



Darlington Safeguarding Partnership

Protecting Children and Adults

Annual Report

2021-2022



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1. Introduction

Foreword by Statutory Safeguarding Partners

Welcome to our third annual report of the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership which covers the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. The report summarises and reflects on the work of the Partnership throughout the year, illustrating the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding children and adult arrangements across Darlington.

Whilst the last two years have undoubtedly been dominated by Covid-19 and the challenges the Pandemic continued to pose, the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults has remained at the forefront of our collective approach. This year spanned the mid-point of the Pandemic and we recognised how agencies flexed and demonstrated professionalism despite having a much higher demand for services. Many services stepped up and yet were still able to address issues with a ‘business as usual’ attitude.

In common with many organisations, our meetings continued to be held exclusively on Teams which has allowed a greater number of colleagues to join when previously would not have been able to do so. This has enabled us to continue to have that collective oversight of safeguarding arrangements to help understand the challenges and pressures faced by organisations. Whilst these plans are likely to change in the coming months and years as organisations move to a hybrid model, it is anticipated Microsoft Teams will continue to have a place for many years to come.

The vision of Darlington Safeguarding Partnership is to ensure ‘Darlington is a place where children and adults can live their lives safely’. We recognise there will continue to be many challenges as we move forward including the threat to the emotional health and well-being of people in Darlington as a result of the profound changes in wider society and the adverse consequences of the Covid-19 Pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis. We also recognise the staffing pressures with so many agencies struggling to recruit and retain staff, such as the care home sector, social care and health organisations.

Working together across organisations will always be a challenge and 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. Safeguarding is never ‘done’ and it is up to us all, to make a difference and to add value to a big issue no single agency can deal with on its own.

We would like to thank those dedicated professionals across all agencies who have continued to work so positively, keeping our children and adults safe and protected in Darlington, through yet another very challenging year. Working together has been a real strength of the partnership. The commitment to joint working and the incredible efforts made every day to keep services – and people – afloat, has been outstanding.

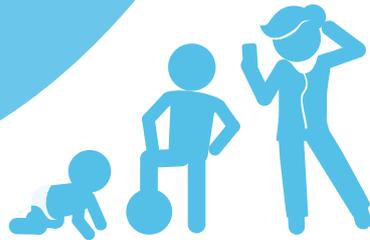
<p>Ann Baxter Independent Scrutineer</p>	<p>James Stroyan Group Director for People Darlington Borough Council</p>	<p>Adrian Green/ Dave Ashton Detective Chief Superintendent Durham Constabulary</p>	<p>David Gallagher/Jean Golightly Executive Director of Place Based Delivery/ Director of Nursing and Quality North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board</p>
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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.



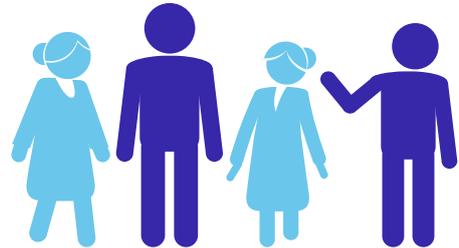
As of 2020 Darlington has a population in excess of **108,000** individuals who live in around **45,000** households.



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

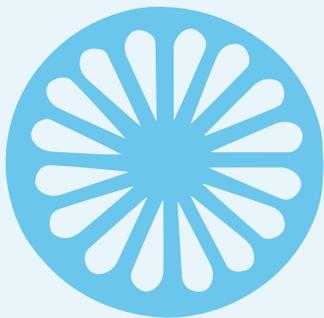


The number of people aged over 65 years old in Darlington is estimated at **21,700**



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



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.

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. How we have worked this year?

As is to be expected, the Covid-19 pandemic continued to pose a significant challenge throughout the year, ensuring children, young people and vulnerable adults were safeguarded. The Pandemic has tested us all and forced us to do things differently and adapt services to working remotely which has strengthened connectivity. It emphasised the fact that anyone can be at risk of harm and reminded us that abuse and neglect can be increased by a whole range of factors such as mental health, poverty, domestic abuse as well as loneliness and isolation—and it is not always easy to tell who might be at risk. Whilst measures were in place to oversee the most vulnerable with the Critical Safeguarding Partnership Groups having that ‘line of sight’ on the most vulnerable, work continued with partner agencies in understanding the impact and the numerous challenges they faced in safeguarding those people who were not being seen by any professional.

The year continued to be dominated by Covid-19 and its impact felt nationally and locally meaning the need to have a collective oversight on safeguarding was increasing. The Statutory Safeguarding Partners and Independent Scrutineer committed to meeting monthly to have that oversight on safeguarding arrangements and invited key leads from partner agencies to meetings to obtain an understanding of their current issues and challenges. They also facilitated a development session to reflect on the multi-agency partnership arrangements and experiences throughout the Pandemic.

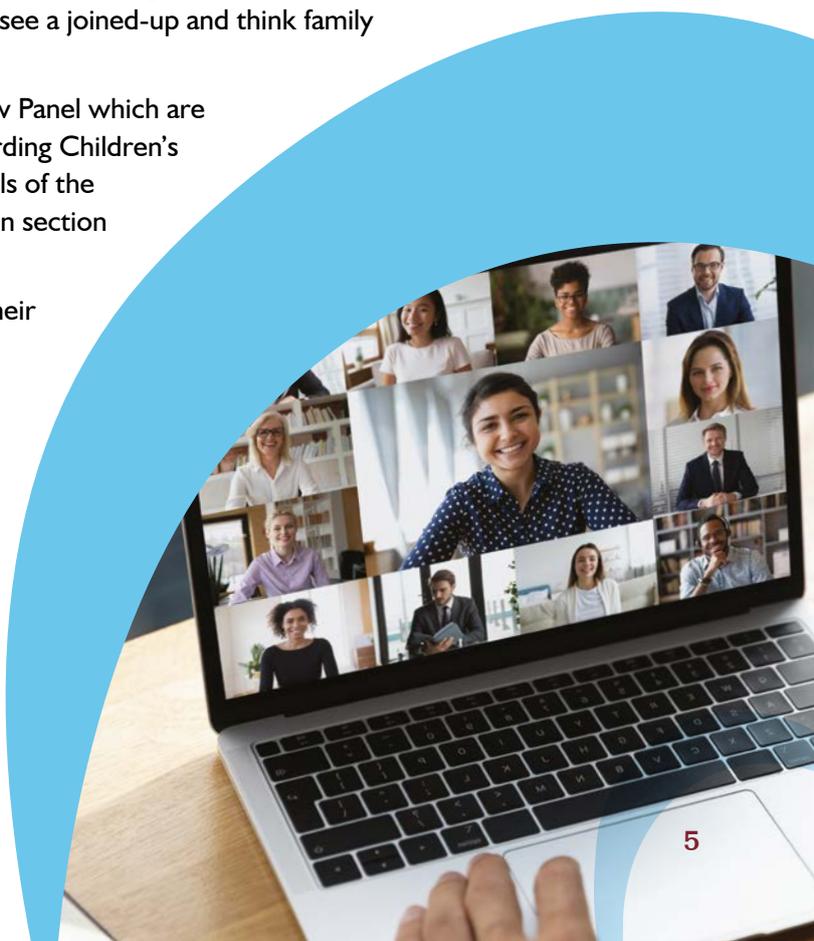
What was evident was the need to have separate child and adult operational groups to have oversight on the most vulnerable and ensuring those mechanisms were in place on that line of sight but also having oversight of operational practice issues. This provided an opportunity to review and streamline the initial governance arrangements implemented when the Partnership was established back in July 2019.

The Critical Groups established at the start of the Pandemic evolved and developed into separate Child and Adult Operational Groups having a focus on practice issues and challenges relating to operational management. The Learning and Development and Quality Assurance and Performance Groups have a strategic and coordinated view to identify opportunities for learning, improve and embed the quality of multi-agency frontline practice and implement quality assurance processes, to help understand the strengths and weaknesses of safeguarding arrangements and having the ability to oversee a joined-up and think family approach to improve outcomes for children and adults.

The Child Exploitation Group and Child Death Overview Panel which are joint groups with representatives from Durham Safeguarding Children’s Partnership, continue to feed into the Partnership. Details of the revised partnership governance and structure is set out in section 4 of this report.

As we began to see agencies looking to the future and their road to recovery, we saw many adapting a blended way of working using a ‘hybrid’ model that mixed remote working and face to face, which will continue to develop over the coming months and year.

It was recognised there are real benefits in Darlington being so small and evidence of excellent working relationships, which is a real strength and partners are assured that organisations are working closely and effectively to ensure the most vulnerable are supported and safeguarded. However, it is recognised there is much more to do including the development of its scrutiny arrangements and will continue to explore how this can be taken forward.



Priorities for 2021-22

The key priority and main focus throughout 2021-22 was to further develop the Partnership arrangements to ensure all agencies worked together in an effective manner to protect children, young people and adults from abuse and neglect.

What we did:

- Invited safeguarding key leads from agencies into the Statutory Safeguarding Partners meetings to provide assurance that safeguarding activity continued to be effective but to also obtain an understanding of the current issues, challenges and pressures they faced.
- Facilitated a development session to reflect on the multi-agency partnership arrangements and experiences throughout the Pandemic.
- Revised the Partnerships Governance arrangements which were formally signed off in February 2022.
- Improved engagement with education sectors - Independent Scrutineer attending Education Forums to talk about what is working well and what needs to change relating to current safeguarding arrangements/issues
- Provision of easily accessible information, training, advice and practice guidance to support frontline practitioners, shared through a number of mediums



Key highlights from sub group activity:

The Children's MASH Operational Group continued to have oversight on front door practice and a number key themes that were being seen through contacts included: impact parental mental health was having on children, domestic violence, harm outside the family home and harmful sexual behaviour. The group continues to discuss specific multi-agency practice issues raised by agencies to determine how they can be addressed collectively as well as addressing the key learning points from national reviews such as the myth of invisible men: safeguarding children under 1 year old from non-accidental injury.

The Adult Operational Group was formally established in February 2022. The group is split into two parts, part 1 to address practice issues and review and monitor adult safeguarding performance data to obtain an understanding of the changing landscape and oversight of safeguarding practice and service delivery. Part 2 to focus on significant provider concerns to share intelligence, discuss concerns and agree actions on providers where there were significant concerns. The group is in its infancy and will need time to embed.

The Learning and Development Group continued to receive referrals for learning requests for child and adult cases and developed a reflective tool for agencies to explore what they could have done differently. Key themes include; harm away from home, parental mental health impact on children; safeguarding complex young people at crisis point and adult self-neglect. Details of these learning requests are outlined in section 7 of this report. The group continued to develop and launch key policy, procedure and guidance and these are outlined in section 6 of this report along with the development of core training modules based on the learning.

Quality Assurance and Performance Management Group was instrumental in developing the revised governance arrangements for the Partnership which were approved in April 2022. It continued to have oversight of quarterly performance data ensuring exception reporting on highs and lows into the Statutory Safeguarding Partner meetings. It has recognised there is further work required to develop the performance framework and quality assurance processes.

The Child Exploitation Group continued to raise awareness of online harm, child exploitation, risks to missing children, county lines and modern slavery to support frontline practitioners. Exception reporting provided an overview of the local picture of exploitation using the Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker to gain an understanding of changing trends, needs and risk factors. Work continues in developing an understanding of the contextualised safeguarding model.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) oversees all deaths of children under 18, there have been 9 in the reporting period and all of these are subject to a Child Death Review. CDOP works closely with the Partnership to highlight any emerging themes and issues and learning from child death reviews that require further consideration. CDOP completes its own [Annual report](#) which provides a summary of activity carried over that period.

Sub Group Chairs work together in aligning key pieces of work to ensure effective learning and change across all groups and continue to review how they can align more closely to ensure the learning is embedded into practice.

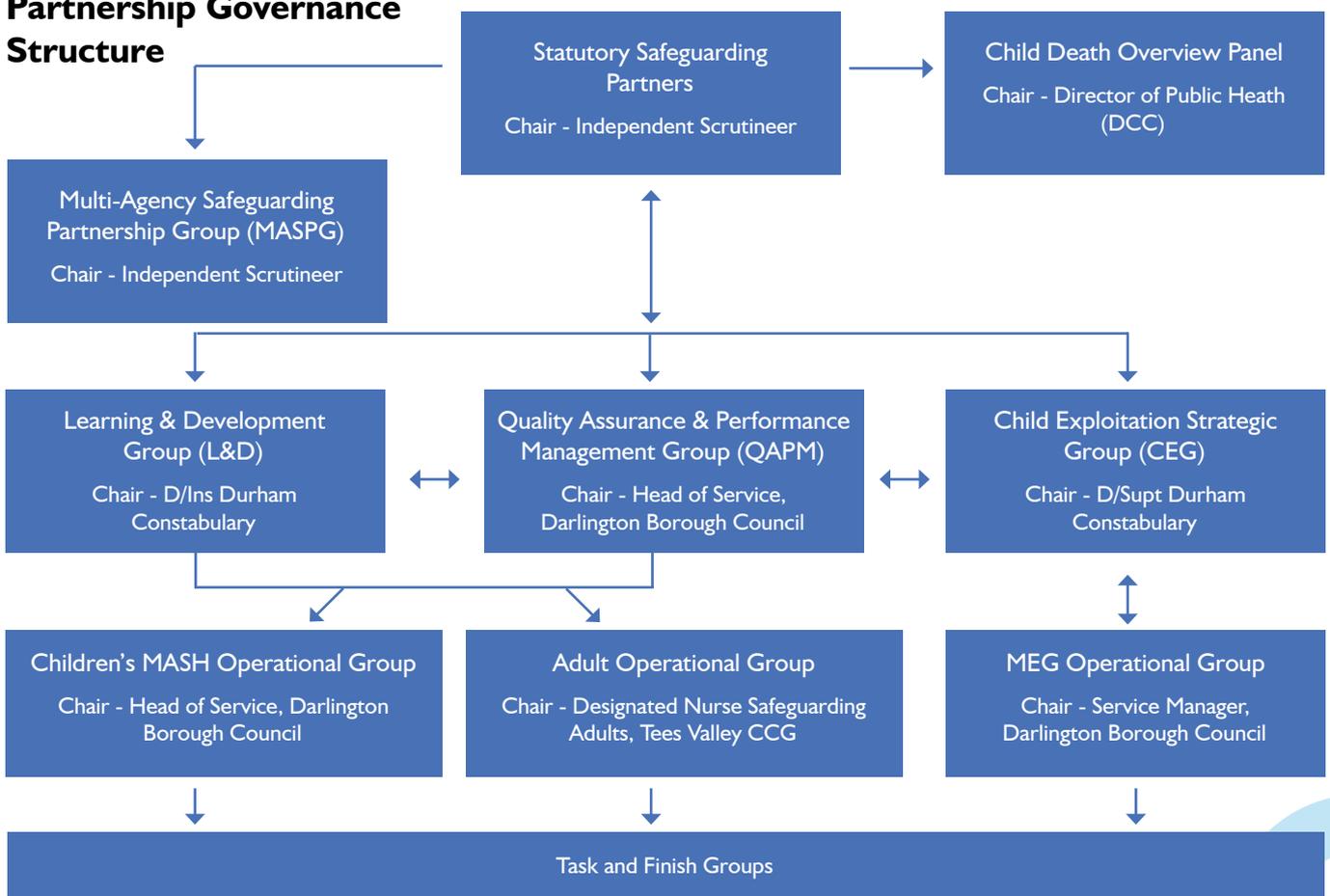
4. Partnership Governance and Structure

The Partnership revised its governance arrangements 2021/22 with new terms of reference and lines of accountability established. A wide range of organisations and are represented on the Partnership groups, including senior representatives and they are outlined in Appendix 2.

<p>Statutory Safeguarding Partners Group – Chaired by Independent Scrutineer</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>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Partnership Group – Chaired by Independent Scrutineer</p>	<p>Partners are looking to re-establish this group as it has not met since before the start of the Pandemic. It was recognised there are benefits in meeting as a wider partnership group having that open dialogue with all agencies involved in safeguarding matters. This will be progressed in the next reporting period.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance and Performance Group (QAPM) – Chaired by Head of Service, Darlington Borough Council</p>	<p>To scrutinise, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding work across partner agencies and commissioned organisations. Quarterly Performance reports provide information by exception on highs and lows and highlight the changing landscape. It will determine the steps required to implement quality assurance processes to help understand how learning has been embedded and to further understand what the Partnership needs to take forward.</p>
<p>Learning and Development Group (L&D) – Chaired by Detective Inspector, Durham Constabulary</p>	<p>To identify opportunities for learning and improve and embed the quality of multi-agency frontline practice, for those practitioners working in child and adult safeguarding arenas to improve outcomes for children and adults. Responsibility for ensuring the learning from case reviews is communicated across partner agencies. It also ensures the effective development and review of multi-agency policy, procedure and practice guidance and learning opportunities to meet the needs of emerging issues and changes in practice.</p>
<p>Child Exploitation Group (CEG) – Chaired by Detective Chief Superintendent, Durham Constabulary</p>	<p>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.</p>

<p>Adult Operational Group – Chaired by Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, Local Commissioning Group (Interim basis)</p>	<p>The group was formerly established in February 2022 to identify key themes or practice challenges and develop appropriate actions to respond to them along with the sharing of good practice. Ensuring agencies are able to fully contribute and fulfil their operational safeguarding roles and responsibilities and ensuring there is a line of sight on the most vulnerable. Responsibility for issues relating to provider concerns and those settings who are in the Executive Strategy Process and monitor responsiveness to any identified issues and actions.</p>
<p>Children’s MASH Operational Group – Chaired by Head of Service, Darlington Borough Council</p>	<p>To share good practice, identify any multi-agency practice challenges that may relevant to the operational management and functioning of the children’s front door. Promote effective communication between all partner agencies who contribute to decision making at the earliest opportunity and ensure all agencies are able to fully contribute and fulfil their Operational safeguarding roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p>Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) – Chaired by Director of Public Health</p>	<p>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 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



5. Partnership Activities and Interventions

The Covid-19 Pandemic and the challenges it posed to ensure children, young people and vulnerable adults were safeguarded was again a focus throughout the year and the Partnership has continued to monitor the impact on safeguarding arrangements through quarterly performance dashboards which continued to highlight the changing landscape.

Patterns of concern were very localised and fell significantly during the initial weeks of lockdown. Safeguarding issues within the community continued to unfold as lockdown measures were eased, resulting in significant peaks which appears to be a regional and national trend. Partner agencies adapted to the rapidly changing landscape, identifying alternative ways of safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk, and responding to the emerging risks and demands. Partners were assured there were no real exceptions or problems being highlighted and the key message throughout has been that safeguarding duties continued to apply and agencies continued to work together effectively to prevent and reduce the risk of harm.

It is recognised there is still work to do in developing the performance framework and quality assurance processes to help understand those continuing or emerging trends and to provide Statutory Partners with an overview of the whole safeguarding system. The development of the performance scorecards and data will be a key priority for both the Operational and Quality Assurance and Performance Management Groups over the next reporting period.

Safeguarding Adults

Whilst there was a slight reduction in the total number of safeguarding adult concerns on the previous year, the partnership saw a rise in the complexity of safeguarding concerns. The most likely causes of abuse remained consistent with neglect and acts of omission, physical abuse, emotional and psychological being the main categories.

Both local and national data indicate cases of self-neglect have increased, Darlington saw a 25% increase in reported concerns for self neglect on the previous 12 month period, it was noted that those already vulnerable to self-neglect were likely to be at more acute risk with less professional contact from services as they were less likely to seek help and support. Whilst the reported concerns suggest there is an increased awareness of self-neglect it is not clear whether practitioners recognise when concerns meet the criteria for safeguarding intervention. It was highlighted there was a gap in provision of guidance to support practitioners who support adults who have care and support needs and are at risk of harm as a result of self-neglect and as a result developed new practice guidance and a self neglect briefing. This was reinforced as there were two learning request referrals into the Learning and Development group where self-neglect was a feature.

The location of abuse for adults changed markedly since the start of the Pandemic, with fewer enquires in care/nursing homes (most likely because of lack of access by family members and professionals) and increases in the community, including individual's own homes.

In relation to prevention, home care workers continue to be the highest to have caused harm and this continues to be monitored. There were three care settings in Executive Strategy Process, two care homes and a private hospital, the process is applied to address concerns and issues relating to unusual, organised or large scale abuse or neglect and holds providers to account. A significant Provider Forum has multi-agency oversight on the Care Home Sector and those settings in Executive Strategy Process and continues to monitor those settings as well as escalating emerging concerns/themes.

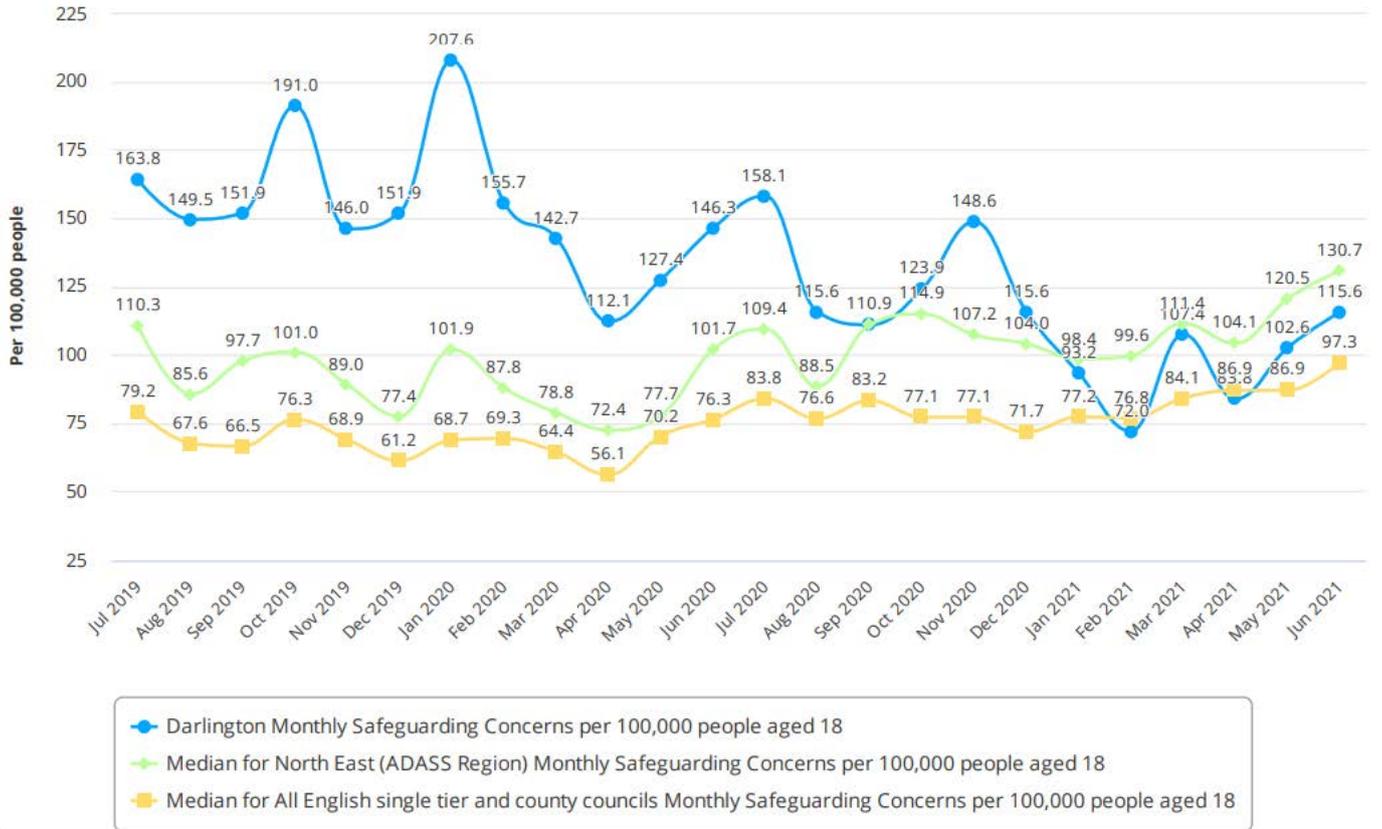


Covid-19 Adult Safeguarding Insight Project

Darlington continued to provide data to support the COVID-19 Safeguarding Insight project which was developed to create a national picture regarding safeguarding adult activity during the Pandemic. 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 from March 2019 up to June 2021 to provide a picture of how safeguarding adults activity was affected over this period.

Patterns of concern were very localised and fell significantly during the initial weeks of lockdown. There were significant peaks when lockdown was eased which appears to be a regional and national trend and demand fluctuated throughout this period. The trends and changes are demonstrated in the graph below:

Monthly Safeguarding Concerns per 100,000 people, aged 18+



Safeguarding Children

In relation to children, the local authority saw a 27% increase in contacts in this year compared to the previous period, partly linked to the Pandemic but also was to be expected due to the implementation of the new children's front door process which encourages practitioners to telephone the Children's Initial Advice Team.

There continued to be a reduction in referrals with a 447.4 rate per 10,000 population, although this is an increase on the previous year, it is still below statistical neighbour and regional and national rates and again expected due to the new front door processes. The weekly review meetings continue to provide a high level of management oversight and challenge to decision making at the front door. Key themes are brought to the Children's MASH operational Group who have taken a number of areas forward as focused sessions which are outlined at the bottom of page 12.

Children missing from home and contextual safeguarding/harm away from home became a key area of focus throughout the year. There have been more children missing from home who are not known to services than before the Pandemic and unclear whether this is a result of the Pandemic. The total number of missing episodes in 2021/22 was 582 involving 174 children. This is an increase when comparing with previous years, both in regarding to the number of children and episodes. The increase has been a result of a small number of children in care and out of area children, placed in Darlington with regular missing episodes during this year, work continues to help them understand the balance between independence with acceptable curfew times and ensuring they are safe. Contextual Safeguarding/Harm away from home has become an area of focus throughout the year and will continue into the next reporting period.

Significant injuries audit (children aged 3 and under)

As a result of Darlington Children's Services seeing an increase (also being seen nationally) in the number of very young children who needed to be safeguarded as a result of either themselves or a sibling they resided with, having a significant non-accidental injury or injuries. It was agreed an audit should be undertaken to determine if there are any particular patterns, themes or learning areas to be taken forward.

8 children were the focus of the audit, 5 of the 8 children in this cohort suffered a non-accidental injury or injuries directly with the remaining 3 children being siblings.

Findings were there was no particular pattern or theme identified, agencies had worked well together and all agencies were assured that had been no missed opportunities and all children had been safeguarded in a timely fashion. A small number of single and multi-agency actions were identified as a result of the findings.

Children's MASH multi-agency focussed sessions/audit activity

The Children's MASH Operational Group focussed on a number of key themes being seen through the children's front door tackling a number of key issues including parental mental health impact on children and young people, domestic abuse and harmful sexual behaviour. Multi-agency focussed sessions/audits were held to help understand if there were any key learning points to take forward. Key findings highlighted a number of missed opportunities relating to information sharing; step up and down to social care processes and use of language; consider those wider agencies who may be providing support and include in multi-agency meetings. Development of new multi-agency Harmful Sexual Behaviour Practice Guidance and protocol to provide professionals with the information necessary to approach and respond to this area of safeguarding confidently.



6. Snapshot of effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Darlington

Child Safeguarding

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

A summary of how agencies worked together along with safeguarding concerns and the outcomes achieved is provided below;

Early Help – Building Stronger Families

Darlington Borough Council rebranded the Early Help Service to Building Stronger Families (BSF) during this period to offer coordinated help for children and families with a range of needs through an early help assessment or targeted programs. During 2021-22 there were 839 Early Help Assessments (EHA) started, which is an increase on the 623 completed in 2020/21. The percentage of EHAs completed by external agencies has seen a decline from 20.4% to 19.2% which is below the 30% target, the majority being undertaken by Education.

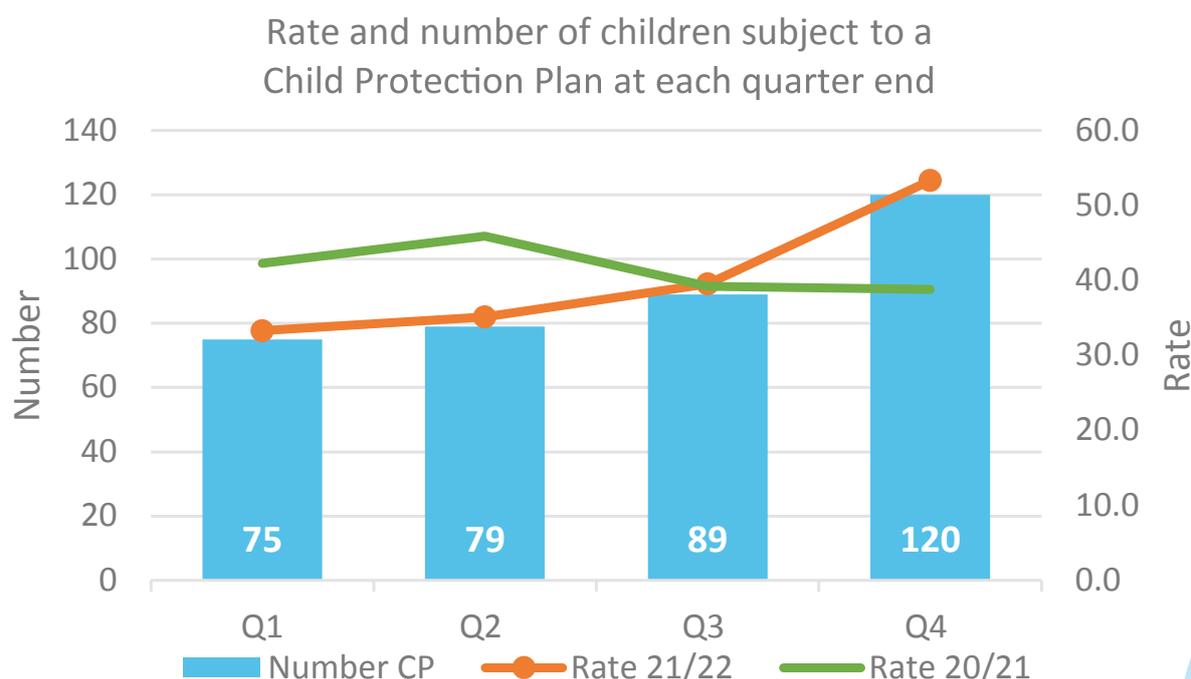
Children in Need (CiN)

March 2021 328 children identified as CiN

March 2022 326 children identified as CiN

Child Protection Plans (CPP)

At the end of March 2022, 120 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan in Darlington (a rate of 53.3 per 10,000). This is an increase of 38% compared with March 2021. Whilst Darlington's rate per 10,000 population has increased, this is still lower than: regional average (67.2); statistical neighbour (55.8) and the national average (42.8) benchmarks. This is potentially a knock-on effect from the increase in referrals, it is steady but managed.



Risk Factors associated with Child Protection were due to:			
Neglect	Emotional Abuse	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse
50%	24%	17%	9%

Edge of Care Model

The Edge of Care Model supports young people to remain with their family as well as a reunification programme for children in care who have the potential, with multi-agency support, to be returned to the care of their family.

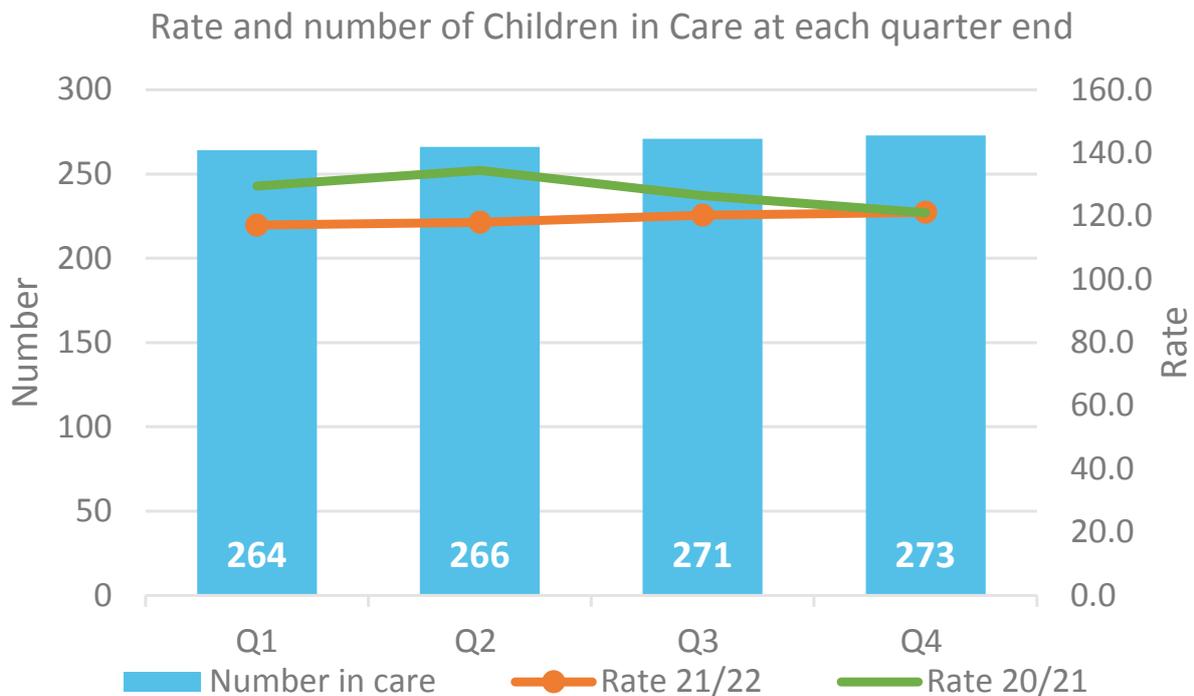
Keeping Families Together

At the end of March 2022, there were 8 families open to the Keeping Families Together (KFT) team involving 16 individual children. This is a reduction compared to the 11 families with 20 children open to KFT at the end of March 2021, although when looking at the number of episodes started in the year this has increased from 44 families (75 children) in 2020/21 to 52 families (97 children) in 2021/22.

57 families with 102 children were closed to the Keeping Families Together team (KFT) in 2021/22, equating to 2,535 days of support. Of these, 70.2% (40 / 57) of the families had completed all their identified work with the team, 12 families (21.1%) withdrew their consent, 3 family closed due to coming into care (5.3%) and 2 families (3.5%) closed due to other personal reasons.

Children Looked After

Children looked after and care leavers are recognised nationally as one of the most vulnerable groups. The number of Looked After Children (LAC) by the local authority at the end of March 2022 was 273 (121.1 per 10,000), 3 of these were unaccompanied asylum seekers. The rate per 10,000 population is similar to that of previous year and is higher than our statistical neighbours (105.4), 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
62	44	84	27	12	7	36	1

Care Leavers

The Local Authority has a 'Staying Put' policy and there are currently 11 young people accommodated under this arrangement.

98% care leavers in Darlington were in suitable accommodation by the end of 2021-22 and the percentage of care leavers (aged 19-21) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 20%, which is below the target of 30%, these were either due to disability or illness, pregnancy or parenting or other circumstances.

Young People Engagement and Justice Service (formerly Youth Offending Service) (YPEJS)

The number of young people identified as First Time Entrants (FTE) being referred to the YPEJS continues to be low. FTE's showing 19 young people (14 Males and 5 Females) at March 2022, which is just slightly higher than the same period last year which was 17.

The YPEJS had 39 young people (28 Males and 11 Females) referred to the service for diversionary disposals: Pre-Caution Disposals (37) and Restorative Disposals (2). There has been a 97% success rate in terms of young people not reoffending, 1 young person received a Youth Caution for Criminal Damage offences.

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 continue to retain responsibility to ensure the right package of care is provided through transition. There is a difference between the thresholds for support and models of care between adults and children's services and 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 and support from Adult Social Care.

Education attendance

Following the pandemic, it was business as usual across all education sectors and schools were able to request legal intervention around poor school attendance however, the release of the DfE's white paper means schools should only be considering legal intervention as a last resort with families being offered support where possible to address poor school attendance. Spring data indicated there was a 7.2% overall absence across all education settings, compared with 7.3% nationally.

There is a lot of work ongoing and advice being offered to schools to ensure that they offer support in a relational way for those young people who are suffering with anxiety, have been a victim of bullying, have special educational needs or have other complicating factors which affect their attendance.



Elective Home Education (EHE)

There are effective measures in place for the monitoring children who are Elective Home Education in Darlington with a EHE procedure and process in place, in line with DfE guidance. There is a full time EHE Advisor who is responsible for maintaining the EHE database, supporting parents and ensuring evidence of suitable education is being provided. All cases are RAG rated against the statutory guidance

The number of children EHE remains fluid. The EHE advisor works closely with schools when children don't return to school at the start of the new academic term and meets with parents who are considering EHE to ensure that parents fully understand the guidance and expectations before making decision to EHE their child.

Home visits continue to take place and since the beginning of April 2021 (up to end of March 2022) 156 unannounced visits were conducted. Those children who are identified as not receiving appropriate education receive a visit every 3 months to ensure appropriate education is in place. Darlington Borough Council implements the school attendance order process when there is no suitable education in place or evidence provided.

As at 31 March 2022 there were 194 children registered on the EHE database, of these 194, 88 were from GRT community, Darlington has a higher than average GRT population, the EHE advisor works closely with the GRT Education Service.

There continues to be a focus on the safety and wellbeing of children who are EHE and partners continue to receive assurance reports throughout the year which provided assurance of the measures in place.

Children Missing from Home, Care and Education

The total number of children who went missing from home or care during 2021-22 was 246 with 90.7% of these children being offered a return home interview (RHI), 51.2% of children engaged in their RHI. Of these young people who went missing Children in Care (CiC) continue to dominate the number of missing episodes, 21.9% were CiC. Return Home interviews suggests children were not returning home at the time they should have due to pressures and strain of the lockdown and feeling isolated with added pressure in family home.

The total number of children missing from education (CME) for 2021/22 were 71 and all children referred had been traced.

Exploitation of children and young people

Multi-agency work around child exploitation continues to be coordinated through the Strategic Child Exploitation Group (CEG). 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 multi-agency Child Exploitation Vulnerability Tracker (CEVT) was launched in November 2019 and continues to be used across Darlington and County Durham to identify those children at risk of exploitation. Children are scored based on the level of risk and continues to be monitored by the CEG. The average score was 72.9%, with a range of 44 to 109, across Durham and Darlington. Of those children on the tracker in May 2022, (numbers are fluid), 21 children were a victim of Child Sexual Exploitation and 4 Child Criminal Exploitation.



Adult Safeguarding

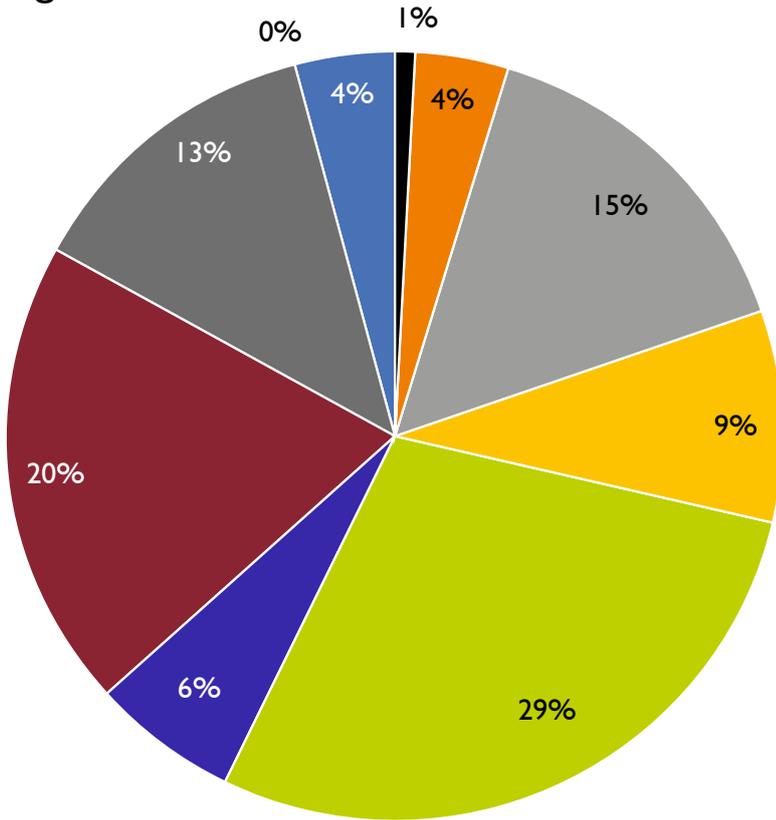
The multi-agency safeguarding adult procedures and guidance provide a framework for all organisations to work together and with the person at risk, to support them to be safe from abuse, neglect or self-neglect and this is underpinned by six Care Act Principles.

A summary of safeguarding concerns and the outcomes achieved is provided below:

The number of reported concerns for abuse and neglect received by the Adult Contact Team in 2021/22 was 888 with 40% progressing to S42 safeguarding enquiry. Safeguarding enquiries can take different forms and of the concluded S42 enquiries, in 95% of cases the outcome was that the risk was either reduced or removed, it is recognised that sometimes people may choose to live with risk and remain with strategies in place, and so it is necessary to look at individual cases to understand why a risk may remain.

The most common category of abuse in Darlington continues to be Neglect and Acts of Omission which represented 27.5%, followed by Physical Abuse (22%).

Categories of abuse:



Discriminatory	1%
Domestic Abuse	4%
Emotional Psychological	15%
Financial & Material	9%
Modern Slavery	0%
Neglect & Acts of Omission	29%
Organisational	6%
Physical	20%
Self Neglect	13%
Sexual Exploitation	0%
Sexual	4%

Location of abuse:								
Own home	In the Community	Supported accommodation	Care Home Nursing	Care Home residential	Hospital Acute	Hospital Mental Health	Hospital Community	Public Place
32.4%	0.8%	2.5%	4.09%	32%	7%	11.1%	0.82%	1.6%

Person or organisation alleged to have caused harm



Adults Voice

In 86% of reported concerns the individual/family representative or advocate had been involved in discussions, with 56% being individuals providing their own view. Work is ongoing to capture in more detail views on their experiences and use to consider improvements.

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 2021-22 period, there were three settings in the Executive Strategy Process, two of these settings were removed from executive strategy process 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. The other setting remains in Executive Strategy Process and continues to be monitored by the Significant Provider Forum.

Domestic Abuse

Whilst it is the vision of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for all agencies to work together to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, the safeguarding partnership is committed to supporting this. 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 Partnership developed a domestic abuse briefing and You Tube video aimed at frontline practitioners setting out the new protections under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The Partnership has oversight of Operation Encompass Protocol which 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 2021 to March 2022 there were 436 incidents which involved 493 children, all notified to schools.

The partnership also has oversight of the 4Kids project, launched in response to a concerning rise in numbers of children becoming looked after and research into those cases indicating that the main causal factor was a background of parental domestic abuse. Since commencement in January 2021, there have been over 424 alerts through safeguarding reports, which have been reviewed by the 4KIDs and Front Door teams culminating in 357 reports being further investigated.

90 families have been worked with directly by the team, with 204 children involved, these families would not ordinarily be picked up as they fall outside the usual thresholds and criteria of statutory involvement and often have refused other voluntary offers of support.





Violence Against Women and Girls

The Partnership is very aware of the measures in place to address violence against women and girls agenda. Darlington was successful in obtaining funding to support this agenda to make public spaces safer for all through projects to help women and girls feel safer on the streets in Darlington. Work continues to increase the safety of public spaces and projects in local communities and schools to help raise awareness. Partners were assured there is an impressive menu of investment and every risk faced by women and girls has been considered and Darlington should see a significant impact in months to come.

Housing and Homelessness

2021/22 continued to be a challenging and busy year for Darlington Borough Council housing teams and partner agencies. The local authority now has a duty to house people and as a consequence there continues to be an increase in the numbers of people in emergency accommodation compared to pre Covid-19 levels. The council 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 2021-22 there were 37 rough sleepers and there were 64 reported clients 'sofa surfing'.

In 2021/22 there were 1745 individuals who contacted Housing Options for advice regarding homelessness, a 23% increase from the previous year, which was as a result of services opening up after the lockdown.

There has been an increase in victims of domestic abuse and 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 and as a consequence two new practitioners have been appointed within the housing options team.



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

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. This is a constant challenge and we recognise more can be achieved. Where possible the partnership will involve families in learning reviews and information from such engagement will be used to inform and develop practice.

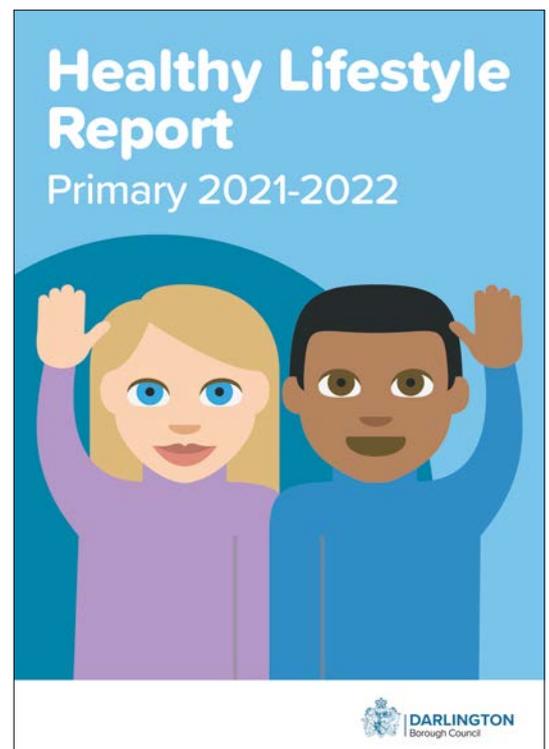
The Communication and Engagement strategy sets out the different ways that the DSP will raise awareness and promote key messages about how to safeguard children and adults as well as how to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect and what to do if you suspect or know abuse or harm has occurred.

Healthy Lifestyle Surveys

A healthy Lifestyle survey is conducted annually in participating schools. A summary of the results of the 2021-22 surveys from both [Primary](#) and [Secondary](#) outline children and young people reporting an understanding of what positive relationships and friendships 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, social media and gaming platforms.

Regional Adult Safeguarding Radio Campaign

The North East Association of Directors of Adult Social Services launched a safeguarding radio campaign for the region which went live at the end of March 2021, the purpose was to reinforce awareness of safeguarding issues amongst the general public and to empower them to feel confident in reporting a concern and to reassure vulnerable adults, their relatives and carers that social services continue to concentrate on reported concerns for abuse.



Making Safeguarding Personal

Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) is applicable to all agencies and aims to develop a person centred and outcomes focus 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. In 2021/2022, 86% 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 and continues to develop customer engagement processes to help inform the Partnerships work.

Children's front door arrangements

Darlington Borough Council implemented its new strengthening families programme in March 2020. A critical part of the implementation was to encourage practitioners from all partner agencies to telephone the Children's Initial Advice Team and discuss their safeguarding concerns directly with a social worker. The Statutory Partners were provided an overview of the evaluation of the 52-week review by Professor Thorpe and colleagues from Lancaster University. Partners were assured to see practice is changing, data demonstrates agencies have taken the new processes on board which demonstrates there is a cultural shift in Darlington which can only improve outcomes for children and families.

Independent Chair Engagement

During the year the Independent Chair held multi-agency meetings with relevant agencies of the Partnership and attended other forums such as primary and secondary education forums and child and adult scrutiny committees to talk about current issues, what is working well and what needs to change relating to current safeguarding arrangements. Feedback has been positive, Head Teachers specifically reporting good support and felt current safeguarding arrangements are working well.

Are you concerned about a child?

Contact the
Children's Initial Advice Team

Professionals on
01325 406252

Public on
01325 406222

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team
01642 524552





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.

Link to Partnership website - www.darlington-safeguarding-partnership.co.uk

The partnerships quarterly newsletter continues to communicate and raise awareness of safeguarding and 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

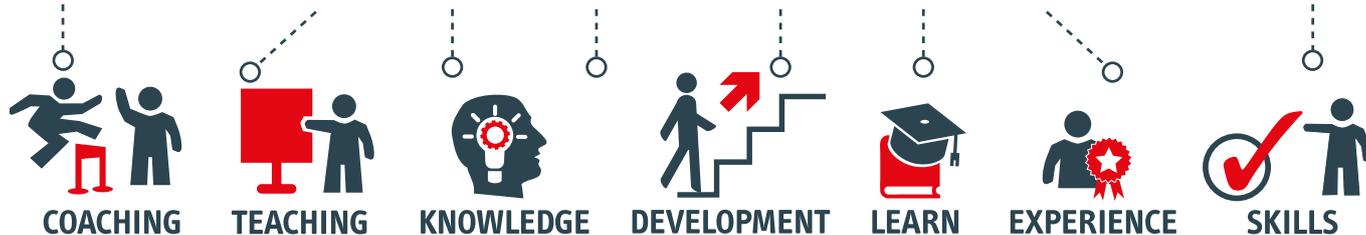
The partnership continues to raise awareness of safeguarding issues by sharing details of key national safeguarding campaigns including, Safeguarding Adult Week in November, Safer Internet Day in February and National Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day in March and asking all organisation to raise awareness of the important issues.

National Safeguarding Adults Week 2021

15 - 21 November 2021

#SafeguardingAdultsWeek

TRAINING



Learning and Development

Whilst the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to impact the ability to provide face to face training, the Partnership continues to provide multi-agency safeguarding training and has developed a variety of E-Learning and workbook options to compliment the virtual training offer. The sessions have been restricted to ensure group sizes remained small enough for questions and discussion to take place.

The Learning and development group continues to monitor and 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 programme is updated to ensure the lessons from learning reviews are reflected as well as identifying the local needs of the multi-agency workforce.

Examples of development during 2021-2022 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. The training has been converted to a virtual course and continues to be delivered.
- Development and delivery to support the updates Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021
- Development of a training module in response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Podcasts developed to focus on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Professional Challenge, and information sharing.

What did we achieve?

- Core courses for Safeguarding Adults and Children at Levels 1 (awareness) and 2 (Managing concerns) which are in line with the Care Act 2014, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021.
- Level 3 specialist courses to reflect national and local priorities
- 106 Virtual courses were delivered.
- 84% increase in attendance on previous year
- 2,054 attendances for training.
- 466 people completed E-Learning workbooks



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. The trainer continues to request delegate feedback on the quality of training. Feedback has been positive although a few delegates have highlighted that virtual training is not as effective as face to face training.

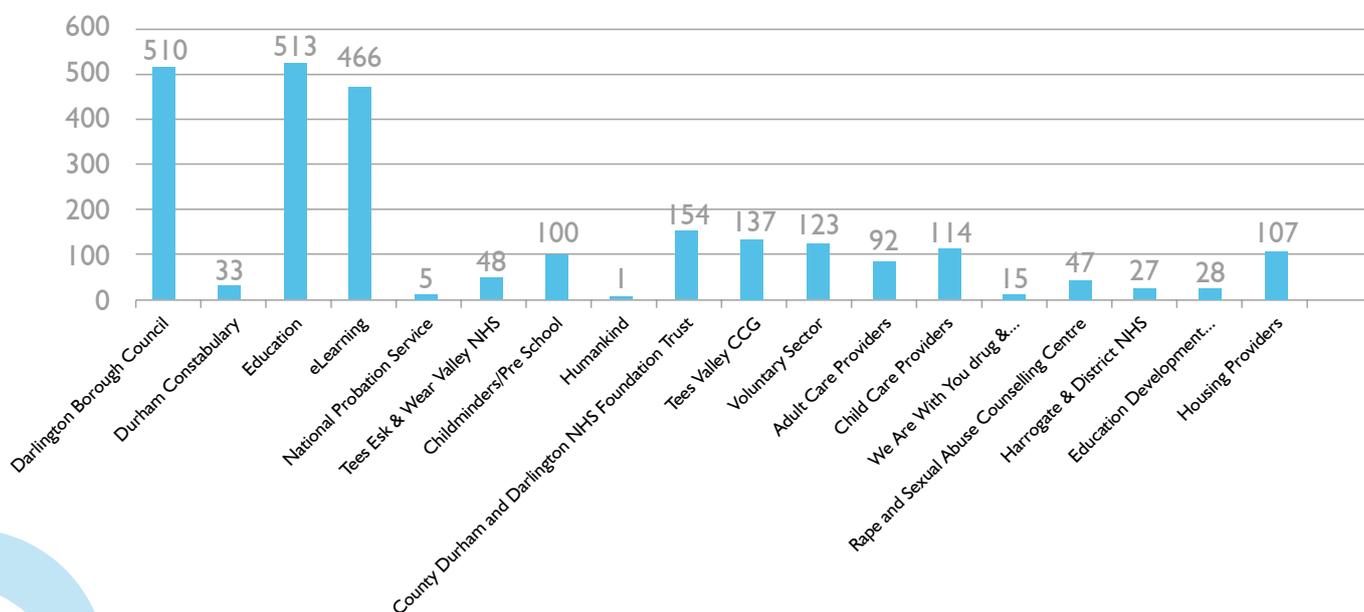
I just wanted to thank you for your time for both training sessions for the team here at PHD. It was really useful and has highlighted a few things we need to consider. I can now put a process in place for the team to follow. (Primary Healthcare Darlington)

Thank you so much Joanna and Chris.....no matter how many times I do this stuff it NEVER gets old or boring and is always comprehensive!!! (Education)

I would just like to thank you again. One of the best training sessions I have attended in a long while. I thought discussion was good and I certainly took a load from it! (Children's Home)

The chart below outlines the attendance by partner agencies during the period April 2021 – March 2022.

Learners by agency



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 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 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 partners agencies are expected to disseminate and implement within their own agency. All documents are published on the DSP website.

During 2021/22 the following were developed, reviewed and revised by the Partnership:

- Revision to Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Procedures
- Revision to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Practice Guidance and Referral Pathways
- Safeguarding the Unborn – Procedure and Practice Guidance
- Self Neglect and Hoarding Practice Guidance
- Childhood Obesity Policy and Practice Guidance
- Domestic Abuse Briefing and video podcast
- Revision to Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) Referral Form and Protocol



7. Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews

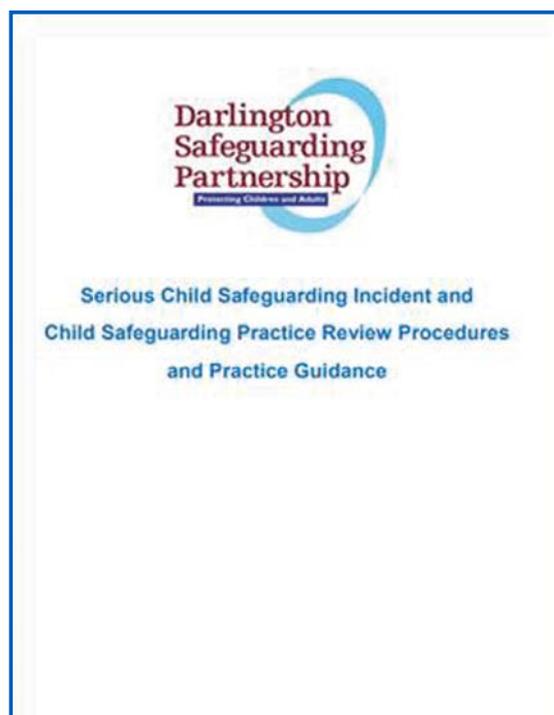
During 2021/22 period, the Partnership did not undertake any Formal Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs) or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs). Whilst it has been acknowledged the number of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) in Darlington remain low, it was recognised there was a need to improve processes and guidance to clearly set out organisational responsibilities for dealing and responding to serious incidents. As a consequence, both the CSPR and SAR Procedures were revised to enable agencies to not only submit a referral if the criteria for a CSPR or SAR were met but also to refer Learning Requests, when they felt there was specific learning to be explored in how agencies had worked together but did not meet the criteria for CSPR/SAR.

The Statutory Safeguarding Partners met with Mark Gurrey, Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel member in June as the Panel had established a number of variances in application of thresholds that trigger Serious Incident Notifications (SiN's) across the Country, Darlington being highlighted as an outlier with no CSPR's being submitted in recent years and wanted to explore reasons why. Partners assured the Panel that current processes and systems ensure SiNs are embedded within safeguarding policy and procedure and there are robust process in place to determine if criteria for notification is met. Partners also highlighted the additional academic oversight throughout the year with the work undertaken by Professor Thorpe and Lancaster University Colleagues on the children's front door safeguarding processes and weekly review processes which did not highlight any specific cases.

Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Procedure and Safeguarding Adult Review Protocol

Whilst there were no specific CSPRs or SAR's undertaken in this reporting period, there were a number of cases (child and adult) which were referred into the Partnership, which were deemed did not meet the criteria for a CSPR or SAR, however the Learning and Development Group, agreed there was multi-agency learning to explore and were taken forward as multi-agency learning events. Themes include parental mental health impact on children, criminal exploitation and adult cases where self-neglect was a factor.

Key learning points were identified and a number of single and multi-agency actions and recommendations for learning were identified and will be addressed by the Learning and Development Group. Learning from good practice has also been embedded in the review process.



What did we learn:

Child exploitation/harm away from home

Continue to raise awareness to understand how young people get involved in exploitation

Look outside the traditional core group of partners to strengthen partnership working

Involve parents in discussions at earliest opportunity

Implement regular check in meetings to respond to current issues/concerns

Voice of child – acknowledge children may also be victims as well as alleged perpetrators and should be assessed to understand any impact on their safety and welfare

Self Neglect

Professional curiosity – when consistent non engagement – obtain a better understanding of person's journey

Ensure multi-disciplinary meetings are held at earliest opportunity

Capacity – despite a number of assessments is person making a capacitated choice to live a particular way- should be further explored and challenged

Self neglect understanding – do agencies consider safeguarding concerns when evidence of self-neglect

Parental Mental Health impact on children

Recognition of impact parental mental health has on child – encourage professional curiosity

Ensure whole family approach is applied

Information sharing and communication is key between child and adult services

Voice of the child – what is life like for this young person living with a parent with mental health

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

- Revision of Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Serious Incident Notification procedure to strengthen process and ensuring effective governance has taken place before submission
- Revision of the SAR referral form to support Statutory Safeguarding Partners and the Learning and Development Group to make informed decision on type of review to be taken forward
- Inclusion of the SAR escalation protocol within the SAR Protocol for issues which may require a national response
- Information sharing video podcast
- Child Criminal Exploitation/Contextual Safeguarding briefing
- Harm away from Home/contextualised safeguarding conference
- Self Neglect guidance and briefing

The Learning and Development and Quality Assurance group will continue to work closely to ensure effective learning and change is embedded into frontline practice.

8. Looking Ahead

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact and influence the services provided by partners agencies throughout the year and recovery continued to be a priority for all agencies, this will continue into the next reporting period.

Learning through the Pandemic has identified a number of key areas of focus which will be taken forward in 2022-23:

- Applying learning from local and national Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews to practice
- Strengthening quality assurance processes and develop performance frameworks
- Further develop scrutiny arrangements
- Focus on key priorities identified in this period - child exploitation/harm away from home and adult self-neglect
- Transitional safeguarding from childhood to adulthood
- Further explore how to obtain the lived experience of children and vulnerable adults



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
- Part-time Analyst (seconded from Durham Constabulary)
- Part-time Information Officer

Contributions from Partner Agencies for 2021-22 period	
Darlington Borough Council	£108,002
Tees Valley 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
Probation Service North East	£770
Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust	£2,000
Training Income	£5,750
Total Revenue	£222,324

Appendix 2

Relevant agencies over and above Statutory Safeguarding Partner Organisations

- Darlington Local Authority - Housing, Public Health, Young Peoples' Engagement and Justice Service
- 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, SEND)
- Support organisations for issues such as Substance Misuse / Domestic Abuse / Sexual Exploitation / Sexual Abuse (SARC)
- Family Justice Board (FJB)
- Probation Service North East
- Voluntary and third sector organisations (including Healthwatch)
- Darlington Primary Care General Practices
- Tees Valley 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

This list is not exhaustive



County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service



DARLINGTON
Borough Council





**Darlington
Safeguarding
Partnership**
Protecting Children and Adults