



Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

Protecting Children and Adults

Annual Report

2020-2021



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1. Introduction

Foreword by Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Welcome to the second annual report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership, it covers the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The report outlines the progress the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership has made throughout the year, illustrating the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across Darlington.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone nationally and locally, rising to this challenge has been a priority for Darlington Safeguarding Partnership throughout the past twelve months. All agencies working with children and adults have been required to adapt the way they deliver their services, working out how to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. We thank the dedicated professionals across all agencies who continued to work so positively, keeping our children and adults safe and protected through such a very challenging year.

The Partnership recognised the need to have stronger collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements to ensure the discharge of our statutory obligations. We worked flexibly to have open and transparent conversations and proactively engage with wider partner agencies. This helped to understand the challenges and pressures, but also gave assurance that safeguarding activity continued to be effective, maintaining service delivery without putting children, adults or their families and practitioners at risk.

The vision of Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is to ensure 'Darlington is a place where children and adults can live their lives safely'. The COVID -19 pandemic has emphasised the fact that anyone can be at risk of harm and has reminded us that the risk of abuse and neglect is increased by a range of factors including mental health, poverty, domestic abuse as well as loneliness and isolation.

Working together across organisations will always be a challenge, however we are confident that the Partnership is functioning well. We recognise there is always room for improvement and we strive to ensure that agencies continue to work together to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe in Darlington.

Ann Baxter, Independent Chair/Scrutineer

Adrian Green, Detective Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary

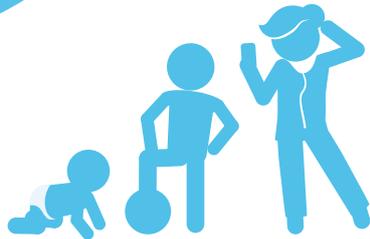
James Stroyan, Director of Children and Adult Services, Darlington Borough Council

David Gallagher/Jean Golightly, Chief Officer/Director of Nursing and Quality, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group



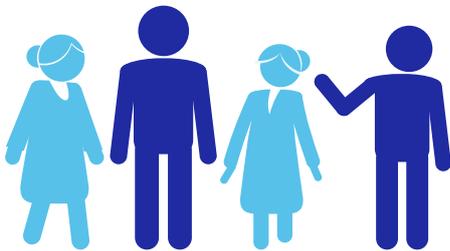
2. Local Picture

Darlington Borough Council is a Unitary Authority in the North East of England which covers 76.3 square miles. Darlington is part of the Tees Valley city region.



Children and young people under the age of 25 years make up **28%** of the population, with 22% (23,599) aged 0-18.

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

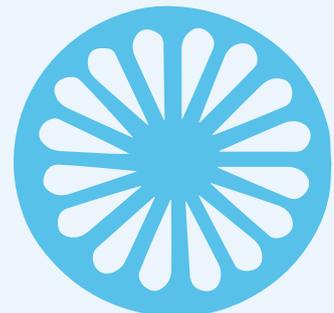


In terms of ethnicity, the 2011 Census reported 96.2% of Darlington's population as White and **3.8%** from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.



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

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 (2011 census) is **0.3%** which is three times higher than the national average.



3. Responding to Coronavirus and the impact on Safeguarding

As is to be expected, the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges posed to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults were safeguarded was the main focus throughout the year.

Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) worked with partner agencies to understand the impact COVID - 19 had on services and to gain assurance about how children and young people and vulnerable adults were being supported as well as how services were adapting to meet their statutory safeguarding duties and responsibilities

The usual sub-group arrangements were temporarily suspended at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and reporting arrangements adapted. In response to the Governments emergency procedures a Critical Safeguarding Partnership Group was established, initially to identify the most vulnerable children in Darlington. This group evolved into a broader multi-agency group which included designated safeguarding leads from key partner agencies. The group had responsibility for the weekly management and oversight of vulnerable children ensuring they had been visited or contacted by relevant agencies in line with agreed frequency or continuing care clinical need requirements.

As partners saw the benefit of having the Critical Safeguarding Partnership Group for children, they implemented a similar Group for adults to oversee adult safeguarding arrangements and ensure there was multi-agency 'line of sight' on those adults identified as most at risk. It was acknowledged that it is a very different scenario as many vulnerable adults are hidden behind closed doors, either in their own home or care setting without much scrutiny and advocacy and is not yet possible to understand the extent of the impact of being in isolation has had on the most vulnerable.

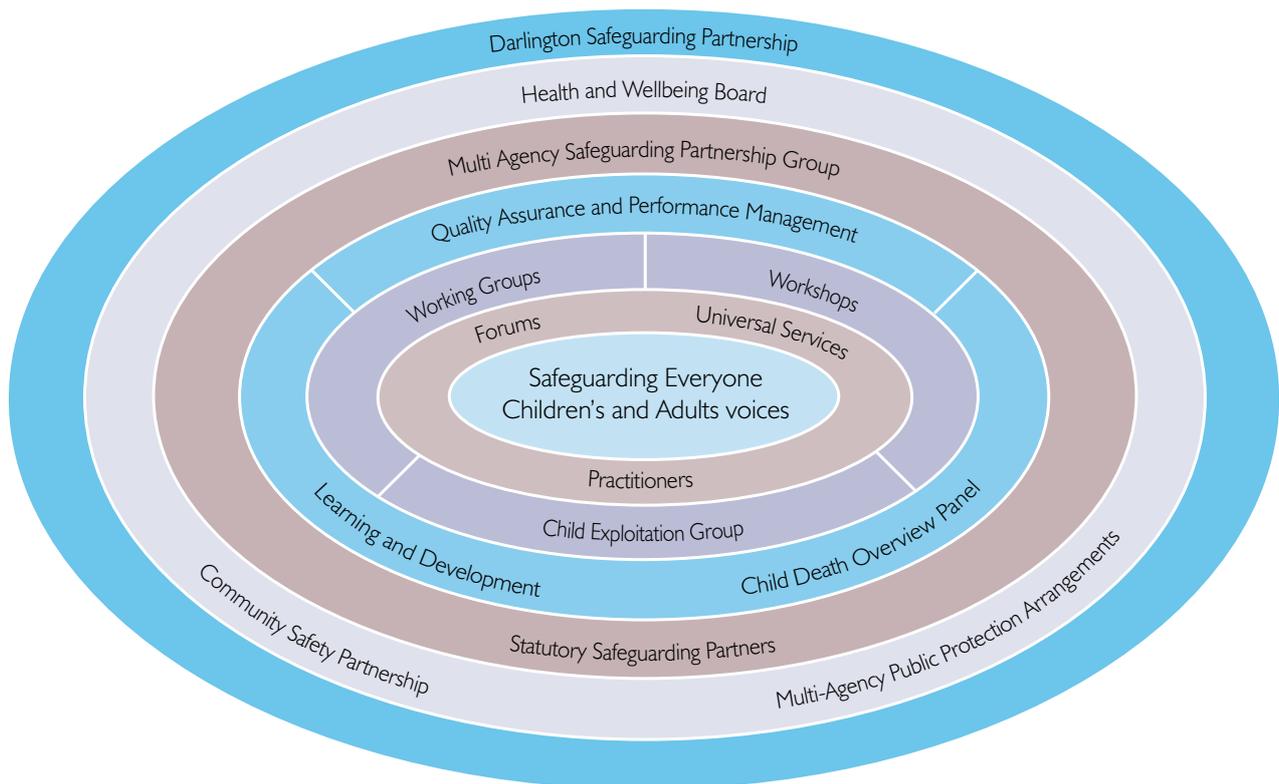
Partners were assured that organisations were able to maintain service delivery without putting children, adults, families or practitioners at risk, and everyone was working closely and appropriately, adapting ways of working to ensure the most vulnerable were supported and safeguarded.

The introduction of virtual technology enabled essential multi-agency meetings to take place ensuring child and adult strategy meetings, Child Protection and Looked After processes were able to continue. The use of virtual technology enabled those children identified as highest risk to have additional oversight from organisations through the adoption of different and innovative ways of working which will continue in the future.

Professionals reported greater involvement in multi-agency meetings held virtually as practitioners have not been required to travel. However, the impact of home working in an intensive but potentially isolated way has been recognised and agencies are considering how to achieve a balance.



4. Governance and Structure



• Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Underpinned by The Care Act 2014 and Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners set the strategic direction of the Partnership aligning the work of Adult and Child Safeguarding. Members are the most senior leaders from the three statutory partners.

The Partners have a strong collective oversight of all safeguarding arrangements to ensure fulfilment of their statutory obligations. They engaged with wider partners by inviting key leads along to meetings on a rotational basis to obtain an understanding of current issues and safeguarding challenges organisations were facing.

• Quality Assurance and Performance sub-group (QAPM)

The role of the QAPM group is to scrutinise, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding work across partner agencies and commissioned organisations. It continues to gather and monitor quarterly performance data and is taking steps to implement quality assurance processes to understand the strengths and weaknesses of safeguarding arrangements and to understand how learning has been embedded within organisations.

Quarterly Performance reports provide the information by exception on the current highs and lows and highlight the changing landscape due to the Pandemic. Measures are in place to address themes and trends to further understand these changes which will shape what the Partnership needs to take forward.

• Learning and Development sub-group (L&D)

Underpinned by The Care Act 2014 and Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Statutory Safeguarding Partners set the strategic direction of the Partnership aligning the work of Adult and Child Safeguarding. Members are the most senior leaders from the three statutory partners.

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- **Child Exploitation Group (CEG)**

The primary purpose of CEG is to oversee, monitor, evaluate and improve responses to tackling children missing from home, care and education and act as the strategic lead group for the reduction of Child Exploitation across Durham and Darlington. An operational group oversees individual cases of children at risk of exploitation in Darlington with a purpose to prevent, disrupt and deter them from being criminally or sexually exploited.

- **Critical Safeguarding Partnership Groups**

Two groups were established at the start of the Pandemic to understand the most vulnerable children and adults and the mechanisms in place to provide assurance on who had line of sight. The groups were responsible for the management, oversight and response to any emergency regards the most vulnerable in Darlington and provided Statutory Partners with assurance and an operational overview of what was happening on the ground.

Both groups had oversight of processes and how agencies were operating. These group ensured there was strategic oversight of vulnerable children and adults across all agencies and a new guidance was developed to support the groups.

- **MASH/Childrens Front Door Operational Group**

The MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) Operational Group for children was established during this period to share good practice, practice challenges and any other information relevant to the operational management and functioning of the Childrens Front Door in Darlington. It is a multi-agency group with a shared responsibility for safeguarding children with an aim of promoting effective communication between all partner agencies contributing to decision making and involvement with children and families at the Front Door.

- **Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)**

Child Death Overview Panel arrangements are undertaken cross border with Durham Safeguarding Partnership. The Panel continues to review all deaths of children as required in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

This year the panel has identified a number modifiable factors and key learning points from reviews completed which include:

- Smoking in the household
- Smoking during pregnancy
- Management of high risk pregnancies
- Co-sleeping and parental alcohol and/or substance misuse.
- The new mortality database collates and shares all learning from reviews across the country.

Review of Governance arrangements

Discussions continue in respect of the development of the governance arrangements and work is ongoing to review how groups can align more closely to ensure learning is embedded into practice. What has been highlighted during the Pandemic is the need to have two separate operational groups for children and adults, to have oversight on the most vulnerable and ensuring mechanisms are in place to provide assurance on who has line of sight. The groups will focus on practice issues and challenges relating to operational management and will feed up to the Learning and Development and Quality Assurance and Performance Groups, who will take a strategic and coordinated view including a programme of checks and balances. This will be a priority for the Partnership going into 2020/21.

5. Activities and Interventions

Performance data and quality assurance activity

Work has progressed in collating multi-agency performance data to obtain an understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted on the changing landscape over the year.

There was a decrease in referrals to child and adult services in the first weeks of the lockdown and partners saw a decline in referrals into other services such as CAMHS and Paediatrics. There was an increase in contacts from midwifery and pre-birth assessments and repeat referrals.

As the year progressed the number of contacts into Children's services started to rise and were nearer normal levels. Police did not experience an increase in domestic abuse incidents as was reported in the media and this was supported by children's services data as the number of contacts received regarding domestic abuse had decreased. However, a larger number progressed to a referral to social care which suggested a rise in the severity of the abuse and a higher level of impact/risk/concern for the child.

Health Trusts saw an increase in children presenting with accidents to Emergency Departments and a decrease in those accessing services where there are more complex health issues. It was appreciated there were caveats with less activity in the general population due to lockdown and a genuine nervousness of accessing hospital due to COVID-19. Partners were assured the children attending A&E due to accidents were genuine and not as a result of non-accidental injury.

There was a noted increase in the number of contacts to the children's front door from members of the public and a revised process was adopted to respond to these to ensure information was triangulated.





Cases involving self-neglect and people with complex lifestyles have increased, there is emerging evidence the increase in the conversion rate could be related to the pandemic, particularly in relation to the cohort of individuals who have either no or low level care and support needs. Many in this cohort can be described as leading “chaotic lifestyles” where a prevalence to abusing substances often lead to self-neglect issues. The safeguarding team spent an increasing amount of time assisting these individuals who may have lost what little informal/formal support they had due to restrictions through the pandemic. As is being reported elsewhere the most vulnerable in the community appear to be the most severely impacted as a result of COVID-19.

There have been some changes in conversion rates for acute health providers who are seeing less people as a result of COVID-19 lockdown isolation.

During the pandemic three care homes and a private hospital met the threshold for Executive Strategy Meeting (ESM) process. This is a significant increase from the previous year. In all cases CQC have inspected these homes and rated them as either inadequate or requires improvement. The ESM process holds providers to account, however significant support is also made available from the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and Care Quality Commission (CQC). It is clear the provider market has struggled with the impact of the pandemic and those providers where there is weaker leadership and issues with recruiting and retaining staff of a sufficient quality have suffered most.

A significant Provider Forum which has multi-agency oversight on Care Home Sector and those settings in ESM and includes CQC and commissioning agencies, continues to monitor those settings as well as escalating any emerging concerns.

The most vulnerable in the community appear to be the most severely impacted as a result of COVID-19 and is acknowledged that there is likely to be an increase in referrals as there will likely be many hidden issues, which will emerge over time.

Adult Insight Project

Darlington took part in the COVID-19 Safeguarding Insight project which was developed to create a national picture regarding adult safeguarding activity during the Pandemic and was supported by the Local Government Association (LGA), Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and National Network of Chairs of Safeguarding Adults Boards.

At the start of the Pandemic there were concerns that safeguarding issues were not being identified and reported during the lockdown period and was considered important to understand what had happened to learn lessons for future COVID-19 outbreaks, as well as responding to changing safeguarding needs.

The project required the collection of monthly data on safeguarding activity alongside a series of questions to elicit further insight and intelligence on local trends and changes. The data was analysed looking at the differences between activity in March 2019 and March 2020 and Darlington was generally comparable with the national picture.

Multi-Agency response to COVID-19 Practitioner Survey

The partnership carried out a survey to obtain a collective understanding of how agencies worked together to safeguard children during the Pandemic and to establish what has worked well and where improvements were required. Findings highlighted that partners were satisfied there was a 'line of sight' on the most vulnerable children, especially those children who were not in school. Appropriate safeguarding procedures were in place and agencies continued to work through the pandemic and ensure visits/contacts were safely undertaken. Services worked together to share the responsibility and there had been good communication and information sharing between agencies.

MASH multi-agency audits

In February 2020, the MASH Operational Group agreed to commence a multi-agency audit process based on key themes highlighted at the children's front door to review live cases. There will be a focus on two to three live cases as this means they will be timely and may result in a change of outcome for families. A model as to how this might be approached was being firmed up and initial areas suggested for initial focus were Cumulative Harm/Neglect and information sharing.



6. Analysis of impact and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements

Child Safeguarding

Early Help

The partnership has recognised that early help requires a wider involvement than that provided by the local authority and the pressure on 'universal' services such as schools and health visitors has increased year on year. There was a reduction seen in the number of early help assessments undertaken by partner agencies due to impact of COVID.

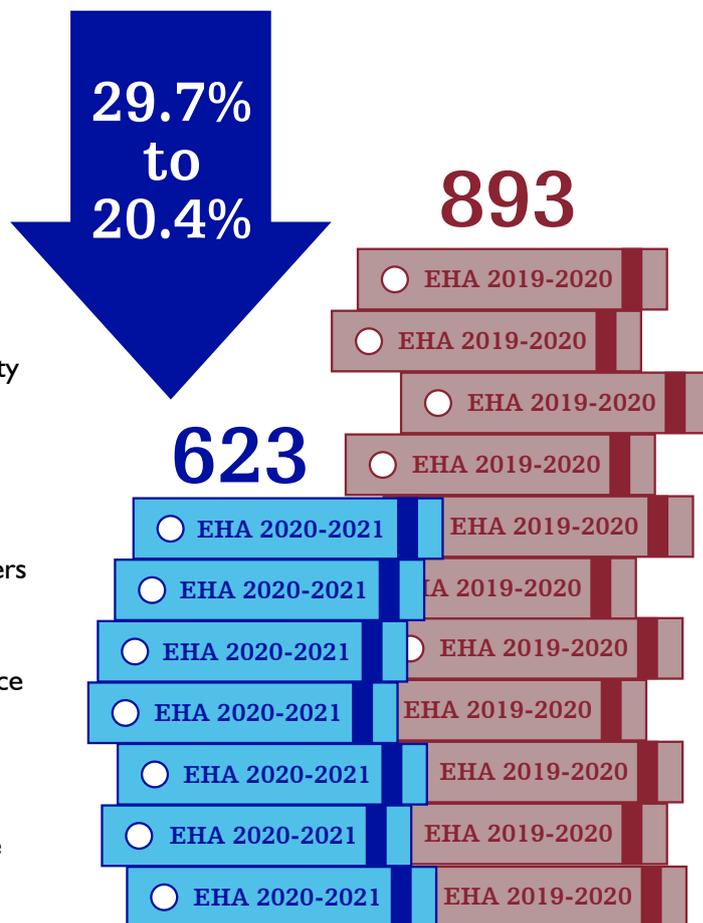
The Early Help Assessment is used by multi-agency partners and provides a standard and coordinated approach for practitioners to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right support at an early stage to reduce the chance of escalation to specialist services.

Early Help Services continued to respond to all contacts during the lockdown and continued to maintain a focus of regular contact with families as services which would have been delivered through face to face were being delivered online.

During 2020-21 there were 623 Early Help Assessments (EHA) started which is a decrease on the 893 completed in 2019-20, which is largely due to the impact of the pandemic. The percentage of EHAs completed by external agencies has also seen a decline from 29.7% to 20.4% which is below the 30% target.

Children in Need (CiN)

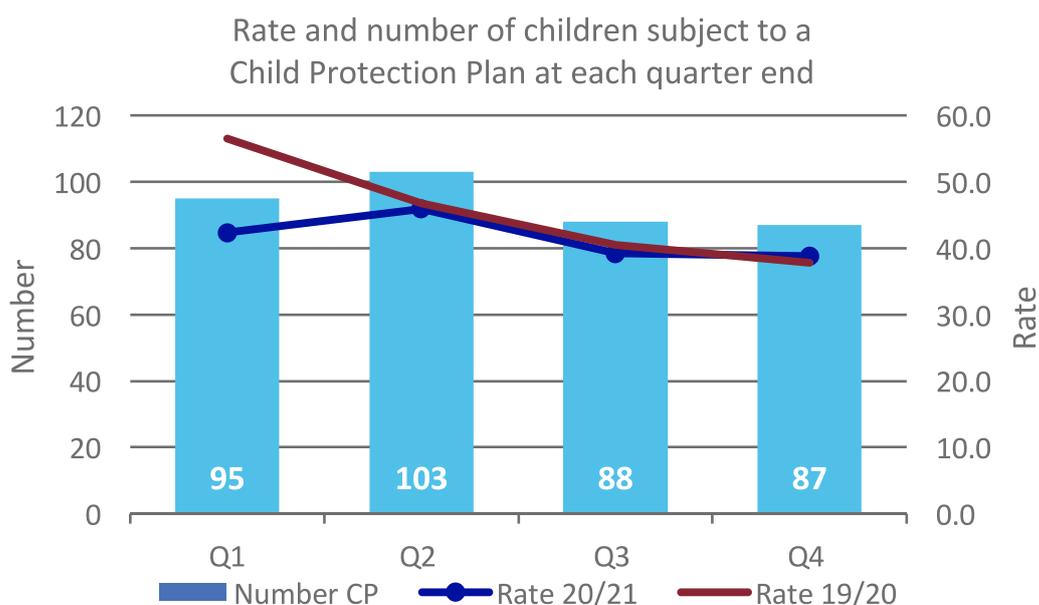
In March 2021 there were 332 children in Darlington identified as CiN, compared to 357 children that were at the end of the 2019/20 period.





Child Protection Plans (CPP)

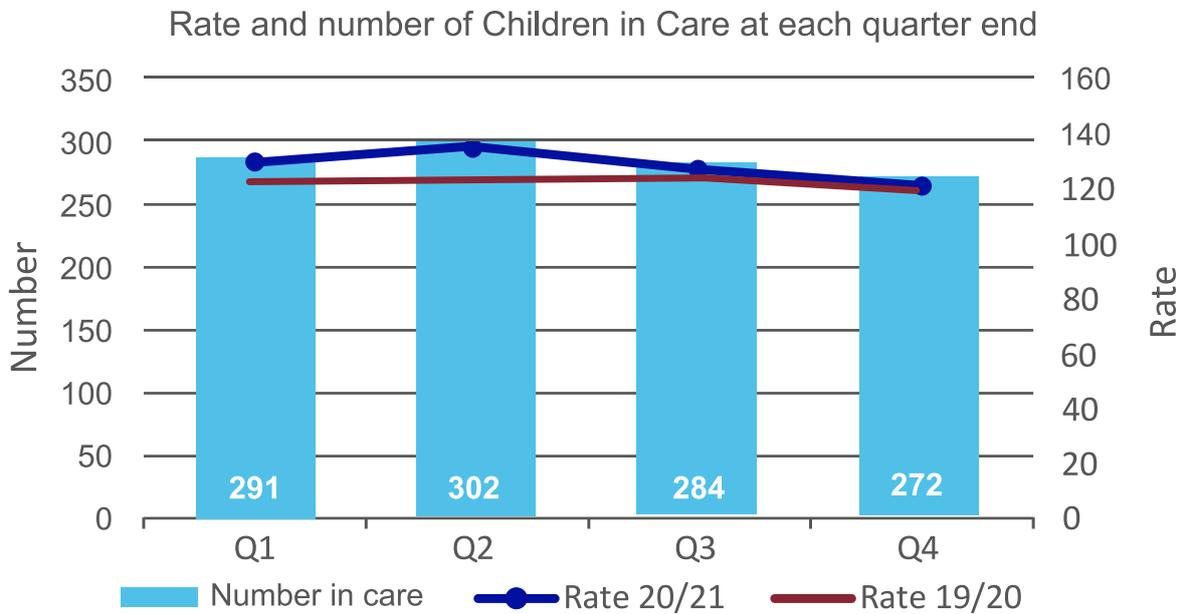
At the end of March 2021, 87 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan in Darlington (a rate of 38.8 per 10,000). This is lower than: regional average (70.0); statistical neighbour (53.9) and the national average (42.8).



Risk Factors associated with Child Protection were due to:			
Neglect	Emotional Abuse	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
42%	42%	14%	2%

Children Looked After

Children looked after and care leavers are recognised nationally as one of the most vulnerable groups. It was reported from the beginning of April there had been a total of 26 children brought into care with 61% of those being placed with extended family members. During the pandemic the Family Courts adapted to new processes and reduced the number of hearings in order to manage virtual Court hearings, they remained open for urgent applications in respect of children who were at risk of significant harm. There had been minimal movement of placements as a result of the Pandemic.



The number of Looked After Children (LAC) by the local authority at the end of March 2021 was 272 (121.1 per 10,000); which is higher than our statistical neighbours (100.3), regional (108.0) and national average (67.0).

These placements were made up of:							
In house Fostering	Connected Carers	Private Fostering	Residential Care	Placed for adoption	Independent Living	Placed with parent	Other
54	44	91	28	17	6	22	10

Care Leavers

Care leavers remained in contact with services during the Pandemic and were supported in various ways. The Local Authority has a 'Staying Put' policy and there are currently nine young people accommodated under this arrangement.

74 out of 75 care leavers in Darlington were in suitable accommodation by the end of 2020-21 and the percentage of care leavers (aged 19-21) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 17.9%, below the target of 30%, these were either due to disability or illness, pregnancy or parenting or other circumstances.



Transition to Adulthood

When a young person reaches the age of 18 they are legally an adult under SEND and Leaving Care statutory guidance, however children's services retain the responsibility to ensure the right package of care is provided. There is a difference between the thresholds for support and models of care between adults and children's services, therefore a child and young person who has qualified for care and support under the SEND agenda for Children's legislation will be reassessed as to their eligibility to receive support from Adult Social Care.

Education

Throughout the Pandemic, 100% of schools in Darlington remained open for vulnerable children and those with critical worker parents, compared to the national average of 61%. All schools in Darlington made arrangements that enabled children with a social worker to continue to attend and children and their parents were actively encouraged to do so with school attendance being monitored daily.

Average attendance for children with a social worker was 30% which compared favourably with national attendance estimate of 18%. It was also reported that throughout the pandemic there had been a strong multi-agency focus on attendance with liaison between Head Teachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Social Workers and health colleagues to ensure the most vulnerable children received a co-ordinated approach to their education and on-line learning.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

There are effective measures in place for Elective Home Education following a real focus in Darlington and the appointment of a full-time EHE Advisor. A local policy has been developed in line with 2019 EHE guidance and all cases are RAG rated against the statutory guidance on evidence of receiving suitable education.

As was to be expected and seen nationally, the number of children EHE increased significantly during the year due to the Pandemic, with reasons cited as COVID related. Although face to face visits were not taking place, welfare texts, phone and conference calls have continued with vulnerable pupils as a priority.



Since beginning of March 2021, 151 unannounced visits were conducted, during which contact was re-established with 72 families. The EHE data continues to fluctuate regularly as parents have free choice to elect for home education. Schools have been encouraged to inform EHE Advisor prior to parent's decision to home educate.

As at 31 March 2021 there were 209 EHE with 110 from GRT community. Darlington has a higher than average GRT population, with a high proportion of EHE from this community. The EHE advisor works closely with the GRT teacher and the 'Moving on and Aiming High' project was well attended.

There continues to be a focus on the safety and wellbeing of EHE children and partners received assurance reports throughout the year.

Children Missing from Home, Care and Education

The total number of children who went missing from home or care during 2020-21 was 219 with 100% of children being offered a return home interview, 69% within the 72-hour timescale. Of these young people who went missing 21.9% were Children in Care. Return Home interviews were offered for all children and feedback suggests children were not returning home at the time they should have due to pressures and strain of the lockdown and children feeling isolated with added pressure in family home.

The Philomena Protocol continues to protect children who go missing from care by promoting a joint investigation with an aim of returning the child to safety.

The total number of children missing from education (CME) for 2019-20 were 58 and all children referred had been traced.

Exploitation of children and young people

Multi-agency work around child exploitation is coordinated through the Child Exploitation Group (CEG), which was extended to reflect a broader focus and includes all forms of Criminal Exploitation, County Lines, Organised Crime and Modern-Day Slavery.

The partnership continues to obtain an understanding of the risks posed to young people as they grow and become influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside the family home such as school/college, their community, peer groups or online.

A cross agency Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) was launched in November 2019, originally designed to track County Lines. The tracker is used across Darlington and County Durham to identify children at risk. Children are scored based on level of risk, the tracker is monitored by CEG.

Child Deaths

During 2020/2021 there were 11 child deaths in Darlington. The 2020-21 CDOP Annual report contains a summary of activity carried out by the County Durham and Darlington Child Death Overview Panel.



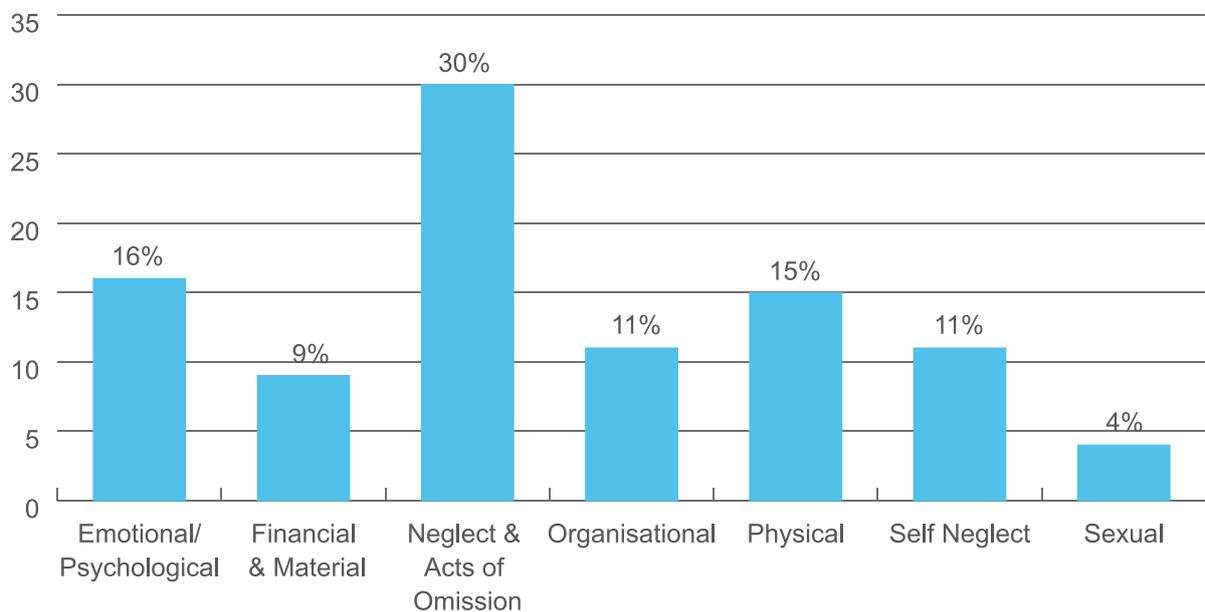


Adult Safeguarding

The number of reported concerns for abuse and neglect in 2020/21 was 1543, with 40% progressing to S42 safeguarding enquiry. Of the concluded S42 enquiries, in 95% of cases the outcome was that the risk was either reduced or removed.

The most common category of abuse in Darlington continues to be Neglect and Acts of Omission which represented 30%. This was followed by Emotional/Psychological (16%) and Physical Abuse (15%).

Categories of Abuse



Location of abuse:								
Own home	In the Community	Community Service	Care Home Nursing	Care Home residential	Hospital Acute	Hospital Mental Health	Hospital Community	Other
35.6%	6.6%	3.2%	2.3%	33%	3.3%	8.6%	0.8%	1.9%

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. In 2020/21, there were three care settings in Executive Strategy Process, two of these settings were removed during this period as assurance was provided that they had made improvements and had safe practices in place and all regulatory action had been completed. One setting continues to remain in Executive Strategy Process and continues to be monitored by the Significant Provider Forum.

Adults who go missing

The Herbert Protocol is a national scheme adopted by Durham Constabulary, working alongside its partners and encourages staff, families, friends and carers to provide useful information which could be used in the event of a vulnerable person going missing from either a care home or their own home. The information may help police and other agencies locate the missing person much more quickly and return them to safety.

Domestic Abuse

The vision of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is for all agencies to work together to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse and to provide a co-ordinated community response. The safeguarding partnership is committed to supporting a reduction in the prevalence of domestic abuse in Darlington, including a co-ordinated community response to prevention, support and protection services and services for perpetrators.

Operation Encompass addresses shortcomings in 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 within the family home. During the period April 2020 to March 2021 there were 406 incidents which involved 576 children, all notified to schools.

Domestic abuse remains a key training module to raise awareness and to ensure frontline practitioners are aware of the impact domestic abuse can have on victims, children and vulnerable adults. It also includes an emphasis on coercion and control.

The Domestic and Sexual Violence Executive Group (DASVEG) monitors local arrangements and the role key partners have in tackling domestic abuse which provides some assurance about multi-agency response to tackling domestic violence and abuse.

December 2020, saw the launch of the 4Kids project, a partnership approach to tackling domestic abuse in the family home, with particular emphasis on the harm caused to children in the household. Through a restorative approach, the aim of the project is to have both parents acknowledge the impact of their unhealthy relationships and to recognise how their behaviour affects the development of their children. The project is still in its infancy, however it is already having a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing of children and through support offered is hoped will improve their life chances.

The Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 will offer many new protections for domestic abuse victims and their families and places a duty on local authorities and partner agencies to support victims of domestic abuse and their families and the Partnership will explore how it can work together with the Community Safety Partnership to tackle its response to domestic abuse in Darlington.





Housing and Homelessness

2020/21 has been a challenging and busy year for Darlington Borough Council housing teams and partner agencies. Changes in legislation means that the local authority has a duty to house people and as a consequence there was a significant increase in the numbers of people in emergency accommodation compared to pre Covid-19 levels. Between May and June 2020 there were 243 presentations requesting emergency accommodation, with June 2020 seeing the highest levels ever recorded. In April 2019 there were 297 people in accommodation and by April 2020 this had increased to 817. These mainly represent the 'hidden homeless' who sofa surf and needed to find accommodation during the lockdown.

There has been an increase in victims of domestic abuse seeking housing and all such victims were accommodated. There has also been an increase in people with mental health needs requesting housing along with people who have multiple complex needs and dual diagnosis, but who are nevertheless deemed to have capacity.

Higher risk people have been housed outside of the borough due to a lack of suitable premises. However, central government announced a four year funding initiative and Darlington Borough Council, with the Community Safety Partnership made a bid for funding to secure accommodation for rough sleepers and will look at funding support workers for offending/substance misuse and providing 'higher risk' units with 24/7 support.

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. The Partnership structure includes the provision for actively seeking the voice of children and adults ensuring their voices are threaded throughout the structure. It is a challenge for some agencies to demonstrate and we will continue to review ways in which we can gather this feedback and recognise there is much more that can be achieved.

Where possible the partnership will involve families in Child and Adult Safeguarding learning reviews and information from such engagement will be used to inform and develop practice.

The Communication and Engagement strategy sets out the strategic aims and objectives of the Partnerships approach to communication and engagement. The strategy embraces the 'Think Family' approach to ensure the work of the Partnership is effectively communicated to relevant audiences which includes children, young people and adults at risk, their families as well as practitioners and the wider community in Darlington.

Annual Young People Conference

Dralington Safeguarding Partnership is committed to hosting an annual Young People's Conference, unfortunately, due to the Pandemic the conference scheduled for July 2020 had to be cancelled. The conference aimed at young people aged 12-14 is an opportunity to promote key messages on the prevention of harm. Again, due to the Pandemic it is unlikely there will be a conference held in 2021.

Corporate Parenting Panel

Care Leavers have an active voice in shaping and developing children's services through a number of channels including the Corporate Parenting Panel and Leaving Care Forum.

Healthy Lifestyle Survey

A healthy Lifestyle survey is usually conducted annually in participating schools, however due the Pandemic it has not been possible to conduct as normal. A survey was shared with Primary sector and summary of results includes reporting an understanding of what positive relationships should look like and the effects of negative behaviours on others such as bullying. The influence of social media is significant and children are largely reporting unrestricted and unsupervised access to the internet and social media.

Regional Adult Safeguarding Radio Campaign

The North East Association of Directors of Adult Social Services launched a regional safeguarding radio campaign during the year, with a purpose of reinforcing awareness of safeguarding issues amongst the public and to empower them to feel confident in reporting a concern and to reassure vulnerable adults, their relatives and carers that social services are concentrating on abuse and have not let it slip as a priority during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The radio campaign was listened by 30% of the region's population and an increase of impact was shown across the region for safeguarding concerns whilst the campaign was live.





Making Safeguarding Personal

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) is applicable to all agencies and aims to develop a person centred and outcomes focus to 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. Despite the pandemic, the principles of MSP were being maintained through telephone, face time or zoom calls. It was highlighted that using these platforms there can be some difficulties in reading body language and therefore making more difficult to monitor and offer support where needed, discussions were taking place with families to prepare for virtual meetings.

In 2020/2021 96% of cases consistently involved the individual (or their representative or advocate) in the safeguarding enquiry. The partnership continues to seek assurances that the principles of MSP are embedded within partner agencies.

Review of Children's Front door arrangements

Darlington Borough Council implemented its new strengthening families programme which was to see relational and restorative practices at the centre of practice to find solutions to issues and work together to lead to better outcomes for children and young people.

The new practice went live in March 2020 and requires partners to telephone the Children's Initial Advice Team and have a conversation with a social worker to discuss the concerns to ensure the right support is put in place to meet the needs of the children and young people. Prior to the process the Children's Access Point were receiving 292 telephone calls and 7177 email contacts. A critical part of the implementation was to encourage practitioners to hold telephone conversations and over the course of the year the number of telephone contacts has increased seven fold to 2364 telephone contacts. These figures evidence the new process has been fully embraced by partner agencies and initial feedback indicates partners are welcoming the opportunity for discussion with richness in having a conversation to support families.

The conversion from contact to referral has reduced by 22.6% which has also resulted in a reduction in the number of strategy discussions, evidencing the model is proven to be effective. There has also been a reduction in the number of single assessments with those resulting in no further action reducing by 39.4%, which can be attributed to consistency at the front door and evidencing there has been a reduction in unnecessary or inappropriate interventions with families.

Independent Chair Engagement

During the year the Independent Chair held multi-agency meetings with the relevant agencies of the Partnership and attended other forums such as primary and secondary education forums to talk about current issues, what is working well and what needs to change relating to current safeguarding arrangements.

DSP website, briefings and newsletters

The DSP uses a variety of methods to communicate to many different audiences. From DSP members, wider safeguarding partners, managers and frontline practitioners, to the general public, children & young people, parents and carers and adults and their families.

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.

www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk

The partnership developed a number of briefings to update on national, regional and local information which highlighted key headlines the partnership should be sighted on, including bulletins to support partners through the beginning weeks of the COVID Pandemic.

In December 2020, the partnership launched its quarterly newsletter to provide information and guidance to those working across child and adult services and feedback on this has been positive, however it is recognised there is much more to be done to ensure key messages are cascaded to the right people within each partner organisation.



Learning and Development

Whilst the partnership continues to deliver a high-quality inter-agency training programme, the Pandemic has greatly impacted on the ability to provide face to face training. During 2020/21 a programme of both eLearning and virtual training was developed to cover any gaps and address any potential risks that the Statutory Safeguarding Partners may need to be sighted on.

Increasingly, courses were being adapted to be relevant for work for both child and adult service user groups. This facilitates a greater understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and supports some of the 'transition' areas for improvement and 'think family approach'. The training is regularly updated to ensure the lessons from learning reviews are reflected within the training programme as well as identifying the local needs of the multi-agency workforce. The virtual training offer was well received and helped to reduce the risk of professional isolation associated with the pandemic.

The Learning and Development group continues to ensure there is quality and consistency of single and multi-agency training through initiatives such as training needs analysis (TNA), peer evaluation, quality assurance and the pre and post course evaluation process. The development of training is supported and actively monitored by the sub group. Any development and changes are reported to the group by the Multi-Agency Trainer.

Despite the pandemic the Partnership continued to provide an extensive multi-agency programme of virtual courses and provision of new training.

Examples of development during 2020-2021 include:

- The local authority is licensed to use the NSPCC Graded Care Profile support tool for child neglect, the multi-agency trainer delivers the training and the course is now embedded into the multi-agency training programme.
- Development and delivery of sessions to support the updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020.
- Additional courses have been developed and introduced to the programme and focus on Professional Challenge, Cumulative harm and Safeguarding Children with Special Educational needs and Disabilities.
- Podcasts have been developed to focus on the revised guidance on Professional Challenge and Information Sharing.



What did we achieve?

- 104 virtual multi-agency training sessions delivered throughout 2020/21 via Microsoft teams
- 1166 attendances recorded for the virtual training
- 578 people completed e-learning modules

Partner agencies provided details on their interim measures to address safeguarding training during the Pandemic, with the majority also delivering on a virtual basis.

Evaluation and Assessment

It is recognised that assessment of learning is necessary to measure both the quality of training and to evidence the impact on practice and how the training is contributing to improving the knowledge and skills of the workforce. Demonstrating the effectiveness of training is not an easy matter and whilst the partnership continues to seek evidence of quality of training and impact of practice, due to the Pandemic the usual paper data evaluation process has proven to be unsuitable following virtual training. As an interim measure only the trainer has requested delegates to feedback via email commenting on the quality of training. The feedback has been positive although a few delegates have highlighted that virtual training is not as effective as face to face training.

Examples of feedback received:

The session was informative and helpful in relation to all aspects of safeguarding procedures. It is reassuring to know there is someone at the end of a phone for help, support and advice (voluntary sector)

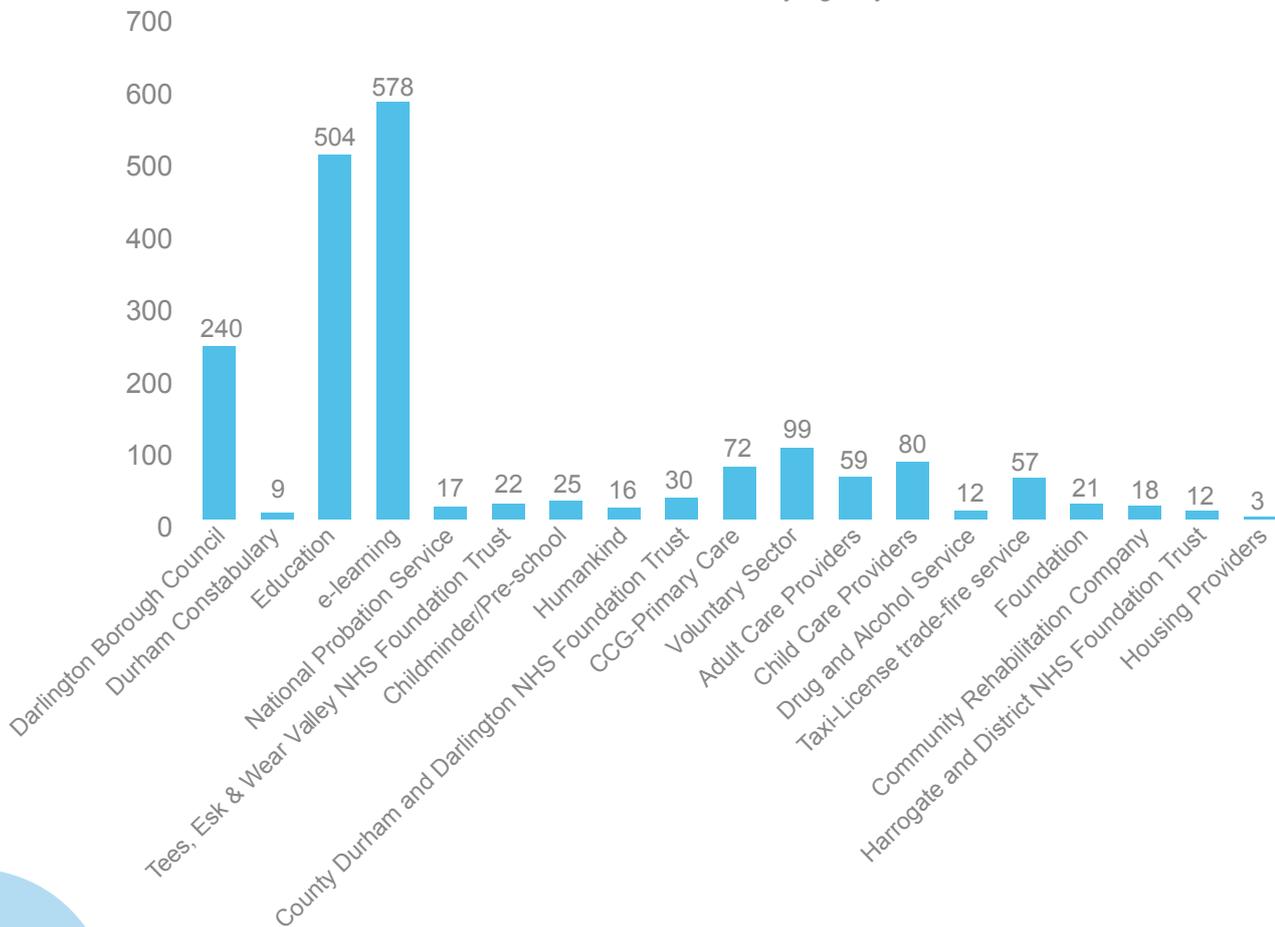
I think I enjoyed it more than the face to face training. Loads of helpful information and advice. Although I have a great network it is so reassuring to know that someone is available to talk to and advise at the end of a phone. Thank you again (volunteer)

The training was very good and a great refresher for us all. Its will be nice when we can return to face to face training, but that training was very well delivered. (Care Home)



The chart below outlines the attendance by partner agencies during the period April 2020 - March 2021.

Learners 2020-21 by Agency



Policy and Procedure

Enabling continual improvement and learning for partners and practitioners is important to the Partnership. The ongoing review of policies, procedures and guidance documents is important 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 Sub 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.

During 2020/21 the following were developed, reviewed and revised by the Partnership:

- Medical Assessments - information on medical assessments have been incorporated into the Child Protection Procedures to support practitioners when there is an allegation, suspicion or disclosure of child abuse involving a suspicious injury.
- Managing Allegations against employees and volunteers who work with adults who have needs for care and support - incorporating advice on dealing with those who are self employed.
- Bruising in non-mobile children Protocol - setting out the referral pathways and incorporating into the Child Protection Procedures
- Guidance on Confidentiality has been incorporated into the Child Protection Procedures
- Professional Challenge Procedure revision - to include additional guidance on when and how it should be applied
- Forced Marriage Practice Guidance
- Honour Based Abuse Practice Guidance
- Safeguarding Adult Review Procedure
- Child Safeguarding Practice Review and serious Incident Notification Procedures
- Fire Setting Guidance

All revisions are undertaken in consultation with partner agencies and partners agencies are expected to disseminate and implement within their own agency. All documents are published on the DSP website.



7. Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews

During 2020-21, the Partnership did not undertake any new Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR) or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR). Whilst it is acknowledged the number of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) in Darlington have been low, the Partnership recognised there was a need to improve the processes and guidance to clearly set out organisational responsibilities for dealing and responding to serious incidents.

Whilst there is no formal requirement for notification for a SAR, partners agreed a similar process to replicate that of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review should be followed where appropriate, which has been reflected in the SAR Procedure.

DSP revised Serious Child Safeguarding Incident and Child Safeguarding Practice Review Procedure and Safeguarding Adult Review Procedure.





Partners are assured there is now a robust process in place for all circumstances and/or events which either meet the criteria for notification to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel or meet the criteria for Safeguarding Adult Review, as well as for reporting those cases that do not meet the criteria however highlight there is learning to be explored and are referred to the Learning and Development Group.

There were a number of cases referred during the year that were deemed did not meet the criteria for notification which the Learning and Development Sub Group has considered and taken forward as learning events.

Key messages from reviews are shared using a range of methods, including the development of briefing documents and training podcasts. Partners are asked to use these tools within their own organisation to support and improve learning and practice.

As a result of learning, the following guidance and tools were developed:

- revision of the Professional Challenge procedure and guidance
- development of a training podcast to support professionals in knowing when and how to apply the procedure
- development of a training podcast on information sharing
- development of fire setting guidance

It was noted that it is only the local authority who have referred cases in this and the previous period and work continues in raising awareness of the CSPR and SAR procedures and the role that all partners have in reporting cases.

8. Looking Ahead

This year has been a year like no other, the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to influence the services provided by partners. We will ensure lessons learnt from how we safeguarded during the pandemic will be taken forward.

There are a number of challenges to support organisations and professionals across Darlington to safeguard children and adults. We will begin the year focussing on embedding the revised governance arrangements and develop the role of the Operational Groups. We will then work with partners in developing our key priority areas. These will include:

- Further develop scrutiny processes
- Transitional safeguarding from childhood to adulthood
- Learning from good practice as well as CSPRs/SARs
- Lived experience of child/adult
- Website development
- Domestic Abuse and collaboration with CSP



Appendix 1

Staffing and Budget

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

- Business Manager
- Development Officer/Designated Officer
- Multi-Agency Trainer
- Business Support Officer
- Analyst (P/T seconded from Durham Constabulary to work jointly across Durham and Darlington Safeguarding Partnerships)
- Information Officer (P/T)

Contributions from Partner Agencies for 2019-20 period	
Darlington Borough Council	£88,942
Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group	£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
Community Rehabilitation Company	£1,000
National Probation Service	£770
Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust	£2,000
Course and Training Fees	£1,930
Total Revenue	£200,444

Appendix 2

Relevant Agencies

- Darlington Local Authority - Housing, Public Health, Youth Offending
- Health agencies - 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)
- Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (DDFRS)
- Early Years Settings
- Education (Primary, Secondary, Further Education, SEN)
- Support organisations for issues such as Substance Misuse / Domestic Abuse / Sexual Exploitation / Sexual Abuse (SARC)
- Family Justice Board (FJB)
- National Probation Service (NPS)
- Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)
- Voluntary and third sector organisations (including Healthwatch)
- Darlington Primary Care General Practices
- Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group
- 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



DARLINGTON
Borough Council



