



**DARLINGTON**  
Borough Council

# Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee Agenda

9.30 am

Monday, 3 March 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT

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

1. Introductions/ Attendance at Meeting
2. Declarations of Interest
3. To approve the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 6 January 2025 (Pages 3 - 6)
4. Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report –  
Report of the Independent Scrutineer – Darlington Safeguarding Partnership  
(Pages 7 - 46)
5. Local Designated Officer Annual Report –  
Report of the Assistant Director Children's Services  
(Pages 47 - 58)
6. Childcare Sufficiency Review 2025 –  
Report of the Assistant Director Education and Inclusion  
(Pages 59 - 72)
7. Home to School Transport –  
Report of the Assistant Director Education and Inclusion  
(Pages 73 - 76)

8. Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2024-25 –  
Report of the Assistant Director Children’s Services  
(Pages 77 - 108)
9. Overview of the Local Area SEND Inspection (November 2024) –  
Report of the Assistant Director Education and Inclusion  
(Pages 109 - 122)
10. Work Programme –  
Report of the Group Director of Operations  
(Pages 123 - 134)
11. 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
12. Questions



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

**Friday, 21 February 2025**

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

**Membership**

Councillors Ali, Allen, Crudass, Dulston, Johnson, Layton, Renton, Storr, Toms and Dr. Riley

**Statutory Co-optees**

Carly Stonier

**Non Statutory Co-optees**

Maura Regan, Janet Woodcock, John Armitage and Sally Hudson

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, Operations 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

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 6 January 2025

**PRESENT** – Councillors Allen (Chair), Crudass, Layton, Renton, Toms and Dr. Riley

**APOLOGIES** – Councillors Ali, Johnson and Storr

**ABSENT** – Councillor Dulston

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillor Wallis

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Chris Bell (Assistant Director of Children's Services), Tony Murphy (Assistant Director Education and Inclusion) and Brett Nielsen (Assistant Director Resources)

### **CYP21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Dr Amanda Riley declared her position on the board of governors of Heathfield school.

### **CYP22 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2024**

Submitted – The Minutes (previously circulated) of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2024

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 28 October 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### **CYP23 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 - 2028/29**

The Assistant Director – Resources submitted a report (previously circulated) which invited members to discuss and give consideration to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2025/26 to 2028/29 with particular emphasis on those services and finances within the MTFP which specifically related to the areas within their remit and forward views to a special meeting the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that since the MTFP had been published for consultation that the council had received notification of the draft financial settlement for 2025/26 which the Assistant Director Resources briefed the committee on the headline changes. It was also highlighted that the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) has been received in late December 2024, covering the 2025/26 period only.

In summary we noted that positive progress is being made overall with additional funding, however, there remains a significant annual funding deficit.

Questions were raised which included as to whether a breakdown of spending for individual services is available with the response that further information to that displayed in appendix 1 can be provided if members contact officers with their specific requests.

It was also asked as to whether updated figures will be included in the MTFP as they become available, with officers confirming that the most up-to-date version of the plan will be provided for Cabinet in February and for the Special Meeting of the Council on 20 February 2025.

Discussions were held in which members credited officers within Children's Services for their positive work in reducing costs by bringing services in-house and reducing the number of external placements.

**RESOLVED** - The MTFP was considered and members agreed to:

- (a) Forward any further comments to the Chair prior to the Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2025.
- (b) That authority be given to the Chair, in consultation with the Lead Scrutiny Officers, to agree the Minutes of this meeting prior to their inclusion in the Special Meeting of the Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2025.

#### **CYP24 SEND STRATEGY 2025-2029**

The Assistant Director Education and Inclusion presented the draft Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2025-2029 which details the key elements of the Strategy and the planned implementation with partners.

Members were informed that the SEND Strategy establishes our strategic approach to the delivery of SEND services for children and young people in Darlington, ensuring the offer is coordinated and responsive to the needs of our community. The strategy sets out our shared local area vision, principles, and priorities to ensure that partners across the Darlington local area are working together effectively to identify, assess and meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) from birth to the age of 25. The SEND Strategy has been coproduced with partners across the borough, and is fundamental to implementing partners responsibilities under the Children and Families Act 2014. It reflects the ambitions and priorities of the Council Plan and other key strategic documents.

Questions were raised which included how relevant information regarding SEND and EHCPs is being provided to parents with the response that the offer is displayed in as clear terms as possible on the Council website and that outreach and accessibility remains a focus. With "Let's Talk SEND" sessions promoted on social media and via flyers including QR codes with evening and online sessions being planned for the future.

It was also asked what impact engagement with children / families had on the development of the strategy with officers confirming that they were heavily included with engagement with children in early years being a priority.

Clarifications of tribunal outcomes was asked with info provided that nationally, 98% of tribunal decisions go against Local Authorities however in Darlington this figure is far lower which underscores the effectiveness of work with parents and carers.

It was asked to whether academisation is an issue to SEND delivery with officers confirming that SENCO staff are present in each school to aid with delivery and if any issues are raised to the Local Authority, they are always considered carefully.

Discussions were held which included the possibility of a Task and Finish group to look into message delivery.

A member also highlighted that parents have reported difficulties in accessing dyslexia diagnoses which officers agreed to look into.

**RESOLVED** – Members agreed the recommendations and noted the priorities outlined in the strategy.

Members were also provided with an update on progress made on the Council's Safety Valve agreement to address historic deficit in the High Needs Block which supports education provision for young people with Special Educational Needs. The council entered into the "Safety Valve" agreement with the Department for Education (DfE), enabling funding over a 5-year period to address the accumulated deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (HNB).

**RESOLVED** – Members noted the Safety Valve terms of agreement and progress made to this date.

## **CYP25 TRANSITIONAL SERVICES**

The Assistant Director Education and Inclusion provided members with an update on the responsibilities for the Local Authority in relation to support young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to prepare for adulthood.

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

A member expressed their appreciation for the work being done in this area and asked the key policies of the plan with the response that working with families is a constant priority and maintaining the responsibility of Children's Services to support individuals into the care of Adult's Services.

**RESOLVED** - Members noted the content of the report and agreed the suggested recommendations.

## **CYP26 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Group Director of Operations submitted a report (previously circulated) requesting that consideration be given to this Scrutiny Committee's work programme and to consider any additional areas which Members would like to suggest should be included in the previously approved work programme

**RESOLVED** – That the work programme be noted.

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 MARCH 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 Children and Young People’s 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 Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the DSP Annual Report for 2023/24 which is published on the DSP website.

**Chris Bell**  
**Assistant Director - Children’s Services**

**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 the Council Plan.
Addressing inequalities	Darlington Safeguarding Partnership 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 children and young people in Darlington is a priority within this report.
S17 Crime and Disorder	Children and Young People 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. 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.
5. The Partnership continues to ensure there are effective arrangements in place to help keep children and young people 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 are outlined within the report. The year saw the publication of new Working Together Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and the Partnership will be working to implement the requirements through the next reporting period.
6. A key statutory responsibility of the partnership is to undertake reviews of cases where a child or adult has died or been seriously harmed as a result of abuse and neglect and there is reasonable cause for concern in how safeguarding partner worked together to safeguard that adult or child. In this reporting period, Darlington Safeguarding Partnership published its first Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review in respect of Family H. A summary of learning from this case is outlined in the report.
7. The report outlines the strengths and impact of multi-agency working to help keep everyone in Darlington safe, with a continued focus on ensuring local multi-agency safeguarding practice remains effective for all our children and young people and adults with needs for care and support.



## **Outcome of Consultation**

8. Not applicable.

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**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.

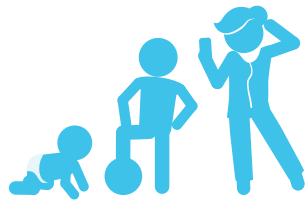
We hope you enjoy reading our annual report and that it gives you assurance about the strength and impact of multi-agency working to keep everyone safe in Darlington. We will continue to challenge ourselves to deliver better services, support those who are vulnerable in our communities and further develop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

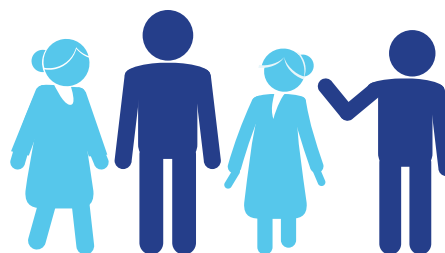
The Health of People in Darlington is varied compared with the England average and **20%** of children live in low income families.



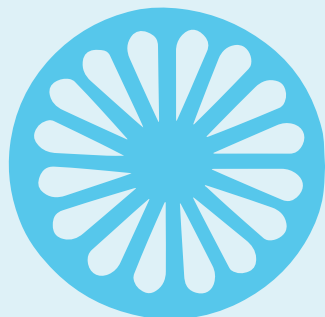
As of 2021 Darlington has a population in excess of **107,000** individuals who live in around **48,475** households.



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



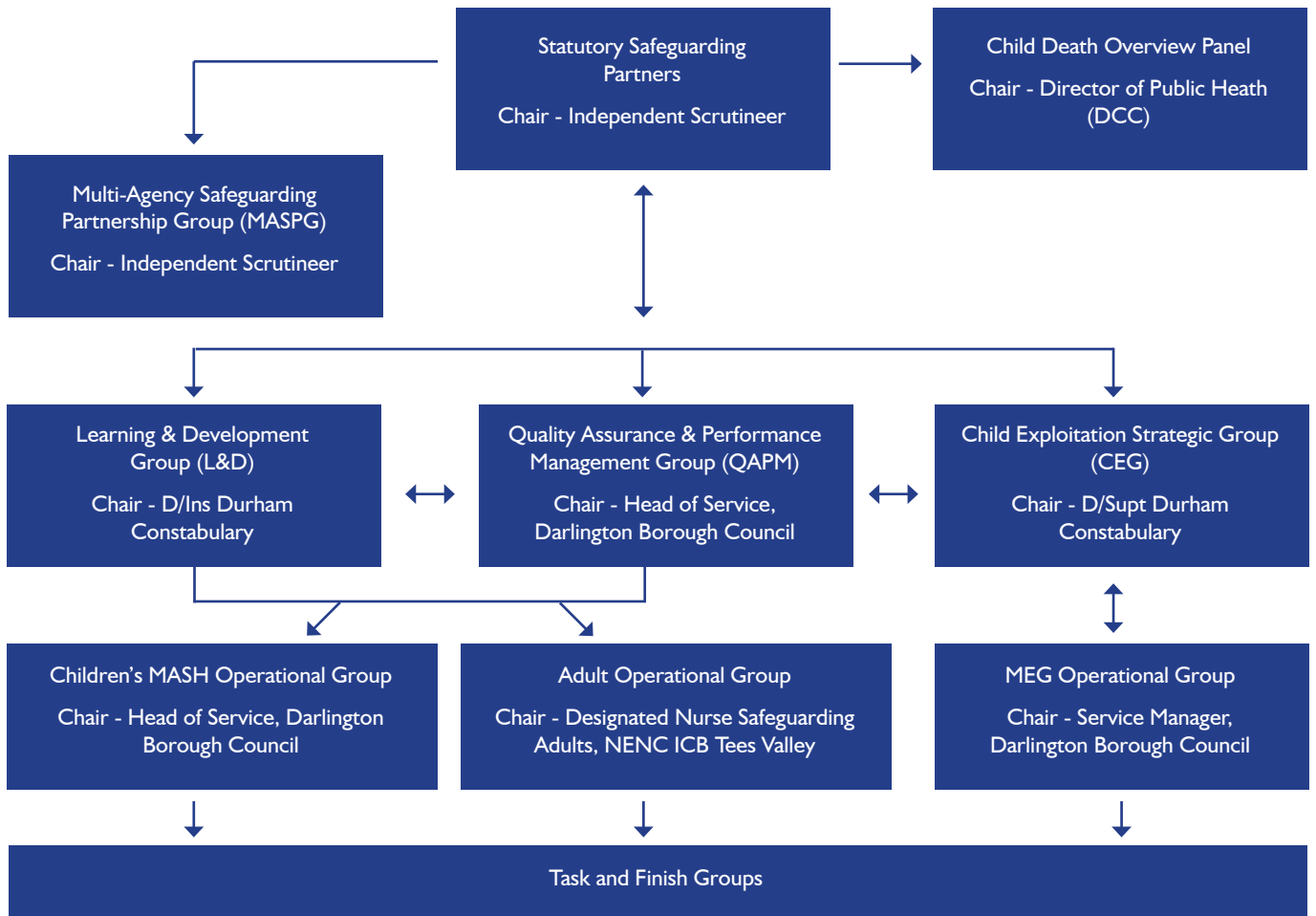
The DSP revised its governance arrangements in 2022/23 and set out the role and responsibilities of the sub-groups. The sub-groups engage in the safeguarding priorities and explore the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of organisations are represented on the Partnership groups 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:

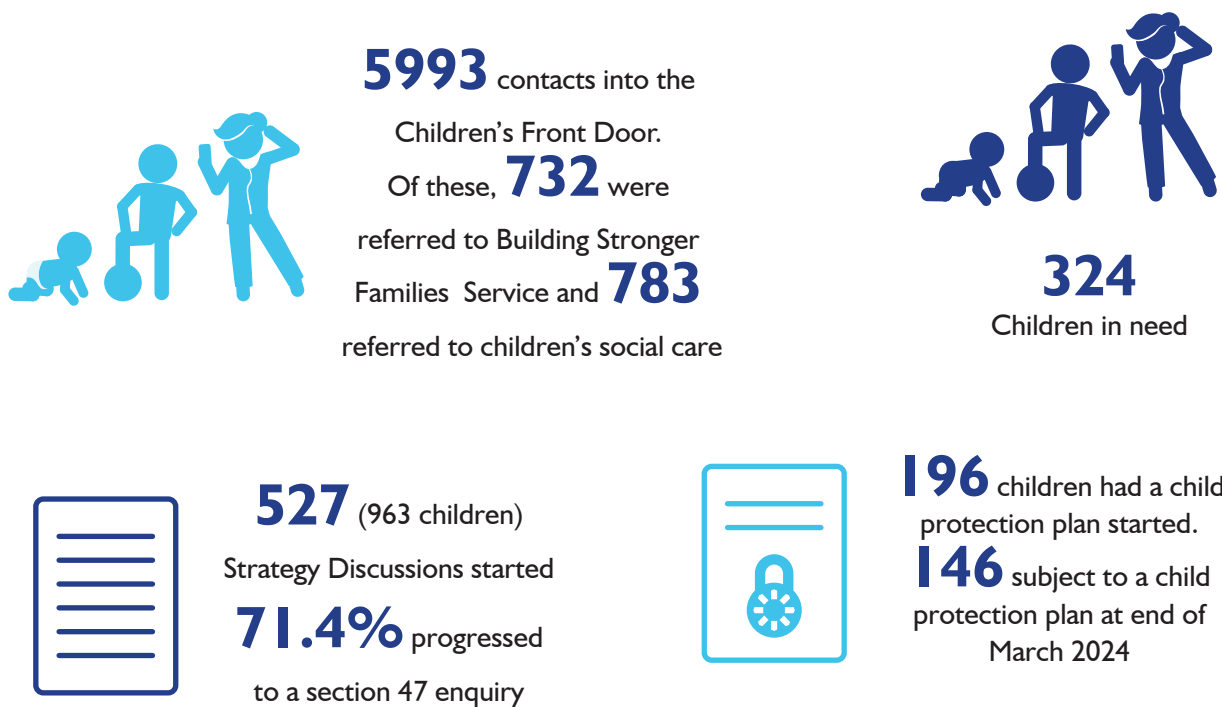
- **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Network** - its purpose is to coordinate a response to modern slavery and human trafficking and increase support for victims.
- **North East Region SAR Champions Network** – its purpose is to identify regional and national themes, develop good practice in the 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)

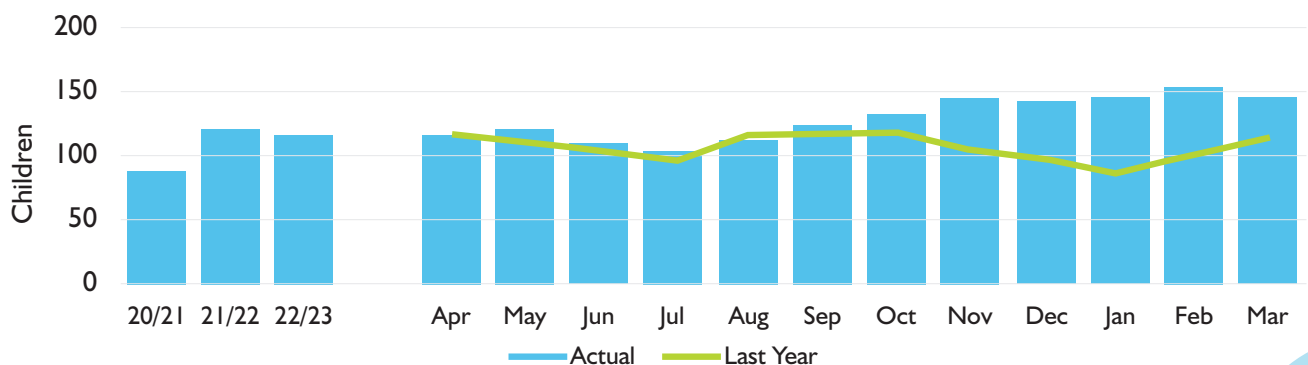
## Child Safeguarding

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.

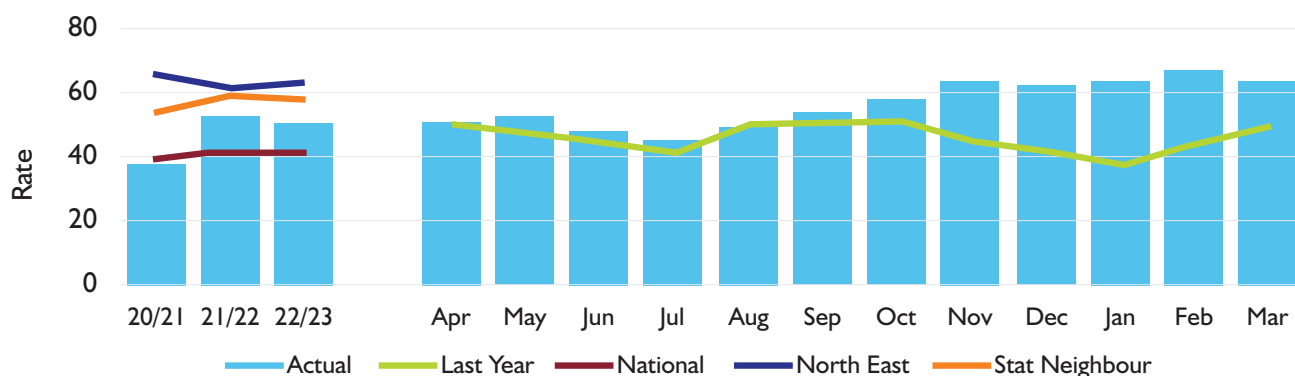
The below provides a snapshot of safeguarding concerns and the outcomes achieved during the year:



## 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.

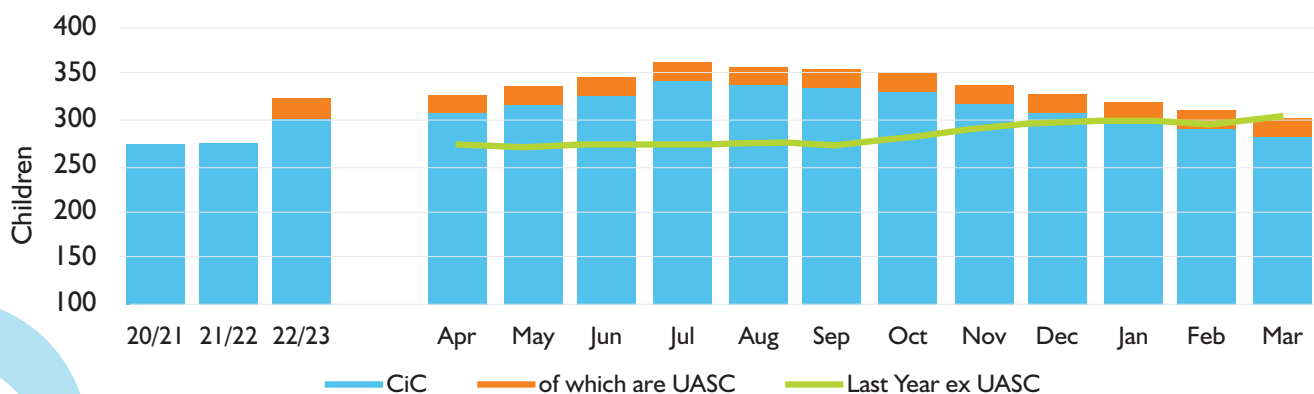
## Keeping Families Together

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.

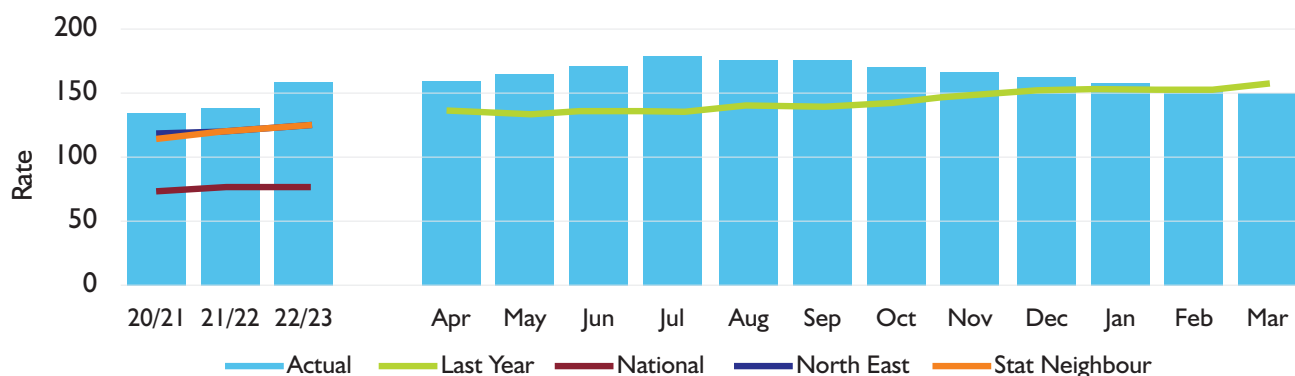
## Children in Care

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

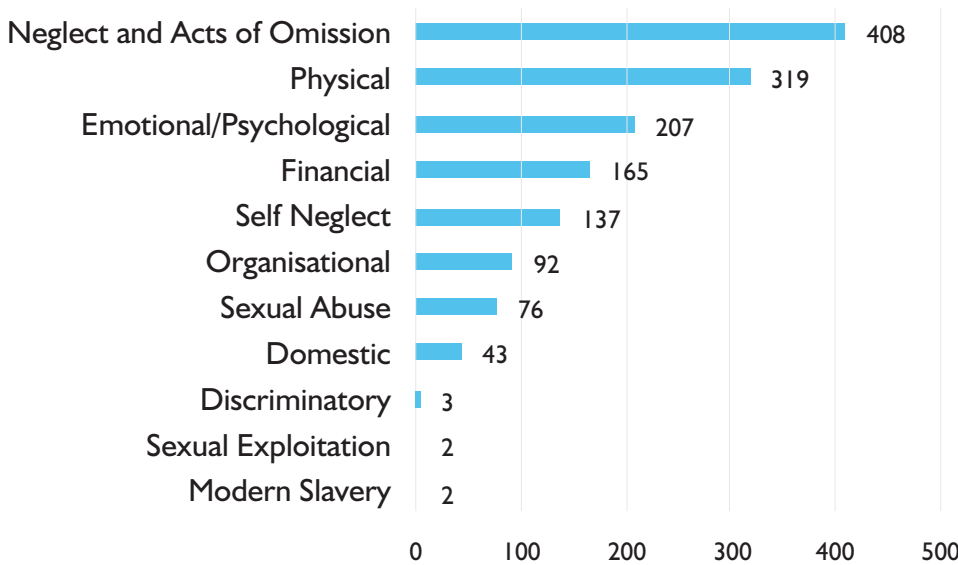


**90%**

risk reduced or removed

## Types of Abuse

### Section 42 Enquiries



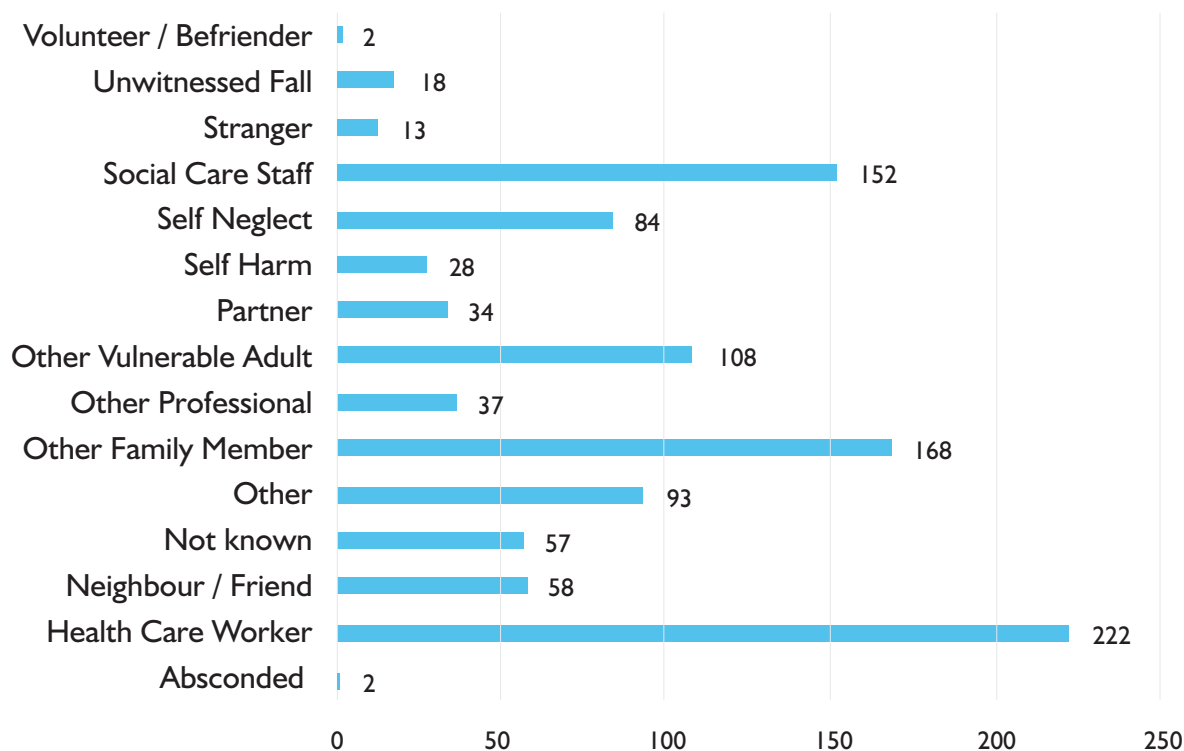
The top five areas of abuse for S42 enquiries continue to be:

- 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

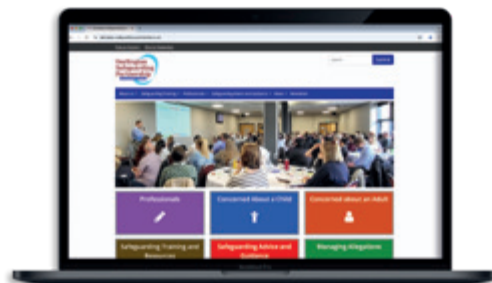
The DSP continues to use a variety of communication methods to share information to a wide range of different audiences.

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







## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY

3 MARCH 2025

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### DESIGNATED OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

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#### SUMMARY REPORT

##### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on the progress and performance of the Designated Officers' (DO) response to all contacts received relating to allegations/concerns of abuse by those who work with children for the period April 2023 to March 2024.

##### Summary

2. In line with national guidance, the Designated Officer function is to ensure that:
  - (a) Advice and guidance are provided to partner agencies and staff where an allegation is made against a person who works with children (paid or voluntary capacity).
  - (b) The Designated Officer will facilitate and oversee this process. The Designated Officer does not investigate. Investigation is the role of the employer or the police where a criminal offence has been committed.
  - (c) An agreed outcome of the investigation is established.
  - (d) Allegations are appropriately managed by employers to protect not only the welfare of children but also staff.
  - (e) Support actions are taken without delay to protect children.
  - (f) All learning is effectively disseminated.
3. All organisations working with children in Darlington are required to have policies and procedures in place in relation to what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children. These policies and procedures should be in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership multi-agency procedures.

4. The allegation can be in connection with:
  - (a) Employment
  - (b) Voluntary activity
  - (c) Work placement
  - (d) The individual's own children
  - (e) Related to the community or private life of a partner, member of the family or other household member.

### **Recommendations**

5. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The contents of the report and the work undertaken during 2023/24 be noted.
  - (b) The annual report be agreed.

**Chris Bell**  
**Assistant Director of Children's Services**

### **Background Papers**

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

Martin Graham Extension 6703



Council Plan	This report has no implications for the Corporate Plan
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to inequalities 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	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda
Health and Wellbeing	The work of the Designated Officer can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of children and young people
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All Children and Young People
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	Not a key decision
Urgent Decision	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

### Purpose of the Report

6. The purpose of this report is to update Members of Scrutiny on the progress and performance of the Designated Officer (DO) service, (previously known as the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO) for all contacts received relating to allegations/concerns of abuse by those who work with children for the period April 2023 to March 2024.

### Introduction / National Context

7. The framework for the management of allegations of abuse is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (July 2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges September 2018 (Revised 2022).
8. In line with the guidance, the Designated Officer function is required to ensure that:
  - (a) Advice and guidance are provided to partner agencies and staff;
  - (b) Any allegation made against a person who works with children in either a paid or a voluntary capacity is investigated. The Designated Officer will facilitate and oversee this process to conclusion. The Designated Officer does not investigate. That is the role of the employer or if a criminal allegation, the police;
  - (c) Designated Officer meetings are chaired effectively, and an agreed outcome of the investigation is established;
  - (d) Allegations are appropriately managed by employers to protect not only the welfare of children but also staff;
  - (e) Support actions are taken without delay to protect children;
  - (f) Learning from Designated Officer referrals is effectively disseminated.
9. All organisations within Darlington are required to have clear policies and procedures in place which outline how and what their organisation should do when an allegation is made against an employee/volunteer who has contact with children. These policies and procedures should be in line with Darlington Safeguarding Partnership procedures.
10. The criteria for a Designated Officer referral are when a person is alleged to have:
  - (a) Behaved in a way that has harmed or may harm a child;
  - (b) Has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
  - (c) Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she may pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or occasionally with children

(d) Behaved in a way or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

11. The allegation can be in connection with employment / voluntary activity / work placement, regarding individual's own children or related to the community or private life of a partner / member of the family / household member.

### **Local Arrangements**

12. Darlington Borough Council currently has one Designated Officer who is based within the Independent Review and Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Service. In the year, the Designated Officer role has been agency Designated Officers.
13. The Designated Officer function is supervised by a Service Manager to ensure that policies are applied consistently and fairly and that all enquiries are progressed in a timely manner.

### **Cross-Boundary Issues**

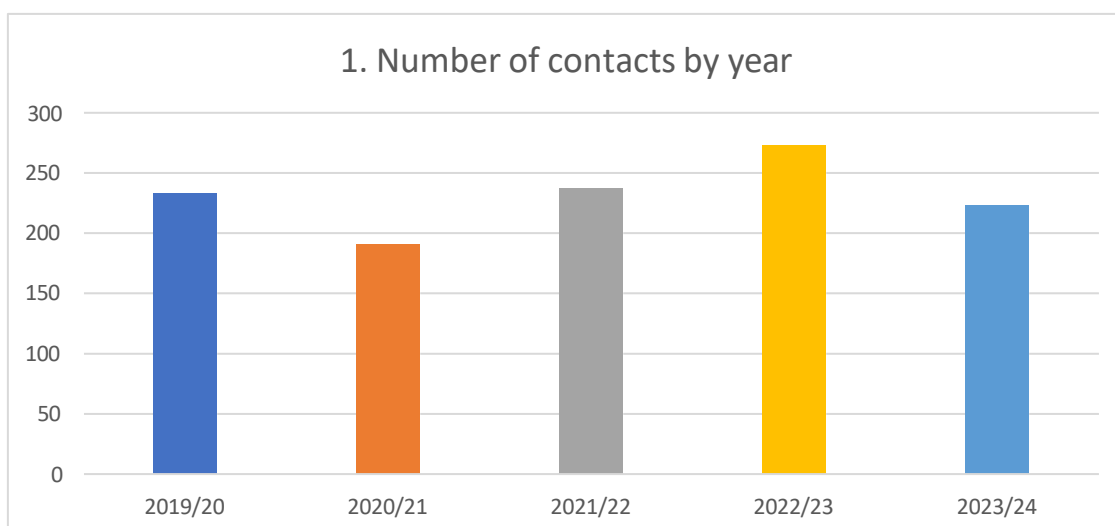
14. Where a child from the Darlington Local Authority area makes an allegation in a setting or placement which is outside the Darlington Borough Council jurisdiction, the lead responsibility for action lies with the Designated Officer in the local authority for the area where the alleged abuse occurred.
15. In these circumstances, the relevant Designated Officer, and where appropriate, the child's Social Worker, will liaise with the relevant local authority and agree a joint strategy.
16. Checks should be made as to whether there are any other children in the placement. If so, the child's Social Worker and Team Manager must be informed, and the Designated Officer should consult them about the action required.
17. Interviews of children from Darlington Local Authority living out of area will usually be undertaken by their own local children's social care services in conjunction with the police as appropriate.
18. Where the referral relates to a child from another Local Authority temporarily placed in an establishment located within the Darlington Local Authority area, the Darlington Designated Officer should liaise with the child's home authority about the roles and responsibilities in carrying out this procedure.

### **Contact made with the Designated Officer**

19. It should be noted that two Designated Officers have carried out the role at different times throughout 2023/24.
20. In the report, all percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
21. In 2023/24 the Designated Officer service received a total of 223 contacts in respect of

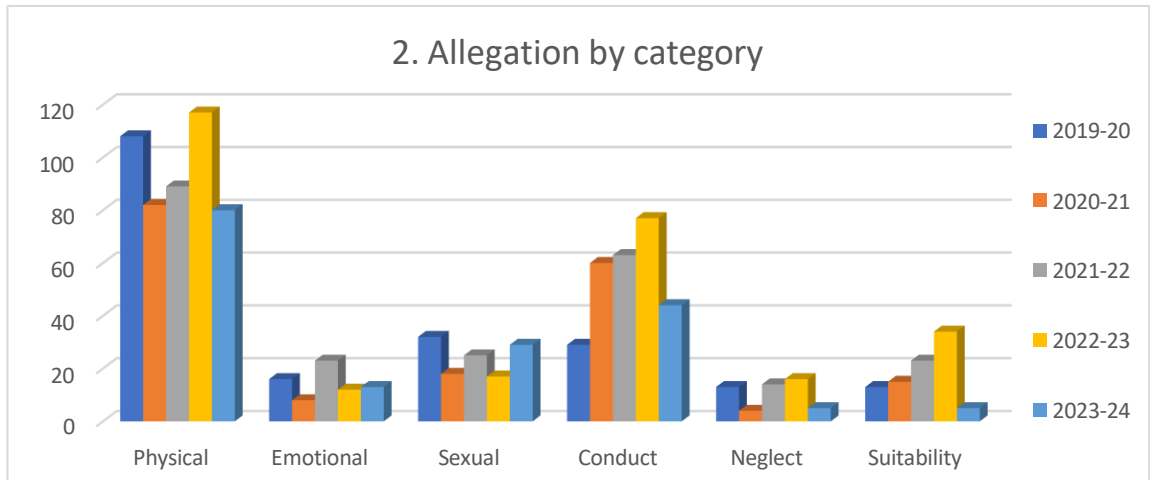
potential allegations. This was a 22% decrease on the number of contacts received in 2022/23 but is more in line with recent years. Of the total number of contacts received, 28 allegations progressed to an Initial Evaluation Meeting (IEM) or a strategy meeting which the Designated Officer attended, (all of which were conducted via Microsoft Teams). This was 12.5% of all contacts, a decrease on the 2022/23 figure.

- 22. Initial Evaluation Meetings take place when information sharing is beneficial between agencies involved, for example, Designated Safeguarding Leads within the referring organisation, Human Resources, Police and Children’s Services. This can follow a Strategy Meeting held by Children’s Services, or it may be a stand-alone meeting. In some circumstances, it is appropriate to share information via telephone without the need of convening an Initial Evaluation Meeting, for example, when the allegation is not of a serious nature, there is no involvement with other agencies, or there is limited information to share with the employer. These allegations are still monitored by the Designated Officer.



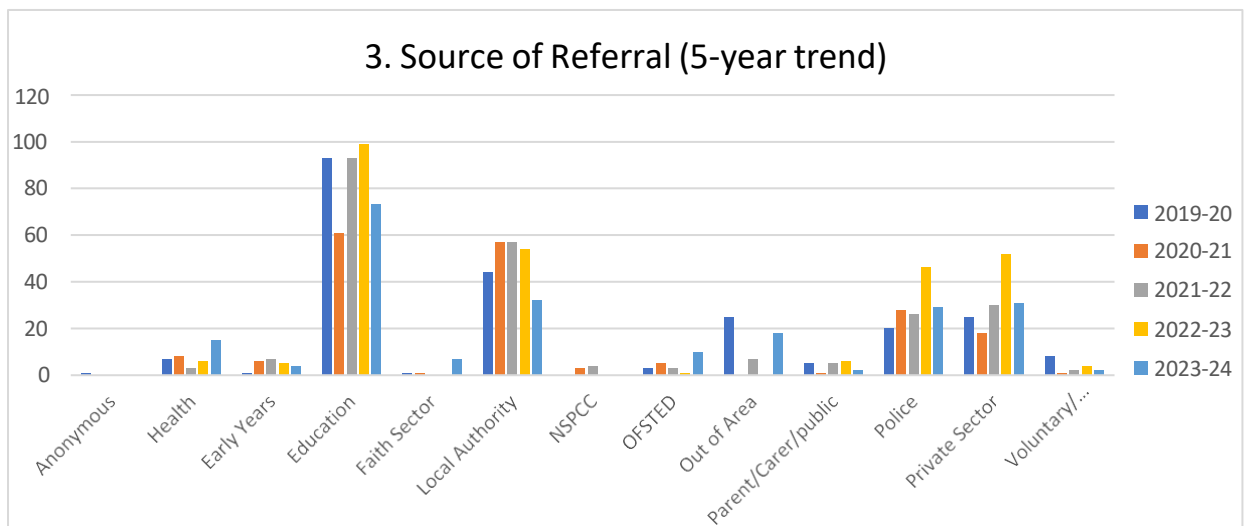
- 23. The figures in **Chart 1** show that the rate of contacts in 2023/24 fell by 22% (50 contacts) in comparison to the previous reporting year.
- 24. The majority of contacts with the Designated Officer relate to schools and the number tends to fall significantly in the month of August during the summer break and falls to a lesser extent during other months when schools are closed.

### Categories of Concern



- 25. For 2023/24, the main category for referral was allegations of physical abuse. This is in line with the data from previous years.
- 26. Allegations under the category ‘conduct’ have seen a decrease in 2023/24. Contacts recorded within this category relate to behaviours which do not easily fit into the four main categories.
- 27. The category of suitability usually relates to issues in an employee’s personal life, such as mental ill-health, ‘association’ with an offender, or association with proscribed organisations, which may affect their suitability to work with children. Some of these incidents related to mental health, alcohol abuse or self-harm or association with a partner who has committed sexual offences.
- 28. Sexual abuse, emotional harm and neglect are roughly in line with previous trends.

### Source of Referrals by Profession / Employment setting



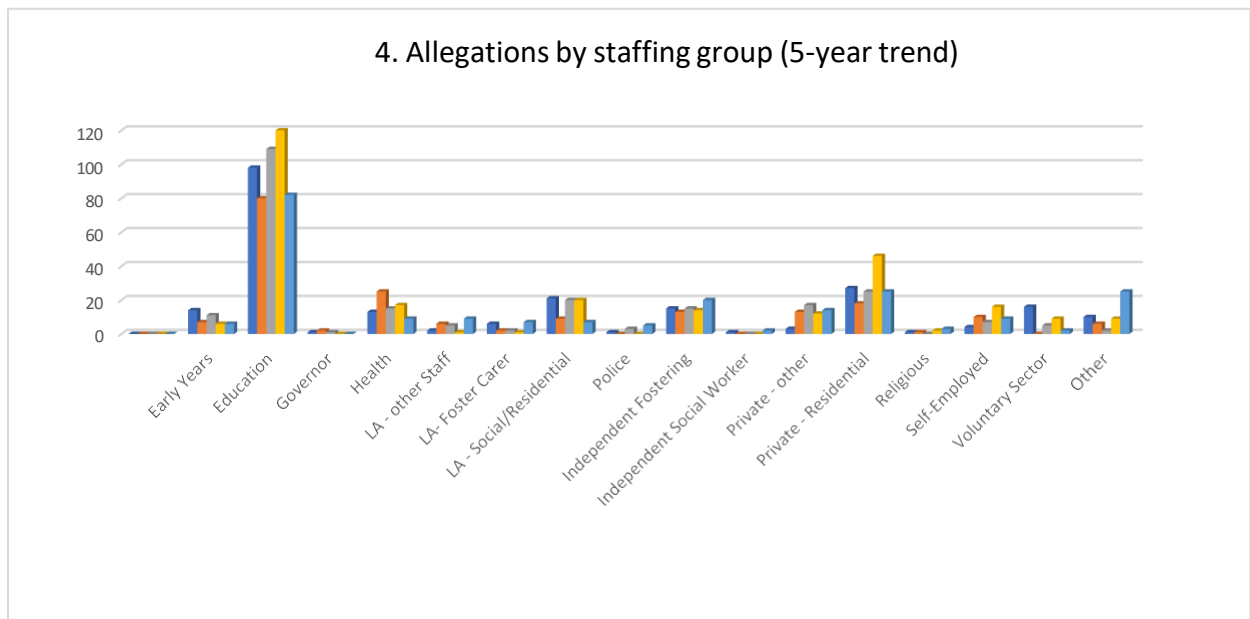
- 29. As can be seen in **Chart 3**, Education settings in 2023/24 continues to be the largest referring group, accounting for 73 (33%) of contacts. This is a small decrease on last year

(36%). Most contacts involving schools were because of allegations of physical abuse and correspond to the analysis of 'category of concern' data, showing that physical abuse is the most common category of allegation reported by education settings.

- 30. Contacts have continued to be received from a wide range of professions and organisations. The other main sources remain Local Authorities, Police and Private Sector.

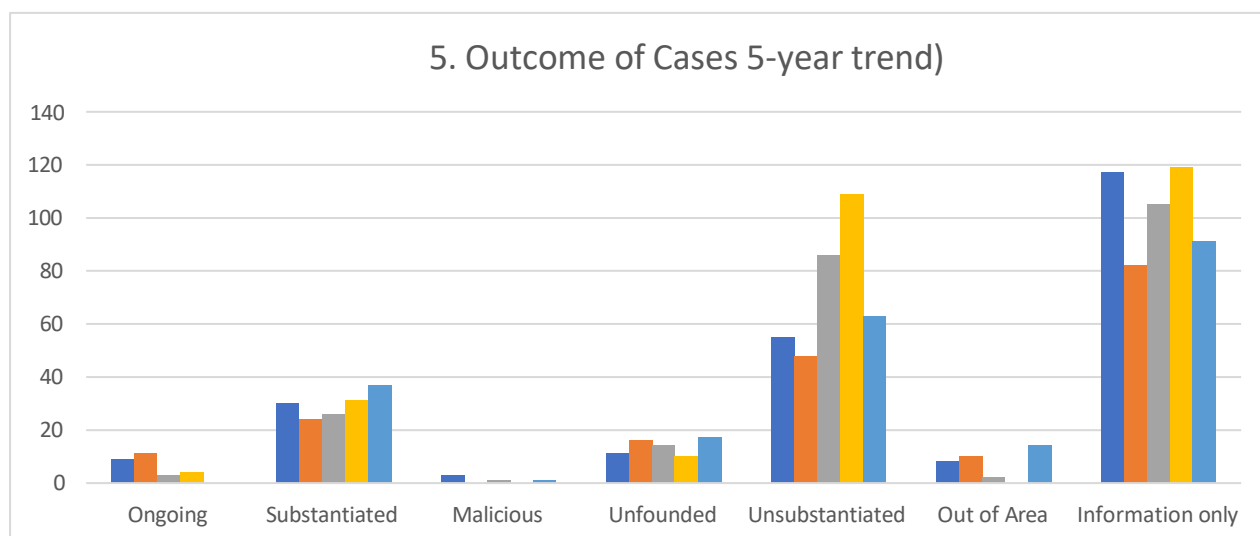
### Allegations by Staff Group

- 31. **Chart 4** shows that referrals are made across a wide range of roles and settings, whether paid staff or volunteers, as outlined in the national guidelines.



- 32. As expected, and in accordance with previous years, the largest number of allegations by staffing groups is Education, accounting for 82 contacts which is 37.43% of all allegations referred in 2023/24. This is a drop from last year's figure which was the highest ever, but more in line with previous years.
- 33. The Designated Officer has worked on re-establishing a good relationship with the Designated Safeguarding Leads in all schools in Darlington and there are clear channels of communication.

## Outcome of Cases



34. In relation to the 37 substantiated allegations, 11 employees were dismissed (30%), 4 were deregistered (11%), 6 resigned from their position (16%), and 7 staff members were reinstated (19%). No action was taken in respect of 9 staff members (24%), with actions plans or management advice provided.
35. There were 63 unsubstantiated outcomes and of these, 19 were re-instated (30%) and 25 resulted in no further action (40%), 19 were either dismissed or resigned (30%). When an allegation is recorded as unsubstantiated, employers are encouraged to look at whether learning can be derived from the incident to inform future practice and whether additional training or management advice for the employee is required.
36. There were 17 allegations deemed to be unfounded, in all cases, no further action was taken.
37. One allegation was recorded under the category 'malicious'. This outcome is not used by the Designated Officer unless there is overwhelming evidence that the allegation was based on deliberate falsehoods.
38. In this reporting period, 63 contacts were recorded for 'information only'. Sometimes after initial enquiries have been carried out by the Designated Officer it is identified that they fall outside of the remit of the Designated Officer. They normally result in advice being given or signposting to other services.
39. At the time of writing, no allegations remain open.

### Designated Officer in 2024/25

40. The Designated Officer service will continue to be crucial to frontline practice to safeguard children in Darlington. Working in partnership with the Designated Officer and sharing information effectively ensures that children are protected from people who pose a risk of harm and promotes good practice and challenges unsafe practice. The Designated Officer continues to work with the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Trainer and the Education Safeguarding Officer to raise awareness of the role of the Designated Officer and the Managing Allegations Procedures to promote good practice and safeguard children.

## **Recommendations**

41. To note the contents of the report and the work undertaken during 2023/24.



**The future of the Designated Officer service in Darlington to be agreed and a decision made as to where the service will be placed within the Local Authority**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Planned Outcome</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
A decision to be made as to where the Designated Officer would be best placed within the Local Authority with regards to workload and taking into consideration resilience for abstraction.	A decision regarding where the DO role should be placed.	Assistant Director	March 2024

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 MARCH 2025**

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**CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REVIEW 2024**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the findings of the 2024 Childcare Sufficiency Review.

**Summary**

2. The Department for Education's Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, January 2024 requires local authorities to 'secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0 – 14 or up to 18 for disabled children'. In carrying out this requirement local authorities should 'report annually to elected council members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and to make this report available and accessible to parents'.
3. The childcare market in Darlington is made up of private day nurseries, pre-schools, childminders, out of school clubs, nursery schools and nursery units. Cases of unmet demand are gathered using various methods: from providers through the monthly attendance returns, by analysing parental enquiries via the families' information service (FIS), via the unmet demand list and from any parental complaints to the local authority. There have been no indications that there has been a lack of sufficiency overall in the borough during the period of the review.
4. The National Childcare Expansion Programme is ongoing. The changes are as follows:
  - (a) From April 2024, the introduction of 15 hours of funded childcare for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds.
  - (b) From September 2024, the introduction of 15 hours of funded childcare for eligible working parents of babies from 9 months up to 2 years old.
  - (c) From September 2025, the introduction of 30 hours of funded childcare for eligible working parents of babies from 9 months up to 3 years old.
  - (d) A government ambition is that by 2026, parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it will be able to access term time childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm, so that parents can access employment and improve labour market participation.

5. Since the introduction of the first phase of new entitlements in Spring 2024, there has been an increase in uptake of entitlements of 16%. The early years sector in Darlington has been able to accommodate this increase, partly through expansion of places offered and partly because many of these children already accessed childcare through parent paid places.
6. The national wraparound childcare programme is part of the childcare reforms announced in the 2023 Spring Budget. Local authorities have been allocated start-up funding over two academic years to support schools to increase the number of places offered to parents. To date 11 schools have been awarded grants to expand the number of places available or create new places. The total number of places expected to be made available to parents/carers through the programme is approximately 380.
7. The childcare sector is still facing recruitment and retention issues, nationally and locally. Local authority officers support recruitment and retention in several ways. For example, they attend the Darlington jobs fairs to promote childcare as a career, link with the Department of Work and Pensions to deliver information sessions to job seekers and work with secondary schools for careers events and masterclasses.
8. The local authority (LA) has continued to work with the sector through the Early Years Education Strategy Group. Support has continued to be provided through regular guidance updates, network meetings, public health team and Darlington Safeguarding Partnership attendance at provider briefings, the early years leads in schools network, virtual inclusion panels, individualised support for transitions, setting link officers and through the early years newsletter.
9. Whilst the childcare market in Darlington has met the challenges brought by the national expansion so far, work is on-going to support sufficiency for September 2025 and promote to parents' government schemes to assist with the cost of childcare, such as Tax-Free Childcare (TFC), the childcare element of Universal Credits and the early years entitlements. In addition, as the funded market expands, particular attention needs to be given to monitoring access to places for children with special educational needs and disabilities and children who are eligible for a place for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.

### **Recommendation**

10. It is recommended that members note for information the findings of the 2024 Childcare Sufficiency Review.

**Tony Murphy**  
**Assistant Director - Education and Inclusion**

### **Background Papers**

The following paper was used in this report:

- (i) 2024-25 Childcare Sufficiency Review

Council Plan	This report has no implications for the Corporate Plan
Addressing inequalities	There are no issues relating to inequalities 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	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda
Health and Wellbeing	The work of the Designated Officer can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of children and young people
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All Children and Young People
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	Not a key decision
Urgent Decision	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

### The Childcare Expansion Programme

11. In the Spring 2023 Budget, the government announced the Childcare Expansion Programme. There was already established childcare entitlements of 15 hours a week for all 3 and 4-year-olds and for 2 year old children from low-income households and an additional 15 hours a week (total 30) for 3 and 4-year-olds from eligible working families.
12. The phased changes are as follows:
  - (a) From April 2024, the introduction of 15 hours of funded childcare for eligible working parents of 2-year-olds.
  - (b) From September 2024, the introduction of 15 hours of funded childcare for eligible working parents of babies from 9 months up to 2 years old.
  - (c) From September 2025, the introduction of 30 hours of funded childcare for eligible working parents of babies from 9 months up to 3 years old (where eligibility will match the existing 3 and 4-year-old 30 hours offer).
  - (d) The reduction in staff-to-child ratios from 1:4 to 1:5 for 2-year-olds from September 2023 is now in effect.
13. In February 2024, a financial incentives pilot scheme was launched to increase the number of childcare workers by giving new and returning workers a £1000 tax free payment if they met certain criteria. The pilot has not had a large uptake nationally and this was also reflected in Darlington.
14. The national wraparound childcare programme is part of the childcare reforms, with start-up funding to support the introduction or expansion of childcare provision, from Monday to Friday during term time, 8am to 6pm for primary school-aged children. The LA has worked with the Department for Education (DfE) and schools to implement the programme. To date 11 schools have been awarded grants to expand the number of places available or create new places. The total number of places expected to be made available through the programme is approximately 380.
15. In early 2023, funding was made available by the Department for Education for capital projects in schools and settings to deliver expansion of entitlement and/or wraparound places. 5 projects have been funded in Darlington schools and settings. These projects will deliver up to an additional 65 wraparound places, 20 entitlements places for 2-year-olds and 60 entitlement places for mixed ages.

### The childcare market in Darlington

16. The childcare market in Darlington is made up of private day nurseries, pre-schools, maintained nursery schools, nursery units attached to schools, childminders and out of

school clubs. Typically, childcare providers draw funding from two sources: early years entitlement places for 9 months to 4-year-olds which are funded by the local authority (from funding provided by the DfE) and places across the whole age range which are paid for by parents.

### Early years provision

**Table 1: Number of registered early years providers by type in July 2024**

Type of Provider	Number of providers
Childminders	38
Private Nurseries	18
Maintained Nursery Schools	2
Nursery units attached to a school	18
Pre-Schools	8

17. Provision has been relatively stable during this period. One new school nursery opened in September 2024 providing an extra 26 early year places. Childminder numbers fluctuate and numbers overall have reduced in recent years, falling from 51 in November 2022 to 38 at present. Currently there are potentially five new childminders interested in providing early years childcare.

### Demand for childcare

18. Several factors impact on demand for childcare including employment in the local area. Between July 2023 and June 2024, 81.7% of the working age population were economically active, with 77.8% in employment. This is higher than the national average of 75.5% and the North East average of 71.1%.

19. The birthrate in Darlington has declined in recent years; however, there was a small recovery in 2023/24.

**Table 2: A breakdown by age of under 5s at 31 August 2024**

Year of birth (Sep – Aug)	Year entering reception	Births	Annual difference	Age
2019/2020	2024/2025	1171		4
2020/2021	2025/2026	1128	-43	3
2021/2022	2026/2027	1119	-9	2
2022/2023	2027/2028	1037	-82	1
2023/2024	2028/2029	1058	28	0

*Source: GP registration data provided by NHS Digital from the NHS Primary Care Registration (Demographic) database. The reports break down the number of children living in English postcodes and registered at a GP practice.*

20. Housing developments, as part of the Local Plan, are likely to generate small increases in demand for childcare over time. Using pupil projection information for new build homes within the LA, on average, each 100 new family homes are expected to generate approximately 2.8 additional children per year group, some of which will require childcare.
21. In addition, the introduction of the new childcare entitlements to support working parents and young children has resulted in an increase in demand. Since the introduction of the new entitlements in Spring 2024, there has been an increase in the number of children accessing entitlements. In Summer 2023 the total number of children accessing entitlements was 2014, by Summer 2024 this had increased by 16% to 2418. The sector has been able to accommodate these places, partly because many of these children were already accessing childcare through parent paid places. These may be further referred to as ‘switched places’.

**Table 2: Take up of early years entitlements places in summer 2024**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>2 yr-old disadvantaged</b>	<b>2 yr-old working parents</b>	<b>3 and 4-yr-old 15 hours (only)</b>	<b>3 and 4-yr-old 30 hours</b>	
Nursery schools	49	23	103	58	
Nursery units	61	1	369	231	
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>895</b>
<b>PVIs</b>	<b>2 yr-old disadvantaged</b>	<b>2 yr-old working parent</b>	<b>3-4 yr-old 15 hrs (only)</b>	<b>3-4 yr-old 30 hrs</b>	
Day nursery	166	300	214	434	
Pre-school	16	66	78	151	
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>1425</b>
<b>Childminders</b>	<b>2 yr-old disadvantaged</b>	<b>2 yr-old working parent</b>	<b>3-4 yr-old 15 hrs (only)</b>	<b>3-4 yr-old 30 hrs</b>	
Childminders	6	44	6	42	<b>98</b>

22. The sector has been able to accommodate these places, partly because many of these children were already accessing childcare through parent paid places. These may be referred to as ‘switched places’.
23. A further increase in demand is expected from September 2025 as eligible working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3 years old will be entitled to an additional 15 hours free childcare per week for 38 weeks per year. However, it is anticipated that there will be some parents already accessing hours who ‘switch’ parent paid hours to entitlement hours.
24. In early 2023, funding was made available by the Department for Education for capital projects in schools and settings to deliver expansion of entitlement and/or wraparound places. Five projects have been funded in Darlington schools and settings. These projects will deliver up to an additional 20 entitlements places for 2-year-olds and 60 mixed age entitlement places.



## **Wraparound and out of school childcare**

25. The national wraparound childcare programme defines wraparound as childcare provision, available Monday to Friday during term time from 8am to 6pm (or an equivalent time scale such as 7:45am to 5:45pm). The programme is focused on primary school-aged children from reception to year 6. In Darlington nearly half of primary schools already have a full wraparound offer, with others that offer a similar time frame (i.e. 7:45am to 5:45pm). All primary schools offer before school provision, with starting times ranging from 7am to 8:30am. With respect to afterschool provision, two schools have no provision. Sixteen primary schools offer some form of provision until 6pm, either through their own wraparound or through a private provider. During the year, one private provider of out of school care closed but the school introduced their own wraparound offer resulting in no loss of places. The remaining 12 either have an offer which sits slightly outside the DfE definition (for example 7:45am to 5:45pm) or finish between 4:20pm and 5.45pm. There are 36 active childminders across the town who provide wraparound to schools.
26. In early 2023, funding was made available by the Department for Education for capital projects in schools and settings to deliver expansion of entitlement and/or wraparound places. Five projects have been funded in Darlington schools and settings. These projects will deliver up to an additional 65 wraparound places.
27. In early 2024, schools were offered the opportunity to express interest in revenue funding through the National Wraparound Childcare Programme. To date 11 schools have been awarded grants to expand the number of places available or create new places. The total number of places expected to be made available through the programme is approximately 380.

## **Holiday provision**

28. Within Darlington, there are 20 providers registered for holiday childcare provision. They deliver to children aged between the ages of 2 and 18 years, with further specialist provision from Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) for those aged 18 to 25. Holiday provision is delivered in a variety of different formats, seven were nursery providers, five were private providers based in schools, one school has its own, two were private providers and five of the schemes were from Darlington Association on Disability (DAD).
29. 13 of the providers have start times between 7:30am and 8:30am and finish times between 4:30pm and 6pm.
30. In 2021, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme was established by the Department for Education. The programme is for children aged 5 to 16 years who receive benefit related free school meals. In Darlington this is provided by the Move More team and details of the programme are sent to eligible parents and guardians via schools along with a unique code which they need to book a place for a child to meet the 'robust requirements' guidance given by DfE to ensure that the programme is delivered to the target audience.

31. DASH is an inclusive play scheme for children. DASH provides inclusive play and leisure schemes throughout the school holidays to all children, disabled and non-disabled children aged 3 to 17 years old and a further club for those with disabilities between 18 and 25.
32. Darlington childminders providing holiday childcare, reported to families information services, after each period over the year 2023/2024. In September 2023 they reported that 22 children had been looked after by 10 childminders with some vacant places available. In November 2023 5 childminders provided care for 14 children and further vacancies were reported. In February 2024 10 children had childcare from 4 childminders, with vacancies reported.

### The views of parents

33. During July 2024, an online parental survey was carried out. The survey was primarily aimed at parents who are currently using registered childcare provision in Darlington. However, the views of parents who use family and friends for childcare and who do not use any form of childcare were also gathered. The survey asked questions about the cost of childcare, why parents access childcare, the type of registered provider they use, the factors they take into consideration when choosing childcare, which days they use and how many hours they access over a week. The survey also asked if parents had heard of Tax-Free Childcare (TFC), Universal Credit and other entitlements. The return rate was high with 830 responses. 495 of those were from parents who use registered childcare provision. This identified that childcare is used by 87% of parents to enable them to work. Parents were also asked when they use childcare: 95% of parents use childcare during term-time and 51% during school holidays. 84% of parents chose childcare based on location. 92% of parents said that the childcare they use suits their needs and 95% said it was of good quality. Themes emerging from the no responses to this question were around cost, eligibility for funded childcare and shift work.

**Table 3: Proportion of parents and carers using childcare provider by type**

Registered breakfast and/or after school provision	43%
Private day nursery	29%
Registered holiday club	23%
Childminder	16%
Nursery school	15%
Preschool	11%
Nursery unit (attached to a primary school)	6%

**Table 4: Proportion of children accessing childcare by age**

Under 1	3%
1 to 2 years old	26%
3 to 4 years old	36%
5 to 8 years old	42%
9 to 11 years old	26%
12 to 14 years old	6%
15 to 17 years old with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	1%

34. 76 respondents to the online parental survey indicated that their child had additional needs. From the parental survey it was identified that parents of children with SEND mainly choose their childcare based on location (80%) which mirrored the responses of all parents. They then choose childcare based on the setting’s ability to meet the needs of the child (70%) and then the quality of the provider (53%). There were no indications that there was an overall lack of sufficiency relating to children with SEND. 89% of parents agreed that childcare suited their needs and 93% answered that it is of good quality. 74% of respondents stated they accessed childcare to enable them to work followed by 54% accessing childcare to enable their child(ren) to access opportunities to develop and grow and 49% choosing childcare to help their child make friends.

**Provider feedback**

35. In spring 2024 providers were asked to complete a survey about the childcare expansion. 12 providers completed the survey. When asked how many of their children whose parents currently pay for their childcare would ‘switch’ to a LA funded place from September 2024: a third answered that none would switch, a third stated that between 1-10 children would switch and a third stated that over 10 would switch. Three quarters of respondents stated that they thought parents would want to pay for additional hours. Just over one half of respondents stated that additional children would want to attend their setting.

36. When asked whether the expansion of childcare entitlements from September 2024 would affect the delivery of disadvantaged places for 2-year-olds, no providers said yes, five said maybe and seven said no. Providers were asked whether the expansion of childcare entitlements from September 2024 would have any effect on the delivery of places for children with SEND. Two providers said yes and 10 said no.

37. Half of the providers said they were planning to make any changes to their businesses to meet demand for the expansion of childcare entitlements from September 2024. Examples of changes to businesses included employing more staff, installing facilities and extending physical space.

38. Providers were asked whether there are any barriers to their childcare businesses engaging fully with the expansion of childcare entitlements from September 2024. 10 said yes and two said no. The barriers included a lack of physical space, having the correct facilities and the ability to recruit staff.

39. A further provider survey will be conducted in spring 2025 to gather views about the final phase of the expansion in September 2025 and providers will be invited to meet with the local authority to explore the results and share current intelligence on supply and demand.
40. In July 2024, a Childcare Recruitment and Retention survey of local providers was undertaken. There were 20 respondents from a range of providers including private day nurseries, pre-schools, nursery units (attached to a primary school), nursery schools and a breakfast and after school club. There were no responses from holiday clubs. 53% of returning providers stated that they were experiencing issues with recruitment of staff and 28% had issues with retention. A discussion about recruitment and retention continues to form part of the provider funding audits.
41. 75% of providers stated that they are fully staffed and 25% currently have vacancies. The type of vacancies being advertised are for both permanent and casual vacancies, with a range of hours from zero hours to full time. The level of qualification which is required is level 3.
42. Nurseries continue to report difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified and experienced staff and some providers explained that positions can take a long time after advertisement to attract applicants who then may not be appropriately qualified. Methods nurseries are successfully using to combat recruitment issues include creating a bank of stand-by staff, taking apprentices, being more flexible with staff terms and conditions and contributing the cost of staff training.

### **Local employer feedback**

43. Previous employer surveys have investigated the use of family friendly employment practices and explored the extent to which childcare supply meets the needs of businesses. These surveys reported that the number of businesses frequently experiencing problems due to childcare issues is relatively low.

### **Local authority support for the sector**

#### **Strategic**

44. The local authority childcare sufficiency group meets regularly to monitor childcare demand and supply, as well as the health of the local childcare sector. In addition to officers, the group includes representation from the Darlington Families' Information Service, SENDIASS (special educational needs and disabilities information advice and support service), Darlington Association on Disability, Jobcentre Plus, children's centres, Economic Growth and Learning & Skills. The group cross references with the Early Years Education Strategy Group.
45. The Early Years Education Strategy Group (EYESG) is made up of representatives from all provider types with a strategic overview of childcare in Darlington. The group considers national and local developments, shapes national and local initiatives and has a focus on the most vulnerable children.

46. Providers also have a dedicated link officer as a point of contact, as well as a generic e-mail address for queries. The link officer provides bespoke support and challenge to suit the needs of the setting. A half termly early years newsletter is produced, and regular updates on regional and national issues are distributed through FIS. Officers meet with the regional DfE representative every six weeks and attend regional and national DfE events where the concerns of the local childcare sector are reported back to the DfE.

## **Quality**

47. There have been termly briefings for private and voluntary providers (PV), childminders, early years leads and early years SENCOs. These briefings include regular updates from the education safeguarding officer. In addition, a range of face-to-face networks for practitioners have been facilitated. This year there has been a baby network for practitioners working within the 0 to 2 age range, 2-year-old networks for practitioners working with 2 to 3-year-olds and good practice meetings for practitioners working across the early years. These provide opportunities for practitioners to come together and share teaching and learning ideas and challenges.
48. Transition into school is supported in a variety of ways. A transition event is held in May which is attended by both PV and school colleagues. Child voice is also gathered from both nursery and reception aged children and is central to the bespoke support on offer and informs a transition programme document which is published annually. The early years inclusion coordinators have continued to support enhanced transition for children with additional needs and have facilitated input by a range of professionals, including headteachers and health professionals.
49. A range of training sessions is available for the sector to support staff. These are offered as whole training sessions, as well as bespoke sessions at staff meetings within the provider's setting. During the academic year 2023/24, Early Talk Boost was rolled out across the sector with the aim of supporting speech and language in the early years. Providers have also had access to training for First Words Together which many settings have now run to support families with early speech and language for 0 to 2s. The DfE Experts and Mentors support programme has been promoted widely and has supported 11 PV settings in Darlington over the duration of the scheme.
50. Providers are encouraged to participate in the Healthy Early Years (HEY) programme and apply for the HEY catering award, an award which gives parents and families the confidence that the setting adheres to high standards of nutrition and education around healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.

## **SEND**

51. The early years inclusion panel continued to meet termly, awarding funding for children with emerging and significant special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
52. Following a consultation with the early years sector in the summer term of 2024, a new funding model for the allocation of SEN inclusion funding and a new panel process were agreed for implementation in the autumn term 2024. The new arrangements include more frequent panels, so that settings can be supported to meet the needs of children

with SEND in a more timely manner, and a reduction in administrative tasks for providers. These new arrangements have been warmly received by the early years sector.

53. Early years inclusion coordinators supported settings to meet the needs of children and provide enhanced transition support to reception. The caseload figures for the early years inclusion service show an increase in children being identified with SEN in settings across Darlington and receiving support. There has also been an increase in EHCP requests in recent years, indicating that early identification of needs is well established in early years settings.

**Table 13: Early years inclusion caseload figures**

Academic year	Number of new referrals	Total number of children supported
2020-2021	110	138
2021-2022	110	166
2022-2023	156	195
2023-2024	119	211

54. The early years inclusion coordinators offer EarlyBird and EarlyBird+ training, a programme to support parents of children receiving a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This has been made available to early years practitioners to help them to support the families of children receiving a diagnosis of ASD and to improve practice in the setting.
55. To support children with SEND specific training is offered which supports new SEND managers and new SENCOs in childminder, PV and school early years settings. Bespoke SEND support for individual settings has also been provided. During autumn 2023, early years providers were given the opportunity to be involved in a pilot called Valuing SEND. Valuing SEND is an online tool which helps settings to identify their current strengths and areas for development at both a whole setting level and for individual children.
56. The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is a yearly payment to support childcare settings where a child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance and they access an entitlement place. DAF was allocated to settings for 24 children in autumn 2023, nine children in spring 2024 and 39 children in summer 2024. Numbers of children receiving DAF are increasing as more children are identified with SEND needs within settings.

**Business sustainability**

57. The LA offers support to providers through events, assigning link officer and childcare sufficiency officer support on a bespoke basis or during routine entitlement audit meetings. From this they can have further signposting to business management tools, events and training opportunities.
58. Encouragement is made during provider audit for settings to discuss Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) with parents as this can be given yearly to settings to help to support eligible children. EYPP has been given to 242 children in autumn 2023, 263 children in

spring 2024 and 398 children in summer 2024. The additional funding contributes to sufficiency and sustainability.

59. Childcare Development Officers support the development of careers in childcare in numerous ways. For example, by attending Darlington Jobs Fair, working with DWP to deliver information sessions to job seekers and engaging with secondary schools for careers events and masterclasses.

#### **Unmet childcare demand in 2024**

60. Unmet demand for childcare is monitored by Darlington Family Information Service (FIS) who receive parent and carer enquiries and request monthly feedback from childcare settings and childminders. Settings also give informal feedback during visits and conversations. FIS has reported that they had 6 enquiries from parents regarding unmet demand in the period September 2023 to September 2024 which were related to parental area preference and hours required. These were all resolved satisfactorily.
61. It should be noted that, whilst some childcare providers carry waiting lists, this is typically in response to parents/carers having a preferred provider rather than a reflection of overall lack of available places within a reasonable distance.
62. Another indicator of potential unmet demand is the validation rate of Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) codes. For a child to access funded childcare, the person with parental responsibility will have been issued with an ECS code from DfE which is then taken to the provider and verified to be used. For summer 2024, Darlington's validation rate for residents was 96.95% which was above the national rate. The codes apply to Darlington residents only. Therefore, they do not consider places taken up in neighbouring local authorities. The high validation rate indicates that there is no unmet demand for Darlington residents.

#### **Conclusion**

63. Indicators have shown that there is currently sufficient capacity for early years childcare and wraparound to meet demand. The national expansion of the early years entitlements in April 2024 and September 2024 which has resulted in eligible working parents being able to access 15 hours of funded childcare has been absorbed into supply. The national wraparound programme has led to an increase in wraparound places available to parents and carers.
64. Consultations with parents have demonstrated the need for local childcare to be affordable and flexible, to be available to meet existing or new working patterns and where required, the need for accessible, affordable, inclusive holiday childcare. In September 2025, eligible working parents of children aged 9 months plus will be entitled to 30 hours of funded childcare per week; this will represent a further expansion of the funded entitlements. The DfE capital and wraparound funding programmes referenced above will facilitate an increase in supply of both early years entitlement places and wraparound places through the next academic year. This will help to address the anticipated increase in demand.

65. The LA will continue to be monitor the market position and sufficiency over the course of the expansion, paying regard to access to places for children with special educational needs and disabilities and children who are eligible for a disadvantaged 2-year-old place. The LA is engaging with providers to promote sufficiency of places. The LA will continue to support the sector in areas such as recruitment and retention, special educational needs and quality to ensure that childcare in Darlington meets the needs of our children and families.

#### **How this will work in Darlington**

66. 2024 childcare sufficiency findings and DfE national expansion updates will continue to be presented to the childcare market and to schools in late spring 2025, to enable them to develop services to meet changing childcare demands. Market flexibility to meet changing parental demand will be key to sector resilience and the success of the expansion.
67. The priorities for the local authority continue to be to:
- (a) Provide parents with up-to-date information about entitlements and financial assistance towards childcare costs, including any available tax credits;
  - (b) Work with settings and other interested stakeholders to continually improve the quality of care and make settings/activities more inclusive;
  - (c) Assist childcare providers by providing information on matters relating to funding and sustainability.



**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 MARCH 2025**

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**SCHOOL TRANSPORT AND THE ASSOCIATED SERVICES**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report outlines the current arrangements for the Council's Home to School Transport Policy and outlines the changes in recent statutory guidance.

**Summary**

2. Darlington Borough Council has a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport in certain circumstances.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that :-
  - (a) Scrutiny Committee note the arrangements currently in place.
  - (b) Scrutiny Committee note the changes to statutory guidance relating to home to school transport.

**Tony Murphy**  
**Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion**

**Background Papers**

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

Tony Murphy: Extension 5637

S17 Crime and Disorder	The service supports the Council’s crime and disorder responsibilities, young people engaged in learning are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour
Health and Wellbeing	The service actively promotes health and wellbeing
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The service promotes sustainability
Diversity	The service actively supports the diversity agenda
Wards Affected	All wards will be affected
Groups Affected	All families of school age children
Budget and Policy Framework	Services for home to school transport are supported through the Dedicated School Grant and core council funding
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This work will support the aim to provide excellent services for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) - implement a new SEND strategy, increase the number of SEND places in schools and work to raise SEND funding levels from central government
Efficiency	The work will support efficient use of resources to support SEND and education
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This work will have a positive impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

4. All local authorities have a statutory duty to have in place arrangements for the provision of home to school travel assistance and transport for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who meet the published eligibility criteria
5. Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, it is the responsibility of the parent of every child of compulsory school age, to cause their child to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. The duties and powers of local authorities to provide home to school travel assistance are covered in other sections of the Act and its amendments. The provision of travel assistance support incorporates consideration for children from low-income families.
6. Sections 508B and 508C of the Education Act 1996 (as amended) set out the local authority’s duties and powers respectively, to make such suitable travel arrangements as the local authority considers necessary, to facilitate a child’s attendance at school.
7. All local authorities must have in place a travel policy that is regularly reviewed and updated in line with statutory requirements. Darlington LA has two separate policies a

SEND policy that applies to students with an EHCP and version that covers all non EHCP students.

8. Normally eligibility for free travel will be determined at the time that a school place is allocated through:
  - (a) Darlington Borough Council's Coordinated Admissions Scheme for entry at the normal points of admission; and/or,
  - (b) The issuing of an Education, Health and Care Plan; and/or,
  - (c) The operation of the Fair Access Protocol; and/or,
  - (d) The In-Year Coordinated Admissions Scheme.
9. Statutory walking distances beyond which children are not expected to walk to school are as follows. Two miles if under 8 years of age, three miles if 8 to 16 years of age. Free travel is also provided if the distance from the child's home to the nearest available school is under the statutory walking distance but the route is unsafe to walk, even if accompanied by an adult.
10. When, under the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy, children and young people are entitled to free travel it is provided by the most cost-effective means. This will usually be by the provision of a free bus pass. However, where numbers are small, children may sometimes have to be transported by taxi. If parents wish to take their children to school or other means cannot be arranged, the Council may agree to the payment of a mileage allowance.
11. If free travel is agreed, children and young people will normally be expected to use public transport (ordinary scheduled bus or train services) or contracted transport such as a coach or minibus.
12. Three secondary schools in Darlington operate contracted home to school transport routes. These are Carmel College, Hummersknott Academy and Hurworth Academy. Darlington Borough Council provide administration and procurement support to schools so that they can procure buses for their routes. The fees charged for these routes are set by the schools, and the Council then purchases seats on these routes for children who are eligible for free home to school transport. These seats are currently paid for by the Authority at the same cost per child as fare paying children. Local Authorities are statutorily required to provide free school transport for Secondary School children if their nearest appropriate school is beyond three miles. Free home to school transport is available for Darlington pupils of compulsory school age if the family are in receipt of free school meals or full working tax credits and their nearest appropriate school is beyond two miles.

13. Applications received for SEND transport support in the 2024/25 academic year to data are as follows:

<b>New Applications 204-25</b>			
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Post 16</b>	
<b>27</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>New applications declined</b>			
<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Post 16</b>	<b>Reason</b>
		<b>2</b>	<b>Not Nearest</b>
	<b>1</b>		<b>Parental Preference</b>

14. After consultation with relevant parties inclusive of local authorities, the DfE issued an updated travel guidance in June 2023 that has sought to clarify previous requirements for both statutory and non-statutory transport support.
15. Where applicable the council will need to update both policies to reflect latest DfE travel guidance. A local public consultation will be required where necessary for any changes. The consultation would be required to last a minimum of 28 days and take place during term time.
16. The Council has worked on a revised home to school transport policy in consultation with the Darlington Parent Care Forum. A public consultation is planned for the Spring term 2025 to seek views on the amended policy.

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 MARCH 2025**

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**PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 2 2024-25**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with an update on performance against key performance indicators.

**Summary**

2. This report provides performance information (July 2024- September 2024) in line with an indicator set agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 2 July 2018, and subsequently by Scrutiny Committee Chairs.
3. It is suggested monitoring focuses on issues and exceptions, and relevant Assistant Directors will attend the meeting to respond to queries raised by the committee regarding the performance information contained within this report.
4. Where indicators are reported annually, quarterly updates will not be available.

**Where are we performing well?**

5. 0.6% of referrals took over three working days to be completed in Q2 2024/25, which is outperforming our target of 5%.
6. In Q2 2024/25, 19 of the 163 children referred (11.6%), from 17 families, had a new referral within 12 months of their last referral starting. This is below our target of (18%), and a large reduction on the 77 children re-referred during Q2 2023/24.
7. At the end of Q2 2024/25, there were 229 families, 467 children, open to the Building Stronger Families team. A further 56 families with 108 children were open to an external agency supporting the families.
8. In Q2 2024/25, 100% of all Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) were offered, 87.5% of which were offered within 72 hours and 51.4% of the children and young people engaged in their RHI.
9. 164 children had a C&F assessment completed in Q2 2024/25. This is below the 376 assessments started in Q2 2023/24, and in line with pre covid figures. 93.9% of the assessments were completed with the 45-day timescale. This is an increase to previous years (51.2% in Q2 2023/24, 73.8% in Q2 2022/23 and 88.4% in Q2 2021/22) and evidence of sustained targeted work and support throughout the year.
10. 99 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of September 2024 with a rate of 44.5 per 10,000 population with a CP plan.
11. 100% of Child Protection (CP) and Child Protection (CP) children were allocated to a qualified

social worker.

12. 286 children were in care as of September 2024, 7.0% of which are Unaccompanied Asylum-Seekers (UASC). 10 children from Darlington, and 4 UASC came into care in Q2 2024/25. This is a significant decrease when compared with the 35 children (excluding UASC) who came into care in Q2 2023/24.
13. 9.2% of our CiC, as of September 2024, have had three or more placements within the previous 12 months. This is below target (10%), which is an improvement as we have remained above target for some time.
14. 10.2% of our CiC have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of September 2024 which is in line with our target (10%). This relates to children and young people who have been placed in residential care due to their disability / placed with family / or placed for adoption, and this provision is not available within 20 miles.
15. 96.9% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 96.4% of our care leavers aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of September 2024. 21.9% of the young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education including studies beyond A level, and 56.3% young people were in training or employment (32.8% in full time and 23.3% in part time). 10.7% young people, aged 22-25, were engaging in education including studies beyond A level and 64.3% young people were in training or employment (23.2% in full time and 41.1% in part time).

#### Where do we need to improve?

16. In Q2 2024/25, 85.3% of the children had their referral completed within one working day, not meeting our 90% target.
17. 75.6% of Child Protection statutory visits were completed within 10 working days in Q2 2024/25 and 93.4% of the visits were completed within 15 working days. Although below target (90%), this is an improvement on Q2 2023/24 where 60.0% of visits occurred within timescale.
18. 79.3% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding children who were transferred-in conference, during Q2 2024/25. Performance has dropped in recent times due to late notification by the Social Work Teams that a Child Protection Conference is needed. This is being continually monitored through Performance Clinics, and we have seen a slight improvement since Q1 2024/25.
19. 88.9% of the initial CiC reviews have been carried out in timescale as of September 2024. 97.2% of subsequent review have been carried out in timescale. At the end of March 2024, to enable better quality reviews to be undertaken, the decision was taken by the Senior Leadership Team that if the Social Worker's report was not completed for the Child's Looked After Review, then the meeting would be rearranged. In Quarter 2, this decision has continued to impact on the number of reviews held within the required timescale, but we have seen a steady improvement since the previous quarter. This continues to be monitored through Performance Clinics.
20. 83.9% of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in Q2 2024/25. This is an improved performance compared to Q2 2023/24 (80.0%) but remains below target (90%).

21. 53.5% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) in September 2024 have been in their current placement continuously for at least two years. This is below our 68% target and due to some safeguarding placement moves taking place in June, it has taken us below 60% for the year-to-date performance.

### **Recommendation**

22. It is recommended that performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with the appropriate Assistant Director.

**Chris Bell**  
**Assistant Director of Children's Services**

### **Background papers**

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

Sharon Raine Head of Performance and Transformation: 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 Children’s Social Care.
Addressing inequalities	This involves members in the scrutiny of the level to which Childrens 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 may have an impact on their emotional and physical health, social development, education, and future employment.





**DARLINGTON**

Borough Council

# Children's Social Care Performance & Practice Report

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**September 2024    Q2 2024/25**

**Scrutiny**

# Scrutiny

## Quarter 2 2024-25 Performance Summary

**Referrals:** 104 referrals, involving 163 children were started in Q2 2024/25, a decrease on the 189 referrals in Q2 2023/24. 85.3% (139 / 163) of the children had their referral completed within 1 working day in Q2 2024/25, not meeting our 90% target, however the timescale is an improvement on Q2 2023/24 performance (78.9%). 0.6% of the referrals took over 3 working days to be completed in Q2 2024/25 which is outperforming our target of 5%.

**Re-Referrals:** In Q2 2024/25, 19 of the 163 children referred (11.6%), from 17 families, had a new referral within 12 months of their last referral starting. This is positively below target (18%), and a large reduction on the 77 children re-referred during Q2 2023/24.

**Building Stronger Families:** At the end of Q2 2024/25, there were 229 families, 467 children, open to the Building Stronger Families team. A further 56 families with 108 children were open to an external agency supporting the families.

**Missing:** The total number of missing episodes in Q2 2024/25 was 91, involving 30 individual children and young people. This is a reduction compared to Q2 2023/24 which saw 144 episodes of missing involving 54 individual children. The reduction is mainly seen in the missing of CiC young people open to another local authority. In Q2 2024/25, all Return Home Interviews (RHI) (excluding children from other authorities) were offered, 87.5% of which were offered within 72 hours and 51.4% of the children engaged in their RHI.

**Children & Families Assessments:** 164 children had a C&F assessment completed in Q2 2024/25. This is below the 376 assessments started in Q2 2023/24, and in line with pre covid figures. 93.9% of the assessments were completed with the 45 day timescale. This is an increase to previous years (51.2% in Q2 2023/24, 73.8% in Q2 2022/23 and 88.4% in Q2 2021/22) and evidence of sustained targeted work and support throughout the year.

**Section 47 Enquiries:** 49 section 47 enquiries were started in Q2 2024/25, involving 92 individual children, 5 of which were already on an open Child Protection (CP) plan. This a reduction on the 76 section 47 enquiries started during Q2 2023/24.

**Child Protection Conference timeliness:** 79.3% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) were held within 15 working days from the strategy meeting / section 47 being initiated, excluding children who were transferred-in conference, during Q2 2024/25.

We work with partner agencies who need notice so that they can prepare reports and arrange for someone to attend the meeting. The decision that there is a need for an Initial Child Protection Conference is one that needs to be made within a short timeframe. Generally, this means that the decision needs to be made in less than 10 working days.

When dealing with complex situations this can be a challenge for the social worker and their managers. Performance has dropped in recent times due to late notification by the Social Work Teams that a Child Protection Conference is needed. This is being continually monitored through Performance Clinics and we have seen a slight improvement since Q1 2024/25.

**Child Protection Plans:** 99 children were subject to a Child Protection plan (CP) as at the end of Q2 2024/25 with a rate of 44.5 per 10,000 population with a CP plan.

During Q2 2024/25, there were no children who started a CP plan who had ceased a previous CP plan within 2 years. The target for this measure is 6%, but due to the lower numbers starting a plan, this remains a high percentage (11.1%) after the 7 children (3 families) started their 2<sup>nd</sup> plan in June 2024.

**Child Protection Statutory visits:** 75.6% (535 / 708) of Child Protection statutory visits were completed within 10 working days in Q2 2024/25 and 93.4% (661 / 708) of the visits were completed within 15 working days. Although below target (90%), this is an improvement on Q2 2023/24 where 60.0% of visits occurred within timescale. Each month this year, workers have managed to complete over 90% of the visits within 15 days.

**Children in Care:** 286 children were in care as at September 2024, 20 (7.0%) of which are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people. 4 young people came into care after accepted by the Home Office as UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child) during Q2 2024/25. 10 further children, from 7 families, also came into care during this time. This is a significant decrease when compared with the 35 children (excluding UASC) who came into care in Q2 2023/24.

18 children and young people, from 13 families ceased to be in care in Q2 2024/25 3 of which were UASC and turned 18yrs becoming care leavers (3 of which were UASC).

**Children in Care Reviews:** 88.9% (16 / 18) of the initial CiC reviews have been carried out in timescale as at September 2024. 97.2% (206 / 212) of subsequent review have been carried out in timescale.

At the end of March 2024, to enable better quality reviews to be undertaken, the decision was taken by the Senior Leadership Team that if the Social Worker's report was not completed for the Child's Looked After Review, then the meeting would be rearranged. In Quarter 2, this decision has continued to impact on the number of reviews held within the required timescale, but we have seen a steady improvement since the previous quarter. This continues to be monitored through Performance Clinics.

**Children in Care Statutory visits:** 83.9% (636 / 758) of statutory visits for Children in Care (CiC) were completed in timescale in Q2 2024/25. This is an improved performance compared to Q2 2023/24 (80.0%) but remains below target (90%).

**Children in Care Placements:** 9.2% of our CiC, as of September 2024, have had 3 or more placements within the previous 12 months. This is positively below target (10%). Currently, 53.5% of our Children in Care aged under 16 (who have been looked after for at least 2.5 years) have been in their current placement continuously for at least 2 years. This is below our 68% target.

10.2% of our CiC have been placed 20 or more miles away from home as of September 2024, in line with our 10% target. This relates to young people who have been placed in residential care due to their disability / placed with family / or placed for adoption, and this provision is not available within 20 miles.

**Initial Health Assessments:** 57.1% of IHA's completed in Q2 2024/25 were completed within the required timescale of 5 days and 28.6% of those children received a health assessment within 20 days. The main reasons for the reduction in the number of children receiving their assessment within 20 days is due to cancelled appointment and medical professionals' availability.

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**Health and Dental Reviews:** 84.7% of children due a review health assessment by September 2024 have had one completed and 53.8% of the children in care have an up-to-date health check. Currently only 2.4% of the children / young people are refusing to attend a health review.

35.9% of children due a dental health assessment by September 2024 have had one completed. Currently 5.1% of the children / young people are refusing to attend a dental check-up. The young people are continually reminded of the benefits of having a check-up and encouraged to take part.

**Care Leavers:** 96.9% of our care leavers aged 19-21 and 96.4% of our care leavers aged 22-25 were in suitable accommodation at the end of September 2024. 21.9% of the young people, aged 19-21, were engaging in education including studies beyond A level, and 56.3% young people were in training or employment (32.8% in full time and 23.3% in part time). 10.7% young people, aged 22-25, were engaging in education including studies beyond A level and 64.3% young people were in training or employment (23.2% in full time and 41.1% in part time).

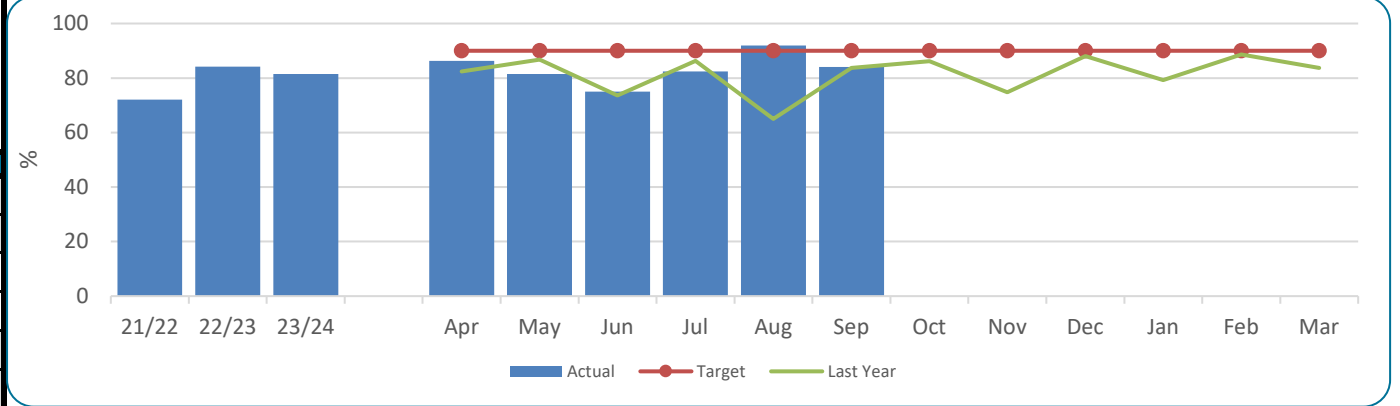
## REFERRALS: TIMELINESS

**DEFINITION** Percentage of referrals completed within 1 working day and over 3 working days. Referrals completed within 1 working day indicates that decisions regarding the services required are made in a timely manner to minimise drift and delay and to ensure that children are safe.

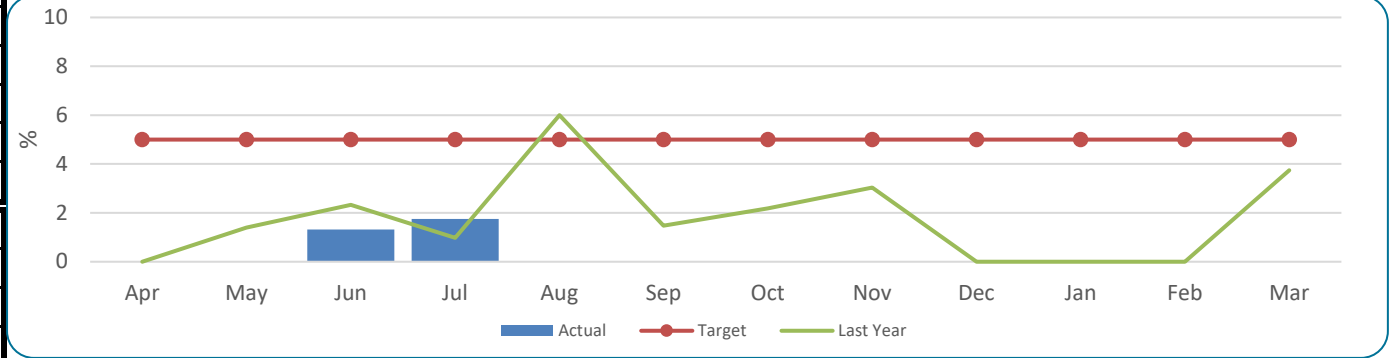
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		CSC 022	CSC 026
		Monthly % of referrals completed within 1 working day.	Monthly % of referrals completed in over 3 working days.
<b>In Month Performance</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>5%</b>
	Apr-24	86.3	
	May-24	81.5	
	Jun-24	75.0	1.3
	Jul-24	82.5	1.8
	Aug-24	91.9	
	Sep-24	84.1	
	Oct-24		
	Nov-24		
	Dec-24		
	Jan-25		
	Feb-25		
	Mar-25		
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	72.1	5.6
	2022/23	84.1	0.8
	2023/24	81.4	1.7
	2024/25	82.8	0.5

CSC 022: Monthly % of referrals completed within 1 working day.



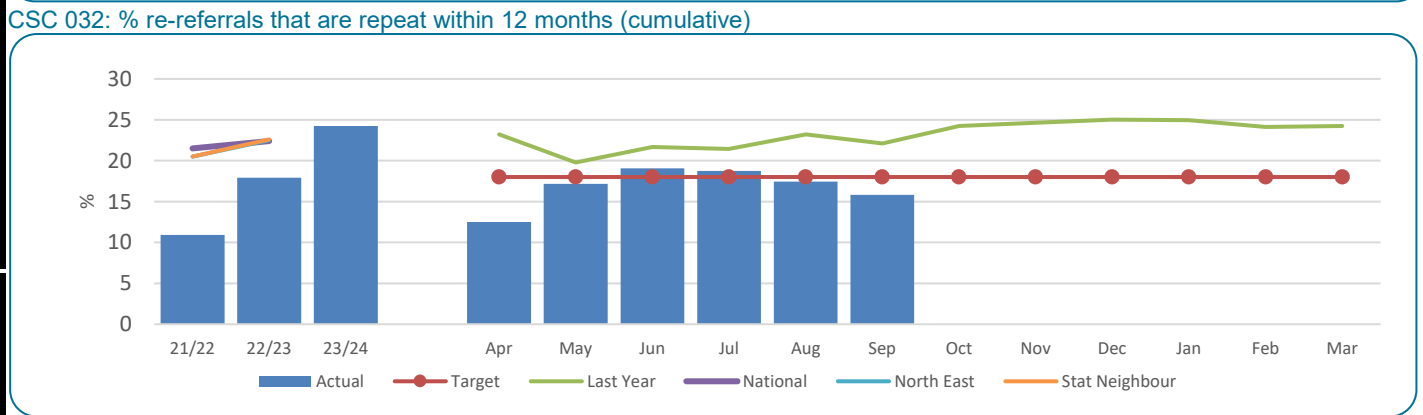
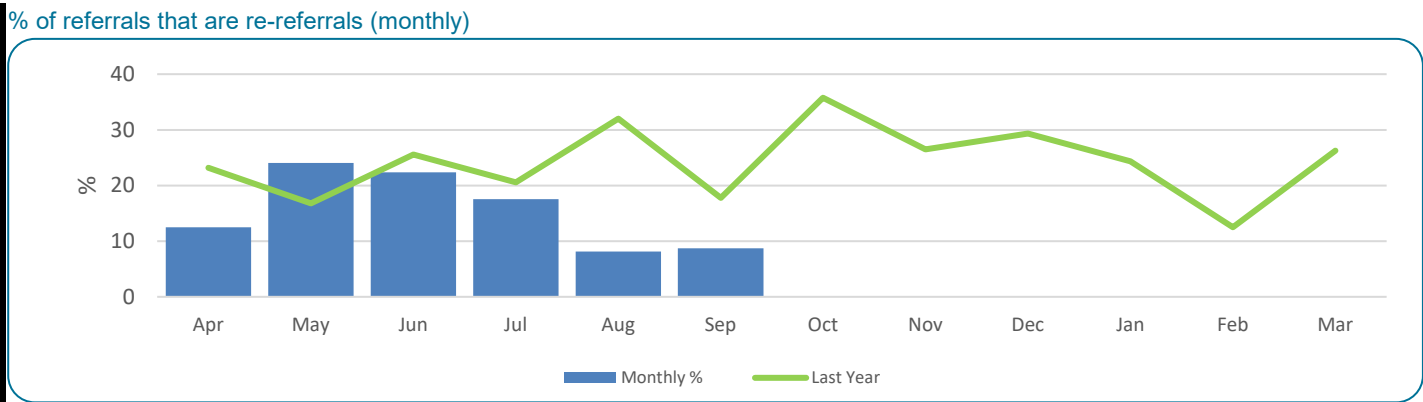
CSC 026: Monthly % of referrals completed in over 3 working days.



## REFERRALS: RE-REFERRALS

**DEFINITION** Percentage of re-referrals that are received within 12 months of a previous referral (based on referral start dates and in line with DfE definition).  
 A re-referral to Children's Social Care could be an indication that the previous referral was inappropriately closed down without addressing the initial concerns or issues.

		CSC 034	CSC 032	
		Monthly number of re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months	% re-referrals that are repeat within 12 months (cumulative)	% of referrals that are re-referrals (monthly)
Page 88 In Month Performance	Target		18%	
	Apr-24	10	12.5	12.5
	May-24	13	17.2	24.1
	Jun-24	17	19.1	22.4
	Jul-24	10	18.7	17.5
	Aug-24	3	17.4	8.1
	Sep-24	6	15.8	8.7
	Oct-24			
	Nov-24			
	Dec-24			
	Jan-25			
	Feb-25			
	Mar-25			
Annual Trend	2021/22	106	10.9	
	2022/23	286	17.9	
	2023/24	333	24.2	
	2024/25	59	15.8	

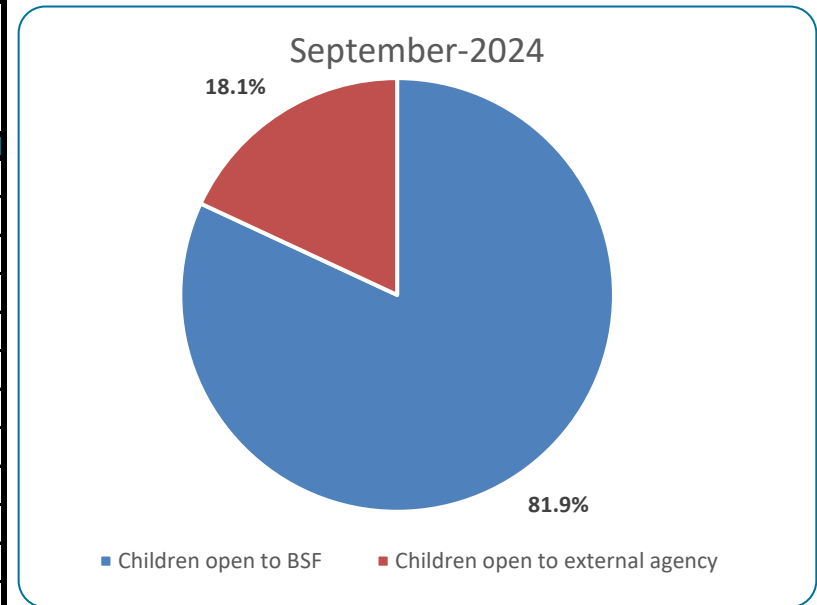


## BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES: OPEN EPISODES

**DEFINITION** The number of children and families that have an open episode with the Building Stronger Families (BSF) team at the end of each reporting month. Also reported is the number of children and families that have an open episode with an external agency. The proportion of children open to BSF is then calculated using the total cohort and displayed as a percentage.

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		Open to BSF at month end		Open to an external agency at month end		% of children open to BSF
		Children	Families	Children	Families	
In Month Performance	Apr-24	418	201	128	65	76.6%
	May-24	429	208	117	63	78.6%
	Jun-24	416	205	108	60	79.4%
	Jul-24	428	206	123	67	77.7%
	Aug-24	447	218	111	61	80.1%
	Sep-24	467	229	103	56	81.9%
	Oct-24					
	Nov-24					
	Dec-24					
	Jan-25					
	Feb-25					
	Mar-25					
	Annual Trend	2021/22	411	191	73	35
2022/23		490	218	125	68	79.7%
2023/24		423	197	125	64	77.2%
2024/25		467	229	103	56	81.9%

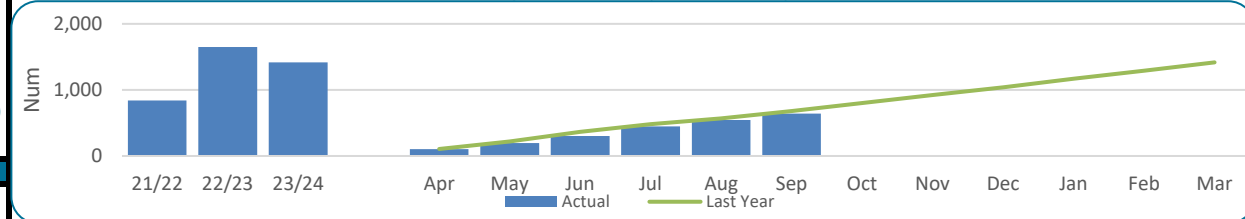


## EARLY HELP ASSESSMENTS: STARTED

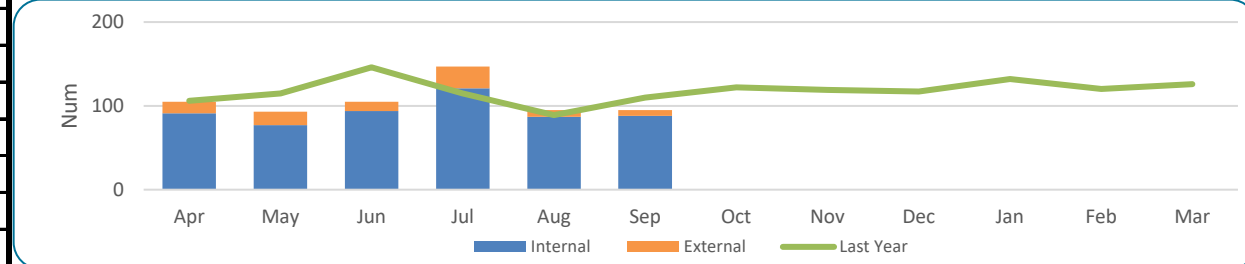
**DEFINITION** The number of individual Early Help Assessments (EHA) started in month and year to date, including those initiated by external agencies. The start date of the EHA is taken from the form created date in Liquid Logic and the start date of the external EHA is taken from the contact date when the agency informed us of the EHA.

		CSC 002		CSC 001	
		Total number of individual EHA's started in month (inc. external)	Number and percentage of the EHA's initiated by external agencies per month		Number of individual EHA's started; year to date (inc. external)
In Month Performance	Target			TBC	
	Apr-24	105	14	13.3%	105
	May-24	93	16	17.2%	198
	Jun-24	105	11	10.5%	303
	Jul-24	147	26	17.7%	449
	Aug-24	95	8	8.4%	545
	Sep-24	95	7	7.4%	640
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
	Mar-25				
Annual Trend	2021/22	839	161	19.2%	839
	2022/23	1,650	223	13.5%	1,650
	2023/24	1,417	204	14.4%	1,417
	2024/25	640	82	12.8%	640

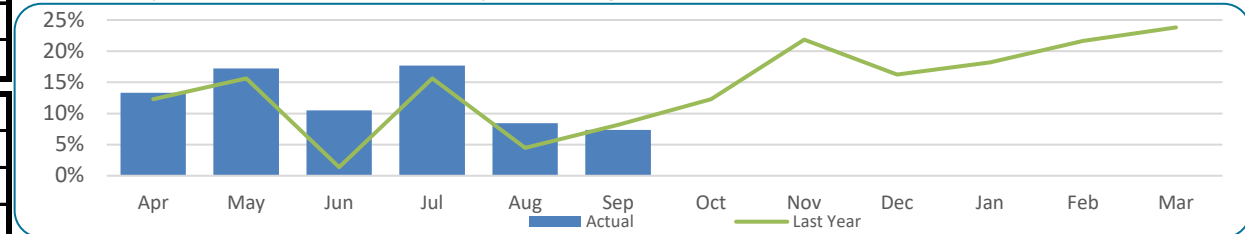
CSC 001: Number of individual EHA's started; year to date (inc. external)



CSC 002: Total number of individual EHA's started in month (inc. external)



% of the Early Help Assessments initiated by external agencies per month





**MISSING: EPISODES**

<b>DEFINITION</b>	The number of episodes of children going missing in Darlington, including Children in Care,
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		<i>CSC 215</i>		<i>CSC 246</i>			
		Total number of missing episodes and children involved in month		Missing - Children in Care with DBC		Of which are in a placement more than 20 miles from home	
		Episode	Child	Episode	Child	Episode	Child
<b>Page 89</b> In Month Performance	Apr-24	19	12	7	2		
	May-24	16	12	8	4		
	Jun-24	15	11	6	4	2	2
	Jul-24	23	12	9	4	3	2
	Aug-24	40	17	23	5	5	4
	Sep-24	28	13	16	3		
	Oct-24						
	Nov-24						
	Dec-24						
	Jan-25						
	Feb-25						
	Mar-25						
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	582	174	253	31	22	4
	2022/23	691	162	383	31	2	2
	2023/24	423	122	152	27	13	6
	2024/25	141	53	69	9	10	5

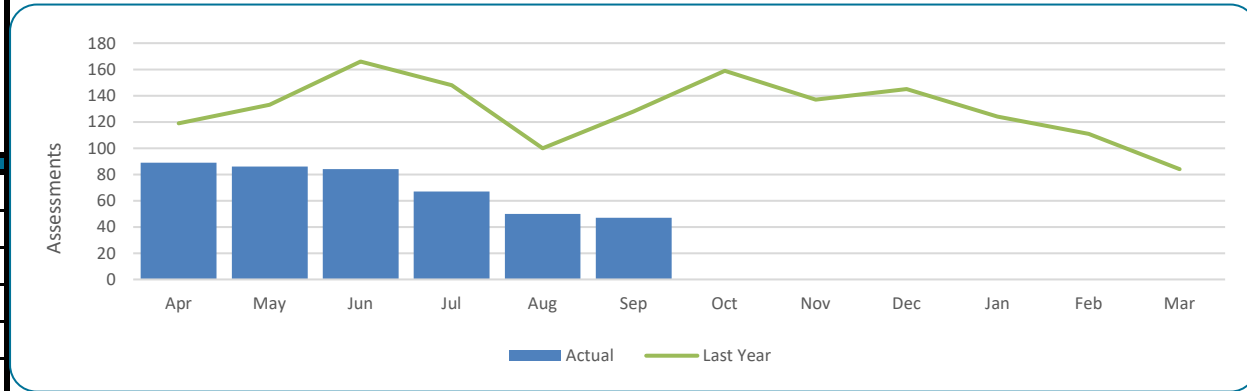
## ASSESSMENTS

### DEFINITION

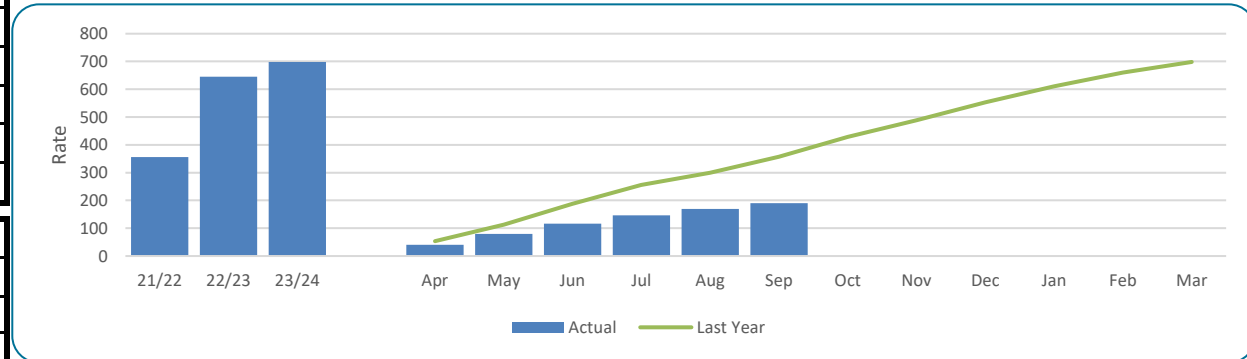
Monthly and cumulative number of Children & Families (C&F) assessments completed for a child.

	CSC 037	CSC 036	CSC 035	
	Monthly number of C&F assessments completed	Number of C&F assessments completed year to date	Rate of C&F assessments completed per 10,000 of the 0-17 population.	
In Month Performance	Apr-24	89	89	40.0
	May-24	86	177	79.5
	Jun-24	84	259	116.4
	Jul-24	67	326	146.5
	Aug-24	50	378	169.9
	Sep-24	47	423	190.1
	Oct-24			
	Nov-24			
	Dec-24			
	Jan-25			
	Feb-25			
	Mar-25			
Annual Trend	2021/22	806	806	356.1
	2022/23	1,461	1,461	645.5
	2023/24	1,554	1,554	698.3
	2024/25	423	423	190.1

CSC 037: Monthly number of C&F assessments completed



CSC 035: Rate of C&F assessments completed per 10,000 of the 0-17 population.



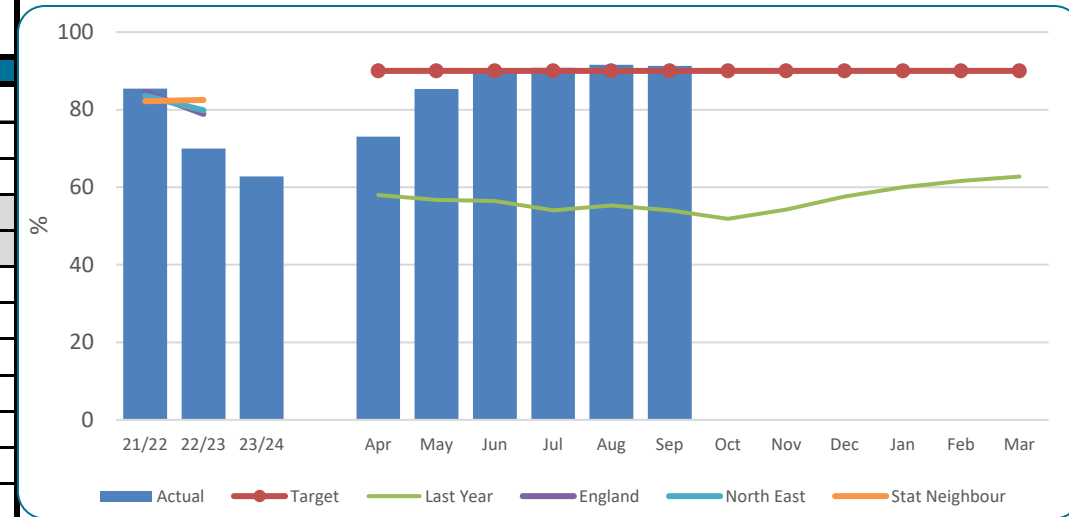
**ASSESSMENTS: TIMELINESS**

**DEFINITION**

Of those assessments completed in a period, the percentage completed within 45 working days. Day zero is the first working day on or after the start date of the referral, or strategy discussion decided to initiate S47 enquiries, or where new information indicates that an assessment should be undertaken. The end date is the first working day on or after the recorded date the Team Manager closes the single assessment.  
 A process indicator as a proxy measure for improved child safety and how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm. Local authorities should investigate and address concerns in a timely and efficient way.

		CSC 038	CSC 040	CSC 060	CSC 080	CSC 100
		% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)	Monthly % completed within 45 working days	Monthly % completed within 25 working days	Monthly % completed within 15 working days	Monthly % completed within 10 working days
In Month Performance	Target	90%	90%			
	Apr-24	73.0	73.0	4.5	3.4	3.4
	May-24	85.3	97.7	7.0	3.5	1.2
	Jun-24	89.6	98.8	19.1	19.1	19.1
	Jul-24	90.8	95.5	3.0	3.0	
	Aug-24	91.5	96.0	6.0		
	Sep-24	91.3	89.4	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Oct-24					
	Nov-24					
	Dec-24					
	Jan-25					
	Feb-25					
	Mar-25					
Annual Trend	2021/22	85.4		17.4	7.6	5.3
	2022/23	70.0		30.3	18.6	13.8
	2023/24	62.7		11.9	9.5	1.2
	2024/25	91.3	89.4	4.3	4.3	4.3

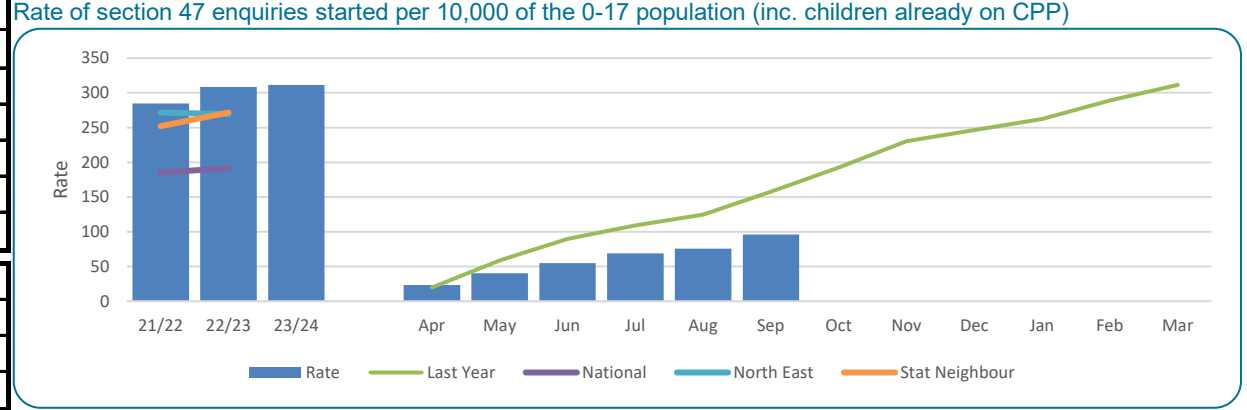
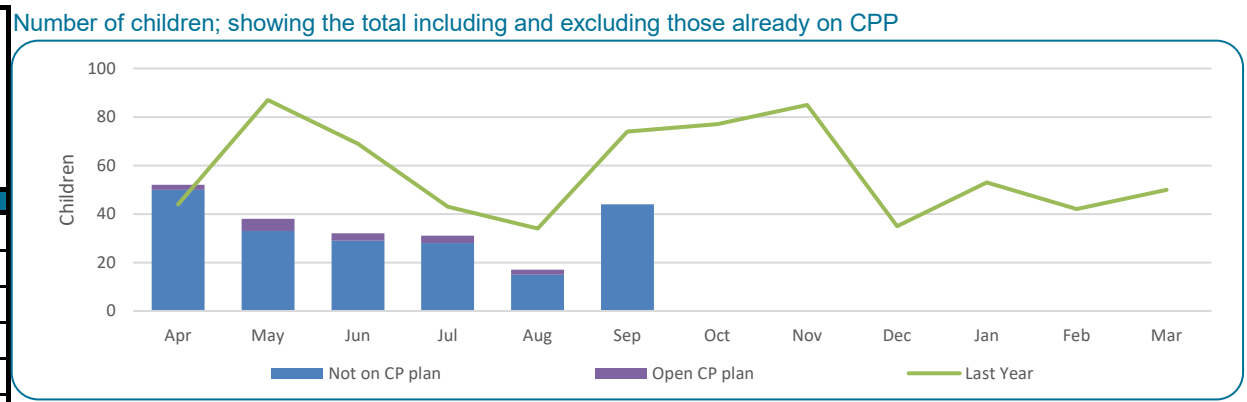
% C&F Assessments completed within 45 working days (year to date)



**SECTION 47 ENQUIRES: STARTED**

**DEFINITION** Number of children who have had a section 47 enquiries started monthly and year to date and the actual number of enquiries started.

		CSC 166		CSC 164	
		Section 47 enquiries started in the month	Number of children who had a section 47 enquiry	Of which also had an open CPP plan	Rate of section 47 enquiries started per 10,000 of the 0-17 population (Cumulative)
<b>In Month Performance</b>	Apr-24	28	52	2	23.4
	May-24	21	38	5	40.4
	Jun-24	18	32	3	54.8
	Jul-24	15	31	3	68.8
	Aug-24	14	17	2	75.5
	Sep-24	20	44		96.2
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
	Mar-25				
	<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	317	633	14
2022/23		351	681	30	308.3
2023/24		372	693	22	311.4
2024/25		116	214	15	96.2

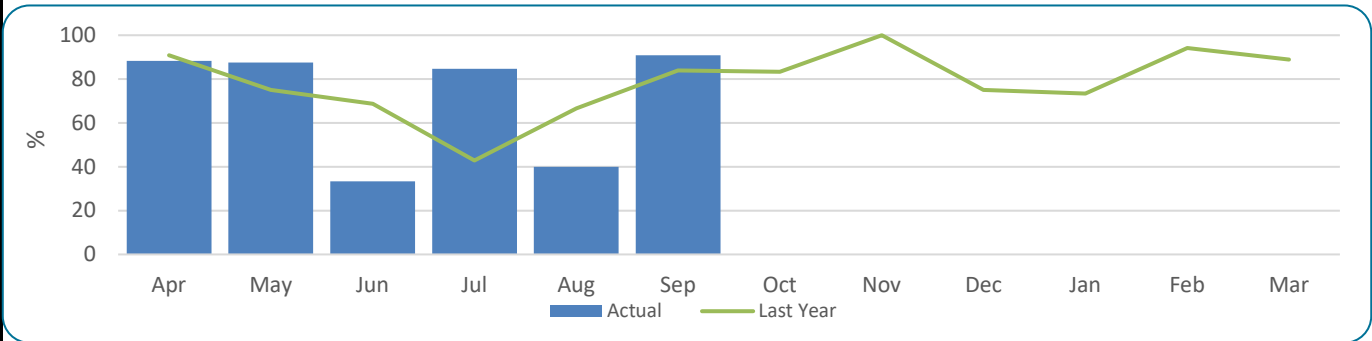


## INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES: TIMELINESS

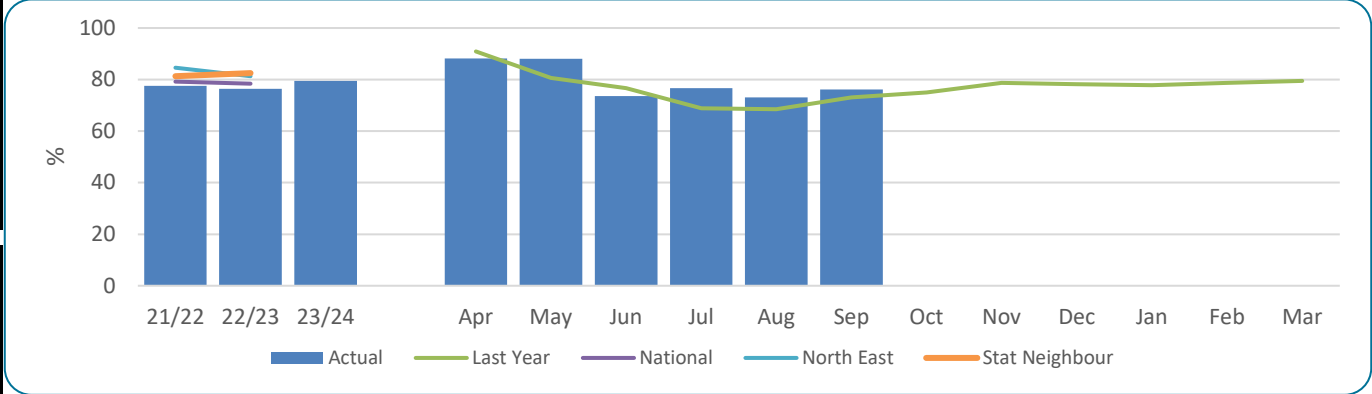
**DEFINITION** Of those Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) held within the period (excluding transfer ins), the percentage recorded in the Safeguarding Unit workbook where Child Protection strategy meeting / section 47 enquiry to ICPC are within 15 days (CPP). This provides an indication of how quickly the safety of the child is considered by a multi-agency meeting.

		CSC 178		CSC 176	
		% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (monthly).		% ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).	
In Month Performance	Target				95%
	Apr-24	15 / 17	88.2	15 / 17	88.2
	May-24	7 / 8	87.5	22 / 25	88.0
	Jun-24	3 / 9	33.3	25 / 34	73.5
	Jul-24	11 / 13	84.6	36 / 47	76.6
	Aug-24	2 / 5	40.0	38 / 52	73.1
	Sep-24	10 / 11	90.9	48 / 63	76.2
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
	Mar-25				
Annual Trend	2021/22			135 / 174	77.5
	2022/23			119 / 156	76.4
	2023/24			171 / 215	79.5
	2024/25	48 / 63	76.2	48 / 63	76.2

CSC 178: % ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (monthly).



CSC 176: % ICPC's held within 15 days (CPP). Excludes transfer-in conferences (year to date).

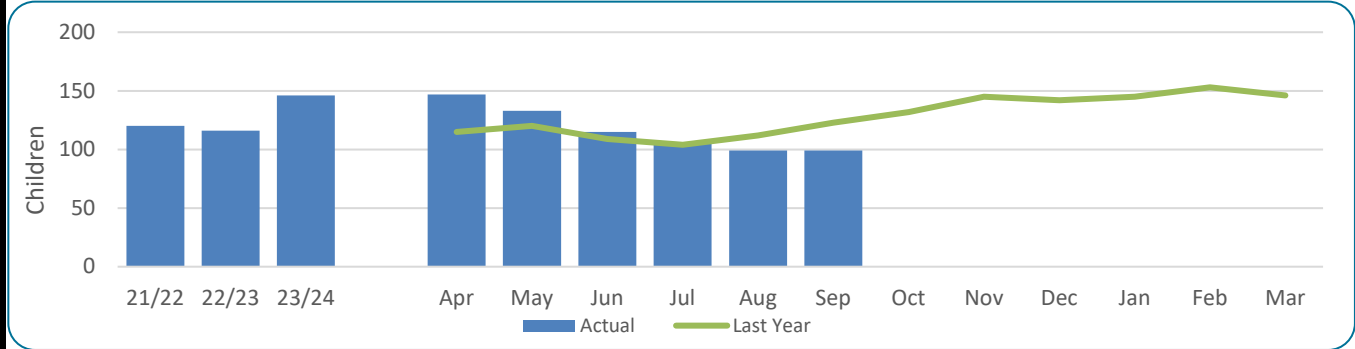


## CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

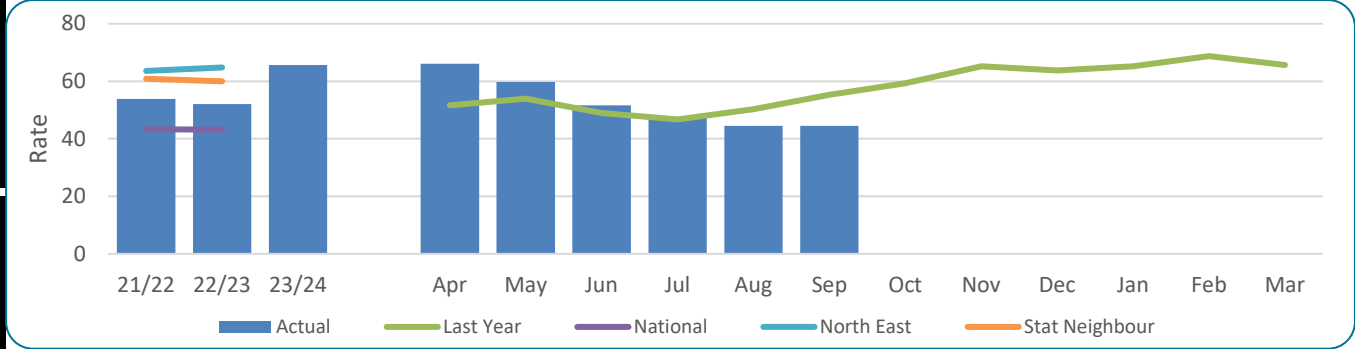
**DEFINITION** Number of children subject to a Child Protection plan at the end of the month.

		CSC 182	CSC 181
		Number of children subject to a CP plan	Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population
Page 94 In Month Performance	Apr-24	147	66.1
	May-24	133	59.8
	Jun-24	115	51.7
	Jul-24	106	47.6
	Aug-24	99	44.5
	Sep-24	99	44.5
	Oct-24		
	Nov-24		
	Dec-24		
	Jan-25		
	Feb-25		
	Mar-25		
Annual Trend	2021/22	120	53.9
	2022/23	116	52.1
	2023/24	146	65.6
	2024/25	99	44.5

CSC 182: Number of children subject to a CP plan



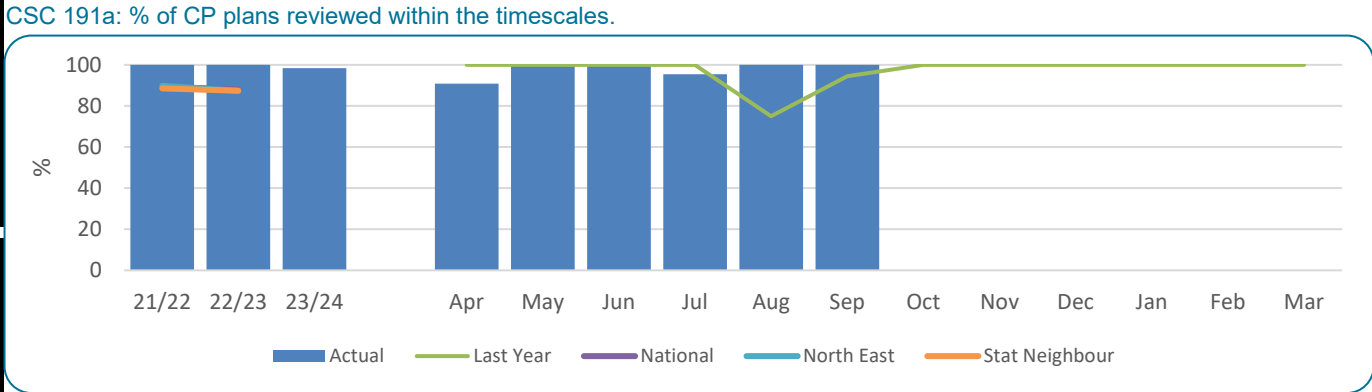
CSC 181: Rate of children subject to a CP Plan per 10,000 population



## CHILD PROTECTION PLANS: ALLOCATION & REVIEWS

**DEFINITION** Reviews are a key element in delivering CP Plans and effective reviews should ensure the provision of good quality interventions. This indicator is a proxy for the measurement of effectiveness of the interventions provided to children subject to a CP plan. "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance requires that the first review should be within 3 months of their ICPC and thereafter at intervals of no more than 6 months.

		CSC 183	CSC 191a	
		% of children with a CP plan allocated to a qualified social worker	CP plan review meetings held in timescale during the month	% of CP plans reviewed within the timescales.
<b>In Month Performance</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>
	Apr-24	100.0	10 / 11	90.9
	May-24	100.0	18 / 18	100.0
	Jun-24	100.0	17 / 17	100.0
	Jul-24	100.0	21 / 22	95.5
	Aug-24	100.0	9 / 9	100.0
	Sep-24	100.0	16 / 16	100.0
	Oct-24			
	Nov-24			
	Dec-24			
	Jan-25			
	Feb-25			
Mar-25				
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	100.0	159 / 159	100.0
	2022/23	100.0	155 / 155	100.0
	2023/24	100.0	193 / 196	98.5
	2024/25	100.0	91 / 93	97.8

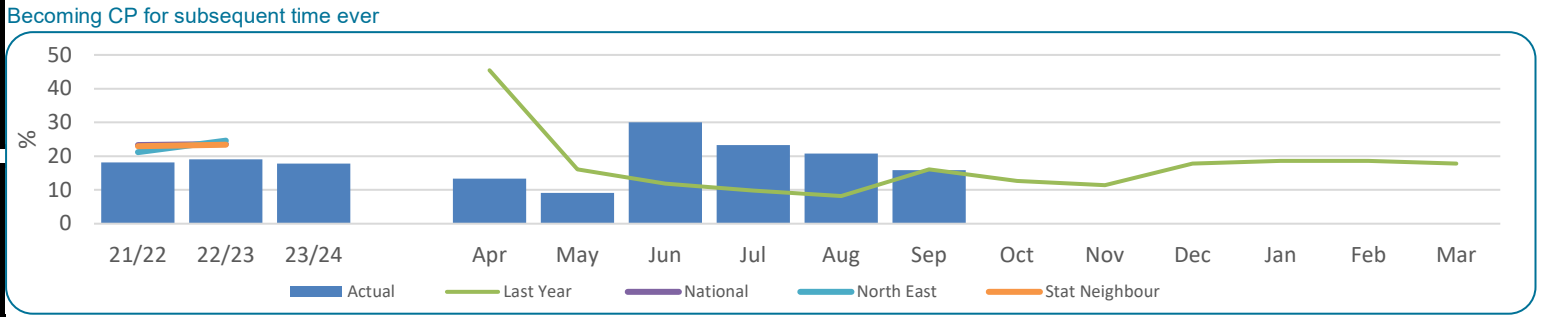
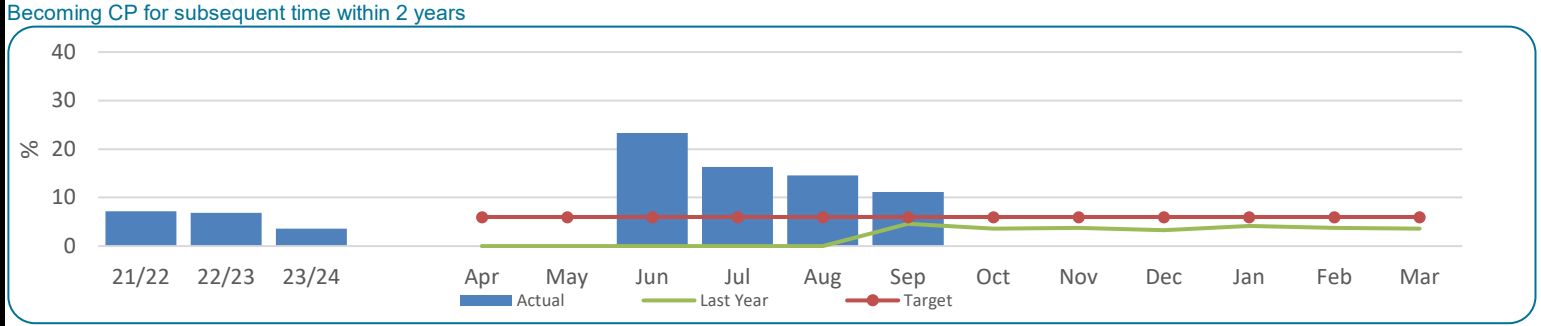
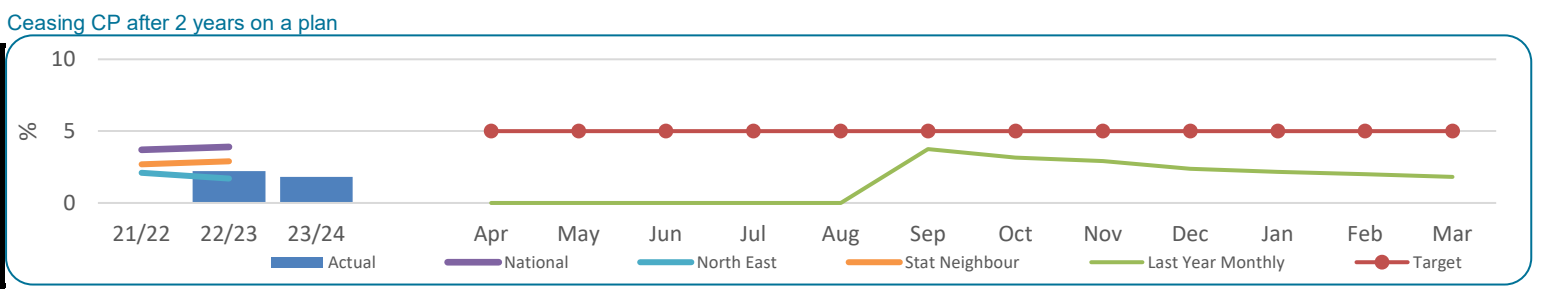


## CHILD PROTECTION PLAN: TIME PERIODS

**DEFINITION** Percentage of children ceasing to be subject to a Child Protection Plan who had been subject to a Plan for 2 or more years, and percentage of children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan for the 2nd or subsequent time within a) 2 years of a previous plan, and b) with a previous plan at any point. These indicators reflect the underlying principle that professionals should be working towards specified outcomes which, if implemented effectively, should lead to all children not needing to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan within a maximum of two years, or becoming subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time.

	CSC 186		CSC 188			
	% children ceasing a CP plan who had been subject to CP for 2 or more years (Cumulative)		% of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a 2nd or subsequent time <b>within 2 years of a previous plan ending</b> (Cumulative)		% of children becoming subject to a CP plan for a 2nd or subsequent time <b>ever</b> (Cumulative)	
<b>Target</b>		<b>5%</b>		<b>6%</b>		
Apr-24	0 / 14	0.0	0 / 15	0.0	2 / 15	13.3
May-24	0 / 34	0.0	0 / 22	0.0	2 / 22	9.1
Jun-24	0 / 60	0.0	7 / 30	23.3	9 / 30	30.0
Jul-24	0 / 82	0.0	7 / 43	16.3	10 / 43	23.3
Aug-24	0 / 94	0.0	7 / 48	14.6	10 / 48	20.8
Sep-24	0 / 94	0.0	7 / 63	11.1	10 / 63	15.9
Oct-24						
Nov-24						
Dec-24						
Jan-25						
Feb-25						
Mar-25						
<b>Annual Trend</b>						
2021/22	0 / 121	0.0	11 / 154	7.1	28 / 154	18.2
2022/23	3 / 135	2.2	9 / 131	6.9	25 / 131	19.1
2023/24	3 / 166	1.8	7 / 196	3.6	35 / 196	17.9
2024/25	0 / 94	0.0	7 / 63	11.1	10 / 63	15.9

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In Month Performance

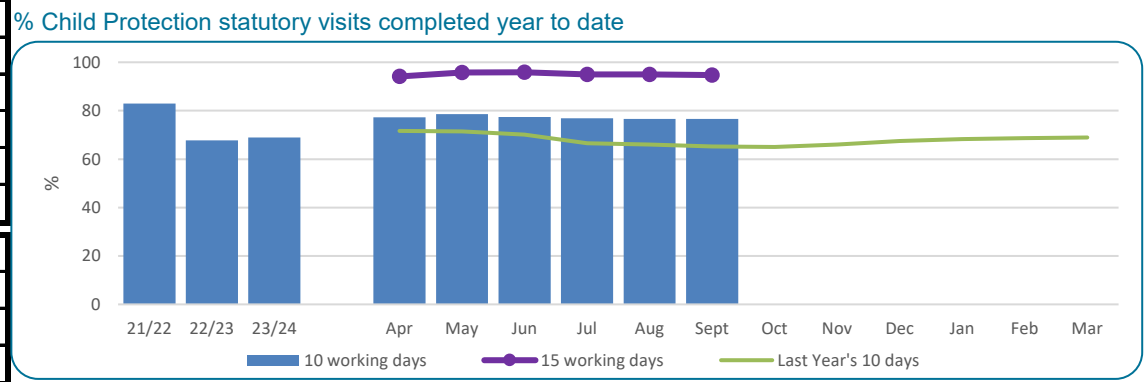
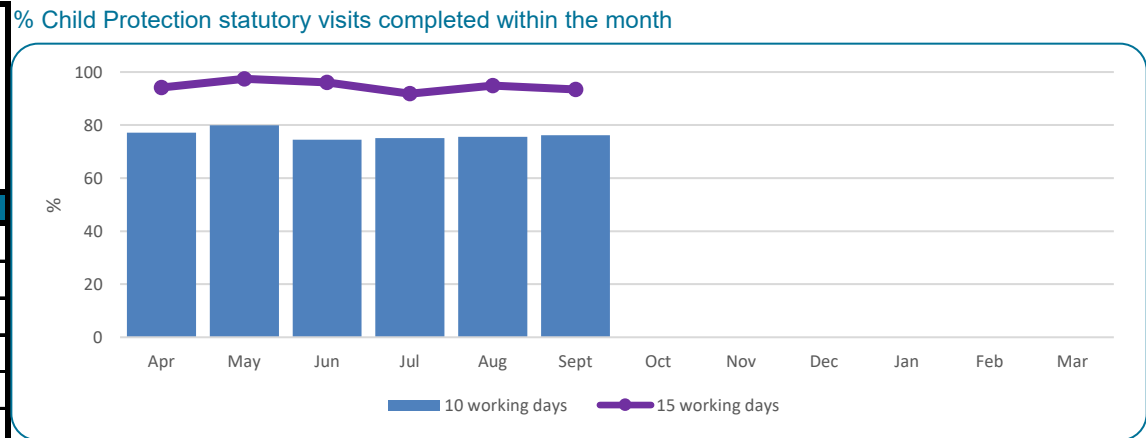




## CHILD PROTECTION: STATUTORY VISITS

**DEFINITION** Percentage of children subject to a Child Protection (CP) plan who had all statutory visits carried out within timescales and percentage of Child Protection statutory visits completed within timescale monthly and year to date.

		CSC 252a		CSC 252b	
		% CP visits completed within 10 working days within the month	% CP visits completed within 15 working days within the month	% CP visits completed within 10 working days year to date (cumulative)	% CP visits completed within 15 working days year to date (cumulative)
In Month Performance	<b>Target</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>
	Apr-24	77.2	94.1	77.2	94.1
	May-24	79.9	97.4	78.6	95.8
	Jun-24	74.5	96.0	77.5	95.9
	Jul-24	75.1	91.8	76.9	94.9
	Aug-24	75.5	94.9	76.7	94.9
	Sep-24	76.2	93.5	76.6	94.7
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
	Mar-25				
Annual Trend	2021/22			82.9	96.8
	2022/23			67.8	90.0
	2023/24			69.0	90.4
	2024/25	76.2	93.5	76.6	94.7



## CHILDREN IN CARE

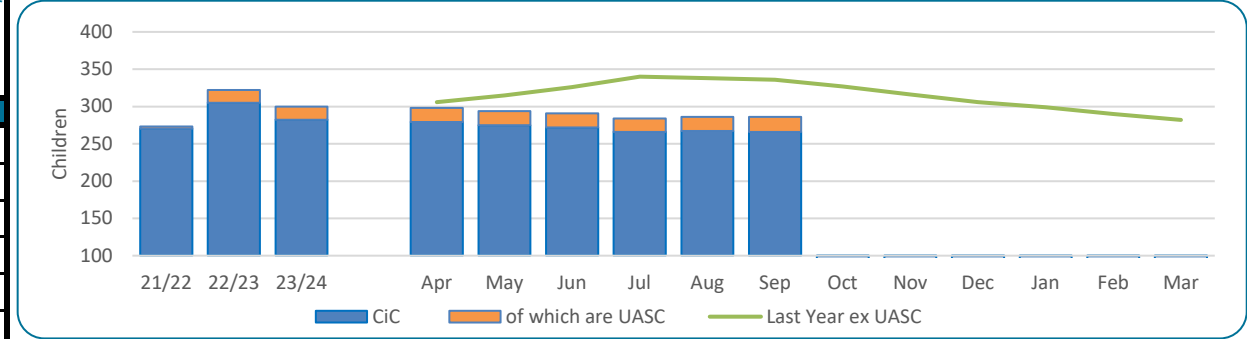
### DEFINITION

Number of Children in Care (CiC) at the end of each month and of which are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC).

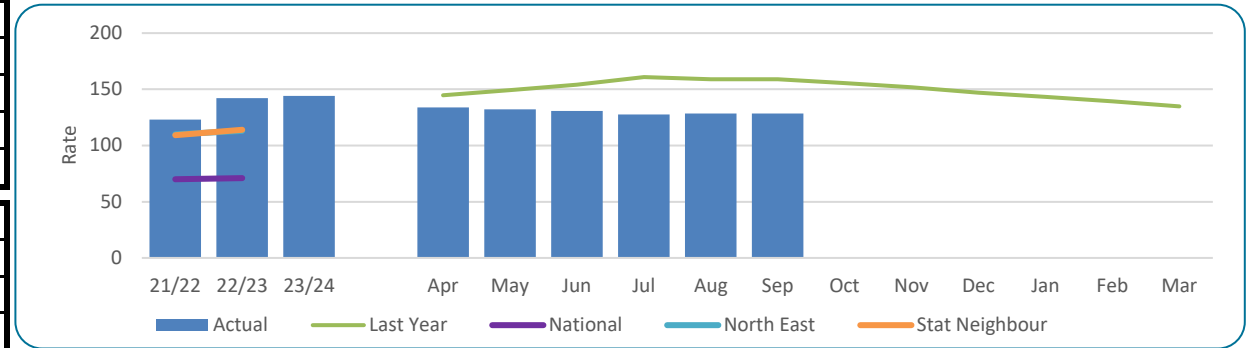
CSC 201      CSC 207      CSC 200

	Total number of Children in Care	Of which are identified as a UASC	Rate of CiC per 10,000 population
<b>Target</b>			<b>95</b>
Apr-24	298	19	133.9
May-24	294	19	132.1
Jun-24	291	19	130.8
Jul-24	284	18	127.6
Aug-24	286	19	128.5
Sep-24	286	20	128.5
Oct-24			
Nov-24			
Dec-24			
Jan-25			
Feb-25			
Mar-25			

CSC 201: Total number of Children in Care



CSC 200: Rate of CiC per 10,000 population



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In Month Performance

Annual Trend

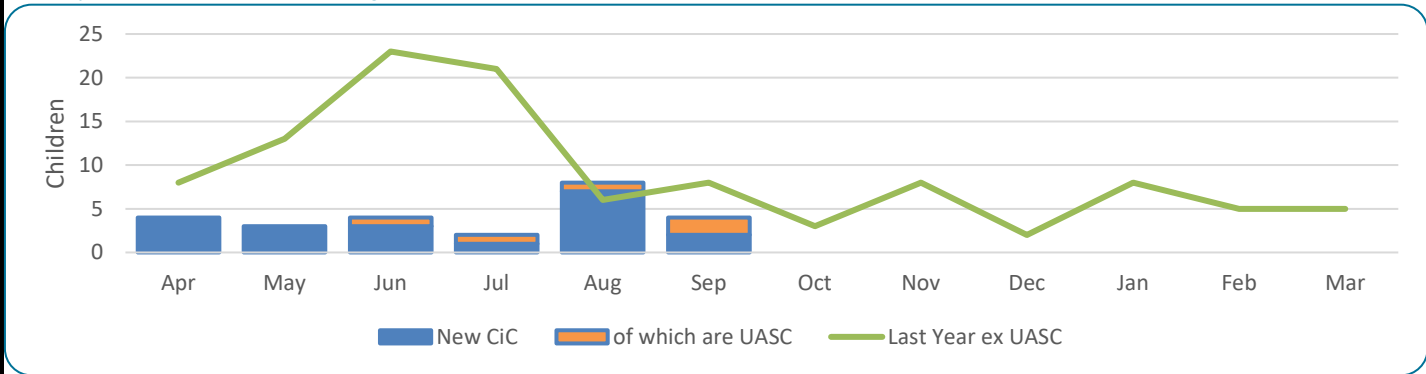
2021/22	273	3	123.0
2022/23	322	17	142.3
2023/24	300	18	134.8
2024/25	286	20	128.5

## CHILDREN IN CARE: COMING INTO CARE

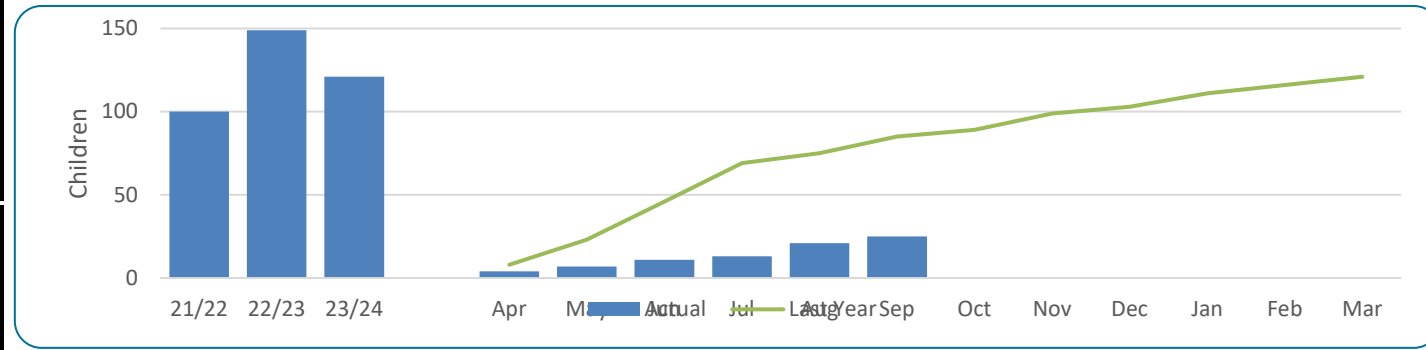
**DEFINITION** Number of children coming into the care of the local authority during the month and year to date and where they are an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC). This is further broken down to show their first placement type.

		CSC 209	CSC 208b	
		Monthly number of children coming into care	Cumulative number of children coming into care	of which are UASC
In Month Performance	Apr-24	4	4	
	May-24	3	7	
	Jun-24	4	11	1
	Jul-24	2	13	1
	Aug-24	8	21	1
	Sep-24	4	25	2
	Oct-24			
	Nov-24			
	Dec-24			
	Jan-25			
Feb-25				
Mar-25				
Annual Trend	2021/22	100	100	2
	2022/23	149	149	18
	2023/24	121	121	11
	2024/25	25	25	5

Monthly number of children coming into care



Total number of children coming into care within the year

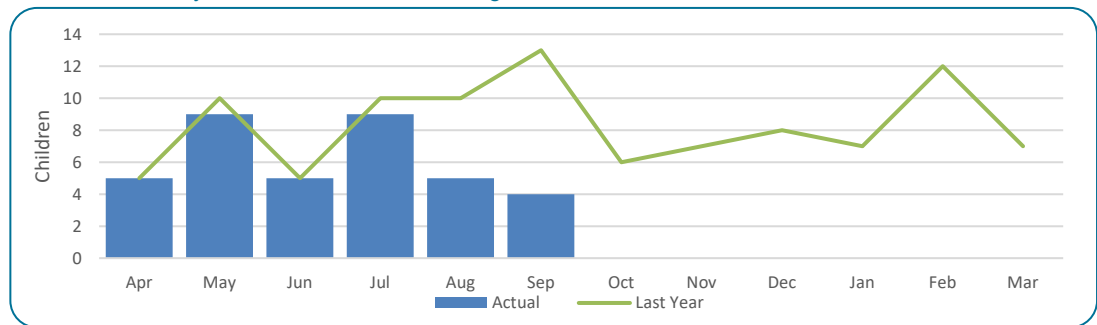


### CHILDREN IN CARE: CEASING CARE

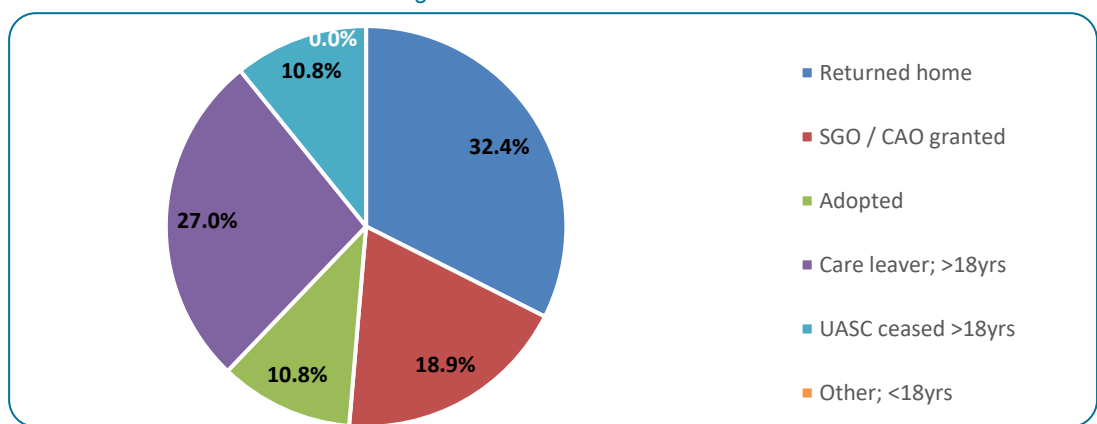
**DEFINITION** Number of children ceasing to be a Child in Care during each month and year to date and their destination when they ceased being in care. This could be due to returning home to parent or other person with no PR (planned and unplanned), having a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) / Child Arrangement Order (CAO) granted by the courts to a carer, adoption or turning 18 years old and becoming a care leaver and supported by a personal advisor. Other reasons why a child could cease care could be due to receiving a custodial sentence or moving out of the area and transferring to a different local authority.

		CSC 212	CSC 211
		Monthly number of children ceasing care	Cumulative number of children ceasing care
In Month Performance	Apr-24	5	5
	May-24	9	14
	Jun-24	5	19
	Jul-24	9	28
	Aug-24	5	33
	Sep-24	4	37
	Oct-24		
	Nov-24		
	Dec-24		
	Jan-25		
	Feb-25		
	Mar-25		
Annual Trend	2021/22	99	99
	2022/23	100	100
	2023/24	143	143
	2024/25	37	37

CSC 212: Monthly number of children ceasing care



Cumulative reason for children ceasing care



**CHILDREN IN CARE: REVIEWS**

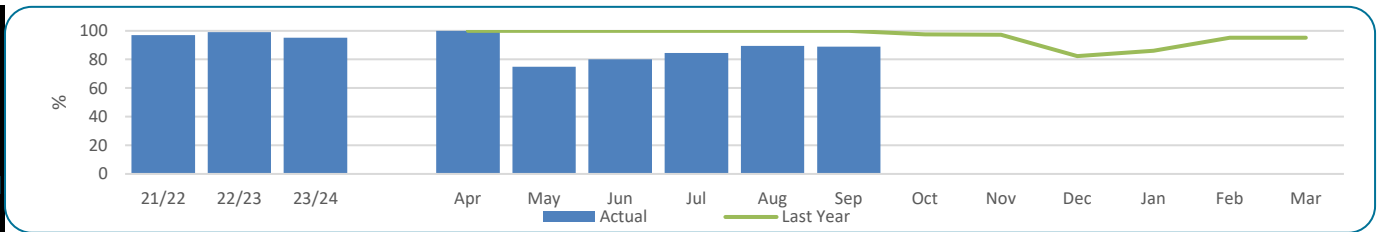
**DEFINITION**

The purpose of the review is to consider the plan for the child's welfare, to monitor the progress of the plan and amend it as necessary in light of changed information and circumstances. The statutory intervals are within 20 working days of placement, then within 3 months and 6 monthly thereafter, but reviews may be rescheduled or held inside these intervals if there are significant changes to the child's care plan..Percentage of the current Children in Care (CiC) who have had their initial review, and all of their subsequent reviews completed within the required timescales.

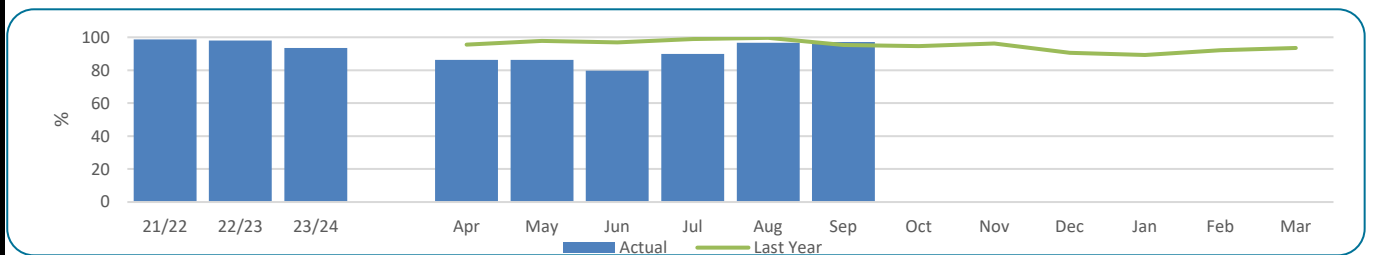
	CSC 219			CSC 218		CSC 220	
	% CiC initial reviews completed within timescales (as at month end)			% CiC reviews had been completed within required timescales (as at month end)		% CiC subsequent reviews completed within timescales	
	Target	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
Apr-24	4 / 4	100.0	63 / 73	86.3	57 / 67	85.1	
May-24	6 / 8	75.0	114 / 132	86.4	106 / 123	86.2	
Jun-24	8 / 10	80.0	125 / 157	79.6	121 / 149	81.2	
Jul-24	11 / 13	84.6	189 / 210	90.0	183 / 201	91.0	
Aug-24	17 / 19	89.5	208 / 215	96.7	151 / 152	99.3	
Sep-24	16 / 18	88.9	206 / 212	97.2	151 / 152	99.3	
Oct-24							
Nov-24							
Dec-24							
Jan-25							
Feb-25							
Mar-25							
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	68 / 70	97.1	243 / 246	98.8	225 / 226	99.6
	2022/23	104 / 105	99.1	297 / 303	98.0	278 / 282	98.6
	2023/24	59 / 62	95.2	271 / 290	93.5	260 / 278	93.5
	2024/25	16 / 18	88.9	206 / 212	97.2	151 / 152	99.3

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In Month Performance

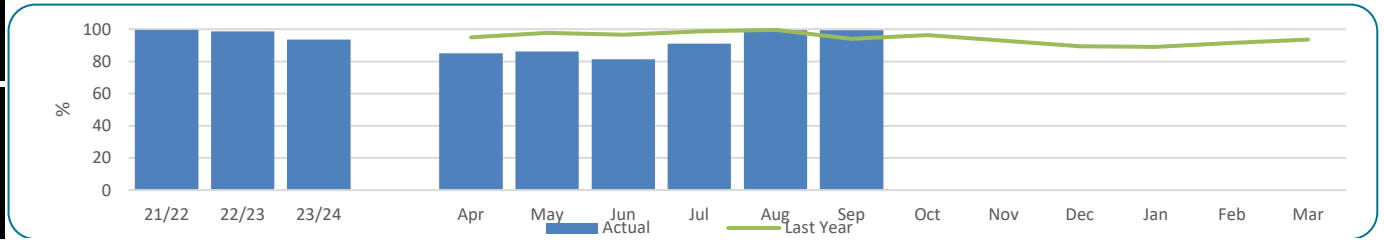
CSC 219: % CiC initial reviews completed within timescales (as at month end)



CSC 218: % CiC reviews had been completed within required timescales (as at month end)



CSC 220: % CiC subsequent reviews completed within timescales



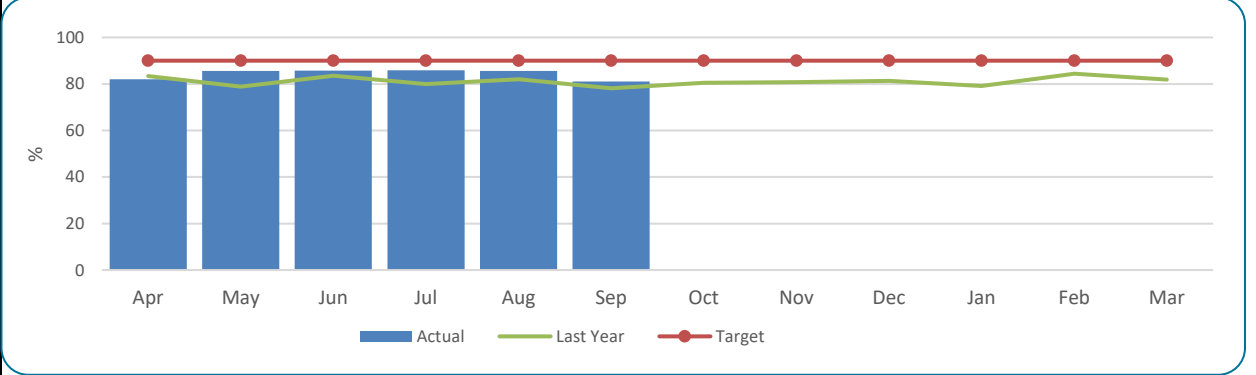
## CHILDREN IN CARE: STATUTORY VISITS

<b>DEFINITION</b>	Percentage of Children in Care (CiC) who had all statutory visits completed within required timescales each month and year to date.
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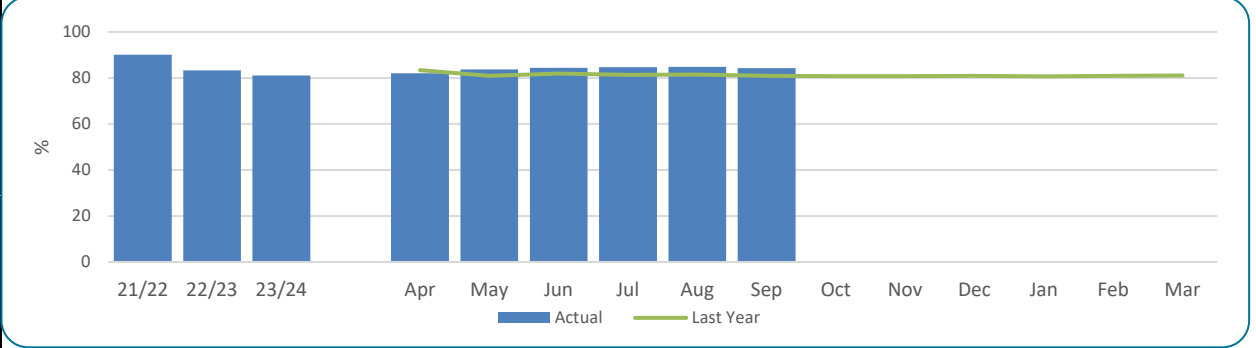
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		CSC 260a	CSC 260b
		% CiC visits completed in timescale within the month	% CiC visits completed in timescale year to date
<b>In Month Performance</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>
	Apr-24	82.1	82.1
	May-24	85.6	83.7
	Jun-24	85.8	84.4
	Jul-24	85.9	84.7
	Aug-24	85.6	84.9
	Sep-24	81.1	84.3
	Oct-24		
	Nov-24		
	Dec-24		
	Jan-25		
	Feb-25		
	Mar-25		
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22		90.1
	2022/23		83.4
	2023/24		81.0
	2024/25	81.1	84.3

CSC 260a: % CiC visits completed in timescale within the month



CSC 260b: % CiC visits completed in timescale year to date

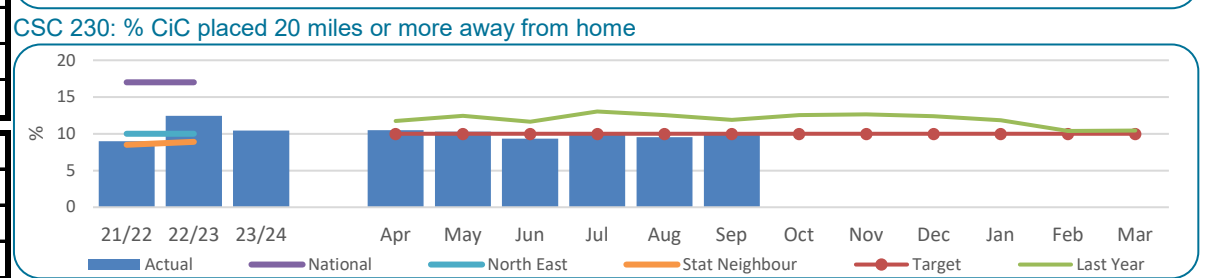
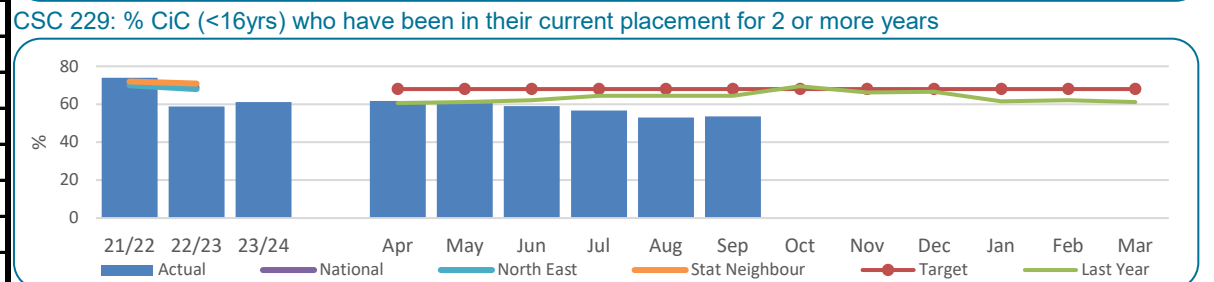
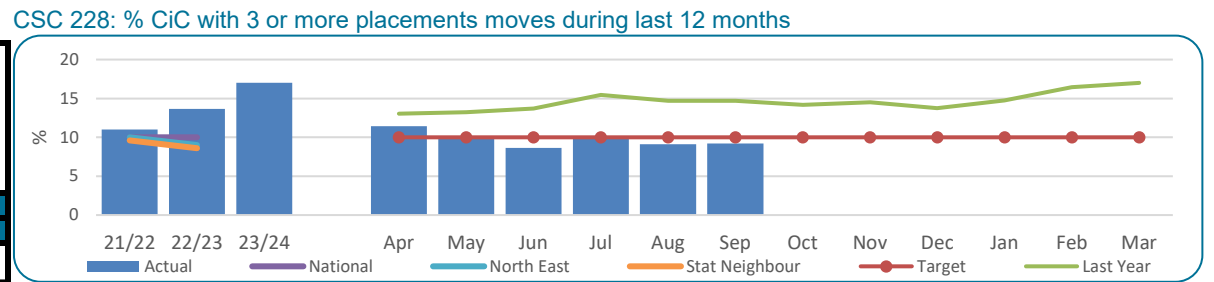


## CHILDREN IN CARE: PLACEMENTS

**DEFINITION** Of those Children in Care (CiC) at the point in time (excluding series of short-term placements), the percentage that had 3 or more separate placements in the previous 12 months; who (under the age of 16 years) had been in their current placement for 2 or more years. and who were placed more than 20 miles away from their home address. Proper assessment and an adequate choice of placements to meet the varied needs of different children are essential if appropriate stable placements are to be made. Inappropriate placements often break down and lead to frequent moves. Nevertheless, the circumstances of some individual children will require 3 or more separate placements during a year if they and others are to be kept safe.

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		CSC 228		CSC 229		CSC 230	
		% CiC with 3 or more placements moves during last 12 months		% CiC (<16yrs) who have been in their current placement for 2 or more years		% CiC placed 20 miles or more away from home	
In Month Performance	Target	10%		68%		10%	
		Children	%	Children	%	Children	%
	Apr-24	34	11.4	79	61.7	29	10.5
	May-24	29	9.9	75	60.5	28	10.3
	Jun-24	25	8.7	72	59.0	25	9.3
	Jul-24	28	9.9	67	56.8	26	10.0
	Aug-24	26	9.1	62	53.0	25	9.5
	Sep-24	27	9.2	68	53.5	27	10.2
	Oct-24						
	Nov-24						
	Dec-24						
	Jan-25						
	Feb-25						
Mar-25							
Annual Trend	2021/22	30	11.0	88.0	74.0	25.0	9.0
	2022/23	44	13.7	74	58.7	37	12.5
	2023/24	51	17.0	77	61.1	29	10.4
	2024/25	27	9.2	68	53.5	27	10.2

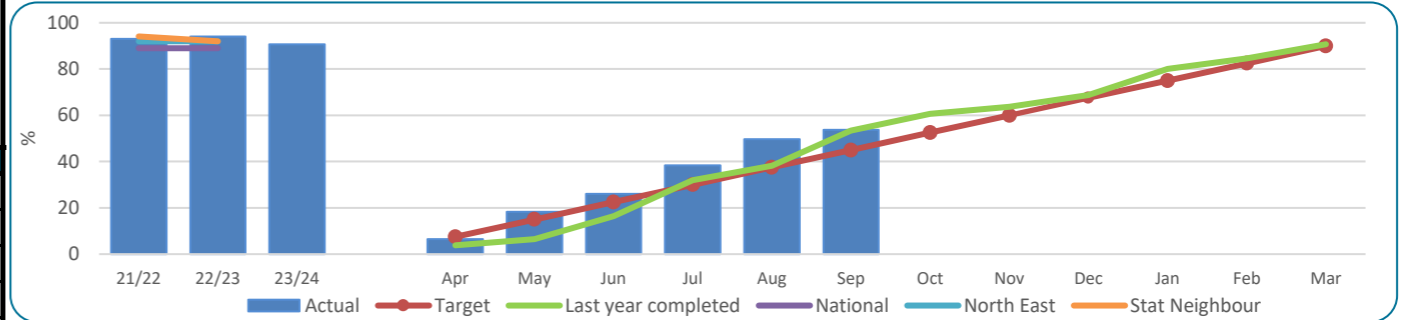


## CHILDREN IN CARE: HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

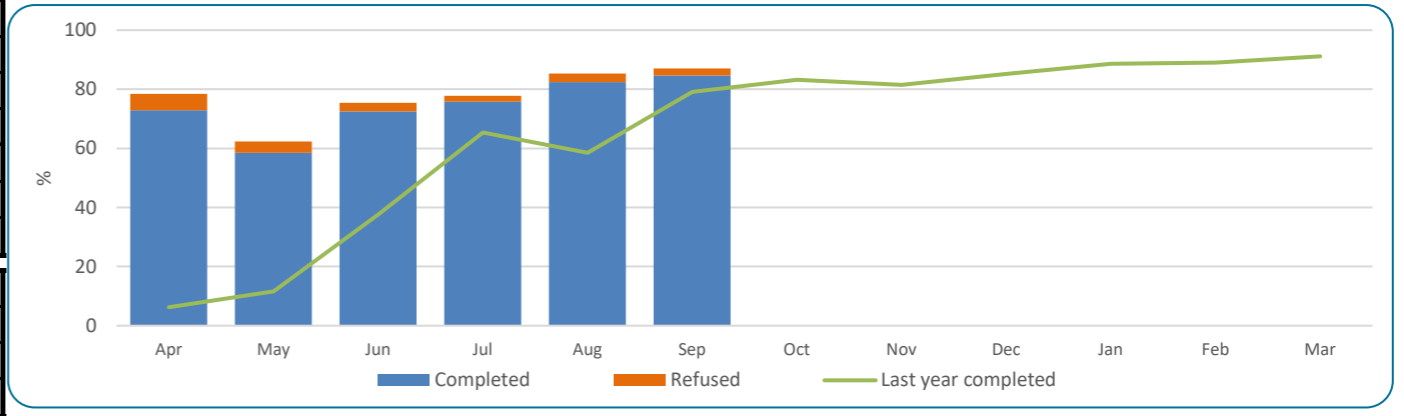
**DEFINITION** Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who have had their Review Health Assessment (RHA) completed and the percentage who have an up to date Health Check (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March). Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care's health as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

		<i>CSC 250</i>		<i>CSC 250b</i>	
		% of CiC who have an up to date health checks	% of CiC refusing engagement in their review health check (YTD)	% of CiC who are due and had a review health check completed (year to date)	
<b>In Month Performance</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>90%</b>		<b>90%</b>	
	Apr-24	6.4	5.6	72.9	
	May-24	18.3	3.8	58.5	
	Jun-24	26.0	2.9	72.5	
	Jul-24	38.5	2.0	75.8	
	Aug-24	49.6	2.9	82.4	
	Sep-24	53.8	2.4	84.7	
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
	Mar-25				
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	93.0	3.7	91.6	
	2022/23	94.0	1.6	83.3	
	2023/24	90.7	1.3	91.1	
	2024/25	53.8	2.4	84.7	

CSC 250: % of CiC who are up to date for a review health check



CSC 250b: % of CiC due a review health check (year to date) that have had one, and % that refused

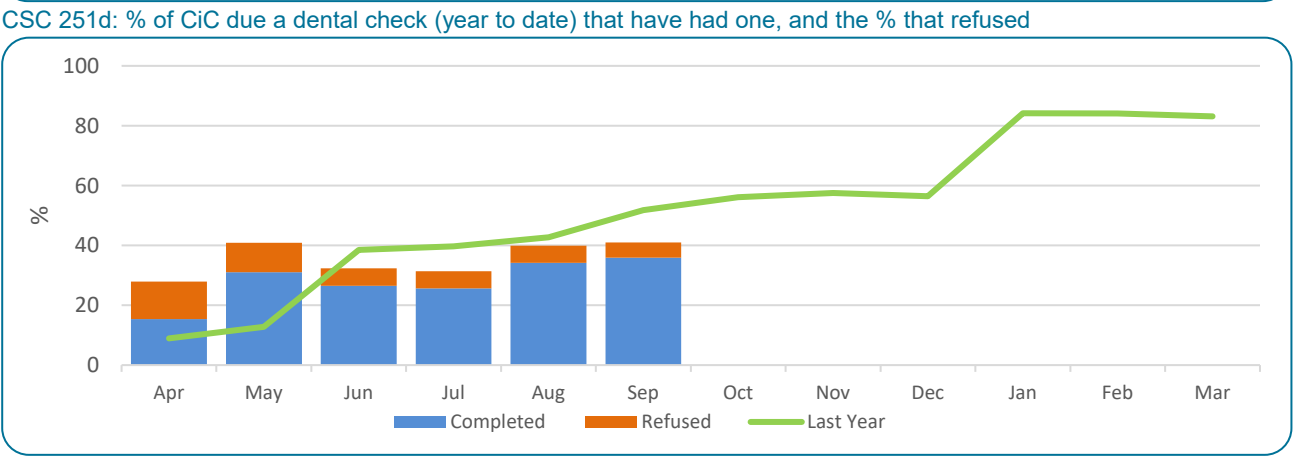
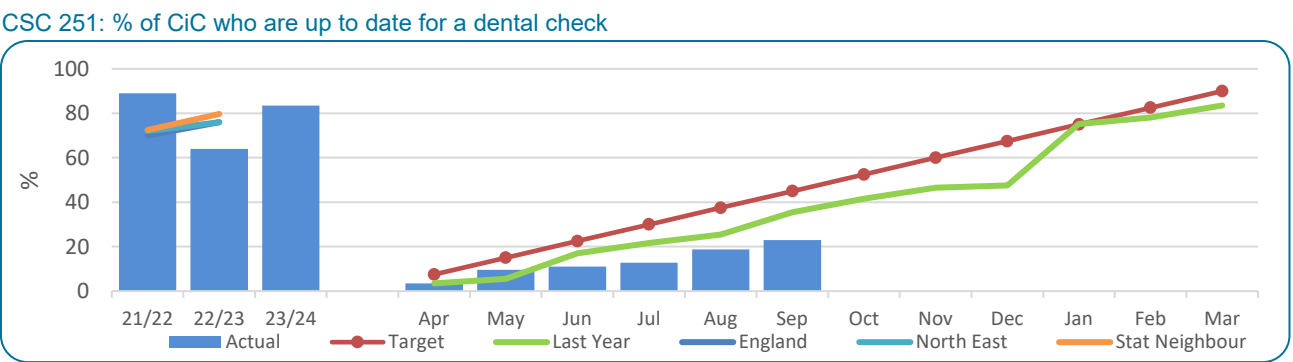




## CHILDREN IN CARE: DENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

**DEFINITION** Of the Children in Care (CiC) at 31 March who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months, the percentage who had had their teeth checked by a dentist during the previous 12 months, and the percentage who had had an annual health check during the previous 12 months (excludes any who will turn 18 before 31st March). Children in Care share many of the same health risks and problems as their peers, but often to a greater degree. These indicators track the participation of our Children in Care with dental checks as a proxy for monitoring the general health and wellbeing of the children, as well as providing a check on the effectiveness of joint working with Health to secure good health outcomes for Children in Care.

		<i>CSC 251</i>		<i>CSC 251d</i>	
		% of CiC who have an up to date dental check	% of CiC refusing engagement in their dental check (YTD)	% of CiC who are due and had a dental check completed (year to date)	
<b>In Month Performance</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>90%</b>		<b>90%</b>	
	Apr-24	3.4	12.5	15.4	
	May-24	9.7	9.9	31.0	
	Jun-24	11.0	5.9	26.5	
	Jul-24	12.8	5.8	25.6	
	Aug-24	18.8	5.7	34.2	
	Sep-24	22.9	5.1	35.9	
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
	Mar-25				
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	89.0	2.6	83.7	
	2022/23	64.0	1.4	47.7	
	2023/24	83.5	3.0	83.1	
	2024/25	22.9	5.1	35.9	

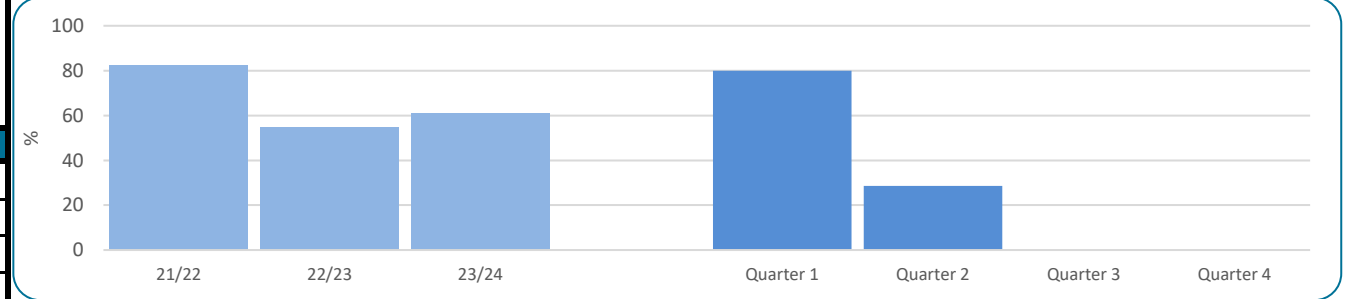


## CHILDREN IN CARE: INITIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

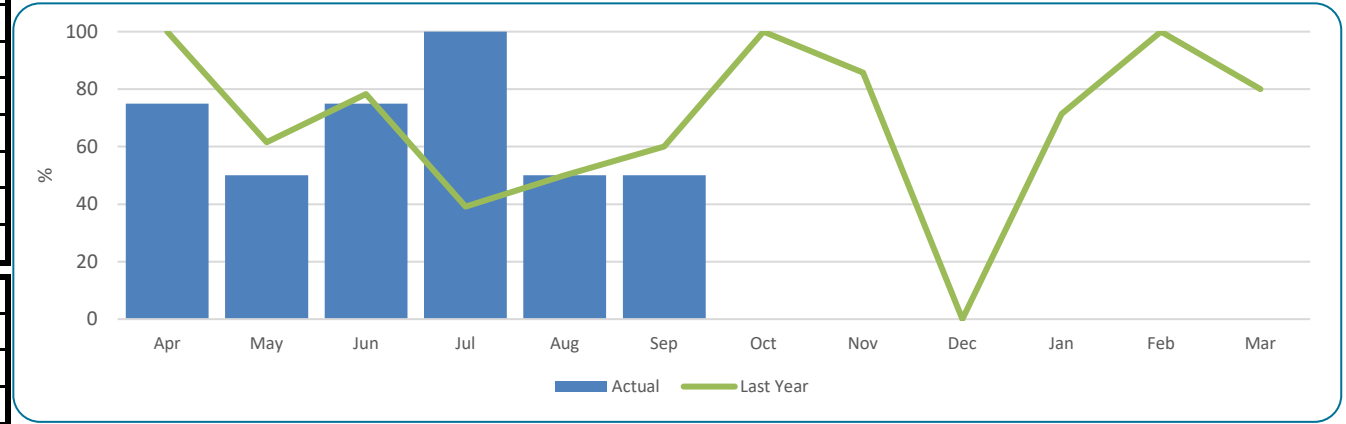
**DEFINITION** Percentage of Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 working days of a child coming into our care year to date (data from Health), and percentage of IHA forms returned to Health within 5 working days. This excludes children / young people coming into care due to being remand or UASC.

		Completed IHA within 20 working days (by Health)	IHA forms returned to Health within 5 working days
<b>In Month Performance</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>95</b>	
	Apr-24		3 / 4
	May-24		1 / 2
	Jun-24	8 / 10	3 / 4
	Jul-24		2 / 2
	Aug-24		4 / 8
	Sep-24	4 / 14	2 / 4
	Oct-24		
	Nov-24		
	Dec-24		
	Jan-25		
	Feb-25		
	Mar-25		
<b>Annual Trend</b>	2021/22	82.1%	89.4%
	2022/23	54.5%	72.4%
	2023/24	60.7%	65.5%
	2024/25	50.0%	62.5%

Completed IHA within 20 working days (by Health)



IHA forms returned to Health within 5 working days



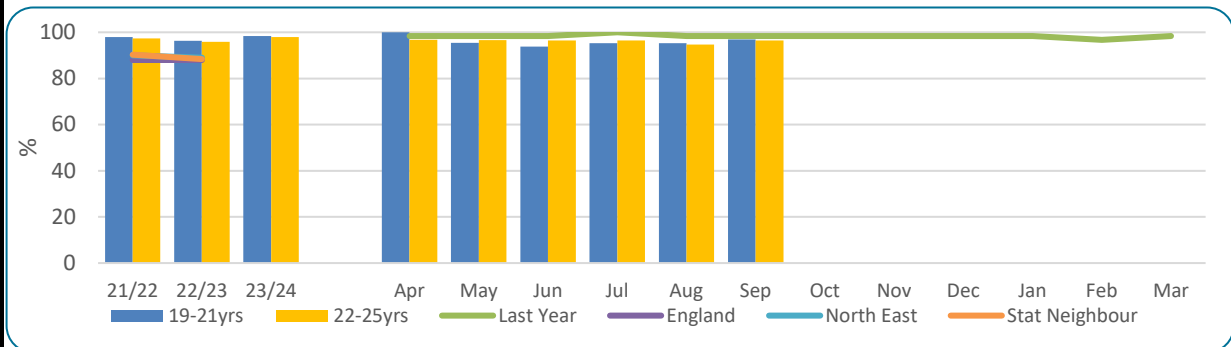
## CARE LEAVERS

### DEFINITION

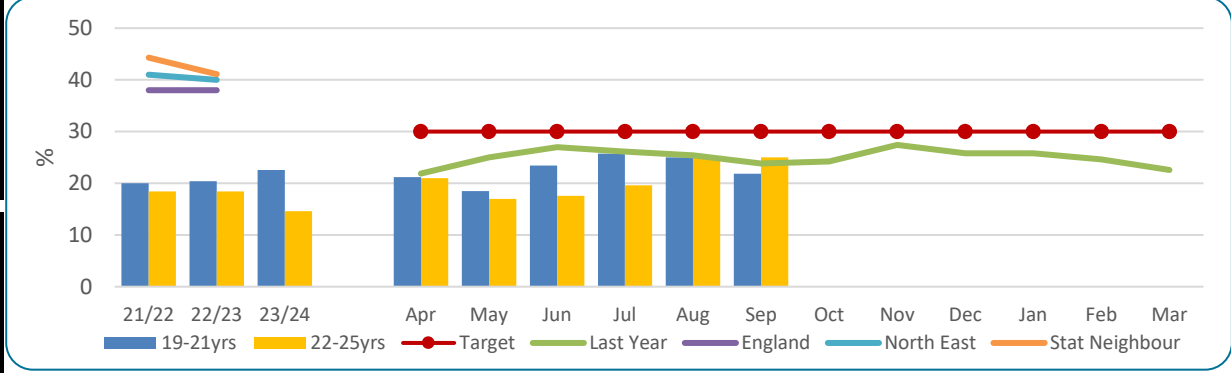
Former relevant care leavers split to show the young people who, at 31st March, will be aged 19-21 and those who will be aged 22-25. The percentage who were in suitable accommodation at their most recent contact, and the percentage who were not in employment, education or training at their most recent contact. This measures accommodation and employment outcomes for young people formerly in care - a key group at risk of social exclusion. It is intended to increase the proportion of former care leavers who are in suitable accommodation and employment, education or training.

		CSC 286		CSC 294	
		19-21 year olds		22-25 year olds	
		% Care leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care leavers NEET	% Care leavers in suitable accommodation	% Care leavers NEET
In Month Performance	Target	90%	30%		
	Apr-24	100.0	21.2	96.8	21.0
	May-24	95.4	18.5	96.6	16.9
	Jun-24	93.8	23.4	96.5	17.5
	Jul-24	95.2	25.8	96.4	19.6
	Aug-24	95.3	25.0	94.6	25.0
	Sep-24	96.9	21.9	96.4	25.0
	Oct-24				
	Nov-24				
	Dec-24				
	Jan-25				
	Feb-25				
Mar-25					
Annual Trend	2021/22	98.0	20.0	97.3	18.4
	2022/23	96.3	20.4	95.9	18.4
	2023/24	98.4	22.6	97.9	14.6
	2024/25	96.9	21.9	96.4	25.0

CSC 286: % Care leavers in suitable accommodation



CSC 294: % Care leavers NEET



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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 MARCH 2025**

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**AN OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL AREA SEND INSPECTION (NOVEMBER 2024)**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides an overview of the SEND Inspection Framework, the activity that took place during our inspection in November 2024 and summarises the findings and subsequent actions taken and planned.

**Summary**

2. Children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are 'valued, visible and included', inspectors have found. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission visited to check on services for young people with SEND. Darlington has seen improvements to services for children with SEND since its previous inspections in 2022. The Council and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Darlington

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that the committee notes the contents of the report and the local partnership's planned response.

**Reason**

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reason; the Council has statutory requirements set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 together with the guidance in the SEN Code of Practice that was issued alongside the 2014 Act. These provisions include the duty to keep under review the educational provision, training provision and social care provision made in its area for children and young people who have special educational needs or a disability and made outside its area for children and young people for whom it is responsible who have special educational needs or who have a disability (section 27 of the 2014 Act).

**Tony Murphy**  
**Assistant Director - Education And Inclusion**

**Background Papers**

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

Tony Murphy: Extension 5637

Council Plan	The strategy supports the commitments for children and young people-supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.
Addressing inequalities	This strategy sets out our local plan for addressing inequalities faced by young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and ensuring that they can receive access to high quality educational provision and outcomes.
Tackling Climate Change	The effective delivery of this strategy will support the council's Climate Change priorities.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The strategy supports the commitments in the council's Safety Valve Agreement to ensure efficient use of the Designated School Grant High Needs Block.
Health and Wellbeing	Health lifestyles of children and young people is a key component of the SEND strategy.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific elements of the strategy which address crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	Children, young people families and key stakeholders.
Budget and Policy Framework	2014 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice.
Key Decision	Yes.
Urgent Decision	No.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The effective delivery of the strategy will positively benefit looked after children and care leavers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

5. The Area SEND inspection of Darlington Local Area Partnership took place over three weeks in November 2024, with the inspection team being on site between 25 and 29 November 2024. This inspection was conducted under the Area SEND Inspection Framework introduced in January 2023 jointly by a team of Inspectors from Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) and as such is very much a system wide inspection reflecting the need for a system wide response to SEND.
6. Darlington, as a SEND area partnership, was last inspected in 2022 and at that time was required to produce a Written Statement of Action to address areas of weakness. The focus of the inspection at this time was on Local Areas' ability to meet the requirement to convert 'statements' into Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as well as whether there were strong joint commissioning arrangements in place.
7. Since that time much has changed within both a local and national context, including the changed health landscape, with the implementation of Integrated Care Boards and

Partnerships (ICBs and ICPs), as well the continued increase in the rise nationally in EHCPs and increased complexity of need including emerging needs post pandemic.

Consequently, the new revised inspection methodology very much reflects some of these changes and has a clear focus on outcomes for children.

8. The purpose of Area SEND inspection is to provide an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND. Where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements.
9. The evaluation schedule used within this inspection considers whether:
  - (a) Children and young people's needs are identified accurately & assessed in a timely & effective way.
  - (b) Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support.
  - (c) Children and young people receive the right help at the right time; children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes; children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities.
10. There are three possible outcomes to the Inspection, and, unlike Social Care and previous School based inspections, these outcomes are not single word outcomes and are intended to be more outcome focused. The possible outcomes are:
  - (a) The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.
  - (b) The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.
  - (c) There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.
11. Darlington Local Area Partnership report was published on 4 February 2025 and the Partnership was judged to have outcome (b) which recognised the strengths and the positive work that is making a difference to our children and young people but clearly recognises that there is more to do as 'our arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND'. This outcome accords with our own partnership self-assessment and comprehensive strategic planning is underway to make further improvements – building upon the areas strengths whilst recognising there is more to do. The local area partnership will next be inspected within three years.
12. The report said children and young people with SEND have a voice in Darlington. They are valued, visible and included in their communities. Children, young people and their families are included in decision-making about the individual support plans and types of

support that they receive. There are many positives about the partnership's SEND arrangements and the experiences and outcomes for children for young people with SEND.

13. Inspectors state the local area partnership is committed to improving the education, health and social care services across Darlington which benefit children and young people with SEND. However, inspectors found the partnership's arrangements for some children and young people can lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes.
14. Some of the areas of strength the report highlighted include:
  - (a) The partnership is ambitious for children and young people with SEND. Leaders work closely together to improve local provision.
  - (b) Children and young people are involved effectively in co-producing the Darlington SEND strategy.
  - (c) The timeliness and quality of children and young people's education, health and care plans are improving.
  - (d) Children, young people and their families receive a comprehensive range of effective support while they are waiting for access to services.
  - (e) The partnership has implemented well-thought-out strategies to support the mental health and emotional well-being needs of children and young people across Darlington
  - (f) Children and young people who are in care, and have SEND, are successfully prepared for adulthood.
  - (g) Disabled children receiving support from Children's Social Care experience smooth transitions to adult social care.
15. However, the report also highlighted areas where the partnership must improve, including:
  - (a) Leaders need to continue to develop how they use data to inform strategic planning.
  - (b) Children and young people wait too long for some therapy services and a diagnosis for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
  - (c) There is a lack of a defined process to assess and support children and young people with a learning disability.
  - (d) Some children and young people experience delays in the delivery of some health services, for example when navigating access to home equipment.
  - (e) Improve the quality of information sharing with schools and services.
16. The partnership already recognises and is responding to these challenges. The partnership had developed a new SEND Strategy to be adopted this year and completed a full public



consultation on the strategy in December 2024. The partnership will use the findings of the report to align with and inform the SEND Strategy implementation plan.

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# Area SEND inspection of Darlington Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 25 to 29 November 2024

Dates of previous inspection: 24 to 28 January 2022

## Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.

## Information about the local area partnership

The commissioning of health services changed across England in 2022. At this time, the responsibility for health services in Darlington passed to the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB). Darlington Borough Council and North East and North Cumbria ICB are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Darlington.

Since the previous inspection in January 2022, leadership across the local area partnership has remained stable with some changes to the local governance structure. This includes development of the SEND implementation group and SEND assurance executive committee, overseen by the health and well-being board.

The local area partnership, and schools, commission alternative provision (AP) through a local authority maintained pupil referral unit (PRU). This is for permanently excluded pupils, those pupils identified at risk of permanent exclusion and pupils being reintegrated into education after a period of absence. Children and young people who cannot attend school because of health needs are supported by the home and hospital teaching service. This is managed by the PRU with the support of the local authority.

## **What is it like to be a child or young person with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in this area?**

The local area partnership (the partnership) is committed to improving the education, health and social care services across Darlington which benefit children and young people with SEND. However, the impact of the partnership's work on children and young people's lived experience is inconsistent.

Children and young people with SEND have a voice in Darlington. They are valued, visible and included in their communities. The partnership works closely with children and young people with SEND to ensure that their voices are heard. Children and young people make their views known to local leaders. This includes speaking to elected members about the type of activities and facilities that they would like locally. For example, children and young people have been influential in suggesting improvements to the design of local facilities, such as adaptations and improvements to local parks to improve disabled access.

Children, young people and their families are included in decision-making about the individual support plans and types of support that they receive. This includes support that is effective for their next steps in education, employment or training, and to prepare for adulthood or the transition from children's to adult social care. The partnership mostly works proactively with schools and education providers to ensure that children and young people stay in education or training.

There is a growing number of pupils in Darlington with social, emotional and mental health needs who benefit from the additional provision and support provided by AP. The partnership has successfully reviewed and reorganised AP provision. As a result, some of these pupils develop positive school attitudes and demonstrate improved attendance at school.

Most children and young people receive effective support with their school attendance. As a result, children and young people with SEND in Darlington attend school regularly. Many children and young people with SEND are supported effectively to do well at school. For example, the number of children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans, who achieve at least a grade 4 in English and mathematics GCSEs, is greater than national averages for England.

The voice of the child, young person and their families is more consistently represented in new EHC plans than older plans. However, advice and recommendations about a child or young person's health, education and social care is not consistently included in EHC plans and/or when annual reviews have been completed. In addition, some children and young people's EHC plans are not consistently linked to their social care plans to ensure continuity of care. This negatively impacts multi-agency planning to provide children and young people with co-ordinated care when needed.

Disabled children's social care needs are mostly identified accurately and assessed in a

timely way. Consequently, most children and young people receive timely and effective support from early help or children's social care. Their voices are clearly incorporated into their social care assessments and this informs children and young people's plans. Children and young people's social care plans are child-centred and identify multi-disciplinary actions to improve the child's lived experience.

Children and young people receive a range of appropriate health support in Darlington. This has been implemented to meet individual children and young people's needs at the earliest opportunity. However, across some health services, for some children, young people and their families, waiting times are too long. For example, some children and young people over five years old experience lengthy waits for a neuro-developmental diagnosis, while others can wait for extended periods of time to access speech and language therapy.

Children and young people are working with the partnership to co-produce a new SEND strategy to improve the support that they receive. This is currently under consultation with the wider community. However, it does not have an accompanying implementation plan. This means that it is unclear how the SEND strategy will be delivered and what the overall impact will be for children, young people and their families.

## **What is the area partnership doing that is effective?**

- The partnership is ambitious for children and young people with SEND. Leaders work closely together to improve local provision. They have shared priorities in a joint-working partnership to improve SEND in Darlington. Most stakeholders, including the Darlington Parent and Carer Forum (PCF), believe that the support for children and young people with SEND is improving.
- The PCF is valued by the partnership. It has a strategic voice and is fully involved in co-production and the development of a range of partnership strategies, for example the emotionally based school avoidance strategy. Similarly, children and young people are involved effectively in co-producing the Darlington SEND strategy.
- The timeliness and quality of children and young people's EHC plans are improving. Children and young people's assessments for EHC plans are mostly completed within statutory timeframes. A new EHC plan format, developed with the PCF, more accurately represents children and young people's lived experience.
- The Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) is well established in the ICB and across SEND systems in Darlington. The role is widely known and understood by professionals across education, health and social care. The DCO provides impactful information and advice for children, young people and their families.
- The Dynamic Support Register (DSR) is well developed and embedded in Darlington. Children and young people receive a clear package of key-worker co-ordinated care that meets their needs well. Some children and young people also benefit in the same way from a pre-DSR. This means that children and young people without a formal diagnosis of autism or learning disability can access care from a multi-disciplinary team of professionals.

- Children, young people and their families receive a comprehensive range of effective support while they are waiting for access to services, such as speech and language therapies and autism assessment. For example, children with complex needs are referred to the sleep service, incontinence teams and 'early bird plus' to develop their family's understanding of best practices to support autism. Family support hubs and the local 'daisy chain' autism support are available for families to access for further support.
- The partnership has implemented well-thought-out strategies to support the mental health and emotional well-being needs of children and young people across Darlington. This includes the mental health support team in schools and early intervention by the 0-19 service, provided by the Darlington 'Growing Healthy Team'. For example, the 0-19 service offers a 'Decider' resilience course to prepare children and young people for secondary school.
- Most education providers describe a generally positive picture of partnership work to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Darlington, for example co-ordinated workforce development that includes emotionally based school avoidance training and awareness. As a result, this area of need is better supported and prioritised across services.
- Children and young people who are in care, and have SEND, are successfully prepared for adulthood. Their destination data compares favourably to national averages for England. Schools proactively request the support of the virtual school to deploy partnership inclusion and SEND teams to support them. These teams ensure that children and young people who are in care, and have SEND, are supported well to stay in education, employment or training.
- When disabled children and young people are cared for, away from their families, commissioners seek appropriate assurance about safeguarding them and the quality of their care and education. Carers support children and young people to participate in social and life skill opportunities that enhance their lived experiences.
- Disabled children receiving support from children's social care experience smooth transitions to adult social care. They receive effective multi-agency support from health and education during this transition period. As a result, young people with disabilities are supported to stay safe, and their SEND needs continue to be met.

## **What does the area partnership need to do better?**

- Leaders are improving the effectiveness of data to support their work, such as to gain a clearer picture of the number of children and young people with SEND who are electively home educated. However, this is not consistent across the partnership. Leaders are continuing to develop how they use data to inform strategic planning.
- Children and young people wait too long for some therapy services and a diagnosis for autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. For example, children under five years old often wait for up to 23 months and children and young people over five years old wait up to 42 months. However, children, young people and their families can access support while they are waiting. This includes primary and secondary resource bases that provide help and advice without needing a diagnosis to access

support. In addition, the 0-19 service duty line is available for families to access support.

- There is a lack of a defined process to assess and support children and young people with a learning disability. As a result, it is sometimes difficult for families and professionals to navigate the support available. This means that there is an increased likelihood that children and young people with a learning disability could miss out on important services, such as annual health checks.
- Some children and young people experience delays in the delivery of some health services, for example when navigating access to home equipment. Service specifications, which include funding for local authority occupational health services, do not align across health services. These delays and complicated service specifications can be frustrating for families to navigate.
- The partnership has developed clear criteria for the identification of need with 'SEND ranges' documents. However, professionals' understanding of 'SEND ranges' is inconsistent. This leads to variability in timeliness when schools assess the needs of pupils with SEND. In the strongest practice, early intervention meets younger children's SEND needs well and some children have EHC plans prior to starting primary schools.
- The AP admission information available to the PRU generally provides an up-to-date picture of the child or young person's individual needs. In contrast, information available to early years providers, and to schools, for admissions of children and young people is not as thorough. As a result, some pupils may experience incomplete support on entry to their new education provider.
- A lack of information-sharing with schools means some schools do not consistently know about referrals being made to wider services. This places increased demands on school leaders' capacity to manage case loads when several information requests are made to schools at once. However, requests for information have appropriate deadlines.
- Children and young people can access a range of clubs and activities outside of school. However, some do not access the clubs available as the offer is not well known by children, young people and their families. Frequently, families of children and young people with SEND told inspectors that transport is an issue to access clubs and activities.
- Despite their best efforts, some special schools struggle for space. There is further need for space if children and young people require assistive devices, such as wheelchairs and standing frames. However, the partnership has identified additional building space to alleviate capacity issues in special school provision.
- The Vulnerable Pupil Panel (VPP) is a forum for schools to discuss an individual child or young person's needs. Schools self-refer complex cases to the VPP. This means that some children and young people's needs may be missed if the school does not proactively seek support.

## Areas for improvement

### Areas for improvement

Leaders should continue to strengthen their governance arrangements to deliver and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of their SEND strategy across the partnership. This includes ensuring that:

- the partnership continues to strengthen and further improve the quality of data it uses to accurately identify where there are gaps in provision and commission appropriate services to effectively address those gaps;
- the partnership strengthens the information that is currently available to all partners and uses this effectively in order to hold each other accountable for the effective commissioning and delivery of services to improve outcomes for children and young people;
- the planned increase in special school places for post-16 students proceeds to timeframe to alleviate capacity issues in special school provision.

Leaders in health should continue to take action to reduce waiting times across some health services, including neuro-developmental pathways as well as therapies that include occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. In the intervening waiting period, the partnership should continue to mitigate the impact for children and young people.

Leaders should continue to strengthen the systems and processes to further improve the quality of children and young people's EHC plans, including updates to EHC plans following annual reviews, to ensure that EHC plans reflect the most up-to-date information from education, health and social care.

Leaders should continue to strengthen the systems and processes to support children and young people to access support and assessment for a learning disability. The partnership should ensure that these children and young people receive suitable support across education, health and social care that meets their needs well.



## Local area partnership details

Local authority	Integrated care board
Darlington Borough Council	North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
James Stroyan Executive Director of People	Samantha Allen Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board
<a href="http://www.darlington.gov.uk">www.darlington.gov.uk</a>	<a href="http://www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk">www.northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk</a>
Town Hall Feethams Darlington County Durham DL1 5QT	Parkhouse Building Baron Way Kingmoor Park Cumbria CA6 4SJ

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including: two HMI from education and social care; a lead Children's Services Inspector from the Care Quality Commission (CQC); and another Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

## Inspection team

### Ofsted

David Mills, Ofsted HMI Lead inspector

Mary Cook, Ofsted HMI

Jo Warburton, Ofsted HMI

### Care Quality Commission

David Roberts, CQC Lead inspector

Sandra Smith, CQC inspector

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
3 MARCH 2025**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025**

**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**).

**Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that:-
  - a) It is recommended that Members note the current status of the Work Programme and consider any additional areas of work they would like to include.
  - b) Members' views are requested.

**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 of the Scrutiny Committee supports the 'Children and Young People' priority, supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.
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

5. 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.
6. The Council Plan was adopted on 18<sup>th</sup> 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.
7. The Council Plan identifies six priorities, including 'Children and Young People', which aims to support the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations. Eight key deliverables are identified as part of this priority.

### Forward Plan and Additional Items

8. 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.
9. A copy of the index of the Forward Plan has been attached at **Appendix 3** for information.

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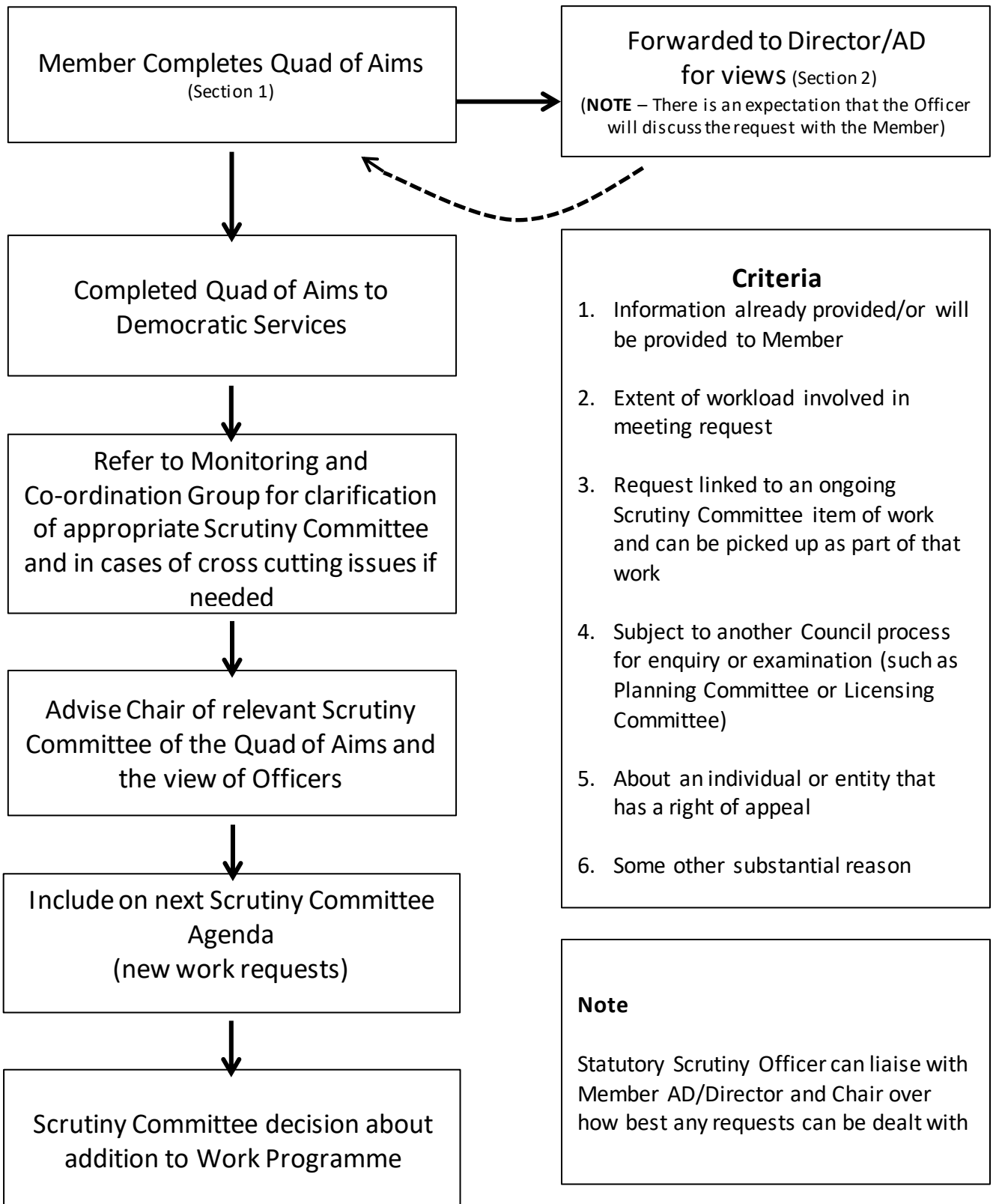
### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

Topic	Timescale	Lead Officer/ Organisation Involved	Link to PMF (metrics)	Scrutiny's Role / Notes
<b>Darlington Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report</b>	03/03/2025	Ann Baxter, Independent Chair		
<b>Local Designated Officer Annual Report</b>	03/03/2025	Martin Graham		To examine the Annual Report and assure Members that allegations made against staff who work with children are reported and how they are actioned
<b>Performance Indicators Quarter 2 2024/25</b>	03/03/2025	Sharon Raine	Agreed set of indicators	To receive quarterly monitoring reports and undertake any further detailed work into particular outcomes if necessary
<b>Transport Review</b>	03/03/2025	Tony Murphy		
<b>Calm in Communities</b>	07/04/2025			
<b>Children and Young People - Website Content</b>	07/04/2025			
<b>Home Education</b>	07/04/2025	Dianne Gage, Inclusion Lead		
<b>Children and Young People Public Health Overview</b>	TBD	Ken Ross		

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### 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)**

	<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**



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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