the multi-agency response towards prevention, early identification and intervention.</p> <p>An operational group oversees individual cases of children at risk of exploitation in Darlington with a purpose to prevent, disrupt and deter individuals or groups who seek to exploit, abuse and harm children.</p>
<p><b>Adult Operational Group</b></p> <p><b>Chaired by Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Adults, North East &amp; North Cumbria, Integrated Care Board (Tees Valley)</b></p>	<p>This is an operational group with shared responsibility for safeguarding service delivery to safeguard adults with needs for care and support.</p> <p>The group will identify key themes or practice challenges through monitoring performance data and operational practice issues and develop appropriate actions to respond to them.</p> <p>Identified trends and areas of concern are shared with the Quality Assurance &amp; Performance Management and Learning &amp; Development Groups by exception.</p> <p>The Group has responsibility for issues relating to provider concerns and settings who are in the Executive Strategy Process and monitor responsiveness to any identified issues and actions.</p>
<p><b>Children's (MASH) Operational Group</b></p> <p><b>Chaired by Head of Service, Darlington Borough Council</b></p>	<p>This is an operational group with shared responsibility for safeguarding service delivery to safeguard children and young people.</p> <p>The group will identify key themes or practice challenges through monitoring performance data and operational practice issues and take them forward within multi-agency focussed sessions and develop appropriate actions to respond to them.</p> <p>Identified trends and areas of concern are shared with the Quality Assurance &amp; Performance Management and Learning &amp; Development Groups by exception.</p>
<p><b>Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)</b></p> <p><b>Chaired by Director of Public Health, Durham County Council</b></p>	<p>Child Death Overview Panel arrangements are undertaken cross border with Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership. The Panel continues to review all deaths of children as required in Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance (2018) with an aim to identify learning to prevent future deaths.</p> <p>The National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) gathers information on all children who die in England and shares the learning so that improvements can be made to save children's lives in the future.</p>

## Partnership Governance Structure



# 4. How we have worked this year

Whilst this report covers the period from April 2023 to March 2024, it includes some references to work already started in the previous year which continued into this reporting period, along with the new work which has commenced, and which will continue beyond April 2024.

The DSP's vision is for *'Darlington to be a place where children and adults can live their lives safely'* and its aim is to understand what is working well in its collective safeguarding practice and identify what needs further development to ensure arrangements are effective and coordinated.

The [Strategic Plan](#) was published in June 2023 and sets out DSP's shared vision and actions that will help keep children, young people, and adults with needs for care and support safe and protected from abuse and neglect and sets out the priority areas of focus for 2023-26.

The Statutory Safeguarding Partners have a collective oversight of safeguarding arrangements and to be assured of these arrangements, the chairs of sub-groups provide an executive overview of the key issues, themes, practice issues and the narrative required. Partners are equally responsible for Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs) and met to consider a number of referrals submitted throughout the year to determine if they met the criteria for serious incident notification (child) or criteria for a SAR. Details of these are outlined in section 8 of the report.

The Statutory Partners have considered the new provisions outlined in revised Working Together Statutory Guidance (2023) and acknowledged that some changes will be required to meet this guidance to ensure DSP achieves the requirements which will help strengthen the way the Partnership operates. They were all in agreement that it is not feasible to introduce those changes within the timescale of this report. A review of current multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is being undertaken alongside the implementation of new requirements, including ensuring there is adequate representation and input by education. Due to the current business support function being very small, Partners agreed to appoint a Project Manager (on fixed term basis) to lead on the implementation of the new arrangements.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group, met twice in this period. The forum enables critical challenge and the holding of each agency to account. Standing agendas include Chairs of sub-groups providing an overview of current activity, themes and work programmes. Meetings focus on specific themes identified through Partnership work and have included: learning identified through child and adult reviews; Local Authority Adult Inspection preparation; an overview of learning and reflection following the investigations into incidents at West Lane Mental Health Hospital and Public Health plans to strengthen collaborative ways of working on domestic abuse agenda.

The sub-groups continue to drive forward the work and through understanding those themes and trends we are better able to understand the priority areas of focus and details of the work outlined below.





# Snapshot of activity from Sub-Groups

## Children's MASH Operational Group

This group continued to have oversight of the Front Door practice in Children's Social Care and considers performance data and emerging patterns. In 2023/24 there was a significant increase in demand for services at the Front Door and in Children's Services generally.

Domestic Abuse continued to be the highest presenting issue in safeguarding referrals and the 4Kids service, a joint initiative to reduce the incidence of domestic abuse between Police and Darlington Borough Council now sits within the Children's Front Door to promote a 'joined up approach' to safeguarding children.

Focused sessions on identified themes included: **race, diversity and cultural competency** which highlighted the frontline workforce needed to be better equipped to help understand and be aware of the diverse cultural factors which may be influencing patterns of risk to be able to respond appropriately. The group will consider training and development of guidance and consider undertaking a deep dive to better understand the issues; **Harm away from home/Contextual Safeguarding** to understand what we are doing well, next steps and goals. The group will establish a working group to consider what is needed and to drive forward key pieces of work including **bruising in non-mobile babies and non-verbal children** following some regional cases of agencies not following multi-agency procedure and guidance.

The group continues to discuss specific multi-agency practice issues raised by agencies or identified in the weekly referral meetings to determine how they can be addressed collectively. The group also spends time focussing on key learning points from national and regional reviews to understand whether Darlington is compliant with the learning and recommendations.

The work of this group will continue into the next reporting period and is not possible at this time to evidence specific impact of this work.

## Adult Operational Group

The group continues to have oversight of performance data to obtain an understanding of the changing landscape and emerging patterns coming through contacts and referrals.

The ongoing Adult Safeguarding Review within Adult Social Care is looking to improve data recording and the collation of data on its safeguarding casework system which will help improve the identification of emerging themes and trends which will support multi-agency work.

Adult Social Care has also introduced a Weekly Review Meeting to allow management scrutiny of the decision making involved in and outcomes of all safeguarding contacts referred to the Local Authority and an update is provided at meetings providing some assurance that decision making is evidenced, and safeguarding is robust.

The key theme continues to be self-neglect and hoarding. A task and finish group was established to consider whether practitioners recognise self-neglect and understand what action can be taken. The group is revising practice guidance to include guidance on Mental Capacity act assessments and a risk assessment tool and referral pathway will be developed. This work will soon be concluded, a Risk Enablement Forum is being established to facilitate decision making on complex cases where service users are reluctant to engage with services.



The group continues to monitor those settings in the Executive Strategy Process and discuss significant provider concerns and has revised its guidance. The practice guidance has been amended to ensure that learning from the Executive Strategy Process is shared with providers and organisations within Darlington.

The group continues to provide an overview of any emerging trends and patterns to ensure that any themes or emerging risks can be identified at an early stage and reported accurately to the Statutory Safeguarding Partners and the group continues to have oversight of national and regional review findings which may identify learning relevant to Darlington.

The work of this group will continue into the next reporting period and is not possible at this time to evidence the impact of this work.

## **Learning and Development Group**

The reporting year 2023-24 was extremely busy for the Learning and Development group, mainly because of the submission of a high number of Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) referrals and Serious Incident Notifications (children) and the subsequent Learning Lessons reviews which took place which the group has governance responsibility for.

There were four new serious incident notifications in respect of children, one of which progressed to a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. There were four new SAR notifications, one of which progressed to a Learning Lessons Review. Work also continued on three learning reviews which were notified in the previous reporting year 2022/23. Details of these are outlined in Section 8 of the report.

As a result of the recurring theme of self-neglect in local, regional and national SARs, the group has oversight of the work being considered by the task and finish group as outlined above and work is ongoing.

Darlington Borough Council participated in the Newcastle University Expert in Practice Project which examined the multi-agency response to self-neglect and captured the voice of service users in Darlington which will be considered by the task and finish group.

The group continues to monitor policy, procedure and practice guidance to ensure they reflect changing needs in practice and learning and highlight those which require revision, inviting those with the expertise in the subject matter to support where possible.

The group has continual oversight of national and regional review findings to identify any learning that may be relevant for Darlington. Partner agencies which sit across a bigger footprint have a role to play in sharing themes and learning identified through their organisation's involvement.

## **Quality Assurance and Performance Management Group**

The group continues to have oversight of multi-agency performance data and operational information. Robust data and operational oversight of Children's multi agency performance is well embedded; however, work is ongoing in respect of adult multi-agency safeguarding performance data which is being reviewed in conjunction with the review of Adult Safeguarding Services as highlighted earlier.

The two operational groups (Child and Adult), provide an overview of any emerging trends and patterns to ensure that any themes or emerging risks can be identified at an early stage and reported accurately to the Statutory Safeguarding Partners and the group continues to have oversight of national and regional review findings which may identify learning relevant to Darlington.

The implementation by Adult Services of a Weekly Review Meeting, where senior managers review the decision making and the outcomes of safeguarding referrals, will improve the collation of intelligence and the identification of multi-agency themes to address. This process has already identified several themes which cut across child and adult safeguarding.

Adult Social Care has also seen including reports of demand for services, with an increasing rate of safeguarding referrals and an increase in complex concerns about younger adults and the data has highlighted self-neglect and hoarding and a link to child neglect and transitional safeguarding as issues. Throughout 2023/24 there has been an increase in Children Looked After (CLA) and the year saw unprecedented levels of demand on the service, which together with the complexity and volume has proved challenging.

The group has a role in ensuring that Partnership learning from reviews and quality assurance activity is evident in practice and the group will begin to conduct live audits on current cases to ensure that new practice is embedded. Work will continue to evidence the impact of the work and provide assurance on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

## Strategic Child Exploitation Group

The group continued to monitor the strategic response of partner agencies in tackling the incidence of children missing from home, care and education and the reduction of child exploitation in Darlington and County Durham.

Themes identified in the fortnightly Operational Missing and Exploited groups are reported to the CEG. The Darlington group is well established and covers both exploitation and missing children; daily meetings are held to discuss all children reported as missing and work has extended from the traditional core partner agencies with the Community Safety Partnership now involved in the identification of places and spaces where children and young people are at risk.

A new Partnership Intelligence form was developed by Durham Constabulary and training was rolled out throughout the Partnership with a view to improving information sharing. In May 2023 Durham Constabulary hosted the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme Peer Review (VKPP) which involves direct engagement with police forces and key partners to understand current practice, identify good practice and gaps in services with a view to improving the overall response to young people at risk of harm away from home, reduce the threat of harm, bring offenders to justice and improve outcomes for victims. The findings were positive, and work is ongoing within the group to implement the recommendations and a delivery plan with three priority areas has been developed based on the findings.

The Child Exploitation Matrix Tool was amended and guidance and training provided, the matrix went live in January 2023 in Darlington which has significantly improved local authority reporting and has enabled practitioners to access live data.

## Child Death Overview Panel

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) oversees all deaths of children under the age of 18. There have been 8 deaths in Darlington during this reporting period and all of these were subject to a Child Death Review. The CDOP works closely with the Partnership to highlight any emerging themes and issues and learning from child death reviews that require further consideration. CDOP completed a [bi-annual report](#) which provides a summary of activity carried over a two-year period 2021-23.

In line with Statutory Guidance, the administration of CDOP will switch to the responsibility of Child Death Review Partners (Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards) the administration of the CDOP will switch from the Safeguarding Partnership Business Units to the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENCICB). The process of the transition is ongoing, and the Partnership will continue to be involved in the CDOP process.







## Independent Scrutineer and Chair

The Independent Scrutineer/Chair continues to ensure there is a clear focus on seeking assurance on the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements from a strategic perspective and ensures safeguarding partners and relevant agencies are challenged and supported in their roles to work collaboratively to meet the safeguarding priorities identified by the Partnership.

The Independent Scrutineer/Chair currently chairs meetings of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group and encourages and facilitates an open culture of mutual, respectful challenge and support. It has been acknowledged that this arrangement will need to be reviewed considering the revisions in Working Together to Safeguard Children and responsibility being passed onto the Delegated Safeguarding Partner.

The Independent Scrutineer/Chair continues to present the Partnerships Annual Reports, outlining the Partnership achievements and effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to the Children and Young People and Adult Scrutiny Committees, Community Safety Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board.

Statutory Partners will review and develop the scrutiny arrangements in the next reporting year to ensure processes are in place for effective scrutiny of both strategic and operational safeguarding arrangements, which will help improve and reflect best practice.

## Priorities for 2023-26

As outlined in the Strategic Plan, DSP has identified five priority areas of focus:

- Communication and involvement – making safeguarding everybody’s business and improving awareness of safeguarding across all communities and partner organisations
- Prevention and Early Intervention – enabling partners to work together to act early to protect those at risk of abuse or neglect
- Joint Working – ensure effective arrangements are in place to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect
- Exploitation – ensuring effective multi-agency response and intervention to protect those at risk of exploitation, in all its forms
- Adult Self-Neglect - ensure all partner agencies improve awareness and understanding of adult self-neglect to ensure early identification can be achieved

The below outlines work that has been undertaken this year and work that will continue into the next reporting period against those priority areas. As outlined earlier it is not yet possible to evidence any impact that work is having, this will be reported next year.

## Priorities - What have we done:

### Communication and Involvement

- Use the DSP website to raise awareness to enable communities to play a part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect and ensure everyone is aware how to report abuse – redeveloped February 2024
- Develop key resources, leaflets and newsletters to continually raise awareness – ongoing

### Prevention and Early Intervention

- Multi-Agency Safeguarding Training Programme – implementation of ME Learning Platform to offer key training and e-learning modules to increase skills and knowledge across the workforce
- Development of briefing documents following findings in Family H Review, Parental Mental Health and Safeguarding and Child Exploitation

### Joint Working – effective multi-agency arrangements

- Ensure clear governance arrangements are in place to underpin safeguarding practice - reviewed annually
- Continuous delivery of safeguarding training to align with DSP priorities – updated annually
- Further develop Quality Assurance Frameworks and Dashboards to be inclusive of all member agencies to seek assurance on safeguarding processes - ongoing
- Commission and undertake audit activity to ensure effectiveness and adherence – planned programme to be devised

### Exploitation

- Develop resources and tools to support the identification of children at risk of missing and exploitation - ongoing
- Revision of the Child Exploitation Matrix to remove victim blaming language
- Revision of Partnership Information Sharing form to improve sharing of intelligence
- Implemented multi-agency forums to focus on spaces and places – Community Safety Check In, daily missing meetings

### Self-neglect

- Established a task and finish group to take forward key pieces of work - ongoing
- Revising self-neglect practice guidance to include examples of positive, flexible approaches of engaging people who are self-neglecting - ongoing
- Develop self-neglect pathway flowchart - ongoing
- Develop self-neglect multi-agency risk assessment tool to support assessing and identifying risk - ongoing
- Developing a Risk Enablement Forum to manage high risk cases - ongoing
- Planning a self-neglect conference to raise awareness – 2 July 2024
- Consider the development of Mental Capacity Act Guidance to support practitioners working with individuals who are reluctant to engage with services

# 5. Partnership Activities and Interventions

## Safeguarding Children

In terms of safeguarding children, the number of contacts into the Children's front Door in 2023/24 remained similar to that reported in the previous period. There were significantly more contacts made by Health and an increase in contacts from Housing, though Police continue to dominate the source of contacts in this period. The breakdown of presenting issues highlights that domestic abuse remains the highest presenting issue followed by behavioural issues, physical abuse and bullying.

There was a slight decrease in the number of Early Help Assessments started in 2023/24 in comparison to the previous year and 14.4% of these were initiated by external agencies. In response to the revisions in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, discussions are taking place to establish a multi-agency Early Help Strategic Board which will be responsible for the strategic and operational delivery of effective, targeted and coordinated preventative and early help support for children, young people and families within the Darlington locality.

The Children's Social Care Weekly Review Meetings (WRM) continue to provide a high level of management oversight and challenge to decision making at the Front Door and is the mechanism for highlighting emerging themes and trends coming through. The WRM monitors and implements changes and scrutinises decision making at the earliest point of referral. Whilst this is a social care process, it is recognised there are significant benefits in extending this to wider partner agencies to help them see how their referrals progress, including the decision making behind them to take learning back to their own organisations.

Ofsted conducted a focused visit to Darlington Children's Services in October 2023 and the inspectors looked at the Local Authority's arrangements for children in need and children subject to a protection plan. The inspection identified that relationships with partner agencies are a particular strength and enable professionals to engage in effective multi-agency information sharing which informs decision making and sound planning for children and robust child centred responses to identified risk and need.

## Safeguarding Adults

In terms of adult safeguarding the patterns of concerns reported to the Local Authority have changed. Adult Social Care has experienced increased referrals for Mental Health Support which is mirrored across system partners, as well as increased homelessness and people experiencing the impact of the cost of living, which has impacted on charity and third sector organisations. There is an assumed link with these experiences, with changing patterns of concerns reported to the Local Authority within Adult safeguarding in the last year; inpatient settings reporting increased Peer on Peer altercations, bed based regulated services reporting increased acts of omission; medication incidents, falls and peer on peer altercations and community-based concerns relating to alcohol and substance misuse pertaining to self-neglect.

The areas of abuse remain consistent with Neglect & Acts of Omission within care home settings, Physical Abuse, Emotional and Psychological abuse being the highest categories.

A joint approach is taken when there is an accumulation of high-risk concerns within a provider setting with the Local Authority, Health and the Care Quality Commission providing quality assurance support. This may result in an action plan for the service which is monitored or consideration for further safeguards such as the Executive Strategy process. Information relating to concerns in care home settings is shared with the Adult Operational Group which continues to monitor the response to those identified issues and the actions required to provide assurance to the Statutory Safeguarding Partners.

There continues to be an increase in self-neglect as a reported category of abuse, this is a national issue and is a consistent theme in many Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and is often linked to alcohol and substance misuse. The Local Authority has found that the referrals for individuals who are self-neglecting often require a more proactive approach to promote engagement. Work is ongoing to support this engagement through the self-neglect task and finish group.

It is recognised that self-neglect and hoarding can be a complex and challenging area for practitioners and not always easily identified. An adult who self-neglects may not always be at a level of risk which warrants adult safeguarding procedures to be initiated and it is therefore imperative that agencies work with the adult and each other to prevent individuals who self-neglect from reaching a point where safeguarding interventions or a type of enforcement is required to protect them.

There has been a lot of work undertaken during this reporting period following a number of Learning Lesson Reviews where self-neglect was identified as a feature. Details of actions, progress and multi-agency tools and resources produced as a result of the work are outlined in Section 8 of the report.

The Local Authority continues with its transformation review of adult safeguarding processes and is reviewing how data is collated and reported into the Partnership. The implementation of a Weekly Review Meeting (WRM) now ensures there is direct management oversight and scrutiny of reported safeguarding concerns and decision making. The WRM reviews cases which do not progress to safeguarding procedures, looking at decision making, risk assessment/protection plan and communication with the person and referrer to ensure that the individual's safety and wellbeing have been promoted. An overview of themes, issues or concerns highlighted within WRM are reported into the Adult Operational Group. The Local Authority is awaiting the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Adult Regulatory Inspection following new regulatory powers to assess local authorities outlined in the Health and Care Act 2022. Live inspections using a new framework will commence in September 2023, no date has been set for Darlington.

## Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse concerns continue to be one of the top five reasons for contacts into the Children's Front Door. During the period April 2023 to March 2024 1,215 contacts were received regarding concerns of domestic abuse resulting in 244 referrals into social care.

To understand the local picture, DSP has oversight of the Operation Encompass Protocol which ensures the early sharing of information with schools to enable them to provide proactive support to children and young people who are affected by domestic abuse that has occurred in the family home when the incident has been assessed as high or medium risk. In 2023/24 there were 155 notifications made for 230 children. The 4Kids project, which was launched in response to a concerning rise in numbers of children becoming looked after where the main causal factor was a background of parental domestic abuse, sits in the Children's Front Door. The service supports families which would not ordinarily be visible to services through other processes, as they fall outside the usual thresholds and criteria of statutory involvement and may have declined consent to offers of support.

In relation to adult safeguarding, there were 35 reported concerns where domestic abuse was the reported category of abuse for the 2023-24 period, 8 progressed to a strategy meeting (23%).

## Housing and Homelessness

2023/24 continued to be a challenging and busy year for Darlington Borough Council housing teams and partner agencies. The service has seen an 84.5% increase in people being accommodated in emergency accommodation. There has been a significant increase of 186% on last year for people presenting due to being served a section 21 (no fault eviction notice) from the private rented sector.

The Local Authority continued to carry out the monthly and annual rough sleeper counts with colleagues across the region to ascertain how many individuals were sleeping rough through the North East on a specific night. In 2023-24 35 rough sleepers were identified.

In 2023/24 1842 individuals presented to the Housing Options Service for advice regarding homelessness,



157 homeless applications were received where Domestic Violence was the main reason for homelessness. This is 11.2% of total presentations and an increase of 6% on previous year. Applications were received through Duty to Refer, individual applications, customer service referrals or referrals from other agencies such as Harbour, Children and Adult Services.

The Local Authority is updating its Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure over the next five years that, with the strong partnership of agencies and organisations in Darlington, they continue to strive to minimise the risk of homelessness and effectively support those who become homeless back to a stable home and an independent life. The Local Authority will consult with partner agencies on the revised strategy to help them understand if they have identified the key issues currently affecting homelessness in Darlington.

At the time of writing the report the Statutory Partners were aware of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Ministerial Letter regards recommendations for Safeguarding Adult Boards in relation to individuals rough sleeping and will be responding in the next reporting period.

## Right Care, Right Person

Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) is a national model changing the way emergency services respond to welfare and medical calls, to ensure that when someone calls about a mental health issue, the right people respond to ensure that the right care is given by the right people. Safeguarding Partners have a responsibility to monitor and ensure partner agencies carry out their roles and responsibilities. Work is ongoing to develop local policy and procedure.

## Participation in wider forums

Darlington participates in a number of forums to help improve connectivity and understanding of the wider safeguarding issues and areas of common interest which include:

- **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Network** - its purpose is to coordinate a response to modern slavery and human trafficking and increase support for victims.
- **North East Region SAR Champions Network** – its purpose is to identify regional and national themes, develop good practice in the submission of Safeguarding Adult Referrals (SARs) maintain a regional SAR library and share learning from SARs. The network monitors regional and national SARs to identify themes. The network has also supported the development of regional tools and resources to support safeguarding, along with development of regional protocols.
- **North East Regional Fire Task and Finish Group** - its aim is to increase fire risk awareness and partner referrals to the fire service and increase awareness of risk factors including mobility issues, memory problems clutter, hoarding and emollient cream.
- **UK Hoarding Partnership** - Its purpose is to seek to develop interventions based on research to support member organisations and practitioners in supporting individuals and their families with hoarding behaviours, though sharing information and good practice throughout the UK.
- **Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Executive Group** - is a multi-agency strategic group with responsibility for supporting Durham and Darlington local authorities in meeting their duty under Part 4 of Domestic Abuse Act 2021, ensuring victims of domestic abuse have access to adequate and appropriate support within safe accommodation and wider domestic abuse services. Work is ongoing to forge better links into the Safeguarding Partnership.

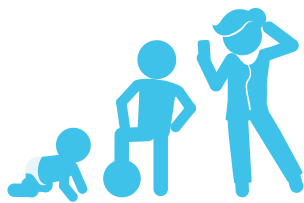


# 6. Snapshot of effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Darlington (April 2023 to March 2024)

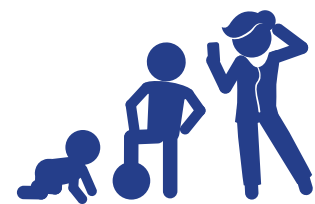
## Child Safeguarding

The multi-agency Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance provide a framework for all organisations to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Darlington.

The below provides a snapshot of safeguarding concerns and the outcomes achieved during the year:



**5993** contacts into the Children's Front Door. Of these, **732** were referred to Building Stronger Families Service and **783** referred to children's social care



**324** Children in need

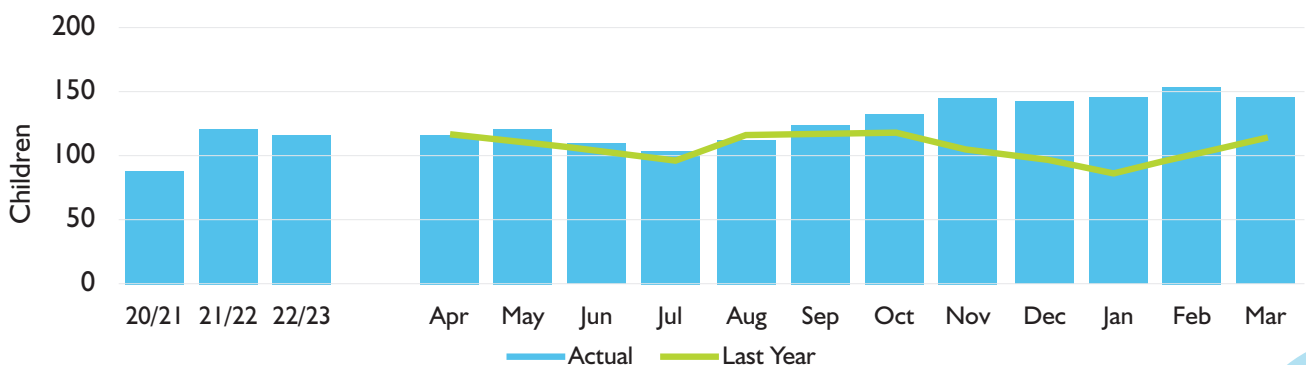


**527** (963 children) Strategy Discussions started  
**71.4%** progressed to a section 47 enquiry

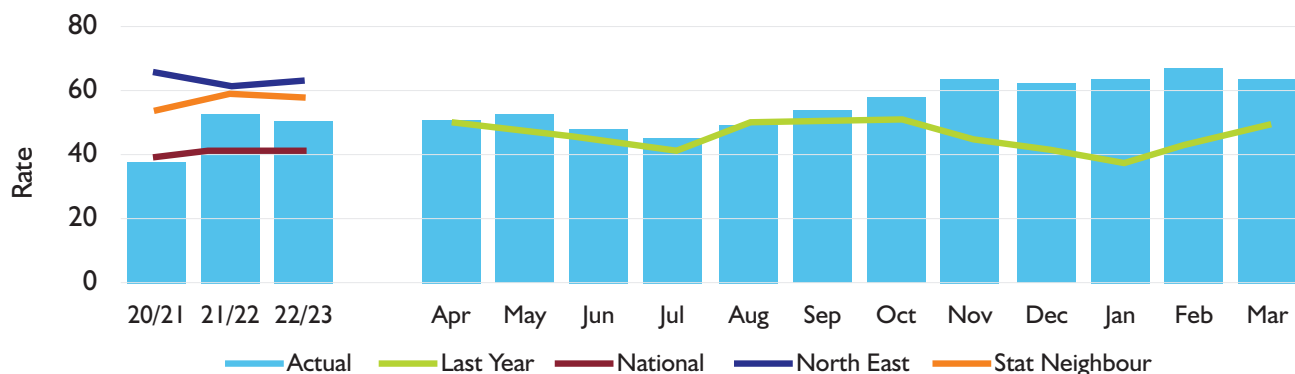


**196** children had a child protection plan started.  
**146** subject to a child protection plan at end of March 2024

## Number of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan



## Rate of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 population



### The top five risk factors associated with Child Protection were due to:

Substance Misuse	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Domestic Abuse	Mental Health
22.2%	17.8%	14.6	13.5%	12.4%

## Building Stronger Families (BSF) (formerly Early Help Service)

Provides coordinated help for children and families with a range of needs through an early help assessment or targeted programmes. There were 1417 Early Help Assessments opened in this year, of these 204 were initiated by an external agency.

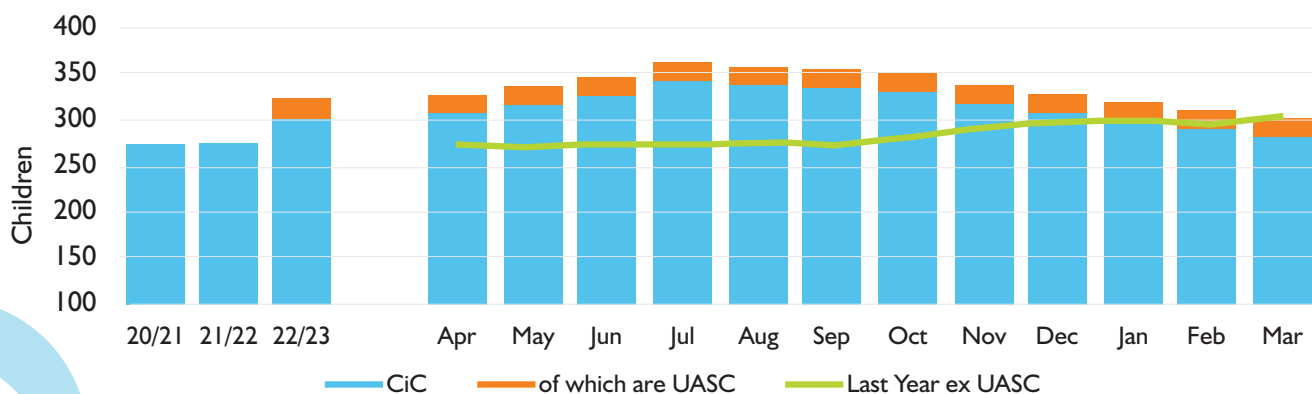
## Keeping Families Together

Has an aim to support children to remain at home, where it is safe to do so. At the end of March 2024, there were 11 families open to the Keeping Families Together (KFT) Team, involving 16 individual children.

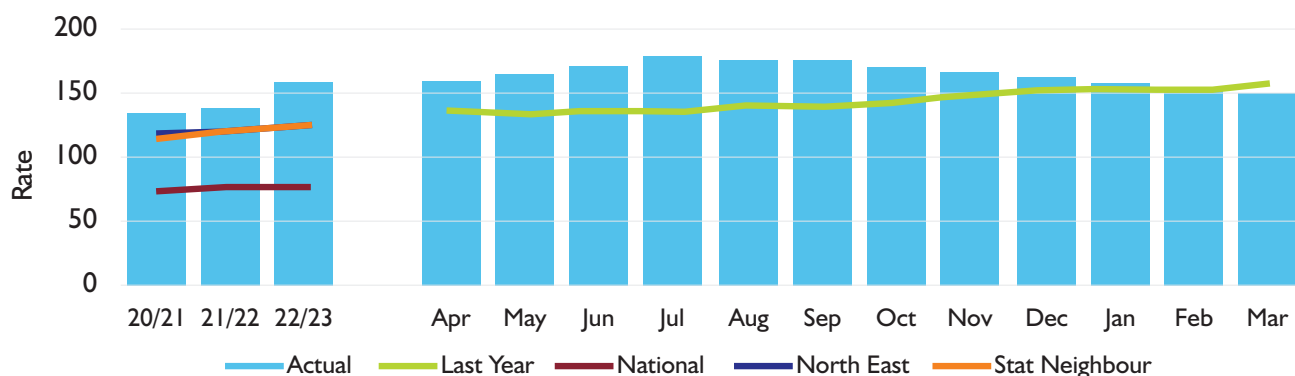
## Children in Care

The total number of Children in Care (CiC) within the Local Authority at the end of March 2024 was 300, (134.8 per 10,000), of these 18 were unaccompanied asylum seekers. The primary and secondary presenting issues for children coming into care are due to substance misuse, neglect, physical abuse, domestic abuse and mental health concerns.

## Total Number of Children in Care



## Rate of Children in Care per 10,000 population



### Care Leavers

In Darlington 98.4% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation by the end of 2023-24 and the percentage of care leavers (aged 19-21) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 22.6%.

### Young People Engagement and Justice Service (YPEJS)

Saw the number of young people identified as First Time Entrants (FTE) being referred increasing from the previous year. At the end of March 2024 there were 19 young people (15 Males and 4 Females) who were FTEs. The YPEJS had 57 young people (35 Males and 22 Females) referred to the service during 2023-24 for pre-caution disposals (56) and restorative disposals (1), there has been a 96% success rate in terms of young people not reoffending.

### Education attendance

Autumn 2023 data indicated there was 7% overall absence across all education settings, compared with 6.7% nationally. The estimated absence rate was highest in special schools (9.6%), followed by secondary schools (8.1%), and primary schools recorded the lowest absence rate (5.8%). In 2023-24, 22.6% of pupils were estimated to be “persistently absent” (defined by the Department for Education as missing 8% or more of possible school sessions). The Vulnerable Pupil Panel is a multi-agency panel whose aim is to avoid children disengaging from education due to any cause.

### Elective Home Education (EHE)

There are effective measures in place for the monitoring children who are in EHE. A full time EHE Advisor monitors and maintains the EHE database, supporting parents and ensuring evidence of suitable education is being provided. The number of children EHE remains fluid and the EHE advisor continues to support schools when children don't return at the start of the new academic term. As of 31 March 2023, there were 285 children registered on the EHE database, of these 84 were from GRT community, Darlington has a higher than average GRT population, the EHE advisor works closely with the GRT Education Service.

### Children Missing from Home and Care

The total number of children who went missing from home or care during 2023/24 was 423 with 87.8% of these children being offered a return home interview (RHI) and 76.9% of children engaged in their RHI. Of these young people, Children in Care (CiC) continue to dominate the number of missing episodes.

## Children missing from Education

The total number of children missing from education (CME) for 2023/24 was 31 - 11 have moved Local Authority, six children have emigrated, four children are from the travelling community and have left the area to travel, three children returned to school after a period of absence. There are seven children whereby the Local Authority has so far been unable to trace who have been out of Darlington education for a significant number of weeks.

## Exploitation of children and young people

Multi-agency work around child exploitation continues to be coordinated through the Missing and Exploited Operational Group (MEG) and Strategic Child Exploitation Group (CEG).

A multi-agency Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) continues to be used across Darlington and County Durham to track and identify those children at high risk of exploitation. Children are scored based on the level of risk and continues to be monitored by the Strategic CEG.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, the average score was 71 (down from 71.5 in the previous year), with a range of 37 to 92 across Durham and Darlington. The average score for those in Darlington was 72. A snapshot of the tracker in August 2024 (numbers are fluid), shows that there are 21 children “active” (12 of which are high risk) across County Durham and Darlington (7 in Darlington). Of these 21 children, 11 are linked to Child Criminal Exploitation (2 in Darlington), 9 children are linked to a Child Sexual Exploitation (5 in Darlington) and 1 child is linked to County Lines (0 of which were in Darlington).

## Designated Officer and Managing Allegations (children)

Is responsible for the oversight of the management of allegations against employees who work with children and may have harmed or may pose a risk of harm to children. In 2023/24 the Designated Officer service received a total of 244 contacts in respect of potential allegations. It is of note that this figure is likely lower than expected due to a change in Designated Officer and differing recording mechanisms. Of the 244 contacts recorded, the main category for referral continues to be allegations of physical abuse and the largest referring group and largest allegation by staff group is Education.

## Adult Safeguarding

The multi-agency safeguarding adult procedures and guidance provide a framework for all organisations to work together with the person at risk, to support them to be safe from abuse, neglect or self-neglect and is underpinned by the six Care Act Principles. The below provides a summary of safeguarding concerns and the outcomes achieved.

<b>What is a Safeguarding Concern?</b> A report made to the lead agency for the safeguarding process to raise a concern of adult abuse and neglect	<b>What is a S42 Enquiry?</b> The Care Act 2014 (Section 42) requires that each Local Authority must make enquiries, or cause others to do so, if it believes an adult is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse and or neglect
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**2995**

Number of contacts into Adult Contact Team



**1047**

Number of initial enquiries started



**24%**

progressed to a S42 safeguarding enquiry



**48.2%** of individuals had a family representative or advocate involved at initial enquiry

**46.8%** of individuals providing own view

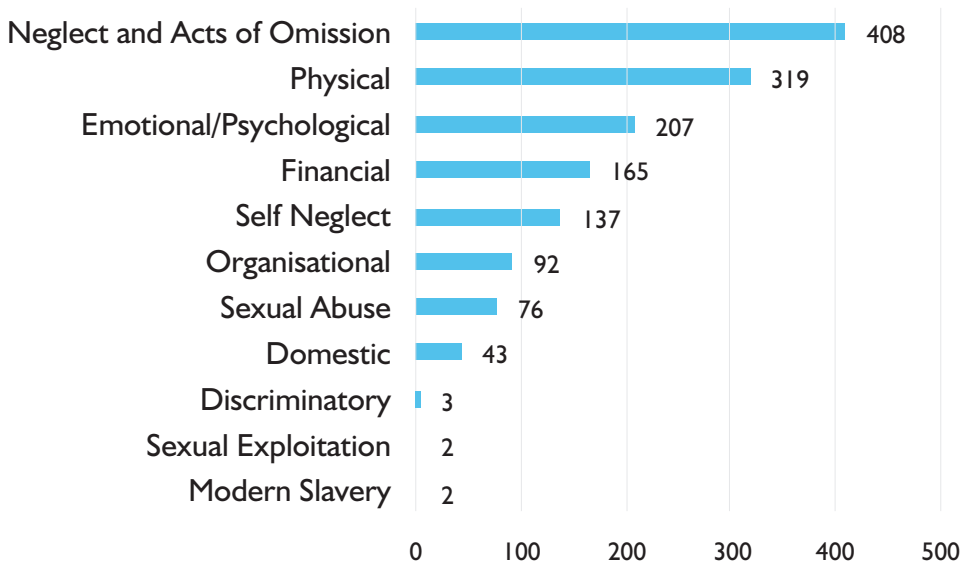


**90%**

risk reduced or removed

## Types of Abuse

### Section 42 Enquiries



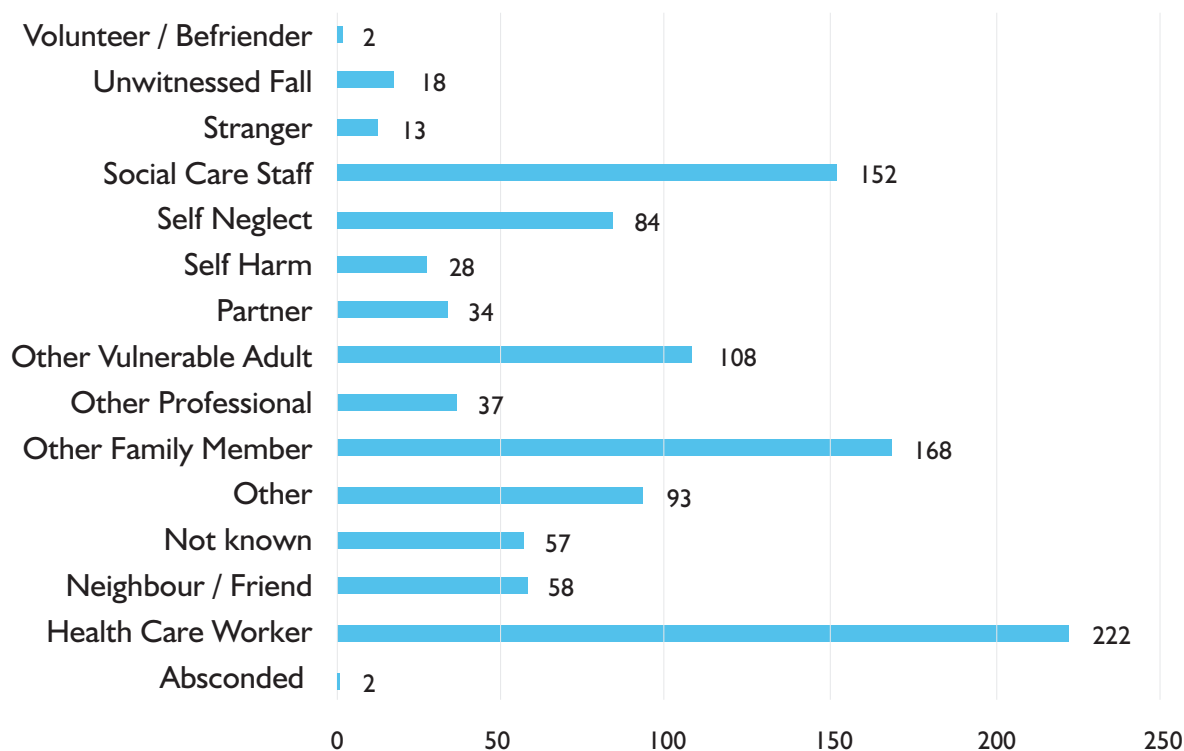
The top five areas of abuse for S42 enquiries continue to be:

- Neglect & Acts of Omission (30%)
- Physical (20%)
- Emotional (12%)
- Financial (11%)
- Self Neglect (10%)

### The Highest Number for Location of abuse relates to the following:

Own home	Home of person alleged to have caused harm	Supported accommodation	Care Home Nursing	Care Home residential	Hospital Acute	Hospital Mental Health	Not Known/ Other	Public Place
34.5%	2.9%	4.6%	4.6%	33%	2.9%	7.1%	4.5%	3.7%

## Person Alleged to have Caused Harm



## Executive Strategy Process

Executive Strategy processes are held to address all concerns and issues relating to suspected organised or institutional abuse or neglect of adults.

	Number of settings
2021-22	3
2022-23	4
2023-24	3

Three settings entered into the Executive Strategy Process during the 2023-24 period and all three remained in this process in March 2024 due to ongoing concerns for safeguarding. The Adult Operational Group has responsibility of monitoring those settings who are in the Executive Strategy Process and will continue to monitor until it is satisfied that improvements have been made and all regulatory action had been completed.



# 7. Continuous improvement and raising awareness of safeguarding across all communities and partner organisations through:

A key priority for the Partnership is '*Communication and involvement – making safeguarding everybody's business and improving awareness of safeguarding across all communities and partner organisations*'.

There are a number of available options to help support this to ensure people receive clear and simple information about what neglect and abuse is and how to recognise the signs and seek help and have the confidence to report the concerns.

## Communication and Engagement

The voice of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and their families is at the heart of all partnership activity, however it is recognised it is a challenge to evidence their lived experiences and how that may help inform multi-agency working and influence service provision. This is an area that needs further exploration and will be a key area of focus in the coming year.

## Making Safeguarding Personal

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) applies to all agencies and aims to develop a person centred and outcomes focussed approach to adult safeguarding. In Darlington, MSP and the involvement of service users or their representative in safeguarding enquiries is measured from the outset and is evaluated as part of the safeguarding process.

## Independent Chair Engagement

The Independent Scrutineer/Chair continues to meet with relevant agencies of the Partnership and attend meetings such as primary and secondary education forums, Child and Adult Scrutiny Committees, Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership to talk about current issues and themes and what is working well and what needs to change relating to current safeguarding arrangements.



## DSP website, briefings and newsletters

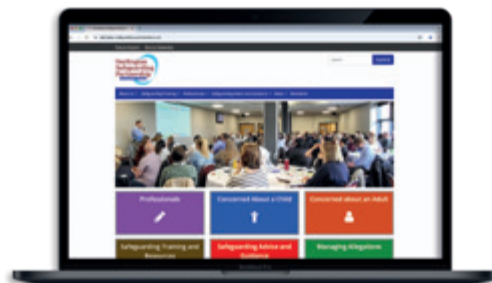
The DSP continues to use a variety of communication methods to share information to a wide range of different audiences.

The Partnership website continues to be a key forum to provide key safeguarding messages to practitioners and to the wider public as well as useful information and resources to support those working with children and adults.

The website was redeveloped in February 2024 to help improve navigation and revision of information relating to adult and child safeguarding.

Partnership website - [www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk](http://www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk)

The Partnership's monthly newsletter continues to communicate and raise awareness of safeguarding matters and helps to keep in touch with all our agencies to provide information, signposting and guidance to those working across child and adult services.



## Social Media

Whilst the Partnership does not have its own social media platforms, it regularly requests partner agencies promote key safeguarding campaigns throughout the year on their own social media platforms.

## Awareness of key safeguarding campaigns – National Safeguarding Week

The Partnership continues to raise awareness of safeguarding issues by sharing details of key national safeguarding campaigns throughout the year which included Safer Internet Day in February, National Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day in March and Safeguarding Adult Week in November. During this week the Partnership ran a full programme of events and training sessions to raise awareness of safeguarding issues. The theme for the week was safeguarding yourself and others. A number of speakers provided sessions which covered Child Exploitation and National Referral Mechanism (NRM), Hoarding Awareness, Self-Neglect from an individual's perspective, fire risk awareness, safeguarding under the Care Act 2014, Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage, domestic abuse and sexual abuse. The sessions were well attended by a broad range of partner agencies.



## Learning and Development

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is committed to working together to protect children, young people and adults with needs for care and support from the risk of serious harm and abuse. It seeks to review and update pathways, policies and procedures so that they are responsive to current levels of need and risk in the local area along with promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk of abuse remains the focus of learning and development activity.

Practitioners working in both universal and specialist services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect and to share that information and provide children and adults with the help they need. To be effective, practitioners need to continually develop their knowledge and skills. The Partnership is committed to delivering a high-quality inter-agency training programme to support professionals, volunteers and the independent sector.

The standards are monitored through the Learning and Development Group and ensures there is quality and consistency of single and multi-agency training. Training is reviewed and updated to ensure the lessons from learning reviews are reflected as well as identifying the local needs of the multi-agency workforce.



## What did we achieve?

- During this year, there was a change in roles with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Trainer retiring meaning a gap in training provision for a period of six months. During this time there was limited training opportunities, however DSP continued to provide some limited training, resources, e-learning modules and podcasts. To address safeguarding training as an interim measure DSP implemented a child and adult safeguarding awareness workbook for Practitioners and over 400 workbooks were completed during this period.
- Following the successful appointment of the Partnership's Training and Development Officer, new training dates for a range of courses and sessions were added in September which offered training for both child and adult safeguarding from introductory level through to advanced courses for safeguarding leads and managers. There were also sessions on child exploitation, Designated Lead Safeguarding Training and Early Help Assessment Training.
- In January 2024, the Partnership implemented a Local Management System, ME Learning Platform to support with the delivery of safeguarding training and managing bookings. The system enables professionals and volunteers to select the session they would like to book individually and information and materials are sent automatically. This platform allows the Partnership to offer its core training modules through the system as well as tapping into a range of additional e-learning modules created by specialists on a range of safeguarding topics. Providing a greater opportunity for professionals and volunteers to access a wide range of training modules that would not ordinarily be on offer.
- At the time of writing this report there were over 700 users registered on the system.
- Due to the change in roles and implementation of ME Learning, it has not been possible to capture numbers of learners in this reporting period.
- It is recognised that assessment of learning is necessary to measure both the quality of training and to evidence the impact on practice. Due to the gaps in provision in this reporting year, it has not been possible to evidence the learning impact.

## Development of Policy and Procedure

Enabling continual improvement and learning for partners and practitioners is important to the Partnership. The ongoing review of policies, procedures and practice guidance documents is essential to support front line practitioners with both prevention, early intervention and awareness raising. There is a clear timeline for the revision of policy and procedure, which is monitored through a policy revision schedule.

The Learning and Development Group continues to provide a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to safeguarding practice through the development, review and updating of policies and procedures for use by professionals across the partnership. All revisions are undertaken in consultation with partner agencies and who are expected to disseminate and implement within their own organisations. All documents are published on the DSP website.

During 2023/24 the following were developed, reviewed and revised by the Partnership:

- Revision to Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Procedures
- Revision to Safeguarding Adult Review Procedure and referral form
- The Executive Strategy Process practice guidance was revised to ensure that key lessons learned are shared with all providers
- Developed an organisational directory of key safeguarding contacts.
- Refreshed the Information Sharing Protocol.
- Revised the child exploitation risk assessment information form (Exploitation Matrix)
- Revised the Partnership Information form to report
- Multi-Agency Challenge Pledge

# OUR PLEDGE

To be confident in having open and honest conversations with each other as multi-agency partners in order to do the very best we can for children, adults and their families in Darlington.

Multi-agency working is vital to maintain a focus on children and vulnerable adults while also keeping them at the heart of all decisions.

Our Pledge is an opportunity to:

- Seek out professional conversations with each other at the earliest opportunity
- Have a shared understanding of the strengths and risks within a family
- Actively listen to each other and share important information
- Respect each other's expertise
- Be open and empathetic to the professional views of others
- Be professionally curious and evidence what we say
- Use common language that everyone understands

## 8. Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Learning Lesson Reviews

### Children

There have been four Serious Incident Notification referrals submitted to the Partnership in this reporting year. When a notification referral is submitted, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners (SSP) determine if it meets the criteria for notification. The SSP agreed two of these referrals should be notified to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The first was in November 2023 in respect of a child who died whilst co sleeping with parents. The Rapid Review recommended that the circumstances did not fit the criteria for a learning review and that the learning had been identified in the process of the rapid review which was agreed by Statutory Safeguarding Partners.

There was a similar case referred in August 2023 which partners determined did not meet criteria for notification. As a consequence of these deaths and an increase in numbers across the region, the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board carried out an extensive awareness raising campaign in December 2023 to highlight the dangers of co-sleeping.

In January 2024 a serious incident notification was submitted following the death of a child as a consequence of a non-accidental injury perpetrated by a family member. It was recommended that this met the criteria for a LCSPR, and an independent author has been commissioned. This review is ongoing, and the outcome will be reported in 2024/25.

## Published LCSPR – Family H

DSP undertook and published its first Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) in November 2023. The review considered four children under the age of 16. In 2013, parents agreed to abide by a written agreement which stated aunt and her partner should have no unsupervised contact with their children. In April 2022, the children's aunt and her partner were arrested due to suspected sexual offences against children and their devices seized. Examination of the devices found indecent images of children and led police to believe Family H children were also victims of sexual abuse.

The review focussed on a number of key episodes over a ten-year period, the episodes did not form a complete history but were key from a practice perspective. The review found some examples of good practice and looked at how services had worked together to protect the Family H children.

The review made nine recommendations and themed briefing documents were circulated throughout the partnership to highlight the learning. A power point presentation has been shared throughout the Partnership as a learning resource. The report was published in November 2023 and was met with approval by the Child Safeguarding Review Panel which has indicated that the findings raise a number of issues relevant to a forthcoming national review of child sexual abuse in the family environment and will consider if it should be included in the sample of cases considered in this review.



## What did we learn?

### Professional curiosity and challenge

Whilst there were some good examples of professional curiosity there are several instances where this could have been improved. Some agencies were considering the link between the children's behaviour and the possibility of sexual harm, however there was a lack of professional curiosity and challenge leading to missed opportunities to identify the risk. The risks to many children are not always obvious and require continuous professional curiosity about the child and their circumstances. Practitioners need to understand what is happening within a family rather than making assumptions or taking things at face value and remain sceptical of explanations, justifications or excuses and 'check out' what is being said.

### Assessment of risk

The risks posed by the adults were never fully explored and understood by agencies involved with the family and the risk assessment was not applied to any of the work undertaken in the early intervention framework. Some agencies held information regarding the risks, however these risks were not always shared and therefore the significance of the risks was lost over time.

## Information sharing and Early Help

Key pieces of information about the risks posed were not always shared and the focus was always on the health needs of the children rather than the risk of sexual abuse. Information about the written agreement was not shared.

## Hidden adults

It was evident this was a busy household and adults unknown to practitioners were often present during visits. This was noted by practitioners, but not tenaciously pursued and not through the lens of additional household members posing a risk or indeed understanding how they were involved with the children's daily lives. Practitioners need to be more inquisitive. Agency assessments should be extended to include all adults involved with the children

## Children's lived experience/through the eyes of a child

One of the core principles of effective safeguarding practice is a child centred approach which is focused on understanding the lived experience of children. Research identifies that a child who has developmental and communication needs can be effectively hidden from view and considerations needs to be given as to how the abuse suffered can compound a child behaviour. There is little evidence of agencies considering speaking to or carrying out a piece of work with the children to consider the wider involvement of family members in a holistic assessment to afford early identification of risk. Assessments did not place the children's lived experiences in the context of their parent's own backgrounds and their immediate and wider family and how this might impact on their ability to protect. Professionals need to be attuned to the child's world and pay attention not only to what the child says but also what they are not saying and what their behaviour is communicating.

## Recognising risk of harm for children with disabilities

Maltreatment of children who are disabled or have chronic illness can be 'hidden in plain sight' with the disability being seen first and the possibility of abuse not considered. Children with learning disabilities are at greater risk of abuse and may only display their distress through behaviour. Practitioners should not assume that challenging behaviour in a child with a learning disability is due to their underlying condition or parenting and should take a holistic approach that considers possible alternative causes.

## Identification and assessment of the risk of sexual harm

This review highlights the challenges professionals have, the complexities of working with child sexual abuse, and the importance of clarity regarding risk and need. Identifying sexual abuse is difficult as there is often no physical or medical evidence and children are unlikely to tell someone they are being abused, especially if it is someone they know. Practitioners rely too much on a child making a disclosure, and all front-line practitioners should recognise the signs of sexual abuse and agencies should have strong information sharing protocols, with appropriate training and supervision.

## The role of the non-abusing parent and extended family

It has been highlighted in reviews that not enough attention is paid, or assessments completed regarding the needs and circumstances of a non-abusing parent or an evaluation of how to understand their willingness and capacity to keep children safe from sexual abuse and their vulnerability to grooming and exploitation which can undermine that safety. It is critical that there is an assessment of the non-abusing parent's ability to protect and believe children.

## So, what next?

There are important lessons to learn from this review, these circumstances are a reminder of the need to equip all professionals with the knowledge, skills and frameworks to identify and respond to sexual harm and the need to identify hidden adults within the family home. The recommendations identified areas a number of priority areas for improvement which will be taken forward in the next reporting period:

- review the effectiveness of weekly review meetings and MASH triage processes through a multi-agency lens
- promote reflective discussion standards and map out an understanding of what this looks like across a multi-agency partnership
- introduce an Early Help Strategic Board
- launch a challenge pledge to help practitioners be more confident in having open and honest conversations
- consider implementation of a multi-agency harm matrix tool across all partner agencies to help assess risks of abuse and neglect
- seek assurance on communication and sharing of information across the Partnership
- awareness of the need to identify and document additional adults within the home and hidden persons to inform risk assessments and share within multi-agency forums
- understand the tools and processes agencies have in place to capture the lived experience of the child.
- Provision of multi-agency training on identifying sexual harm

## Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR)

Four SAR referrals were submitted to the Partnership, and it was agreed that none met the criteria for a SAR but that one should progress to a discretionary learning lessons review.

In August 2023 County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service submitted a SAR referral in respect of two adults who died in a house fire. The occupants had needs for care and support and there were concerns about self-neglect and hoarding in the home environment. An independent author has been commissioned and the review is ongoing. The findings will be reported in 2024/25.

The Learning and Development group continued to work on two reviews which were referred in the previous reporting year where the adults who had needs for care and support died and self-neglect was subsequently highlighted as an issue.

## What did we learn?

- Self-neglect was not easily identified by practitioners
- The findings relate to mental health and the adults' reluctance/non-compliance with services offered over a period of time.
- There was a presumption of capacity however lack of any formal capacity assessments being undertaken in respect of care and support and treatment along with a lack of legal oversight relating to capacity and Court of Protection.
- More should have been done if there were concerns for safeguarding and practitioners should have considered flexible approaches and appropriate communication styles to suit the individual
- Little evidence of multi-agency working, agencies did not work together collaboratively,
- Lack of communication and professional challenge.
- There was an apparent acceptance by practitioners that the situations were a 'lifestyle choice' and the lack of professional curiosity, resulting in missed opportunities to safeguard the individuals.

Self-neglect continues to be identified as a significant theme and is reflected regionally and nationally.

## So, what next?

The Partnership has recognised self-neglect is a complex and challenging area and is not always easily identified. These circumstances are a reminder of the need to equip all professionals with the knowledge, skills and tools to support them to work with individuals who self-neglect. The Partnership has identified self-neglect as a key priority area of focus.

The issues raised are being addressed within a self-neglect task and finish group who will lead on the development of guidance, resources and tools to support practitioners. It was also agreed the Partnership should host a Self-Neglect and Hoarding Conference to help raise awareness and focus on some of the practice issues and challenges being experienced. Arrangements are underway with the conference planned for the summer 2024.

The partnership has considered its training offer and now provides additional training and resources which includes bespoke training programmes and e-learning modules on Adult Self Neglect and Mental Capacity Act Awareness along with a number of briefings, podcasts and videos to support practitioners.





## 9. Moving Forward

Looking forward to 2024/25 we will:

- Continue to raise awareness of abuse and neglect among the public and professionals in Darlington
- Apply the learning from local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Learning Lesson Reviews
- Develop and implement our local response to the changes outlined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 statutory guidance and how they can be aligned to a joint Partnership and to strengthen scrutiny arrangements
- Continue to prepare for the forthcoming CQC Assurance Visit
- Continue to progress and focus on the steps needed to address the key priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan
- Further explore ways in which the partnership has sought and utilised feedback from children and families and vulnerable adults to help inform and Co- produce future work and service provision.

For more information about Darlington Safeguarding Partnership, please visit

**[www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk](http://www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk)**

Or email us at: **[DSP@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:DSP@darlington.gov.uk)**

# Appendix 1

## Staffing and Budget

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is supported by the following staff within the Business Unit:

- Business Manager
- Policy & Development Officer/Designated Officer
- Training and Development Officer
- Business Support Officer
- Part-time Analyst (seconded from Durham Constabulary)
- Part-time Information Officer

Contributions from Partner Agencies for 2021-22 period	
Darlington Borough Council	£145,493
North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (Tees Valley)	£41,310
Durham Constabulary	£34,404
Schools Forum	£10,000
Darlington College	£1,600
County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust	£16,973
Queen Elizabeth 6th Form College	£1,515
Probation Service North East	£1,846
Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust	£2,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>£255, 141</b>



# Appendix 2

## Relevant Agencies

- Darlington Borough Council
- Durham Constabulary
- Health agencies – North East and North Cumbria, Integrated Care Board (NENCICB), County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT), Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT), North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS)
- County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS)
- Early Years Settings
- Education (Primary, Secondary, Further Education, SEN)
- Probation Service North East
- Darlington Primary Care General Practices
- Voluntary and third sector organisations (including Healthwatch)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Support organisations for issues such as Substance Misuse / Domestic Abuse / Sexual Exploitation / Sexual Abuse (SARC)
- Family Justice Board (FJB)
- NHS England (pharmacy, dentist and optometrists)
- Independent providers including private hospitals, children’s homes, nursing and care homes, domiciliary providers
- Youth groups – e.g. sport, scouts, brownies
- Faith settings
- Minority Communities
- British Transport Police (BTP)
- Chairs of other key local boards
- Representatives of other National Partners
- Darlington Partnership – which includes business and community organisations
- Coroner

This list is not exhaustive



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council







## ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 25 FEBRUARY 2025

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### WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025

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#### SUMMARY REPORT

##### Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the work programme items scheduled to be considered by this Scrutiny Committee during the 2024/25 Municipal Year and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included.

##### Summary

2. Members are requested to consider the attached draft work programme (**Appendix 1**) for the remainder of the Municipal Year, which has been prepared based on Officers recommendations and recommendations previously agreed by this Scrutiny Committee.
3. Once the Work programme has been approved by this Scrutiny Committee, any additional areas of work which Members wish to add to the agreed work programme will require the completion of a quad of aims in accordance with the previously approved procedure (**Appendix 2**).
4. A request has been made of this Scrutiny Committee by the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee, as follows:

*At a Special Meeting of the Health and Housing Scrutiny committee held on 5 February 2025, Members received an update on the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Quality Accounts. An area of concern for Members related to healthcare associated infections, in particular Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) outbreaks at Darlington Memorial Hospital. Members of the Health and Housing Committee have*

*requested that this Committee gives consideration to the CPE data in respect of Care Homes and Domiciliary Care.*

## Recommendations

5. It is recommended that:
  - a) Members note the current status of the Work Programme and consider any additional areas of work they would like to include.
  - b) Give consideration to the request from the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee.

**Luke Swinhoe**  
**Assistant Director Law and Governance**

## Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Author: Paul Dalton

Council Plan	The report contributes to the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Members in contributing to the delivery of the Plan. The Work Programme contains items which enable Members to scrutinise those areas that contribute the priority of Living Well – a healthier and better quality of life for longer, supporting those who need it most, and Communities - working together for safer, healthier and more engaged communities.
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to diversity which this report needs to address.
Tackling Climate Change	There are no issues which this report needs to address.
Efficient and effective use of resources	This report has no impact on the Council’s Efficiency Programme.
Health and Wellbeing	This report has no direct implications to the Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder.
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Group is considered to be minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.

Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. The format of the proposed work programme has been reviewed to enable Members of this Scrutiny Committee to provide a rigorous and informed challenge to the areas for discussion.
7. The Council Plan was adopted on 18 July 2024, and outlines Darlington Borough Council's long-term ambitions for Darlington and priorities for action over the next three years. It gives strategic direction to the Council and Council services, defining priorities, identifying key actions, and shaping delivery.
8. The Council Plan identifies six priorities, one of which is 'Living Well', which states that more years in good health leads to more fulfilling lives, and a better standard of living, however the Plan highlights that are inequalities in Darlington across all stages of life which are influenced by broader social factors including education, employment, housing and income. Seven key deliverables are identified as part of this priority.
9. The Council believes that all residents should have the opportunity to live longer, healthier lives, and wants to support residents of every age to live well. The Council has committed to improving our contact with carers and working to create a network of support for better health and wellbeing outcomes. The Council will support those who need it most and signpost for access to other provision and support, where appropriate.

### Forward Plan and Additional Items

10. Once the Work Programme has been agreed by this Scrutiny Committee, any Member seeking to add a new item to the work programme will need to complete a Quad of Aims.
11. A copy of the index of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

### Climate Considerations

12. Pursuant to Minute AD22/Oct/2024, any matters pertaining to climate considerations will be outlined in the individual reports submitted to Committee.



**ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

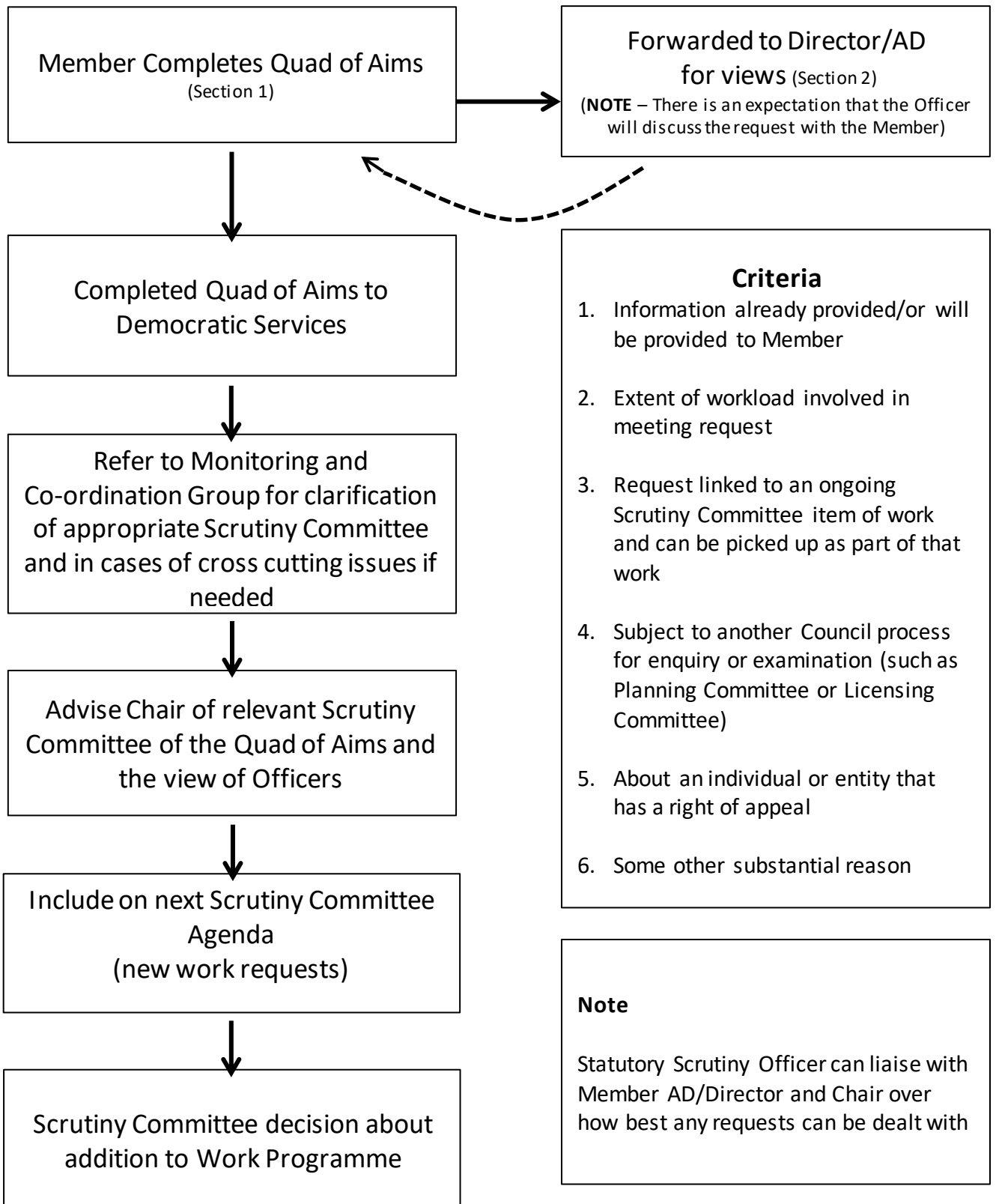
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Link to PMF (metrics)</b>	<b>Scrutiny's Role / Notes</b>
Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2024/2025 (including budgetary information)	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2025	Joss Harbron / Sharon Raine / Wendy Excell	ASC 002 ASC 003 ASC 019 ASC 045 ASC 046 ASC 049 ASC 050 ASC 208 ASC 209 ASC 211	To monitor Key Performance Indicators.  To receive six-monthly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary.
CQC Assurance Framework – Update	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2025	Joss Harbron		
Care Homes in Executive Strategy Measures / Arrangements	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2025	Rachel Watt / Joss Harbron / Barbara Beadle		Recommendation from the 'Nursing Care Homes in Special Measures Task and Finish Group' – six monthly report to this Committee.
Hoarding and Self-Neglect	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2025	Amanda Hugill / Marion Garland		

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership - Annual Report	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2025	Ann Baxter / Amanda Hugill	ASC 028 ASC 029 ASC 059 ASC 061 ASC 062 ASC 199 ASC 200 ASC 201 ASC 202 ASC 203 ASC 204 ASC 205 ASC 206 ASC 207 ASC 209 ASC 210 ASC 213 ASC 214	To consider the Annual Report on the work of the Board and to receive reassurance that adult safeguarding is being addressed and an effective approach is in place.  To be advised of the key issues for the Board and funding.
CQC Assurance Framework – Update	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025	Joss Harbron		
Overview by Commissioning Services on Shared Lives	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025	Christine Shields		Requested by Councillor Toms.
Mapping of Provisions within the Borough including Commissioned Services	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025	Christine Shields		Requested by Chair (Councillor Anderson)
Reclaiming Our Communities	To be confirmed			Request from Councillor Toms. To be discussed by Chair outside of the meeting.

**Task and Finish Review Group(s)**

- **‘Loneliness and Connected Communities’ Task and Finish Review Group** – To recommence in 2024/25.

### PROCESS FOR ADDING AN ITEM TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WORK PROGRAMME



## QUAD OF AIMS (MEMBERS' REQUEST FOR ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED BY SCRUTINY)

### SECTION 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY MEMBERS

**NOTE** – This document should only be completed if there is a clearly defined and significant outcome from any potential further work. This document should **not** be completed as a request for or understanding of information.

REASON FOR REQUEST?	RESOURCE (WHAT OFFICER SUPPORT WOULD YOU REQUIRE?)
PROCESS (HOW CAN SCRUTINY ACHIEVE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOME?)	HOW WILL THE OUTCOME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Signed Councillor .....

Date .....

**SECTION 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY DIRECTORS/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS  
(NOTE – There is an expectation that Officers will discuss the request with the Member)**

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	<b>Criteria</b>
1. (a) Is the information available elsewhere? Yes ..... No ..... If yes, please indicate where the information can be found (attach if possible and return with this document to Democratic Services) .....	1. Information already provided/or will be provided to Member
(b) Have you already provided the information to the Member or will you shortly be doing so? .....	2. Extent of workload involved in meeting request
2. If the request is included in the Scrutiny Committee work programme what are the likely workload implications for you/your staff? .....	3. Request linked to an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and can be picked up as part of that work
3. Can the request be included in an ongoing Scrutiny Committee item of work and picked up as part of that? .....	4. Subject to another Council process for enquiry or examination (such as Planning Committee or Licensing Committee)
4. Is there another Council process for enquiry or examination about the matter currently underway? .....	5. About an individual or entity that has a right of appeal
5. Has the individual or entity some other right of appeal? .....	6. Some other substantial reason
6. Is there any substantial reason (other than the above) why you feel it should not be included on the work programme ? .....	

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**Signed .....**   **Position .....**   **Date .....**

**DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
FORWARD PLAN**

**APPENDIX 3**



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

**FORWARD PLAN  
FOR THE PERIOD: 5 FEBRUARY 2025 - 30 JUNE 2025**

Title	Decision Maker and Date
Adoption of Finalised Appraisal for the Stockton and Darlington Railway: Northgate Conservation Area Including Changes to its Boundary and Name	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Adult Social Care Transport Policy 2024	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Consideration of the Use of Ingenium Parc, Maidendale Farm and part of Morton Palms for Residential Use	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Customer Services Strategy 2025/30	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Darlington Transport Plan	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Digital Darlington Strategy 2025-30	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Land at Coniscliffe Road, Darlington	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Land at Faverdale - Burtree Garden Village - Proposed Infrastructure Development Agreement (IDA)	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025/30	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) and Renewal of Town Centre Order	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
To consider the Use of Land at Faverdale including the Former St Modwen Land for Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality Credits	Cabinet 4 Mar 2025
Annual Procurement Plan Update	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Dolphin Centre – Invest to Save Projects	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Household Support Fund	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Long Term Plan for Towns	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
North East Smokefree Declaration	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Physical Activity Strategy	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Schedule of Transactions	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Strategic Asset Plan	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025
Woodland Road Waiting Restrictions	Cabinet 8 Apr 2025

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