



Norfolk Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Annual Report

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1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025



flourish



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Foreword by the Three Statutory Partners

We are pleased to present the 2024-2025 annual report for the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership. As Statutory Safeguarding Partners—Norfolk County Council, Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board and Norfolk Constabulary—this report serves as a vital reflection on the partnership's achievements and challenges, ensuring transparency and accountability in all that we do. This year's report demonstrates how the Norfolk partnership has been well placed to respond to the changes set out in Working Together 2023.

The Norfolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements are comprehensively outlined, demonstrating the county's proactive approach to strengthening collaboration and enhancing safeguarding practices. Norfolk has successfully risen to the challenge of incorporating education as a fourth statutory partner, reinforcing the crucial role of schools and educational institutions in protecting children and young people. Moreover, the Voluntary Sector remains an integral part of the safeguarding framework. This inclusive and strategic approach underscores Norfolk's commitment to a robust, collaborative safeguarding system, dedicated to the welfare and protection of children and young people.

Together, we uphold our shared responsibility for the effectiveness of the partnership and remain resolutely committed to safeguarding the welfare of Norfolk's children and young people. Through this report, the partnership reaffirms the statutory safeguarding partner's dedication to providing them with the best possible foundation to flourish, and lead happy, safe, and fulfilling lives.

This report underscores the partnership unwavering commitment to continuous learning and development, ensuring that the voices of children remain central, and actively challenging and identifying areas for improvement, strengthening multi-agency partners' collective response to safeguarding. The partnership's robust use of evidence, data, and insight, has become a key asset, enabling strategic prioritising of resources and assessing the impact of actions.

The partnership's dedication to independent scrutiny ensures a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness, benchmarking of performance against national best practice while addressing areas for local development.

This year, the partnership maintained a steadfast commitment to the key priorities identified for 2024-2025 - namely, tackling neglect, supporting vulnerable adolescents, and strengthening family and community networking, with a particular focus on developing father-inclusive practice. Nationally, the approach to safeguarding children has evolved into a highly sophisticated and collaborative framework, and this maturity is clearly reflected in Norfolk's methods of working. The partnership's sustained focus on these local priorities acknowledges the pressing challenges faced by children and families in today's climate. Over the past year, the focus has been to embed clear, evidence-based strategies aimed at driving meaningful improvements in practice and delivering tangible, positive outcomes for children's lives.

This year has been particularly active in relation to external inspections across individual agencies, culminating in a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. This comprehensive multi-agency review provided a valuable platform to bring together partners and partnership boards, highlighting Norfolk’s strengths while strategically addressing areas for improvement. The feedback from inspectors was highly encouraging, affirming that Norfolk’s partnership arrangements are “strong and collaborative.” The presence of robust governance structures has played a critical role in ensuring that most unborn and young children affected by domestic abuse receive the necessary support and protection they need. This positive assessment reinforces Norfolk’s commitment to continuous improvement and best practice in safeguarding.

This report highlights the partnership’s continued dynamic and responsive approach 2024-2025, demonstrating its tangible positive impact on Norfolk’s children and young people. The partnership remains focused on delivering meaningful change through strategic collaboration, continuous learning, resource integration, inclusivity, and constructive challenge—ensuring that safeguarding efforts are both effective and forward-thinking.

The Statutory Safeguarding Partners collective commitment remains steadfast: to empower professionals, support families, and protect children and young people, providing them with the best possible foundations to thrive. We will continue working together to strengthen safeguarding practices and drive sustainable improvements across the system.

	Delegated Safeguarding Partner	Lead Safeguarding Partner
 Norfolk County Council	 Sara Tough, OBE Executive Director Children’s Services	 Tom McCabe Chief Executive Officer
 NORFOLK CONSTABULARY <i>Our Priority is You</i>	 Christopher Balmer T/Assistant Chief Constable	 Paul Sanford Chief Constable
	 Patricia D’Orsi Executive Director of Nursing Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board	 Tracey Bleakley Chief Executive Officer, Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board

Foreword by the NSCP Independent Scrutiny Team

Norfolk Children Safeguarding Partnership continues to promote a culture where scrutiny is not only welcome but seen as an essential part of providing the best possible safeguarding outcomes for children and families. This is reflected in the investment made in an experienced team that perform this role for the Partnership. Three Scrutineers ensure there is independent focus across all Partnership meetings. In addition, they are commissioned to do bespoke pieces of scrutiny to assess multi-agency practice in key areas. This group is supported by the Business Manager, Support Team and Analyst, all of whom are exceptional. This affords the scrutiny group opportunity to provide high quality scrutiny reports that can provide positive impact on learning and practice. This genuine commitment to seeking out independent scrutiny was of significant value during the inspection that are detailed in this report.

It is important that this document sets out what good scrutiny should look like. Working Together sets out the functions of scrutiny, describes what the Scrutineer or Scrutiny Group should look like, the fact that scrutiny should be evidenced based and the various methods scrutiny may follow. The document states 'Independent scrutiny should drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. It should also consider learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews, national reviews and thematic reports'. I am pleased to be able to reassure you that this continues to be the model used by the NSCP.

During this reporting period the scrutiny team have been commissioned to do several pieces of targeted work by the Partnership. These have included, but not limited to, a significant piece of work that examined Transitional Safeguarding in Norfolk. We worked jointly with the Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) to scrutinise how we support children as they move into adulthood. The work included seeking the views of practitioners and young people with lived experience, giving us incredibly impactful insight into issues people face. The report that followed was presented to the statutory leads who accepted the recommendations made and have supported the action plans that were developed to improve systems, practice and outcomes. We followed this with another piece of joint work with the SAB scrutinising the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This involved observations of practice, interviews with practitioners and a review of the structure. The final report was extremely positive outlining good practice and some small areas for improvement. It has been accepted and supported by the Partnership and an action plan is being developed to improve what is an already high functioning area of the Partnership. We continue to provide scrutiny across the Partnership through attendance and chairing meetings, various observations of practice and providing an independent view when disputes are escalated. Both of these pieces of work are covered in detail in this Annual Report.

As the Lead Scrutineer I remain confident that we could and should be used as a model of good practice. The NSCP is, in my view, exceptional in the work it does and has a real drive to seek continuous improvement.

Chris Robson, Lead Independent Scrutineer - NSCP

Introduction

The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership is the body responsible for implementing and reviewing the local plan for Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements ([MASA](#)). The MASA was reviewed and revised to comply with the statutory guidance set out in [Working Together 2023](#) and the latest version was published on the NSCP website on 29 November 2024. The MASA is the responsibility of the three statutory partners, i.e. the Local Authority, the Police, and Health. The published arrangements set out how they will ensure all partners fulfill their safeguarding duties.

This annual report has been written in adherence to Working Together requirements as set out in Chapter 2 (paragraphs 106 - 107). The focus of the report is to evidence what the NSCP has done as a result of the MASA, including how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

The scope of this annual report runs from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report provides information in relation to:

- the contribution of safeguarding partners to the functioning and structure of the MASA
- themes emanating from aggregated methods of scrutiny, including reviews, scrutineer activity and multi-agency audits
- evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children and families
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of learning from serious incidents
- a record of key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle, including in relation to implementing the recommendations from any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews and the impact this has had
- ways in which the safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision
- the breakdown of costs in delivering the arrangements for that period, including the financial contributions of individual partners, any changes to funding and an assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding
- evidence of how safeguarding partners are ensuring the adequate representation and input of education at both the operational and strategic levels of the arrangements
- an overview of how data is being used to encourage learning within the arrangements and evidence of how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes
- a review of the impact and learning from independent scrutiny arrangements to ensure the leadership is strong and the arrangements are leading to the desired and necessary impact
- evidence that national reforms have been implemented, taking into account key decisions and actions taken by safeguarding partners in response to reforms, and any issues or concerns encountered within the yearly cycle

As in previous annual reports, much of the contextual background has been stripped back to allow for more detailed analysis of the evidence of outcomes in our safeguarding system. Information on Norfolk's population and demographics can be found on [Norfolk Insight](#).

A separate children and young people version of this report has been produced in consultation with them as key stakeholders and this serves as an Executive Summary.

Governance and Strategic Overview

The overarching governance arrangements adhere to Norfolk's plan for Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. This chapter serves as a summary reference of governance in 2024 - 25.

The Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partners (LSPs and DSPs) named in the MASA are:

- **Norfolk County Council:** represented by the Executive Director of Children's Services, Sara Tough OBE (DSP) and the Chief Executive Officer, Tom McCabe (LSP)
- **Norfolk Constabulary:** represented by the T/Assistant Chief Constable, Chris Balmer (DSP), and the Chief Constable, Paul Sanford (LSP)
- **Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board:** represented by the Executive Director of Nursing, Patricia D'Orsi (DSP) and Chief Executive Officer, Tracey Bleakley (LSP)

There has been consistent leadership within the partnership over the past five years. In 2024 – 25, the Assistant Chief Constable, Nicholas Davison, was seconded so from November 2024 this role has been delegated to Christopher Balmer. Mr Balmer has played an active role in the NSCP, including co-chairing the Joint Strategic Analysis Group, so was well placed to assume the responsibility of Delegated Safeguarding Partner.

The DSPs meet quarterly and are chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services, acting as a conduit for the LSPs. The LSPs are provided quarterly written briefings and meet twice a year with the DSP meeting chair to consider MASA milestones as well as to respond to emerging challenges and maintain a strategic overview on the system.

Progress Against Statutory Guidance

Norfolk was well placed to respond to the changes set out in Working Together 2024. The MASA provides further details of our adherence. In summary progress can be seen in terms of:

- **Chairing:** the named Chair for the NSCP is Sara Tough, OBE, as noted above.
- **Education:** Norfolk has risen to the challenge of having education as a fourth statutory partner. Key milestones achieved:
 - Representatives for primary, secondary, special schools and further education now meet regularly and work to agreed Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).
 - The agendas for Partnership Group meetings are shared with the education representatives four weeks ahead of time to give them ample opportunity to consult with their peers.
 - There is dedicated time at Partnership Group to understand schools' perspective on the safeguarding agenda, providing space and context for challenge and support.
 - In addition, the DSPs and/or their scrutineers attend the Norfolk School Leaders Forum to address education leaders beyond their representatives. Schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) networks continue to be a strength of the partnership.

- **Voluntary Sector:** the VS have a place at Partnership Group meetings and continue to play an important role in safeguarding Norfolk's children, with over 500 members from the VS signed up the NSCP's Safer programme
- **Data and performance intelligence:** the well established role of the NSCP's data analyst is evident in all aspects of our work, including: regular monitoring of the safeguarding data dashboard; the provision of data profiles against priority areas and contributions to priority review; underpinning any scrutiny work; informing joint strategic needs analyses, for example on serious youth violence and domestic abuse; and responding to emerging areas of concern, such as child sexual abuse snapshots.

The new arrangements were also a welcome opportunity for us to further strengthen our approach to scrutiny, information sharing agreements and evidence value for money. These are picked up in greater detail in this report.

Independent Scrutiny Team

The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership continues to invest in high levels of independent scrutiny. This reflects the value they place on their independent scrutiny team. The MASA has three clearly defined roles for independent scrutiny. The Lead Scrutineer, Chris Robson, continues to chair the Partnership Group and attend the DSP and LSP meetings to ensure appropriate challenge and identification of strengths and areas for improvement detected in the safeguarding system.

The NSCP's Lead Scrutineer is supported by two other independent scrutiny roles: the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Practice Review Group, Sian Griffiths, and the Independent Chair of the Workforce Development Group, Bridget Griffin. The three members of the Independent Scrutiny Team meet regularly to triangulate their findings from their respective areas and report back to the statutory safeguarding partners. Further detail on specific pieces of scrutiny is included in Chapter 4.

Working Subgroups

The governance structure in the MASA sets out all the working groups. In summary:

- **Partnership Group:** The purpose of the Partnership Group is to support the statutory partners in the co-ordination of local arrangements and to provide challenge and feedback on the safeguarding system. Appendix 2 lists all items discussed at Partnership Group this reporting year.
- **Subgroups relating to Statutory Duties – Learning and Workforce Development:**
 - Safeguarding Practice Review Group and Child Death Overview Panel. (see Chapter 6)
 - Workforce Development Group (see Chapter 7).
- **Performance and Intelligence:**
 - Multi-Agency Audit Group is responsible for audit and monitoring recommendations
 - Joint Strategic Analysis Group responsible for providing quantitative evidence of how well the system is working.
- **Local Safeguarding Children Groups:** The NSCP is represented at locality level by six LSCGs made up of representatives from the multi-agency partnership in each area. An LSCG annual report on their achievements is published separately on the NSCP website.

- **Advisory Groups:** sector-specific advisory groups for Early Years and District Councils create a space for professionals to address safeguarding issues at sector level. District Councils also play a key role in engaging with housing providers; learning events for housing are held twice a year covering children's and adults' safeguarding issues jointly.

Leadership Exchange and Learning Events

In addition to Partnership Group, the Delegated Safeguarding Partners are committed to bringing all members of the wider partnership together and promote learning and best practice. The Leadership Exchange and Learning Events (LELE) are a vehicle for partners to have dedicated time to focus on specific issues. This year, two events were held focusing on risk assessment at the front door and transitional safeguarding. The Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board were included in both of these events. Evaluation reports have contributed to action plans and work is ongoing to monitor practice in these areas.

Strategic Overview: Links to Other Partnership Boards

The MASA provides further detail on links to other boards. In summary:

- The Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance (CYPSA) and the NSCP's commitment to endorsing and promoting the **Flourish Strategy**.¹
- The Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board, including join up on independent scrutiny and learning from safeguarding review activity. The NSAB Chair and Business Manager also meet regularly with NSCP's Independent Scrutiny and Head of NSCP Business Delivery.
- The Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership, including learning from Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews and supporting on the development of the Serious Violence Strategy. There is strong partnership working in response to children who are victims of domestic abuse.
- The Health and Wellbeing Board, who are sighted on the NSCP annual report as part of its sign off procedures prior to publication
- Links with Norfolk's seven Youth Advisory Boards (YABs) through the Local Safeguarding Children Groups.

The NSCP Business Unit

The governance structure is supported by an efficient and experienced team, including the Head of NSCP Business Delivery, a Safeguarding Intelligence & Performance Co-ordinator, a Workforce Development Officer, Safer Programme Co-ordinator and 3.5 FTE administrators. The Business Unit is responsible for supporting on a range of activities including: supporting strategic leadership; monitoring and audit; budget oversight; training provision; and key administrative tasks such as setting agendas, minuting meetings, communications, website development and event co-ordination.

The team includes a 0.5 FTE dedicated senior analyst officer, shared with the Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance.

¹ Flourish is an acronym for: Friends and Family; Learning; Opportunity; Understanding; Resilience; Individual; Safe and Secure; Healthy.

The Year at a Glance

There have been numerous milestones over 2024 – 25. The below is a summary showing our achievements against our priorities, our innovations and progression in our governance arrangements.

APRIL SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW Case AM: 1-2-1 with professionals involved in a case of Fabricated or Induced Illness VOICE OF THE CHILD: Workshop with Children & Young People to co-produce the CYP version of the NSCP's annual report	MAY PRIORITY: FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE Launch of 12th Man Talking Dads Radio Show VOICE OF THE CHILD: Workshop with Children & Young People to co-produce the CYP version of the NSCP's annual report	JUNE GOVERNANCE NSCP Priority Review MASA & EDUCATION: DfE led workshop with school leadership and DSPs
JULY SCRUTINY: Report on Transitional Safeguarding signed off by DSPs PRIORITY: NEGLECT Three neglect took it workshops completed MULTI-AGENCY AUDIT: Norfolk Graded Care Profile Report findings informed the Neglect Strategy Implementation Group WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Train the trainers session promoting best practice in safeguarding training	AUGUST VOICE OF THE CHILD: NSCP's version of the CYP annual report is awarded a Quality Mark by a Panel of young people PRIORITY: NEGLECT Norfolk hosted national summer leadership programme, showcasing outputs of neglect strategy PRIORITY: VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS Publication of Data Review, a non-statutory review, learning from the fatal stabbing of an 18 year old - shared with Serious Violence Duty Board	SEPTEMBER SCRUTINY: Review of MASH arrangements, jointly with Adults, to understand risk assessment at front door VOICE OF THE CHILD: Flourish award ceremony - City College media students, nominated by NSCP, won an award for their film on exploitation MULTI-AGENCY AUDIT: Impact of Domestic Abuse on unborns to seven year olds. Report findings presented to Partnership Group GOVERNANCE: NSCP annual report presented to Norfolk's Health & Wellbeing Board
OCTOBER LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE & LEARNING EVENT: Focus on MASH/the front door PRIORITY: NEGLECT Neglect Champions Forum PRIORITY: VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS Strategy review.	NOVEMBER GOVERNANCE: Published the local plan for Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements INNOVATION: JAGS Reviewed and launched new procedures for Joint Agency Group supervision, including dedicated training for a pool of facilitators and ongoing networking opportunities SECTION 11: Section 11 challenge and support events, providing partners opportunity to share good practice	DECEMBER INSPECTION: Joint Targeted Area Inspection on the impact of DA on unborn children to seven year olds (letter published Feb 2025) SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW: Central Bedfordshire published Case IW which involved the death of a child who visited Norfolk shortly before he murder INNOVATION: MACS Tools to finalise the introduction of the Multi-Agency Chronology published on the NSCP website
JANUARY INSPECTION: Norfolk Youth Justice Services inspection report published PRIORITY: NEGLECT Adolescent Graded Care Profile tool piloted and workshop held to develop the Accumulative Neglect Operational Oversight Forum	FEBRUARY LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE & LEARNING EVENT: Focus on transitional safeguarding SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEW: Case AM completed and signed off by the DSPs. Publication delayed to 2026. Work commences on action planning.	MARCH PRIORITY: VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS Serious Youth Violence Conference held in collaboration with Serious Violence Duty Programme Board PRIORITY: FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE Conference held to mark the progress made over three year period, including legacy planning

Voice of the Child

The NSCP takes participation seriously and we are committed to ensuring that children's voices are not only heard but are listened to. We are proud of the work we do to ensure that this report is not only shared with them but also to collaborate with them to co-produce a children and young people's version that is accessible and clearly records their views of our safeguarding arrangements. We extend our thanks to all the children who give up their time to support with this.

This year, that piece of work was recognised by a Quality Mark Panel where the illustrated report was awarded a Quality Mark. Not only was this a demonstration of the commitment and mutual respect that underpins the children and young people's annual report it was also a chance for them to provide constructive feedback and challenge. The three areas that we can improve on – and remedial steps planned – were:

- Demonstrate what the NSCP has done in response to their messages. One of the things that was picked up last year was the data about children not in schools. This informed a piece of scrutiny on children missing out on education due to be completed summer 2025.
- Ensure inclusivity. The NSCP works with Norfolk County Council's Participation Team to open up the opportunity to engage with the co-production of the report and have made sure that the invite goes out to all groups: Youth Advisory Boards (YABS), Youth Parliament, the In Care Council, Dragons (for children with SEND), Young Carers and other groups that are led by partners.
- Raise awareness of the report. Plans are in place to distribute hard copies of the children's version of the annual report to schools and libraries.

We are really proud of the children and young people's version of the NSCP annual report and so grateful to the children who helped us with that. We are pleased to publish the CYP version alongside this full report. We hope you enjoy it as much as we do!

The NSCP always seeks direct feedback from children where possible. Further examples of how we have sought their views this year:

- We arranged focus groups with 17 – 25 year olds as part of the independent scrutiny on transitional safeguarding. This included care leavers, young offenders, young carers and young adults in receipt of Pathway for Adult Learning Services. They were quoted in the final scrutiny report.
- We developed a communication asset to promote Family and Community Networking, one of the priority workstreams. A series of consultations were held, including with Youth Parliament and a YAB, as well as a Family Hub parent stakeholder group. The feedback informed the final product which will be launched in 2025 – 26.
- The NSCP's Vulnerable Adolescent group worked closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk and Norwich City College's Media School to produce a series of communication assets on child exploitation. Young people pitched ideas and one of the resulting films was nominated by the NSCP for a Flourish award – which they won! These award winning young film makers went on to support the NSCP filming with senior leadership short pieces promoting the use of multi-agency chronologies (for more information see Chapter 7, Priorities and Projects).

There is always more we can learn from children, young people and families when we speak to them directly and opportunities to do this are followed up directly in any project plans or indirectly through speaking to the professionals who have established relationships with the children and young people.

Using Data and Evidence in Partnership

Our approach to data and evidence

Data, evidence, and analysis underpin the partnership's strategy and activity. Since 2020 a Joint Strategic Analysis Group has brought together analysts across the partnership, and a dedicated resource and role now coordinates support to deliver analytical products and outputs.

Key activities in the last year included:

- Regular monitoring of key partnership indicators.
- Data support to the Partnership's priorities, including an initial Data Review of Family & Community Networking, and an update and development of data about Neglect.
- Specific analyses in support of scrutiny activity, particularly around children not in school, and transitional safeguarding.
- Detailed analysis of the Flourish Survey covering key aspects of children and young people's perceptions of safety.

This evidence-led approach has provided valuable insight into risk factors, and at-risk cohorts, that has enabled the partnership to prioritise activity where it is most needed whilst accounting for the complex drivers of safeguarding risks for children and families. It has also helped us accelerate progress in key areas, with joined-up data available to practitioners around school attendance and safeguarding, and (through the Family Connect project) where children and families have multiple risk 'flags' on different partners' systems.

Telling our story with data: the scale and range of safeguarding activity in Norfolk



- Around **148** babies are born
- There are around **189,000** children and young people aged 0-19 with around **125,000** attending schools.

Within the context of this, each week there are around:



1,030 A&E attendances for Under-18s and **370** for under-4s'; **17** acute hospital admissions caused by injuries for under-15s; and **3** acute admissions for mental health problems and **2** for substance abuse.



8 children are screened for exploitation by the Police; **99** Police investigations are started where domestic abuse is suspected and there is a child present; **10** children and young people are stopped and searched, and around **19** are arrested.



Around **950** contacts are made to the Children's Advice & Duty Services (CADS); including around **265** from schools and education services, around **188** from the Police, **160** from members of the public, and **115** from health services where contacts suggest there may be a risk to the safety or wellbeing of a child, partners work together to agree the best course of action through formal safeguarding routes. Each week this means around:

- **65** referrals prompt a social work assessment, and around **47** prompt a multi-agency strategy discussion.
- **10** children start a Child Protection Plan, including around **2** who will have had a previous CPP. In addition, around **7** children will become looked after each week (with a similar number ceasing to be looked after).
- **2** children and young people enter the Youth Justice system for the first time.

All of this means that at any one time in Norfolk there are around:

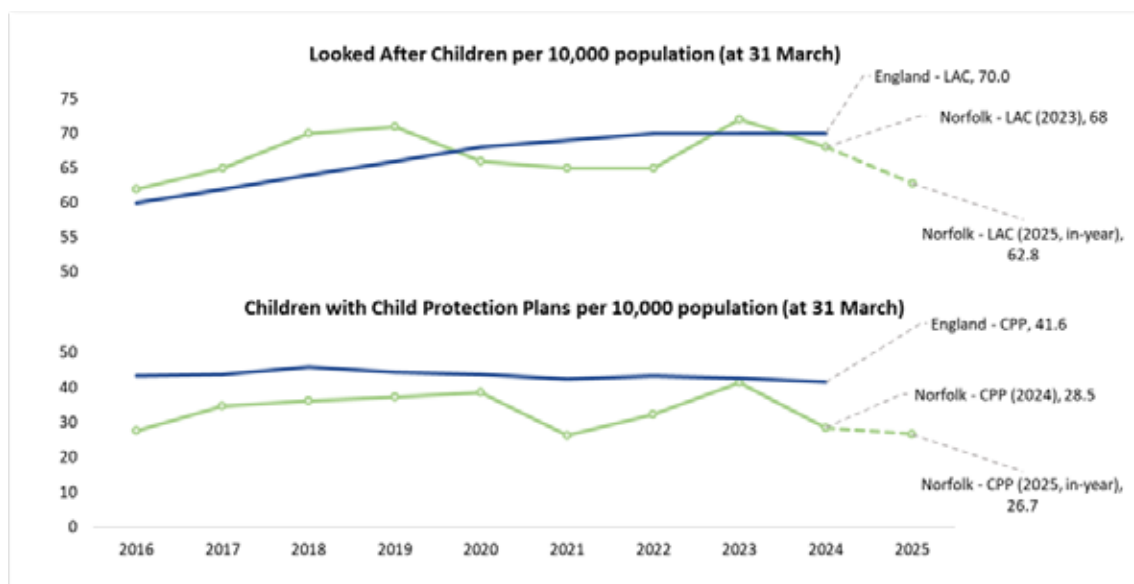
- **440** children and young people with a Child Protection Plan
- **1,115** Looked After Children (including around **142** unaccompanied asylum-seeking children)
- **145** children and young people receiving Youth Justice Service interventions.

[Note: data about an average week taken from national returns and local systems, using the most recent data available, and using either the most recent snapshot figure or an average figure for the last 12 months].

Current trends from national and local data

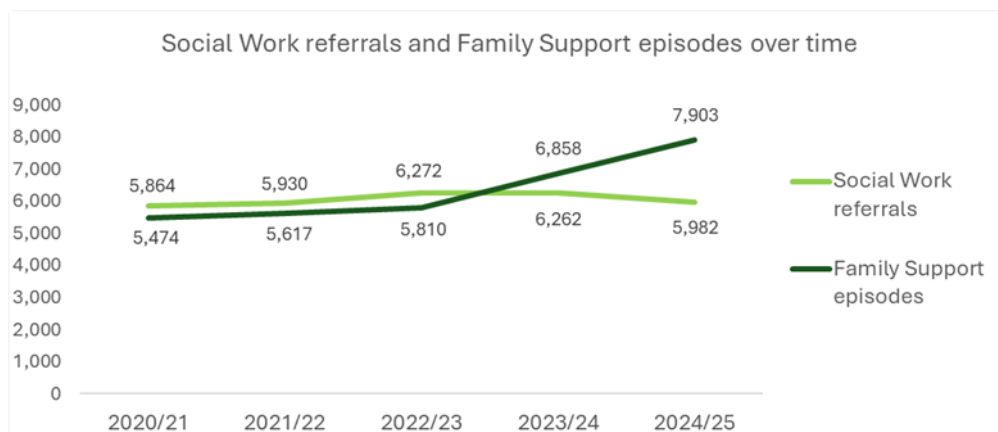
The partnership monitors a range of indicators and these, alongside statutory data returns, show some emerging trends in Norfolk.

Last year's report described a reduction in numbers of children in some key safeguarding and child-protection pathways, evidenced through preliminary data. This reduction has been confirmed and has continued this year, with notable sustained reductions in children with Child Protection Plans and children who are Looked After. The graphs (below) show this and include in-year data to show current rates (this in year data is unpublished and is likely to change through the data verification process for government data returns).



Whilst it is not possible to understand what has driven these reductions through structured data alone, analysis of preventative and early help services suggests that it may be driven by an increase in those services. The graph (below) shows an increase in family support episodes coinciding with a slight reduction in new referrals into safeguarding pathways (see graph, below). Both trends began in 2022/23 when key elements of the Prevention and Early Help Strategy were implemented including the Family Hubs approach. Once referrals are made, improved Family Support interventions have also been able to better support escalating concerns and avoid the need for statutory social work interventions.

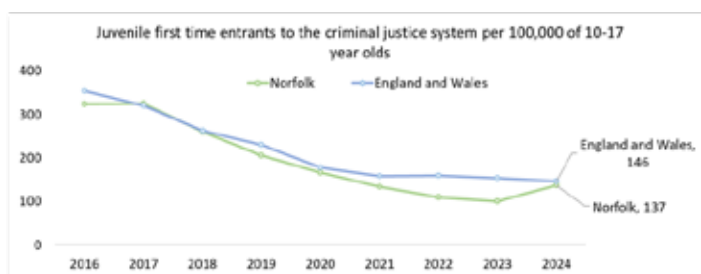
Additional analyses show this period also included an increase in access to information and advice services (for example through the Just One Norfolk website and Family Hub online offer) and in the provision of more direct support to families (Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) groups talking therapies). Continued monitoring and analysis is needed to assess whether preventative approaches continue to prompt reduced levels of formal safeguarding activity.



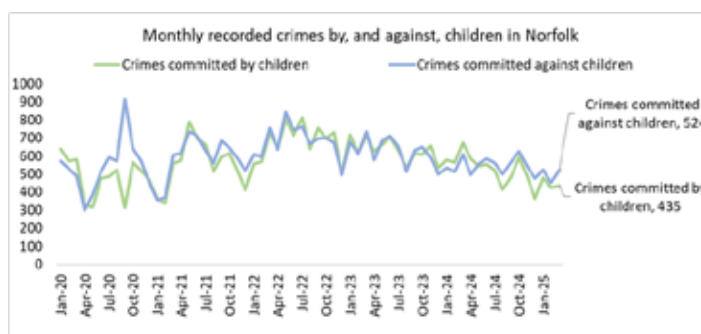
It is important to note that whilst reductions in formal safeguarding pathways and increases in preventative activity are evidenced through Children's Social Care data, all reflect multi-agency referral routes and responses and contain a significant proportion of activity referred through, and commissioned by, partners.

National and local Youth Justice and Police data continues to show a long-term reduction in rates of children and young people involved in recorded crimes, and within youth justice pathways.

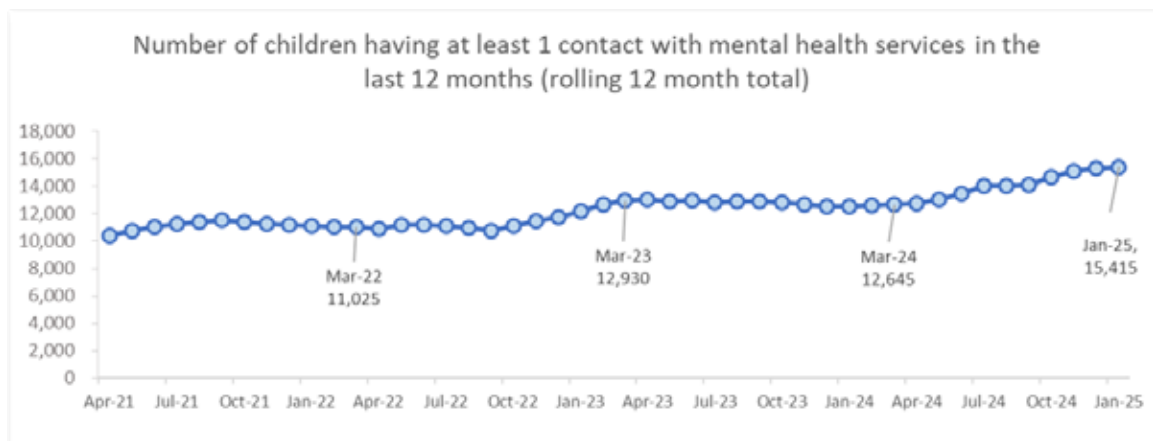
Whilst 2024 saw a slight increase in first time entrants to the criminal justice system, this comes within the context of longer-term reductions (see graph right, top) and remains below the national average. For scale, the 2024 rate equates to 111 children and young people.



Local Police Data also shows some notable long-term trends. The graph (right, bottom) shows recorded crimes by and against children, with a general reduction in monthly numbers of both since the pandemic. Other data shows broadly stable numbers of Police child protection investigations, numbers of children screened for criminal exploitation, and domestic abuse investigation where a child was present. Numbers of stop-searches and arrests are also somewhat stable, albeit within the context of notable month-to-month variation.



Many of the NHS indicators monitored by the Partnership focus on mental health given the strong association between children's and parents' mental health and safeguarding outcomes. Numbers of children with at least one contact with mental health services continue to rise (see graph, below). Hospital admissions for mental health conditions for under 18s have reduced slightly since 2022, although Norfolk's rates remain slightly above national and regional averages.



Beyond mental health indicators, emergency admissions overall for under-18s have reduced notably since 2022 and are below the national average. Similarly, admissions for injuries have reduced for all age-groups (including aged 15-24), as have overall admissions for substance abuse for young people age 15-25 which has reduced steadily since 2017. Detailed health outcomes can be reviewed on the Fingertips website: **Child and Maternal Health - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care.**

Children and young people's voice: results from the Flourish Survey

In 2024, over 9,300 pupils completed the Flourish Survey. Commissioned by Public Health, this covered, in detail, experiences and outcomes in 8 domains set out by the Flourish Strategy (see right), including 'Safe and secure'. The sample was broadly representative of Norfolk's children and young people in terms of demographic characteristics. The survey also included several questions asked in previous surveys, enabling us to see changes over time.

A number of overall themes were identified, including:

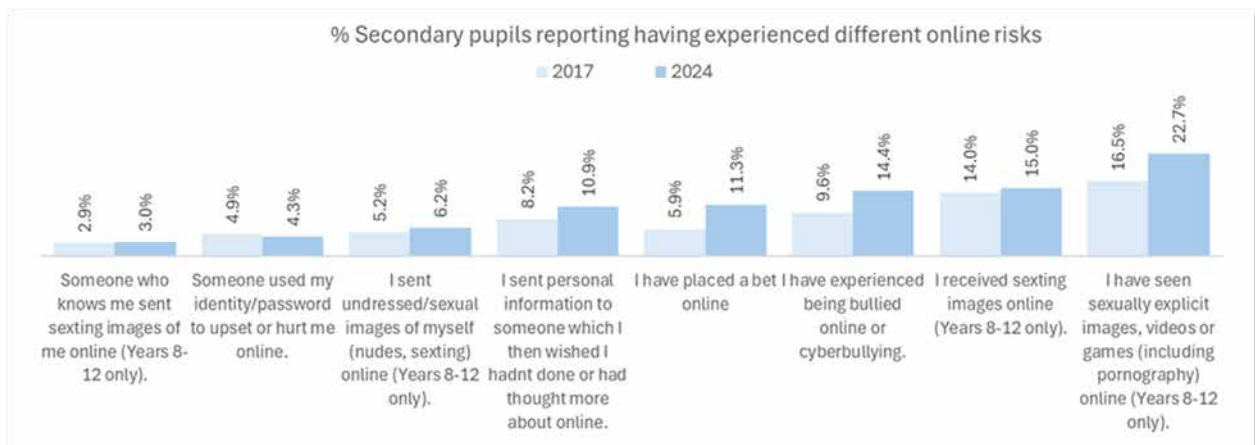
- An increase in the proportion of children and young people with poor mental health.
- Complex circumstances for particular groups of children and young people – with those with SEND, who are young carers, or who are eligible for free school meals more likely to experience a range of poor outcomes around mental health, problems at home and socially, and lower engagement in activities outside of school.
- An increase in the proportion of pupils who feel it is not important to go to school – and a notable proportion of children reporting that they have missed school in the last year because of their mental health, or because of bullying.



- Complex changes in the way young people feel about their place in the world – with improvements in feelings of inclusivity and involvement generally, but reduced confidence and optimism, and a reluctance to talk about their feelings or ask for help when things go wrong.

There are number of detailed findings that were specifically relevant to children and young people’s safeguarding. These include:

- An increasing proportion of pupils experiencing online risks (see the graph below), with notable rises around online bullying, seeing sexually explicit media, and placing online bets.
- A slight overall increase in pupils reporting being bullied in the last 12 months (with around 4 in 10 saying they had been bullied “a little” or “a lot”).
- Most respondents reporting feeling safe in their local area during the day (80% rating safety as ‘very good’ or ‘good’), but less than half (44%) feeling that way at night.
- Around 9 in 10 respondents rate the ability of Police to keep them safe as “very good”, “good” or “OK”.
- Around 1 in 10 primary school respondents reporting that there has been violence between adults in their house in the last month (a similar rate to 2017).
- Of those respondents in years 8-12 who had been in a relationship at some point, around 1-in-12 reported being slapped or hit at some point, and almost 1-in-8 reported that they did not know where to seek help if concerning behaviours occurred in their relationship.



For each priority, partners have identified how they will embed the findings of the Flourish Survey into their work.

Inspection

It has been a busy year in terms of external inspection activity. In addition to two child-focused inspections looking at (a) the impact of domestic abuse on unborn to 7 year olds and (b) the Youth Justice Service, Norfolk Constabulary was also inspected against the police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) framework and, earlier in the year Norfolk Probation Delivery Unit’s inspection report was published. Taking these in chronological order:

Norfolk Probation – May 2024

His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspected Norfolk in February 2024 and the report was published in May 2024. At the time, the judgement was inadequate: “Inspectors were concerned with the breakdown in the senior strategic relationships with Norfolk PDU and partners involved in the safeguarding of children. The PDU had not been carrying out its statutory duties to attend or contribute towards the Local Safeguarding Partnership and relationships between probation practitioners and social workers were sometimes fractured. This means some children are at risk of harm which needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency.” These issues were known and raised by the NSCP prior to the inspection. To Probation’s credit, they acted quickly to address these challenges and since summer 2024 they have played a proactive role in multi-agency working, both strategically and operationally. This was borne out later in the year during the Joint Targeted Area Inspection.

Norfolk Constabulary – September 2024

His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) conducted a PEEL inspection over a long period of time and published the report in September 2024. Judgements were made against nine areas; there were no inadequate judgements and one area was found to be outstanding.

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement
Recording data about crime	Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability	Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully	Responding to the public
		Investigating crime	Protecting vulnerable people
		Building, supporting and protecting the workforce	Managing offenders and suspects
		Leadership and force management	

The PEEL assessment framework (2023 – 25) has changed since previous inspections so the findings were not like for like, however, inspectors noted: “Since our last inspection, the constabulary has made a significant effort to review and improve its investigative standards. This has led to improvements in its ability to achieve well-supervised, better-quality investigations.

I commend Norfolk Constabulary on the progress it has made. I recognise the constabulary has a higher charge/summons rate compared to other forces in England and Wales. But it needs to do more to always achieve appropriate outcomes for victims.” The NSCP is confident that the Constabulary knows itself well and is taking steps to address areas of improvement.

Youth Justice Service – January 2025

HMIP returned to Norfolk in October 2024 to inspect the Youth Justice Service (YJS). The report was published in January 2025. The YJS is judged as good overall, with some outstanding features. Services and staff were described as “creative” and “motivated”, highlighting our child-centred approach to youth justice in the county. The inspection team also highlighted the dedication of colleagues working in the service, who go “above and beyond” what is required to support the children and young people they work with.

In terms of areas for improvement, HMIP highlighted some areas including post-court assessments, ensuring more opportunities for high quality education, training and employment, and using the views of victims to better inform our work.

Overall, the inspection report was really positive, emphasising the YJS focus on putting the needs of children at the heart of practice. An action plan was shared with HMIP in February outlining the steps planned to further improve the service.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection - February 2025

The year concluded with the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) which joined Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMICFRS and HMIP using the inspection framework on domestic abuse to assess the partnership’s response to children – unborn to age 7 – who had experienced domestic abuse. The letter was published in February 2025.

The inspection was an excellent opportunity to bring both partners and partnership boards together to showcase our strengths as well as address areas for improvement. All partners rose to the challenge of inspection and the process strengthened relationships, including with the Community Safety Partnership board who has domestic abuse as one of its priorities.

Inspectors said Norfolk’s partnership arrangements are “strong and collaborative”, helping ensure that most unborn and young children who are victims of domestic abuse are getting the support they need. Inspectors also praised the “synergy” between partners and the strong governance arrangements. They highlighted co-production with children and young people, and the early identification of need for most children as strengths, alongside the work to support and protect unborn children.

Other strengths included:

- The commitment to father-inclusive practice.
- Multi-agency evaluation of referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- The implementation and monitoring of Operation Encompass and its extension to services supporting children not in school.
- Multi-agency practice to support and protect unborn children.
- The development of domestic abuse champions across education and health settings and the deployment of specialist domestic abuse workers in children’s social care teams.

- The operation of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law).
- Support by partners for the strategic and operational work of a specialist commissioned domestic abuse service.
- The quality and range of support provided by Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs).
- The provision and quality assurance of safe accommodation for victims of domestic abuse.

The inspectors also highlighted areas to improve under five main improvement goals. These were:

- Partners' understanding and engagement in MARAC and the Partnership's oversight of its operation.
- The consistent consideration of the cumulative harm to children aged 0 to 7 from repeated experience of domestic violence.
- How well the voices and experiences of individual children who are victims of domestic abuse are listened to, understood and captured by practitioners, across the partnership, and are used to inform children's plans.
- The timeliness and consistency of information-sharing, in a small number of practice areas, related to risk management. This includes digital information sharing of health records.
- The accessibility of domestic abuse training to practitioners, its take-up by those practitioners, and how well they apply learning to practice.

These recommendations have been incorporated into an action plan alongside learning from a multi-agency audit on domestic abuse undertaken in summer 2024 (see Chapter on Scrutiny) as well as the learning from the case file audit undertaken during inspection on cases selected by the inspectors. The action plan will be submitted to the Department of Education in June 2025. A Leadership Exchange and Learning Event is planned for autumn 2025 to follow up on actions and reflect on any further learning.

Independent Scrutiny

Norfolk adheres to the principles of independent scrutiny as outlined in Working Together 2023, (Chapter 3 page 77) and has dedicated resources in place to fulfil this statutory function in our local safeguarding arrangements. The NSCP's scrutiny arrangements include a range of mechanisms, deployed to provide robust examination of performance and practice. This chapter focuses on actions and outcomes from:

- Independent scrutiny undertaken by the independent scrutiny team
- Multi-agency audit
- Section 11 self-assessment

Independent Scrutiny

The three statutory partners commissions the independent scrutiny team to undertake specific pieces of scrutiny. In this reporting year, there were three scrutiny activities: (1) completing the scrutiny of transitional safeguarding in partnership with the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board; (2) assessment of risk at the front door, again with NSAB; and (3) children missing out on education.

Transitional Safeguarding

In recent years the levels of concern relating to transitional safeguarding has increased both locally and nationally. Specific examples of cases where issues were raised have been brought to the partnership via the NSCP's Safeguarding Practice Review Group, its Vulnerable Adolescent priority subgroup and the NSAB's Safeguarding Adults Review Group. These cases illustrated safeguarding concerns where serious incidents have occurred, including loss of life and / or developing safeguarding patterns for this 18 – 25-year-old cohort have been recognised (exploitation, mental and physical health issues, etc).

The complexity of the issues faced by this cohort of young people cannot be underestimated and have been raised nationally. Amongst matters that were raised as causing concern were: the difference in thresholds for intervention and support pre and post a young person's 18th birthday; misalignment of adulthood in criminal legislation; a view that work is often completed in isolation rather than in partnership; and the statutory legal frameworks that govern how agencies approach young adults is unclear. These factors can result in a perceived lack of support for some of our vulnerable young people, particularly those outside of the care system and/or with undiagnosed or lower-level health and social care needs. If thresholds are not met or needs are not complex enough, then there is a real chance that there will be a lack of support for the young person. In addition, the fact that these young people are legally adults, but they may not be practically or emotionally equipped to take care of their basic needs, adds varying degrees of complexity when considering support. The areas of concern are widespread, including accommodation/homelessness, education/employment/ training (EET), substance misuse and mental health.

The scrutiny was undertaken in three phases:

Phase		Methodology and Governance
1	Establishing an understanding of the current arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktop analysis of published research • Fact finding survey – 29 partners responded • Data analysis
2	Hearing from professionals and service users	Focus Groups, including looked after children/care leavers, young offenders, young carers and young adults in FE with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities
3	Completion of written report	Signed off by both the DSPs/NSCP Partnership Group and the NSAB (July/Sept, respectively)

Voice of the child

"If I was a parent with my child and it was the first time they were crossing a road, I wouldn't leave them alone to do it. I wouldn't cross the road and expect them to do it without me. I would tell them how to cross a road, stay with them, hold their hand while they crossed. I would watch to make sure they were safe. Why would you leave someone alone to deal with all this stuff?"

Voice of the professional

"Whilst for children reaching 18, life may not feel any different in terms of how they are viewed and how services respond, it's completely different... I worked with a child who was being sexually exploited; one minute past midnight on the day of her 18th birthday she was defined as a sex worker."

As the quotes above illustrate, this is challenging work. This comprehensive report pulls out key findings and recommendations (see Appendix 4) summarising what Norfolk needs to do to improve. The scrutineers concluded that these are national challenges but strategic leaders should be assured that they found a workforce that was absolutely committed to providing high quality safeguarding. The professionals involved in the focus groups welcomed the scrutiny and were open about good practice and where they felt improvements could be made. This is a great starting point for implementing change that will improve practice and service delivery.

Whilst each of the recommendations and findings are important it is essential that work starts with the development of a culture where all practitioners, managers and leaders gain greater understanding and respect for each other's role. People must understand the statutory frameworks that guide practitioners and seek to work collaboratively to appreciate how different perceptions can be overcome. When this happens, the prevailing commitment to produce the best possible service and support to this cohort will result in best practice. The challenge lies in the lack of understanding across all agencies and the different cultural approach to the issues, which means that this is not a 'quick fix'. Norfolk needs to adopt a long-term programme of significant change that involves our community and voluntary sector to support the work required to improve outcomes.

The report informed the Leadership Exchange and Learning Event held in February 2025. In this financial year, the NSCP will establish working protocols with colleagues in adults' health and social care to implement the learning from this piece of scrutiny.

Assessment of Risk at the Front Door

A focussed piece of scrutiny on Norfolk's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) was conducted, jointly with the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board, in autumn 2024. This followed previous, more detailed pieces of work that examined the work of the MASH and the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) and progress against the recommendations to improve practice. The main thrust of the scrutiny was to speak to those who worked in the MASH and obtain their views and experiences of current practice. Whilst the general questions of 'what works well?' and 'how could we improve?' were asked, there were also more specific questions around neglect and DA.

The findings and recommendations were brought to a Leadership Exchange and Learning Event in October 2024. While the learning found areas requiring improvement and made helpful suggestions, such as co-location and office layout to support dialogue between agencies, the arrangements for children is working well overall. A separate MASH Task & Finish Group, led by the Independent Chair of the NSAB, is taking these recommendations forward.

Children Missing Out on Education

At the priority review meeting held in June 2024, data showed that children who were persistently or severely absent from school was higher than the national, regional and statistical neighbour average. Concerns about children missing education, i.e. not on a school roll, were also discussed. As a result, it was agreed to conduct a piece of scrutiny to look at these children through a safeguarding lens.

Due to the scope and range of children within the cohort, this was a challenging piece of work and at year end had not been concluded. Much work has been completed in understanding the issues, including analysis of audits undertaken by the Local Authority's Education Safeguarding Team as well as data deep dives. At the time of writing, the scrutineers are assured that partners have 'eyes on' children with known safeguarding risks, i.e. are on child protection plans, are looked after and/or have allocated social workers. The final phase is focusing on the cohort of children who are severely absent who are classified as having: no additional requirements, EHCP, SEN support. The report is scheduled to be tabled at the next priority review meeting in June 2025.

Multi-Agency Audits and Monitoring

The NSCP's Multi-Agency Audit Group (MAAG) is chaired by the Head of NSCP Business Delivery and provides valuable information on how well the system is working in practice. In addition to commissioning and undertaking audits, the MAAG is also responsible for monitoring the Composite Action Plan, tracking the response to recommendations from across all scrutiny work and evidencing impact on practice and improvements to the system. Within the scope of this annual report, MAAG completed two audits on: the Norfolk Graded Care Profile; and the impact of domestic abuse on children aged 0 – 7, using the framework for Joint Targeted Area Inspections.

Norfolk Graded Care Profile (NGCP)

The purpose of the NGCP audit was to identify areas of good practice, areas of concern and to measure the effectiveness of multi-agency performance. The audit provided a baseline of information and analysis. Emerging themes provided a basis for further, more focussed qualitative and quantitative analysis from which a further audit, evaluation and/or inspection could be undertaken. The scope of the audit was 10 pre-selected cases of children for whom a Norfolk Graded Care Profile was completed in the last 12 months.

The audit looked at cases held in Early Help, Family Support, Child in Need and S47/ Child Protection with a range of ages from 0-18 years. The cases selected also included a child under 5 years, and a large sibling group, i.e. 4 or more siblings.

All cases reviewed were from Children's Services, which provided a focused lens for the audit but also limitations in terms of wider partnership practice. The review identified encouraging examples of effective professional collaboration in the delivery of the NGCP, particularly between social care community assessment teams, intensive support teams, and Health Visitors. Where strong partnership working was evident, there were clear indications of positive outcomes for children. In particular, the involvement of therapeutic and specialist workers in delivering the NGCP was seen to offer significant benefits for children and their families. Some cases also demonstrated thoughtful, child and family centred flexibility in the use of the NGCP, for example, adapting the approach by pausing and restarting when needed. While this was not widespread, it highlights the potential for more responsive practice.

The audit also identified opportunities for further development. These include ensuring more consistent application of the NGCP, strengthening the recording of children's voices, and enhancing engagement with parents, carers, and wider family networks. Additionally, improvements in how the NGCP is recorded on children's records would support clearer tracking of its use and impact.

These findings were shared with the Neglect Strategy Implementation Group, which agreed that the NGCP Steering Group would take forward the recommendations. A re-audit began in February 2025, with the updated report due for consideration in May 2025, ahead of the priority review workshop in June.

The Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children under 7, including Unborn Children

As noted in Chapter 5, Norfolk was subject to a Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in December 2025. Norfolk consistently uses JTAI inspection frameworks when they are published in order to benchmark our practice against national standards. When the JTAI on domestic abuse was published in September, we acted quickly to audit and findings were relatively positive, which chimed with the inspection findings later in the year.

A total of 10 cases were selected. The audit's aims were to understand the quality baseline of arrangements for:

- Identification of domestic abuse within assessment;
- Understanding of impact of domestic abuse on children - unborn to 7 years old; and
- How partners effectively work together to reduce risk and improve outcomes for children who had been affected by domestic abuse.

The findings from this audit were shared with the inspectors and the recommendations have been incorporated into the overarching action plan which will be submitted to the Department for Education in June 2025.

Composite Action Plan

The MAAG monitors the outcomes of audit recommendations - as well as learning from scrutiny, Section 11 and Safeguarding Practice Review - through its Composite Action Plan (CAP). The recommendations in the CAP are broken down into the Partnership's priority subgroups, who take ownership of the actions. Where a recommendation does not fit with priorities they are either sector specific or 'other'. Each of the sections is further broken down into subcategories: leadership; workforce development; tools and resources; and communications. This enables MAAG to analyse and summarise progress over time.

Inevitably there is an ebb and flow of the volume of recommendations held in the CAP as actions are completed and new learning comes to the fore. At year end a total of 27 recommendations were outstanding.

The recommendations linked to the corresponding priorities are included in the strategy documents to maintain a clear focus on areas of improvement and ensure that the learning is incorporated into the action plans.

Section 11 and safeguarding self-assessments

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The NSCP has a statutory function under Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 to ‘to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.’ The NSCP fulfils the latter part of this function through the Section 11 self-assessment and associated Challenge and Support panel meetings with partners. Norfolk has developed a dynamic approach to Section 11 which includes attention to development and quality improvement for individual organisations and the partnership.

The 2023 - 24 Section 11 had two recommendations. Progress is summarised in the table below.

Partners should consider developing an implementation plan for the good practice guidance for working with fathers within their organisation.	Returns from Section 11 2024 have evidenced that some organisations have developed, or are planning to develop, implementation plans. All partners have responded to how they are developing this area of work and this recommendation is superseded by the recommendation coming out of this year’s self assessment process and therefore can be closed.
The Accumulated Neglect Operational Oversight Forum (ANOOF) and the Neglect Ways of Working subgroup to develop and disseminate expertise regarding the operational approach to tackling this challenging area of practice.	The number of cases coming through ANOOF have been lower than anticipated and whilst there has been valuable learning, this has been insufficient to develop and share expertise. This forum is being reviewed to ensure that it can be as effective as possible, and this recommendation remains open.

The Norfolk Section 11 self-assessment process for 2024 had minor changes from previous years due to the positive reactions from participating organisations on the value of bringing representatives from agencies together to learn from each other at the previous year’s thematic panels. To this end, two workshops were held in July 2024 to consider and explore the priorities in preparation for completion of the Section 11 return and then in December two workshops to share, and learn from, the good practice evidenced in the 2024 returns.

In total there were 37 Section 11 self-assessments completed and returned, an increase from the previous year. Returns were reviewed by the NSCP’s Safeguarding Intelligence and Performance Co-Ordinator (SIPCo) and members of the Section 11 Steering Group.

Good practice Section 11 workshops.

Following the success of the previous two year's meetings to discuss themes identified by partner agencies this year the Section 11 process included two face to face meetings to share good practice and learn about each other's practices. Steering group members looked through the 2024 returns and selected examples of good practice from each of the sections where there was the potential for transferable learning and the opportunity for replication or innovation by partners. These examples were shared at the workshops and attendees had the opportunity to discuss these and their own work to address the safeguarding priorities. Feedback from these sessions was very positive: partners were asked what had been most useful about the sessions and the opportunity to network and learn from each other came through very clearly:

"Hearing from other agencies about what positive work and outcomes are coming from change in practice. It's inspiring and challenged me to consider what else we can do as an organisation."

Conclusions and Section 11 Recommendations

The effort that goes into Section 11 from all partners is significant and should not be underestimated. The process in Norfolk is robust and provides valuable insight into the functioning of the partnership, in addition to this, it provides reflection time for organisations to consider their practices over the year and to raise concerns that they may have. Feedback from partners supports the Norfolk approach to Section 11 with representatives from organisations reporting that the developing dialogic approach is more collaborative and supports greater confidence with partnership working and encourages a healthy approach to self-assessment. Below are some of the comments from colleagues on what they have found useful from this year's process:

"Having the opportunity to get together with other safeguarding professionals and take advice and ideas from what they do within their own organisation. Sharing positive practice and making connections with partners."

"Being able to share our best practice and understand one another's perspectives on priorities/resources and learning how to manage that."

"Opportunity to discover good practice within other services. Space and time to reflect and discuss further about these ideas with other professionals. These events enable you to consider whether or how these ideas could be implemented in your own service."

A total of 3 recommendations were made:

1. The Partnership continues to keep Family & Community Networking and father inclusive practice as a priority for the next year to allow momentum to continue.
2. Organisations identify father inclusive practice champions to join the existing network to promote and foster cultural change and sustainable good practice in this priority area of work.
3. ANOOF and the Neglect Ways of Working subgroup to develop and disseminate expertise regarding the operational approach to tackling this challenging area of practice.

For further detail on Section 11 findings, see the chapter on NSCP priorities.

NSCP Priorities, Projects and Developments

The NSCP continued to work on its priorities throughout 2024 – 2025. In June 2024, Partnership Group held its annual priority review/priority setting workshop, assessing the achievements and work outstanding against each area. It was agreed to continue with these priorities this financial year.

Each priority area is led by one of the three statutory partners, Children's Services, Police and Health. This ties in neatly to our governance arrangements and reinforces the message of joined up leadership. Strategies have been published against each area and are available on dedicated pages of the NSCP website. The Business Plan includes high level actions against each priority area. The Business Plan is reviewed regularly and will be updated and republished following the priority review in June 2025.

Neglect

The NSCP Neglect Strategy is overseen by the Neglect Strategy Implementation Group (NSIG) which is chaired by Children's Services Director of Partnerships, Inclusion & Practice. The strategy has two clear workstreams, which are led by the Assistant Director of Family Help & High Needs (social care) and the safeguarding leads for Cambridgeshire Community Services (0 – 19 Healthy Child Programme):

- Ways of Working, which focuses on using data to better understand contributory factors and best practice in terms of: the needs of children and young people; the needs of parents/carers and the wider family network; and the needs of the workforce and developing a systemwide toolkit for managing neglect cases. Also responsible for the NGCP steering group and the neglect champions' network.
- Accumulative Neglect Operational Oversight Forum, which focuses on specific cases requiring strategic leaders to look at barriers to success and themes emerging from an operational perspective.

Section 11 findings in relation to Neglect

Neglect has been a priority for Norfolk for many years and the priority setting workshop in June 2024 discussed the potential of stepping down this priority as it will always be a key area of challenging safeguarding practice but could be considered as ongoing business as usual work. Several returns from health partners mentioned the updated Was Not Brought policy and how this has been implemented across the partnership. In the Section 11 returns some organisations described specific pieces of work that they are carrying out to address neglect but the overwhelming theme within this part of the return related to continuing the work that they already have in place. One such example came from Norfolk Constabulary:

“Neglect is well understood by all officers in Norfolk Constabulary as a result of training every year with case examples of how to respond to and report issues of neglect. Neglect is constantly reinforced to officers who now see neglect as part of their core policing practice and who are used to gathering evidence (often through photography or body worn video) to assist partner agencies, even when a criminal investigation may not be required.”

A recommendation was made: ANOOF and the Neglect Ways of Working subgroup to develop and disseminate expertise regarding the operational approach to tackling this challenging area of practice. Work has commenced to address this.

Ways of Working

As summarised above, the Ways of Working (WoW) workstream leads on many of the practice and operational objectives in the strategy. For example, there is now a well developed toolkit in place, which was launched in summer 2024 with a series of workshops aimed at neglect champions. The tools included:

Tool	Rationale for using the tool
The Norfolk Graded Care Profile	Assessing neglect against established domains to better measure change and impact
Multi-agency Chronologies	Maintaining an overview of the case over time, including the impact on the child and the effectiveness of interventions
Substance Misuse and Neglect	How neglected children experience parental substance misuse and the effect of different substances
Using Change Models with Families	Trauma informed approach to helping families make sustainable change through motivational interviewing and questions for success
Parents with Learning Difficulties	Understanding the particular challenges these families face and ways to work with them

A total of 102 delegates from across the partnership attended a total of three sessions. An evaluation report evidenced the value professionals placed on the tools, although there were mixed responses to the 'bite size' approach to the workshops.

WoW also has oversight of the NGCP steering group. After a disappointing audit (see Chapter 6), there is more work to do on further embedding the consistent use of the NGCP. Alongside this, a separate GCP tool focusing on adolescents is currently being piloted.

The neglect champions network continues to grow with a solid offer of support. In addition to bespoke network events, there is a quarterly newsletter and reflection spaces offered to champions focusing on specific issues such as dentistry, medical neglect or educational neglect. These are popular and well attended.

Accumulated Neglect Operational Oversight Group (ANOOF)

ANOOF has been in place since summer 2022. When cases are brought, thematic learning is fed back to the Ways of Working group to address any learning or practice needs. While the principles of ANOOF are strong and clear, the forum has struggled to get cases put forward. A new co-chair took on leadership in summer 2024 and, after observing some meetings and taking account of learning from Section 11, convened a workshop with ANOOF members in January 2025 to review and improve the way ANOOF works. Since then, the aim is to have thematic sessions and produce bite size briefings based on the themes emerging. In March 2025, the first briefings were agreed on patterns of disengagement and intergenerational neglect.

Neglect next steps

Norfolk is realistic and accepts that it is unlikely to ever fully eradicate neglect. What we have achieved is improving practice by making the tools on offer part as 'business as usual' and ensuring that professionals have the support they need to manage these challenging cases. Our approach to tackling neglect was showcased in Norfolk's Summer Leadership Programme which is open to safeguarding partners nationally to help share learning and best practice.

While there has been significant progress against this priority there is still work outstanding, particularly in terms of measuring impact on practice and outcomes for children. A comprehensive strategy review, including data review, will be tables at the NSCP priority review meeting in June 2025.

Child Exploitation: Vulnerable Adolescents

The Vulnerable Adolescent Group (VAG) is chaired by a Detective Superintendent. The VAG's focus is on extra-familial harm, with an emphasis on child exploitation (both sexual and criminal), serious youth violence and radicalisation. The NSCP's Strategy to Protect Vulnerable Adolescents from Extra-Familial Harm has four clear strands of work: Awareness Raising; Early Help and Identification; Safeguarding Exploited Young People; and Identifying and Disrupting Offenders.

The VAG has strong links with the following groups, which sit outside of the NSCP structure, but which are fundamental to the system-wide approach to child exploitation:

- The Children and Young People Strategic Alliance which has governance over the Youth Strategy
- The Serious Violence Duty Board.

The VAG also oversees a Youth Endowment Fund project in Norfolk, working in partnership with Right to Succeed to target community interventions at ward level to reduce and prevent youth violence and criminality. Right to Succeed are delivering the Central Great Yarmouth Place Project. A co-designed project utilising young people, residents, charities and professionals to achieve improvements in literacy, youth offer, education and employment and training.

In autumn 2024, VAG had a full review of the strategy. At that point, it had achieved the majority of its original strategic objectives, but with an ever changing landscape, including policy changes around serious violence and the publication of a local thematic review on serious youth violence, the action plan required updating.

In terms of serious violence, VAG was quick to respond to this. In March 2025, the NSCP and the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership jointly delivered a conference on serious youth violence. There were a wide range of national and local speakers, including the Ivison Trust, the Liminality Group, and representatives from Norfolk's Office of Police & Crime Commissioner, Norfolk Youth Justice Service, and Norfolk's Education Safeguarding Team. The conference was compèred by one of the NSCP's Independent Scrutineer and author of 'Delta', a discretionary Safeguarding Practice Review following the death of an 18 year old (see Chapter 8). Delta's story was woven through the presentations to bring context to the learning. The presentations are available on the NSCP website. A total of 116 professionals attended and the feedback was positive: *"This was one of the most informative conferences I have attended and I learnt so much. [...] listening to the information regarding Delta and his family brings everything into perspective about how vulnerable our children are."*

Section 11 Findings in Relation to Vulnerable Adolescents and Exploitation

In the Child Exploitation part of the 2024 Section 11 return form, organisations were able to report higher levels of confidence for staff in addressing this priority. In the July Section 11 workshops, the chair of the strategy group leading this priority talked about needing to understand child exploitation in terms of "unmet need".

This was noted for some as a “lightbulb moment” in terms of making sense of how to report on their work for this priority. Many of the returns evidenced some of the proactive work that is taking place for children and young people and the links that this has to child exploitation. One example where an organisation has created clarity for and increased confidence of staff is illustrated here:

“Changes to Safeguarding policy providing more robust definitions of child exploitation to support staff to better recognise and report concerns.” [...This included reaching out beyond the organisation’s staff...:] “We have implemented a new online reporting form for our contractors to use, so that if they have any concerns when visiting residents, they can report them to us more easily, this includes concerns for Child exploitation.” (Norwich City Council).

Norfolk Constabulary identified that the work that has been delivered across the partnership over the last year for this priority has shown positive outcomes:

“Significant focus, training and oversight delivered to all partners over the past year has continued increased awareness, earlier information sharing and better outcomes. This is shown by an ongoing fall in both screenings and high-risk ratings - Indicating that this work has been very successful with earlier intervention and awareness meaning that fewer children reach the high-risk level.”

While there was no specific recommendation for the VAG, there is much work to be done which will be monitored through its action plan and the NSCP Business Plan. Some of the transitional safeguarding actions will also need considering by VAG, either in terms of leading on delivering strategic objectives or supporting, depending on governance arrangements; this will be agreed with adults and the Delegated Safeguarding Partners in 2025 – 2026.

Family and Community Networking

Family and Community Networking (FCN) was adopted as a priority in June 2023. The strategy is available on the NSCP website. The NSCP’s aspiration is to ensure that all Norfolk children have the support and resources of a healthy family and community network to not only give them a sense of belonging but also provide them with a safe, secure base which nurtures their sense of identity and place in the world. Norfolk welcomes the policy publication of Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive and recognises that this priority has a key part to play in achieving that vision.

The FCN strategic aims and objectives fall under four main headings:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Father Inclusive Practice
- Restoration

Section 11 and Family & Community Networking

This is the first year that organisation have reported on Family and Community Networking as part of the Section 11 process. At the July workshops this priority was the one that needed greatest exploration for all organisation to think about how they build this into their safeguarding practices. There was clear indication from returns that most organisations are making sense of this priority but also that some were finding it difficult to identify their contributions.

A wide range of partners were able to clearly evidence how they are employing family and community networking in their whole approach: *“Systems have been developed to ensure that the wider natural network is explored at point of assessment, review and closure.”* (Early Childhood and Family Service)

There was greater evidence of confidence and clarity in the returns for the father inclusive practice part of this priority. This reflects the greater time that this work has been prioritised within the partnership and possibly also the more specific nature of this work. There was good evidence that this area of work is progressing in relation to processes and staff awareness but also that many organisations are thinking through what they need to do in the coming period to move this agenda forward: *“Fathers Implementation plan developed, using the good practice guide. Implementation plan in process of being reviewed by clinical leads, with the aim to disseminate to clinicians across the organisation. Next steps will include auditing the implementation plan which include quality standards and identifying areas of good practice and areas for improvement.”* (Norfolk Community Health and Care).

The development of father inclusive practice champions in organisations has been identified by the Family Hub Steering Group as an opportunity to progress the development of this work and a way to advance a more sustainable approach. There is clear evidence that progress is being made but also that all the elements of this priority need more time to become embedded in the culture of the safeguarding partnership: *“Feedback suggested a sense that this work is starting to have a positive impact, but this is the beginning and as an organisation we have a way to go to ensure that family networking and father inclusive practice becomes ‘business as usual’.* Clear expectations from senior leadership, and managers driving the practice through supervision were noted as being helpful going forward.” (Children’s Services)

The analysis above resulted in two recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: The Partnership continues to keep FCN and father inclusive practice as a priority for the next year to allow momentum to continue.
- Recommendation 2: Organisations identify father inclusive practice champions to join the existing network to promote and foster cultural change and sustainable good practice in this priority area of work.

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners and wider Partnership Group accepted both these recommendations and they are incorporated into ongoing action plans.

Specific achievements can be seen in two areas of work against this priority: father inclusive practice and communications.

Father Inclusive Practice

Norfolk has prioritised father inclusive practice since April 2022 in response to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Group’s report *The Myth of Invisible Men* (2021), which highlighted the need for all local authority areas to improve the way that they engage and work with fathers and father figures. Over the last year, training has been delivered to 471 multi-agency staff with over 97% of these reporting increased knowledge and confidence in their practice. Trained staff have subsequently contributed to 42 Community of Practice network meetings, three good practice workshops and a Progress Review Conference held on 20th March 2025. The Progress Review conference was attended by 113 participants and included presentations from leading national experts, local practitioners and fathers talking about their experiences.

This event celebrated the progress which has been acknowledged by a wide range of services in their engagement and work with fathers to improve outcomes for children. Feedback from the conference was very positive from both attendees and presenters:

- *"I think the training really highlighted systemic areas of challenge within systems and ways to work around these without silencing fathers or creating additional barriers."*
- *"This has really changed my working practice. Thank you."*
- *"I felt honoured to be a part of today's conference."*

The conference was recorded and is accessible to all on the NSCP website. One viewer commented: *"Today I have watched the Working Effectively with Fathers review...Wow how powerful and I want to talk about what's happening."*

The conference also launched the role of Father inclusive practice champions to further progress this work and fully embed changes in practice. Fifty staff from the multi-agency workforce have taken on this role and will contribute to the monthly programme of champions' network meetings planned for the next two years. Online learning resources have been developed to support the training of staff across the partnership and the promotion of these will be a significant part of the champions' role. These resources are now accessible to all staff alongside the existing Good Practice Guidance and associated practice toolkit.

In addition to the work being developed within and across organisations, the promotion of information and accessibility of support has been augmented through different media including the 12th Man Talking Dads show on Future Radio. This has contributed to increased numbers of fathers accessing Norfolk services, accessing parenting courses and following Norfolk information social media platforms.

Communications Campaign

The communications workstream agreed to build on some of the imagery in the 2023 – 24 children and young people's version of the annual report. A series of focus groups were held with parents' groups, Youth Parliament and South Norfolk Youth Advisory Board. After extensive consultation the final comms asset was agreed. This will be formally launched in the next financial year.

We all need a team behind us – who is on yours?

Let's Celebrate Family & Friends: Your Network of Love!

For networking resources please visit the Just One Norfolk website:
justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/our-services/family-networking

Scan the QR code to visit the Just One Norfolk website

NSCP Projects and Local Developments

Joint Agency Group Supervision

Joint Agency Group Supervision (JAGS) was introduced to Norfolk in 2020 in order to provide multi-agency practitioners with an opportunity to come together in a reflective space, build stronger working relationships within professional networks and promote best practice for working together. This came out of learning from Serious Case Reviews in acknowledgement that in order for optimum multi-agency work to take place, professionals needed a safe space to reflect on the emotional impact of safeguarding work. The JAGS procedure was published following an extensive pilot in the East of the county and, anecdotally, was well received by the workforce. A feedback form had been developed for JAGS participants but was seldom used.

Over the course of the next few years, it became apparent that the system was difficult to monitor - there was no central system to record how many JAGS were taking place and what impact they were having on practice. During this period, Children's Services developed another form of supervision that included multi-agency partners, Team Around the Child Supervision (TACS). Originally, the acronym 'JAGS' was used when referring to TACS which caused confusion - TACS are time bound, case specific, linked to action planning and not in adherence with the JAGS model or policy. As a result, the fidelity of the model was unintentionally compromised.

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners directed that these issues were addressed. In addition to instructing Children's Services to clarify all models of supervision they offer and rename what they were doing as Team Around the Child Supervision (TACS), they tasked the Head of NSCP Business Delivery to develop better systems to ensure that JAGS were delivered in the way they were intended. A multi-agency Task & Finish Group was convened with representatives from health, social care and education. This was led by one of the NSCP's Independent Scrutineers, Bridget Griffin.

JAGS System Development

Several steps were taken to understand the scope of the issue from the perspective of both JAGS facilitators and JAGS participants. A survey was conducted in the spring of 2024 followed by focus groups with professionals who had been facilitating JAGS. The findings were consistent with the observations, i.e.

- Professionals reported that their experience was inconsistent
- Children's Services led many JAGS, usually with a Team Manager leading a discussion about a case they held responsibility for
- The meetings were often focussed on tasks and actions – akin to other formal meetings already in existence

A workshop with JAGS facilitators, or staff keen to become a JAGS facilitator, was held in July 2024. At that workshop, proposals for system development were tabled:

- The MS Form for requesting a JAGS to be held centrally and administered by the NSCP Business Unit.
- Facilitators to be trained so there was a consistent approach and skill set, as well as support for professional development.
- Facilitators deployed would be independent of the case. (It was subsequently agreed that two facilitators would be deployed to support each other in delivery, wherever possible from two different agencies)

- Facilitators would have regular network meetings to bring peer support
- Facilitators would be more proactive in seeking feedback to inform monitoring

Facilitator Training and Implementation of Monitoring System

The NSCP used some of the monies from the DfE funding which came with the introduction of Working Together 2023 to commission an external trainer from Indigo Brave to deliver the training. Three sessions were held between October and November 2024. Central to this training was ongoing promotion of the trauma-informed and resilience-oriented culture we are promoting in the partnership.

The central aims of the training were to allow for consistent delivery of JAGS facilitation and provide an opportunity to give professionals space to 'reset' their thinking and approach. This cohort of facilitators have gone on to form the pool from which the NSCP draws to deploy when managing JAGS requests. They have had one network meeting online since the training was completed, in January 2025, and regular sessions are planned for 2025 - 26.

An output of the training was further development of the Facilitators' toolbox, which now includes: a basic toolkit; an aide memoire; script suggestions for tackling 'wicked' issues, such as a real or perceived imbalance of power; and the final feedback form for participants. These will be kept under review at the network meetings.

The JAGS procedure was updated and signed off by the Task & Finish Group following the final training session and on 'going live' with the new system. The policy now includes a direct link to the MS Form for requesting a JAGS as well as an appendix which sets out the other supervision offers from Children's Services and how they differ from JAGS.

By year end the NSCP Business Unit were in a position where they could quantify and qualify JAGS delivery. A total of 24 requests were received between November 2024 and end of March 2025. Of these, 20 proceeded to JAGS. Those cases that did not go to JAGS were picked up either through statutory meetings – core groups etc – or through TACS. One of the requests that didn't result in JAGS was made by a consultant paediatrician who was signposted to the ICB's Designated Safeguarding Team for monitoring the case; it was encouraging to have reach into acute settings.

Feedback from participants has illustrated the value of the process: *"Both [facilitator]s from the start of this process have been really responsive, kind and compassionate. I've felt really heard and listened to, they helped me to feel safe and brave in a system that has been really tricky for me both professionally and personally. I've appreciated all the time they've given me and how child-centred they both are. I was very impressed by the 'additions' they brought to the JAGS to try and support everyone to keep the young man at the centre, either through shoes to represent the young man across his life time or different things to reflect his interests, I felt they really understood the young man despite not meeting him – they had him at the heart of it all at all times. Their support and skills have really supported the system to think differently, and I've just been so impressed with them. I've been so thankful to be supported by them, it truly has been such a pleasure to meet and work with them both."*

Plans are in place for ongoing monitoring and reporting to ensure that we better understand the impact JAGS has on cases. This includes observation of practice, multi-agency audit and surveying participants. These tasks will be undertaken in 2025 – 26.

Multi-Agency Chronologies

Last year, the NSCP report on the introduction of multi-agency chronologies (MACs) to Child Protection Conferences. These were further promoted at the neglect toolkit workshops in summer 2024. Further work has been done to ensure that professionals from all backgrounds have the support and confidence to complete a chronology through filmed webinars as well as videos of senior leadership and practitioners discussing the benefits of MACs.

Norfolk is proud of this innovative approach but recognise that it can be developed further. For example, the cumulative impact of domestic abuse was identified in the Joint Targeted Area Inspection in December 2025. The partnership aspires to have MACs in place at all stages of the child's journey to support the families to see how their issues manifest over time and what impact that is having on the children. This is being written into the JTAI action plan and will help position Norfolk effectively in response to anticipated changes in policy aimed at improving outcomes for children and keeping them safe.

Learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews

The NSCP’s multi-agency Safeguarding Practice Review Group (SPRG) is chaired by Sian Griffiths, one of the Independent Scrutiny Team. SPRG oversees all aspects of child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and annually refreshes its local guidance in line with national learning and local feedback. This chapter sets out: activity against Rapid Reviews and SPRs, including publication of reviews; learning from Rapid Reviews and specific actions taken or planned in response to review activity in the last 12 months; and a summary of dissemination of learning. Learning from child death is reported in a separate annual report produced jointly by the Norfolk and Suffolk Child Death Overview Panels.

SPR and Rapid Review activity

Between April 2024 and March 2025, no statutory SPRs were published, however the NSCP did complete a discretionary review on the murder of an 18 year old; the Delta report was a thematic review on serious youth violence. Learning from this review was shared with the national Panel and Home Office. Locally, the recommendations have been incorporated into the Vulnerable Adolescent Group’s action plan and learning was shared at a serious Youth Violence conference in March 2025.

An SPR commissioned in January 2024, Case AM, was completed and will be published on the conclusion of criminal proceedings; a second SPR, Case AO, was commissioned in February 2025 and will be completed in the next financial year.

The Local Authority submitted a total of two Serious Incident Notifications (SIN) within this period, triggering Rapid Reviews, including the case proceeding to SPR. A further two cases were referred to SPRG from Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board:

- One involving an unaccompanied asylum seeker/Looked After Child where there were concerns about criminal and sexual exploitation. This case was diverted to the Exploitation Operational Oversight Forum which reports into the Vulnerable Adolescent Group;
- The second involved a large sibling group, many of whom had learning difficulties, and suspicion around child sexual abuse. This proceeded to a local Rapid Review, i.e. it did not meet the criteria for a SIN/statutory review, however, we used the same process to draw out any learning. (More info on how we used this learning below.)

In addition to the ongoing SPR commissioned in 2023 – 24, a total of four local cases were considered by SPRG. A summary of Norfolk cases and issues is included in the table below:

Type of Activity	No.	Date and Presenting Issues
SINs/Rapid Reviews – not proceeding to SPR	1	Nov 2024: infant with non accidental injuries. Local decision to proceed to an SPR was not agreed by the National Panel so this was stood down. Local learning described below.
SPR commissioned	1	Dec 2024: death of a Looked After Child. SPR report will be published in 2025 – 26.
Non-SIN referrals	2	As noted above.

Norfolk also had ongoing involvement with:

- A Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR – previously Domestic Homicide Review or DHR), which included the death of two children;
- A Safeguarding Adults Review, involving the suicide of a young adult who had previously been identified as a young carer.

See also Out of County Cases below.

The National Panel provided guidance on all decisions made and feedback has helped us improve the way we draw out the key issues from SPRG discussions, including the key points that we agreed on and, where a decision was reached to proceed to a local SPR, the key lines of enquiry emerging. The SPRG intends to review its Rapid Review templates when the National Panel publishes its Rapid Review framework as indicated in its annual report, published December 2024.

SPRG continues to monitor and improve its internal processes, using feedback from the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel to refine the systems.

Learning from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Rapid Reviews

Of the two Safeguarding Practice Reviews in progress, one has been completed. Case AM was signed off by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners in February 2025. This was an extremely complex case involving two Local Authorities, five acute hospitals across Norfolk, Suffolk Cambridgeshire and London (Great Ormond Street Hospital or GOSH) and three constabularies. The learning focused on managing cases of Fabricated or Induced Illness as well as cross boundary working, professional deference and safeguarding children on Supervision or Interim Care Orders. Due to ongoing parallel proceedings – family court and criminal investigations – the report cannot be published until the criminal justice system is concluded. We anticipate that this will be later in 2026 so an action plan to implement the learning will be developed in the interim period. This will be done in partnership with the Suffolk Local Safeguarding Partnership and GOSH. The National Panel has been informed of the delays.

As noted in table above, the Rapid Reviews followed robust procedures allowing the NSCP to draw out relevant learning and make proportionate decisions. The case that was stood down as an SPR has been linked with existing working groups looking at Protecting Babies, consent and parental needs (mental/physical health). The Head of NSCP Business Delivery is bringing these three groups together to agree a co-ordinated action plan focusing on:

1. How agencies need to balance the rights of the child to be protected with the rights of the parents not to give consent to information sharing or interventions.
2. Ensuring professionals maintain a clear focus when adult concerns - including significant health problems or allegations of domestic abuse - may distract from the primary needs and experience of the child.

An anonymised case study has been developed to support the learning and action planning. Further detail on how the learning has been taken forward will be reported in the NSCP's annual report 2025 – 26.

Learning from Non Statutory Cases

In addition to the discretionary SPR, Delta, the NSCP demonstrated its commitment to learning and transparency by conducting non-statutory local Rapid Reviews where the case does not meet the statutory requirement to submit a Serious Incident Notification. One case was put forward where there were concerns about a sibling group with learning difficulties and disabilities. This resulted in producing an anonymised case study, which was shared with a number of working groups/project leads, such as:

- Family & Community Networking priority subgroup/working groups
- Children's Services working group looking at adult capacity/assessments –
- Diagnostic Overshadowing – ICB Evidencing Impact meeting and NSCP policy review Task & Finish group
- Neglect Strategy Implementation Group/NGCP Implementation working group
- MASH Operational Oversight Group
- Father Inclusive Practice training/Community of Practice sessions
- Norfolk Association of Special School Headteachers (NASSH)
- NSCP Workforce Development Group

All working groups reported back in February 2024 confirming how they had disseminated the learning.

Out of county Cases

Norfolk has been involved with three out of county cases:

- An SPR led by Central Bedfordshire: Case IW focused on the murder of a toddler in Ipswich. The family travelled from Central Bedfordshire through Norfolk before the child died. The SPR report was published on 11 February. All the recommendations were accepted by Norfolk and appropriate action has been taken, for example, using the learning to inform a Children's Services Audit on its front door (Children's Advice and Duty Service)
- A Rapid Review conducted by Lincolnshire: a 16 year old who was previously known to Norfolk Children's Services sadly committed suicide. Lincolnshire LSCP did not proceed to an SPR. Learning from this case will tie into actions from Case AM about cross boundary working. More specifically, Norfolk Children's Services is using this case in the development of e-learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews; the module is focused on multi-agency information sharing.
- A Rapid Review conducted by Suffolk: the death by hanging of a 17 year old Looked After Child. Suffolk LSCP did not proceed to an SPR. There was a learning point for Norfolk education to lead a time limited task and finish group that will seek to engage partners in reflective conversations regarding barriers to post 16 school / college attendance. This will be picked up in the transitional safeguarding work.

Local learning is picked up and included in our Composite Action Plan. Norfolk remains committed to improving cross boundary working and welcomes opportunities to collaborate with other LSCPs on systemic learning.

Learning from National CSPRs

Within the scope of this annual report, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (National Panel) published a National Review into child sexual abuse in the family home, October 2024. This learning has been picked up within Norfolk for example, the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team is working with the NSPCC to develop a system wide snapshot of CSA in order to improve the identification and prevention of child sexual abuse. A multi-agency snapshot discussion was held in March where service leads from the multi-agency safeguarding partnership shared their experiences and insights around CSA in Norfolk.

As the financial year drew to a close a survey for people working with children experiencing sexual abuse was circulated in order to expand the evidence base and inform the NSPCC's analysis and recommendations as well as helping to improve the Norfolk response to CSA.

In terms of the National Panel's briefing papers:

- Safeguarding children in elective home education was also used as reference in the scrutiny planning for children not in school.
- Race, Racism and Safeguarding Children learning points will be incorporated into our next steps and chimes with our commitment to promote equality and inclusion across the partnership.

The National Panel's annual report was also shared with the LSPs, DSPs and at SPRG.

Dissemination of Learning from Safeguarding Practice Reviews

This reporting year the NSCP did not publish any SPRs, however we continued to promote learning through our project work. For example, with the development of our monitoring and quality assurance system for Joint Agency Group Supervision, clear links were made to thematic learning from local and national reviews. The JAGS facilitator training and subsequent communication assets noted that in too many SPRs we hear about areas of practice that emerge time and time again such as: lack of professional curiosity, poor communication, a lack of challenge, silo working and/or divides in the professional network. JAGS is an innovative approach to providing a multi-agency reflective space, designed to address these practice issues in real time. (See also Chapter 7 – NSCP Projects and Developments.)

At the end of the financial year plans to share learning from the unpublished SPR, Case AM, were in development.

The NSCP has clear processes for promoting learning from local and national CSRs. Learning options are written into our local Child Safeguarding Practice Review guidance.

Training and Workforce Development

In the 2024-25 training year, the NSCP continued to provide an extensive programme of learning opportunities, both commissioned through our training provider as well as delivered by local practitioners. The training needs of the workforce are informed by statutory guidance, national and local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and by members of the Workforce Development Group (WFDG) who may identify a gap or a specific training need emerging in their service's areas. Twelve separate courses were commissioned from our training provider, Interface, with a total of 47 sessions delivered through a mixture of virtual and face to face delivery. The commissioned courses covered:

- Neglect
- Vulnerable Adolescents
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Working with Families
- Domestic Abuse
- Assessing, Managing & Holding Risk
- Emotional Wellbeing
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Children with Disabilities / Complex Health Needs
- Professional Curiosity & Challenge
- Reflective Supervision Skills
- Voice of the Child

In addition, the commissioned training programme was supplemented by an extensive programme of courses offered by partners or commissioned from other providers. In the 2024-25 training year, 135 sessions were delivered by other partners, including sessions on:

- Signs of Safety/Family Networking
- Child Protection Conferences
- Early Help Assessment and Planning
- Gypsy Roma Traveler Cultural Awareness
- Substance Misuse in the Family
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Adulthood
- Child or Adolescent to Parent Violence
- The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer
- Protecting Babies
- Parental Conflict
- Working with Children's Services
- An introduction to multi-agency working for new practitioners.
- Questions for Success
- Gangs and Serious Youth Violence
- Restorative Approaches

In total, the learning opportunities commissioned and supported by the NSCP Workforce Development business unit during 2024-25 included over 3700 attendances from across the multi-agency network. Quality assurance of these various courses is achieved by a system that includes: members of the WFDG observing the training and providing feedback; quality assurance mechanisms within single agencies reporting into the WFDG; and evaluations received from participants. Some example quotes include: *"The most engaging best trainer I've had on any course – she was amazing."* (Domestic Abuse course) *"Very, very good training – best day's training I have had in a long, long time. Thank you!"* (Trauma Informed Practice)

Multi - Agency Practice Week

Multi – Agency Practice Weeks are run two times per year and are supported by the NSCP/WFDG. These took place in May and November 2024 and were attended by over 800 multi-agency practitioners, managers and service leads. The focus of the May Practice Week was ‘Learning: Enabling all to Flourish’ and the focus of the November Practice Week was ‘Opportunity: Fostering the power to Flourish’. Both Practice Weeks featured a range of workshops, open to all to attend, and a conference on the Wednesday afternoon.

Trainers’ Events

Trainers’ events happen twice a year and bring together those delivering and designing safeguarding children training in Norfolk. The aim is to achieve a balance between providing information to ensure trainers are up to date with safeguarding children developments in Norfolk, and opportunities for skills development and discussion.

The combined total attendance for these event was 34 multi-agency practitioners/managers/ trainers. The trainers’ events receive consistently positive feedback with delegates valuing the opportunity to attend.

Training Impact

The need to measure the impact of training is highlighted both locally and nationally. In Norfolk, relevant recommendations have been made in LCSPRs, scrutiny activity and in the Joint Targeted Area Inspection. Despite concerted and creative efforts in Norfolk over a number of years, a systemic way of measuring impact has been difficult to establish and there is no accepted national model available on which to base a local approach.

The 2023 - 24 annual report highlighted the Training Impact Task & Finish Group conclusion that a ‘systems approach’ was needed which included gaining evidence from a range of quality assurance activities such as single agency and multi-agency audits. Single agency audits are understood to include this as an audit variable but there has been no agreement reached to include this as an audit variable in NSCP multi-agency audits or S11 self assessment returns.

In learning from the Community of Practice approach, adopted in the ‘Father Inclusive Practice’ work of NSCP, the WFDG agreed to pilot this approach to measure impact in relation to specific courses. Available resources and capacity do not allow for this approach to be implemented for all courses. Next steps and actions planned include:

Next steps

1. Findings from single agency audits relating to training impact will be routinely reviewed and monitored by the WFDG to identify any gaps.
2. Agreement to be reached with NSCP that multi- agency audits will include an audit question, posed to practitioners/manager involved in these audits, relating to training impact.
3. WFDG to agree a best practice model for measuring impact and agreement to be reached with NSCP for training impact to be included in S11 self-assessment returns.
4. A community of practice model to be developed and piloted for specific courses identified through scrutiny work, inspections (such as JTAIs) and LCSPRs. WFDG to agree how this approach will be delivered and seek agreement from NSCP on the courses that will be prioritised over the coming 12 months.

5. WFDG to continue with current practices of evaluating the MA training provided and gaining feedback/evaluation from NSCP MA training course participants.

Recruitment and Retention

The WFDG has a role to play in the recruitment and retention of staff and the WFDG are clear that the quality and access to training across the workforce is an important factor in this regard. The WFDG has considered what learning there may be from the Exit Interviews that take place within the multi-agency system. Partners were asked to produce a summary of the findings arising from exit interviews. It was accepted that not all agencies complete these interviews although, of those services that do, there was a limited response to this request. Responses were received from Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust (NSFT) and NCC Children's Services, it was identified that there is no specific question in exit interviews about multi-agency working and therefore it was not possible to gain learning in this regard. Overall, the headline findings were that the lack of training opportunities were not an area of concern and that a working environment that is supportive/trauma informed were the most significant factors in retention.

During the course of this work, the importance of gaining feedback from the **Black and Asian Employee Network** was raised and this led to a meeting between the WFDG chair and a representative from this group.

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are considering what next steps to take in response to the learning from these findings, including:

- How will the feedback from the Black and Asian Employee Network be responded to?
- What further action may need to be taken to nurture trauma – informed working environments?
- Should multi-agency exit interviews include a question about staff experiences of multi-agency working and professional development?

Trauma Informed Training & Workforce Development

Learning opportunities around Trauma informed Practice continued to be offered during the 2024-25 training period supported by the funding received from Norfolk and Waveney ICB.

Following feedback received from the learning delivered in 2023-24, sessions were offered around:

- Half-day Introduction to Trauma Informed Practice sessions
- Full day Trauma Informed Practice training
- Trauma Toolbox for Staff sessions which aimed to address the impact of working with trauma on practitioners

In 2024-25 there were a total of 296 attendances across the multi-agency learning opportunities offered. Detailed evaluation of the learning opportunities offered in 2024 was undertaken by the NSCP Workforce Development Officer. Feedback received was very positive. Delegates appear to have appreciated the variety of learning opportunities in this area. It has also been valuable to offer practitioners from Children and Adults fields opportunities to train alongside each other. In September 2024 a survey was sent to those who had attended trauma informed practice learning opportunities to ascertain further learning needs identified by practitioners. Fifty-nine responses were received (12% of the total cohort). The two most frequently identified learning needs were training around Bereavement and additional Trauma Toolbox sessions.

Additional Work Streams

Alongside the standard programme of multi-agency training, the NSCP Workforce Development Officer also supports additional workstreams. During 2024-25 this has included:

- Supporting the Tackling Neglect agenda (see Chapter 7, Priorities and Projects)
- Continuing to work alongside the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and other partners to commission training around Adultification, Gangs and Serious Youth Violence.
- Chairing the regional LSCP Workforce Development Network.

The WFDG has a detailed workplan which is reviewed annually by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners. Included within the 2025 – 26 workplan are actions linked to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection with join up with the domestic abuse workforce group.

Funding

The three statutory partners contributions to the NSCP pooled budget is equitable. Children's Services and Health costs for the Child Death Overview Panel, including the independent CDOP Chair and the electronic data system, is included in their contributions.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners' Contributions

Contributor	Value of Contribution
Norfolk County Council	£138,628
Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board	£98,143
Norfolk Constabulary	£59,762
Total Statutory Contributions	£296,533
Additional Income (see below)	£265,926
NSCP Budget: Grand Total	£562,459

In addition to statutory partner contributions, this year, the NSCP's income was supplemented by significant one off grants from the Department of Education, namely:

- DfE funding linked to project work on father inclusive practice (Family Hubs - £57,159)
- DfE one off grant following publication of Working Together 2023 (£47,300 – see below)

Other sources of additional income are:

- Training income – including charges to non contributing partners and fees for late cancellations or non-attendance (£117,147)
- The Safer training programme (£22,633)
- The seven District Councils (£35,525)
- Probation (£4,000)

DfE Grant Funding

The DfE provided every Local Safeguarding Children Partner with one off grant funding when Working Together 2023 was published. This money was spent on priorities and scrutiny, including:

- Neglect toolkit workshops
- Development of Family & Community Networking communications campaign
- Contributions to the Serious Youth Violence conference
- Joint Agency Group Supervision facilitator training
- Leadership Exchange and Learning Events, jointly with adults

Next Steps

This report provides an overview of the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership's many achievements over the last 12 months. We continue to be proud of the mature and successful relationships strategic leaders have established which underpin the way we work together to safeguard children and protect them from harm. Our joined up approach to systemic learning is underpinned with energy and commitment to improving our services so we get things right for Norfolk children and families.

This is not to say that we are complacent in any way nor are we naïve about the challenges that lie ahead. We recognise the challenges we face as a country and the significance of anticipated policy changes and we will continue to focus on supporting Norfolk's children and families to flourish, regardless of what the future holds. Our local safeguarding system is flexible and responsive with the systemic resources in place to understand family life and fulfil our duty to protect children.

While this report records many achievements, we also recognise the work that still needs to be done. Our challenges and ambitions as we move into 2025 - 26 include:

- Priority review scheduled for June 2025 and ongoing monitoring of impact on practice and outcomes for children
- Positioning ourselves to respond to policy change, notably Keeping Children Safe and Helping Families Thrive.
- Improving our systemic response to transitional safeguarding in partnership with colleagues in adults' health and social care
- Learning from inspection, scrutiny and audit and implementing action plans to address our response to domestic abuse
- Continue to utilise the performance intelligence, data and qualitative feedback to ensure we are targeting our resources correctly and addressing any gaps
- Developing robust monitoring and quality assurance systems to better support Joint Agency Group Supervisions
- Multi-agency audits planned for the Norfolk Graded Care Profile, Out of Hours services and JAGS
- Disseminating and implementing learning from local and national Safeguarding Practice Reviews and local Rapid Reviews, including publication of current cases
- Ongoing monitoring and review of learning and actions against recommendations from scrutiny, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Section 11 and audit
- Delivering on the Workforce Development Group forward plan with a particular focus on measuring the impact of training on practice
- Working directly with the children, young people and families of Norfolk to ensure that their voices are heard and they contribute directly to strengthening the safeguarding system
- Continue to promote and support the FLOURISH agenda
- Continue to promote equality and inclusion and celebrate diversity in Norfolk

The Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership is well placed to build on its strengths and meet the challenges set out above, with the commitment and resources that are in place. The NSCP's Business Unit is funded to support this work and ensure that organisational memory and good working relationships across the partnership continue into the future.

Appendix 1

Purpose

The education representatives identified for each sector along with the Education Safeguarding Team and NSCP Business Unit will come together as a strategic group. The core purpose of this group is to make arrangements to ensure the voice of education is represented within Norfolk's Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) as the fourth safeguarding partner. Representatives will engage with the NSCP to achieve this through attendance at the NSCP Partnership Group in the first instance.

The sector representatives and this group as a whole will provide a communication channel between education settings and the multi-agency Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership to raise the profile of education and foster positive multi-agency relationships. It will be a collaborative, multi-agency approach to championing the education of all our children, promoting their welfare and ensuring they are effectively safeguarded.

Key Responsibilities

The function of this group is to:

- Ensure all relevant agencies, are clear on the role and contribution of education settings to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Improve the understanding of safeguarding issues within education settings and across the partnership by gathering and sharing representative views of the education sector from all phases: primary, secondary, special schools and further education.
- Share evidence-based trends or emerging safeguarding risks from the education sector perspective with the Partnership.
- Review and comment on relevant education-based data to inform strategic planning and oversight.
- Provide a two-way, responsive communication channel between education settings and the NSCP.
- Raise the profile of the work of the NSCP with all schools and colleges by providing key updates from the NSCP to education settings via existing networks and forums and seeking settings' views on relevant safeguarding issues as required.
- Identify and discuss strategic issues being raised by educational establishments and, where required, make suitable recommendations to the Partnership Group for action.
- Feedback to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Constabulary and Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care Board) and/or Partnership Group on the implications of decisions and policy changes relating to safeguarding children in and out of education establishments.
- Support the Education Safeguarding Team to engage all schools and colleges with the safeguarding self-assessment process in line with the requirements of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- Contribute to the delivery of half-termly DSL updates regarding partnership activity.

Role of the NSCP Business Unit:

- Send out the agenda and supporting papers at least two weeks in advance of the meeting and arrange a pre-meet with the education representatives to consider implications for education settings ahead of Partnership Group meetings.

- Produce and send out an action log to members no later than one week after the meeting.
- Drive forward the aims of this group and hold representatives to account for actions.
- Organise and provide administrative support for any task and finish groups commissioned.
- Work with the Chair of the Partnership Group and Head of NSCP Business Delivery to review agendas and provide space for discussion of relevant education issues.

Role of Education Safeguarding Team:

- Drive forward the aims of this group.
- Act as the conduit for information sharing and gathering feedback from the sectors.
- Collate feedback from surveys and focus groups.
- Develop reports, presentations and sector feedback and lead on updates to the Partnership Group/DSPs.
- Engage with education leaders to ensure representation of each sector and maintain an up-to-date list of members and their contact details.
- Organise half-termly DSL updates on partnership work.

Role of sector representatives:

To work closely with other education representatives for the Partnership Group, the Education Safeguarding Team and NSCP Business Unit to ensure all education settings have the opportunity to be fully engaged, involved and included in Norfolk's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and the views and contributions of all types of education providers are articulated at the highest level of decision making. In order to achieve this representatives will:

- Be an active member of the Partnership Group to improve strategic safeguarding improvements and arrangements.
- Read documents before each meeting, reflect on the implications for the education sector and share with other colleagues when appropriate to seek feedback to feed into the Partnership.
- Act as a single point of contact for their education colleagues from the relevant sectors and/or DSL networks
- Share the synthesised and representative views and voice of their sector at Partnership Group to support the strategic improvements of safeguarding arrangements.
- Have sufficient authority to inform, influence and champion the priorities of the NSCP.
- Engage and encourage involvement of education sector colleagues in work of the Partnership through encouraging colleagues to be involved in safeguarding focus groups, DSL networks and LSCGs.
- Contribute to half termly twilight sessions that enable focused discussions on agreed topics with DSLs and education leaders across the county
- Effectively challenge practice, based on evidence within their own agency and others, in order to safeguard children and young people.
- Regularly attend and contribute to meetings and advise if unable to attend.
- Agree and complete actions in a timely manner.
- Share foci and updates from the Partnership with colleagues in the sector they are representing.

Membership:

Name	Agency Representative
Abigail McGarry	NSCP Business Unit
Amanda Fewkes, Headteacher – Fen Rivers	Norfolk Association of Special Schools Headteachers (NASSH)
Helen Richardson-Hulme, Assistant Principal Student Services – City College Norwich	Further Education Sector
Jessica Balado, Headteacher – Thurlton Primary	Norfolk School Leaders' Association & Primary sector
Jon Ford, Principal – Open Academy	Secondary Sector
Matt Tuckwood, Headteacher – Whitefriars C of E Primary Academy	Primary Sector
Kelly Waters, Senior Safeguarding Adviser	Education Safeguarding Team - Children's Services

All representatives are responsible for raising any issues which may affect their suitability in representing their sector or organisation. Where there are issues, these must be communicated to the Senior Safeguarding Adviser. The potential issues include, but are not limited to:

- Capacity and wellbeing
- Safeguarding concerns being raised about them as an individual (for example if they come to the attention of the police or if an allegation is made against them) or if concerns are raised regarding safeguarding processes in the school/setting in which they work, for example following an Ofsted inspection

Any information will be treated in confidence unless there is a need to share more widely in order to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Governance:

This group forms part of the NSCP and reports to the Partnership Group and/or the Delegated Safeguarding Partners.

Frequency of meetings

- The group will meet 2 weeks prior to the NSCP Partnership Group meeting to review the agenda and plan engagement with the sector about relevant agenda items. This equates to 7 – 8 times per year, including the annual priority setting workshop. Communication with the sector via DSL networks will be managed by the Education Safeguarding Team and representatives will promote engagement with any requests for feedback via their sector groups.
- On a rotational basis representatives will attend Partnership Group meetings. Attendance will be agreed based on agenda items and availability of representatives. This equates to attendance at Partnership Group meetings on average twice a year per representative.
- On a half-termly basis contribute to DSL updates on the work of the NSCP.
- Contribution and attendance will be agreed based on agenda items and availability of representatives. The intention is to do these at half termly or termly intervals so between 3 to 6 times per academic year.

Time and commitment:

Total meeting times will be a maximum of 4 – 8 hours per half term, including Partnership Group pre-meets. The annual meeting dates are set in the spring/summer of each year.

In addition, time is required to:

- Consult with colleagues
- Analyse responses from across the education sector
- Contribute to DSL updates with the support of NCC's Education Safeguarding Team

The time required to undertake the duties bullet pointed above will be rotational but representatives should allow a minimum of 1 day per term to fulfil their responsibilities as representatives.

Appendix 2

NB Priority updates are rotational, with at least one priority presenting on progress at each meeting. Other agenda items were:

- The thematic review on Serious Youth Violence (Delta)
- Priority update on vulnerable adolescents, including the communication campaign commissioned by the OPCC
- NCC's Participation Teams report on community safety.
- Education Attendance strategy
- Independent Scrutiny: transitional safeguarding and observations of child planning meeting (CPM) practice.
- Local assessment protocol: proposed changes to adhere to Working Together 2023
- Health representation at Child Protection Conferences
- LADO: challenges faced with investigating self employed practitioners
- Annual report sign off:
 - Workforce Development Group annual report
 - Local Safeguarding Children Groups (LSCGs)
 - NSCP and CYP version of the annual report
 - NCC's Independent Services
 - NSCP's Child Death Overview Panel
- Service changes and restructure updates from Children's Services (Family Help Operating Model) and the Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- MASH Operational Oversight Group updates (two per annum)
- Multi-agency audit sign off: Norfolk Graded Care Profile and the multi-agency audit on Domestic Abuse
- Data and intelligence update
- Early Years Wraparound Services
- Follow up Task & Finish Groups – actions from previous Partnership Group meetings:
 - LADO (self-employed)
 - Health representation at Child Protection conferences
- Developments to the Joint Agency Group Supervision offer
- Reflections and next steps following the JTAI inspection, including presentation on
- DA training standards
- Section 11 safeguarding self assessment report
- Views from Further Education and Special Schools on safeguarding themes – this forms part of our governance arrangements to have education as a fourth partner (primary and secondary schools scheduled to present in spring/summer 2025 – also rotational)
- Headlines from the Youth Justice Service inspection report published 28 January
- Family Help model update from Children's Services
- Flourish survey outcomes
- Sign off on policy update for voluntary, charity, social enterprise, faith-based organisations, the private sector, sports clubs/organisations

Appendix 3

The following data sources were used in compiling the ‘Using data and evidence in partnership’ chapter in Section 3. The data sources below are in addition to data collected from local systems, and as part of the Flourish Survey, which are not available publicly.

Data	Description of source	Link
Population estimates	NOMIS website – part of the Office for National Statistics	Population estimates - local authority based by five year age band - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics
Births	Births data via Public Health Fingertips	Births Data
School Population	Education Statistics – School population data	Schools, pupils and their characteristics. Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK
Health data	Child & maternal health profile, from Public Health Fingertips. Mental Health referrals data from national dashboard.	https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938133230 National Mental Health Referrals dashboard
Youth Justice data	Data from Youth Justice Statistics	Youth Justice Statistics - GOV.UK
Social Care data	A range of statistical returns, notably the Children In Need publication, and the Children Looked After publication	https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-in-need/2024 https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2024

Appendix 4

Finding one - There is a lack of awareness and understanding of the responsibilities placed upon professionals who are engaged in safeguarding individuals pre and post the age of 18. This becomes even more apparent regarding differences in the legislation that govern working practices. This can lead to frustration with professionals observing the cultural differences in risk management between child and adult care. This cultural difference was highlighted across several focus groups with examples of a perceived lack of engagement from adult agencies being countered with a view that those working with children are risk averse. All agencies are fully committed to safeguarding and a greater understanding of each other’s responsibilities has the potential to reduce conflict and improve transition through better joint working and planning.

Recommendation one – The NSCP and NSAB commission a joint multi-agency training offer that improves the understanding of responsibilities pre and post 18. This offer should also consider opportunities to nurture relationships and understanding between professionals, improving outcomes through transition (recommended lead - Workforce Development Groups WDG’s).

Recommendation two – The NSCP and NSAB agree a joint position on transitional safeguarding, emphasising a commitment to joint multi-agency working across both partnerships. This position statement should emphasise an expectation that all agencies should work collaboratively and hold shared safeguarding values. This clear leadership stance would empower those working with the cohort (recommended lead - strategic leads for SAB and NSCP).

Finding two – There is a lack of multi-agency planning and focus when young people with significant safeguarding issues approach the age of 18. This is particularly apparent when the person concerned is not a care leaver or does not have a disability.

There has been evidence of a lack of focus on the transitional element and issues that are likely to arise post 18. In fact, some of the participants in focus groups raised this as a specific issue. This lack of considered risk assessment risks poor planning and support as the young person transitions into adulthood.

Information exchange is often limited if children approaching transition and there is no formal process for initiating multi-agency meetings for those outside of the local authority.

Recommendation three – The NSCP and SAB develop a multi-agency policy that improves planning for young people with safeguarding needs approaching transition. This policy should include meeting structures and information exchange principles to afford the best possible opportunity to provide holistic support to the person concerned. The policy should be informed by professionals who already work in this area, i.e. are dealing with transition issues on a regular basis. The SAB and NSCP should seek assurance that risk assessments and multi-agency collaboration is taking place to ensure those going through transition are appropriately supported (recommended lead – task and finish group led by senior stakeholder in SAB and NSCP).

Finding three – There is evidence of good practice when dealing with transitional safeguarding in Norfolk. Much of this work could provide excellent learning opportunities for professionals. This scrutiny exercise has found that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the good offers and practice available to young people approaching 18. This results in a general lack of awareness of service provision at this crucial point. This is particularly apparent for staff who do not work in the LA. This inhibits planning and appropriate use of resources for young people approaching the age of 18.

Recommendation four – The SAB and NSCP commission a joint learning event that focusses on good practice in transitions taking place in Norfolk. This event should be co-produced with service users, practitioners, subject experts and leaders all taking part. This will afford learning through demonstrating best practice (recommended lead – NSCP and NSAB Workforce Development Groups)

Recommendation five – The partners consider the creation of a dedicated transitional safeguarding expert post within MASH; this should be jointly funded. The post holder would be developed as an expert in this field offering advice and signposting colleagues to existing offers of support for transitional safeguarding issues (recommended lead – Assistant Director(s) responsible for MASH).

Recommendation six – Both the NSCP and the NSAB develop a briefing sheet that highlights existing service provision, signposting partners to existing offers of support for transitional safeguarding. This would also raise awareness of existing good practice (short task and finish group chaired by Assistant Directors from Children's and/or Adult's social care).

Finding four – Statutory guidance covering CSPRs and SARs make it extremely difficult to commission reviews that examine agency engagement with young people who have recently reached the age of 18. This is the case in Norfolk and there is evidence of strategic leads stepping outside of process to ensure multi-agency practice is reviewed following serious incidents. The circumstances rarely fulfil the criteria for commission of a SAR under the Care Act and partnerships find themselves in a position where, despite obvious benefits of a review, no learning mechanism is triggered. It is important that Norfolk agrees a policy that overcomes this issue with learning and practice improvement being the priority whatever the age of the young person.

Recommendation seven – The SAB and NSCP develop guidance on when and how independent reviews of serious incidents can be commissioned if they fall outside of existing statutory frameworks. This guidance should be based on existing practice and methodology used in Rapid Reviews and should include information sharing (short task and finish group led by the chairs of the SARG and SPRG, with the support of the Business Managers).

