



Annual Report of Local Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people

2025/26

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This Annual Report, alongside our North East Lincolnshire (NEL) Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) Local Arrangements, other key documents, as well as policies, procedures and other resources referenced in this document are published on the North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership NELC		

1) Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the NEL SCP Annual Report of Local Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people 2025/26.

Children, young people and families are first, centre and last in all we do, and we want NEL to be a place our children can grow up happy and healthy, safe in their homes and communities with people that love them. We are ambitious for a child's future with a focus on learning and aspiration so they can be the best they can be. This includes a strong commitment to improving health and wellbeing outcomes across the life course, recognising that safeguarding is intrinsically linked to physical health, mental health, and wider determinants such as poverty, housing, and education.

In the context of the NEL Children Young People and Families 'Growing Stronger Together' strategic framework, our Local Arrangements, contribute to one of the key priorities where we will enable children to get the help, support and protection they need to **be safe and feel safe**.

By '**Growing Stronger Together**,' we can achieve our vision of '**Our Children, Our Future**.'

Our Local Arrangements, which are embedded across the Borough, place children, young people, families and communities at the heart of our early help, family help and safeguarding system. The Helping, Supporting and Protecting Children and Families in NEL Threshold Document (Threshold Document) sets out our arrangements, underpinned by our Unified Approach, to ensure children, young people and families receive the right support, at the right time by the right person. This is being achieved through services which support children, young people, and families to participate, find help online and in their networks and communities, to be resilient, stay safe and independent.

Data analysis and practice wisdom confirms the Threshold Document is being used consistently by partner agencies which has been supported by our Practice Approach, and the Risk Analysis Framework which is embedded into practice and supported by associated training. Set in the context of system wide transformation, there is evidence that the Early Help Strategy is having an impact on the increase of families who have been supported to achieve successful outcomes at an earlier point, through a key focus on targeted family help and support. There has been a continued safe reduction in numbers of children supported as children in need, those subject to child protection plans and to becoming a child in our care.

As a partnership we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and families through the least and best interventions, leading to whole family turnaround. As Delegated Safeguarding Partners, we are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the positive outcomes achieved and the strength of partnership working, and we continue to be ambitious in our approach and are committed to partnership action to improve practice leading to better outcomes.

The last year has been characterised by working collaboratively as a partnership in fully embedding our partnership and governance structure, and in building upon the infrastructure, capacity, resources and core functions to deliver our Local Arrangements, the priorities aligned to Working Together 2023 and our local priorities (in relation to early help, child sexual abuse, child exploitation and neglect). There has been a key focus in responding to the national Families First Partnership reforms (Families First Partnership reforms) and in developing our local response in full collaboration across partner agencies. Through our

culture of listening, learning, reviewing and adapting, underpinned by high challenge and high support, we have continued to build on and further strengthen existing arrangements which support our families at the earliest opportunity to prevent the need for statutory intervention, empower our families to build on their own strengths and promote resilience to improve outcomes.

There have been fantastic collaborations with national bodies and experts in supporting the delivery of the four SCP priorities and in informing practice. This has included the Centre of Expertise in Child Sexual Abuse, in the development and delivery of familial Child Sexual Abuse training aligned to the Child Sexual Abuse toolkit and further work by Jane Wiffin, a national expert in neglect and a child safeguarding practice review author, in developing the SCP neglect training. Mark Finnis, Director of L30 Relational Systems, has worked with the partnership as part of the development of relational practice and building relationships aligned to the local development of the Families First Partnership reforms. Dez Holmes, Director of Research in Practice is also working with the SCP in respect of child exploitation and child centred practice.

In 2025/26, we have continued to:

- ✓ fulfil all functions across our Local Arrangements, and through strengthened partnership and governance arrangements, to respond to need, including prioritising the most in need, to help, support and protect children, young people and families
- ✓ ensured that learning from assurance activity, including rapid reviews (if required), actively informs practice across the partnership and to ensure that everyone recognises their responsibilities

This report fulfils our statutory responsibility to publish a report once in every twelve-month period and sets out what we have done as a result of our Local Arrangements, including rapid reviews and child safeguarding practice reviews (if required), and how effective these arrangements have been in practice. In addition, the report also includes:

- evidence that national reforms are being taken into account and implemented, including key decisions and actions taken by Delegated Safeguarding Partners in response to reforms
- evidence of the impact of the work of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners, their respective organisations and relevant agencies, including training, on outcomes for children, young people and families from early help to children in our care and care leavers
- an analysis of any areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- an analysis of key learning from serious incidents, a record / decisions and actions taken by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners in the reporting period to implement the recommendations of any local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, including any resulting improvements
- ways in which the partners have sought and utilised feedback from children, young and families to inform their work and influence service provision

Over the last year we have continued to embed policy directives and guidance, including Working Together 2023 and the Children's Social Care National Framework. We have moved at pace and worked collaboratively with Safeguarding Partner organisations as well as relevant agencies in developing the three pillars in response to the Families First Partnership reforms, as well as keeping abreast of the interface with wider reforms across the children's system. We remain committed to a culture of listening, learning reviewing and adapting. which is demonstrated through our republished arrangements and through the partnerships

commitment to supporting continual practice improvement through learning and innovation to improve outcomes for children.



Craig Nicholson
T. Chief Superintendent
Humberside Police



Ann Marie Matson
Director of Children's
Services
North East Lincolnshire
Council



Paula South
Director of Nursing Governance
Humber and North Yorkshire
Integrated Care Board

2) Overview of Local Arrangements

Partnerships and Governance

Delivery of Local Arrangements through partnership and governance structure / arrangements

The SCP has an established governance structure which has actively delivered the expectations of Working Together 2023 and is delivering and embedding the four SCP priorities. The function of the SCP Board is oversight of quality, compliance, shared priorities and the effectiveness of practice and outcomes in delivering the Local Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Under the board are six strategic delivery groups which have specific responsibilities in undertaking quality assurance, performance analysis, assessment of quality of practice, voice of children, impact of learning and development and in delivering the SCP key functions and priorities as outlined in the structure below. (Figure 1)

There are also a number of underpinning and associated groups and meetings aligned to the SCP arrangements i.e. Multi-agency Child Exploitation Group (MACE) / Pre MACE, Safeguarding Performance Practice Assurance Group / Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group, and bespoke sessions to respond to national and local policy drivers and developments, as well as other forums i.e. Reforms Steering Group, Child Protection Coordinators forum, GP Forum and Health Forum, and other task and finish groups.

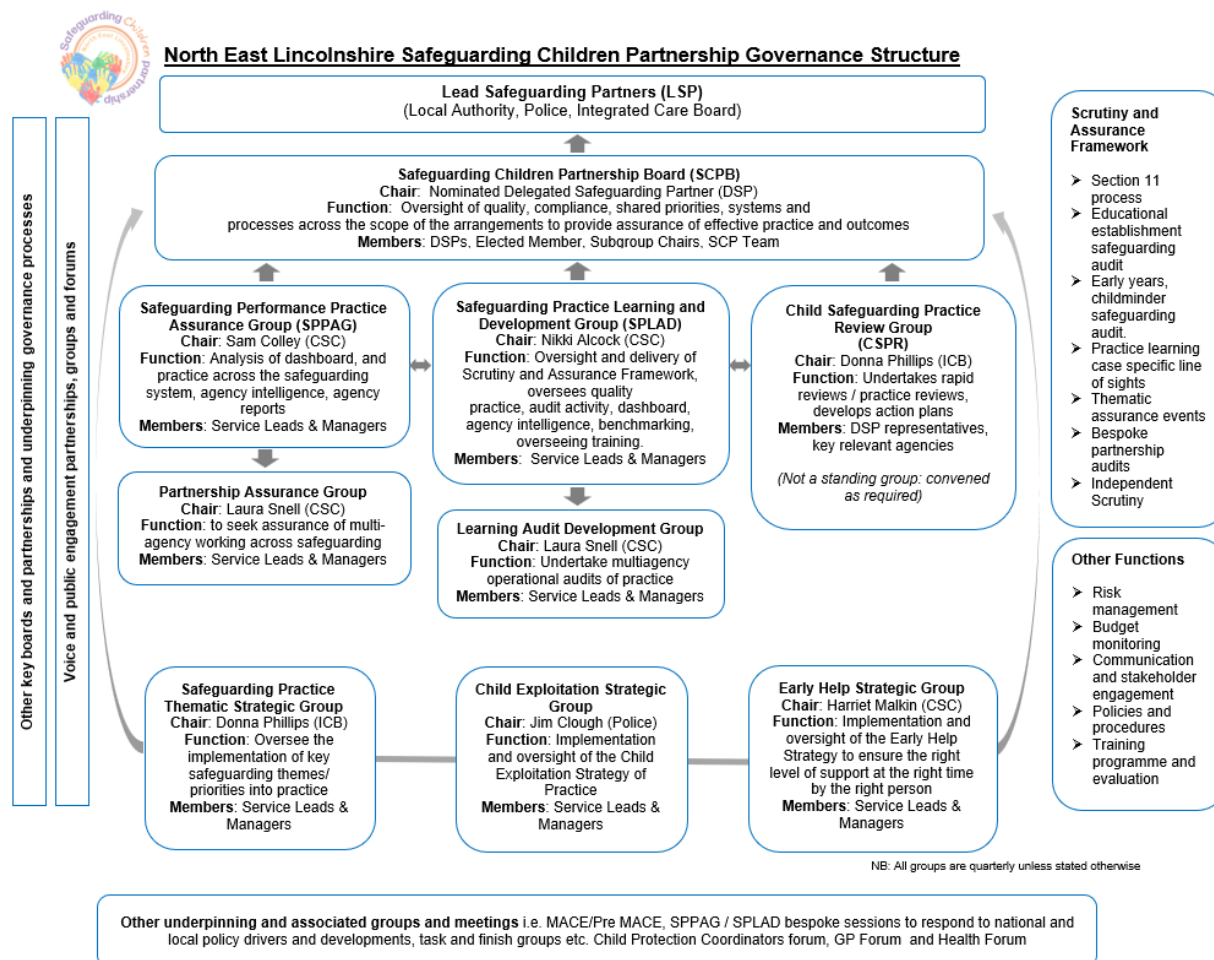


Figure 1 – Structure of NEL SCP

In addition to the SCP Board and the strategic subgroups, there are a number of other functions which support the delivery of Local Arrangements. These include budget monitoring, communication and stakeholder engagement, policies and procedures, workforce development and education and the delivery of quality assurance and impact of safeguarding, including independent scrutiny through the Scrutiny and Assurance Framework. Health partners, including the Integrated Care Board, NHS providers, primary care, and Public Health Nursing services, contribute to both strategic leadership and operational safeguarding activity, ensuring a whole-system approach to prevention, early help and protection.

The SCP Local Arrangements were developed following the publication of Working Together 2023 and it was endorsed that the Chief Officer of Police, Local Authority Head of Paid Service and Integrated Care Board's Chief Executive undertake the roles of the Local Safeguarding Partners and that the Director of Children's Services, North East Lincolnshire Council, the Place Nurse Director, North and North East Lincolnshire Health and Care Partnership and the Temporary Chief Superintendent, Humberside Police undertake the role of Delegated Safeguarding Partners on their behalf.

The document developed by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners outlining the responsibilities of the Lead Safeguarding Partners and the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and reporting arrangements has ensured the Delegated Safeguarding Partners have full oversight of the quality and compliance of the delivery of agreed shared priorities, and processes in place to provide assurance that multi-agency practice is reviewed and operating well. Lead Safeguarding Partners receive quarterly progress reports against the delivery of the Local Arrangements and also have the option to 'call in' the Delegated Safeguarding Partners for additional meetings in year as required. Individual Delegated Safeguarding Partners are accountable to their Lead Safeguarding Partner through their respective organisational assurance functions.

Two annual meetings were held in year between the Delegated and Lead Safeguarding Partners. At the first meeting in February 2025, decisions were made in principle in lieu of pending changes to the Police, Local Authority and Integrated Care Board Lead Safeguarding Partners and due to the Integrated Care Board Lead Safeguarding Partner not being present as a result of unforeseen circumstances. A further meeting was held on 10 November 2025, where the Lead Safeguarding Partners endorsed the annual report 2024/25 and fully supported the SCP Local Arrangements 2025/26. The Lead Safeguarding Partners were fully sighted on the SCP risk register and agreed the risks, controls and mitigating actions. The risks were focused on the development of the local response to the national Families First Partnership reforms and a proposed reduction to the Integrated Care Board offer as part of the Blueprint. In addition, the Lead Safeguarding Partners fully supported the need identified by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners for an amplified commitment to tackling child exploitation based on children's experiences as part of the child exploitation strategic delivery plan. The next annual meeting of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and Lead Safeguarding Partners will be held in early July 2026 to agree the annual report 2025/26 and Local Arrangements 2026/27.

The local partnership and governance structure and reporting functions which were developed to deliver the expectations of Working Together 2023, SCP priorities and Local Arrangements are now well embedded, working effectively and are actively delivering the SCP functions and four priorities. The strategic subgroups meet quarterly, and the chairs provide a quarterly report to the SCP Board on progress and impact against the priority delivery plans which is also monitored through the SCP Local Arrangements strategic delivery plan.

The three Delegated Safeguarding Partners, and their respective organisations have worked collaboratively with relevant agencies over the last year in delivering and embedding the four SCP priorities and statutory functions through the partnership and governance structure. There has been a focus on relational practice as part of the local practice model and in developing the local response to the Families First Partnership reforms which has further strengthened existing relationships. There has continued to be open and honest discussions, and the further continued strengthening of the Local Arrangements has created a robust operating environment, enabling high support and high challenge. Key processes and functions have been fully embedded and built on over the last year in achieving successful delivery of the Local Arrangements including:

- building on available multi-agency data within the NEL SCP performance dashboard (SCP dashboard) and data analysis into meaning for practice, which is actively informing the delivery of the SCP priority strategic delivery plans
- embedding the consistent use of the Threshold Document supported by the Practice Approach (strengths based, solution focused, relational) in providing a framework for how practitioners should work with children and families, and with each other

- development and embedding into practice of the Risk Analysis Framework across the partnership in providing a consistent model for the assessment, analysis and management of risk. Introduction of the Enhanced Risk Analysis Framework Meeting, in order to review, and to measure progress and impact as part of the individual child's child protection plan (ERAM)
- embedding of the Local Protocol for Assessment and Support, which alongside the SCP safeguarding procedures and Threshold Document, clearly sets out arrangements for case management following the referral of a child into NEL Children's Services
- the delivery of the enhanced SCP education and training arrangements, including the development and delivery of a suite of e-learning courses, alongside the face-to-face courses, which are aligned to the SCP priorities in equipping practitioners to responding to abuse and neglect
- the development and launch of the SCP partner achievement award which has recognised and rewarded outstanding practice across the partnership
- building on the dedicated standalone SCP website, resources and reporting specifically designed to deliver the SCP functions and priorities and to support practice
- development of a delegated partner / key officer SCP subgroup observation and assurance process, aligned to the Scrutiny and Assurance Framework in ensuring a line of sight to the effective operation of the SCP governance structure in delivering the Local Arrangements
- continued review and development of the SCP core procedures, including the revision and relaunch of the Pre Trial Therapy Therapeutic Protocol
- developed and overseen the effectiveness of governance arrangements for the local development and delivery of the three pillar of the Families First Partnership reforms, which are focussed on Family Help, Family Group Decision Making and Multi-agency Child Protection Teams, aligned to the SCP Governance structure

The key roles and functions of the SCP Board are detailed in the terms of reference, and the responsibilities are detailed in the Local Arrangements and underpinning Memorandum of Understanding. <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2025/06/Final-SCP-MOU.pdf>

Further information about our partnership and governance structures and Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners can be found in the Local Arrangements 2026/27 which have been updated to reflect the changes in our partnership and governance arrangements.

Key decisions and actions taken by the three Delegated Safeguarding Partners included agreeing continued additional funding in making the SCP Co-ordinator role permanent, and identification of additional funding by the Local Authority to the establishment of a Child Exploitation and Development Co-ordinator, both of which have and will enable sufficient capacity to support the continued momentum of developments and the delivery of our Local Arrangements (see Section 7).

Funding

Safeguarding partners have a shared ownership of funding responsibilities and have agreed equitable and proportionate contributions to ensure the implementation of the Local Arrangements. These consist of actual funding and in-kind resources, for example representatives from safeguarding partner organisations contribute to the development and delivery of the education and training programme. In addition, each of the safeguarding partners have identified relevant system leaders from their organisations to chair the SCP

subgroups, in order to deliver and embed the Local Arrangements, the key areas of focus, associated strategies and delivery plans.

The SCP utilised the ear marked reserve and the underspend from 2023/24 which was added to it to employ a fixed term SCP Co-ordinator for a period of two years to support with the delivery of the Local Arrangements. During 2025, the three Delegated Safeguarding Partners negotiated an uplift to safeguarding partner organisational funding required to deliver the Local Arrangements, which alongside the remaining ear marked reserve,, provided the opportunity to secure the SCP Co-ordinator role on a permanent basis. This enables the partnership to continue to further embed and develop the local arrangements at pace.. In addition, the Local Authority have identified money to employ a permanent Child Exploitation and Development Co-ordinator which was endorsed by all three Delegated Safeguarding Partners and will enable additional capacity and expertise to drive forward the child exploitation delivery plan. The post commences on the 1 June 2026.

In the event of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review, it has been agreed that funding will be met by the three safeguarding partner organisations and where necessary, each partner organisation will contribute equitable and proportionate funding over and above the normal allocation in order to fulfil the costs of any review.

The headline summary of safeguarding partner organisational contributions and spend in year is as follows:

Income	2025/2026
	Actual
Police & Crime Commissioner	32,443
Integrated Care Board	60,000
North East Lincolnshire Council	87,017
National Probation Service	2,184
Reimbursements from other LA's re national safeguarding event	2,367
Combined Total	184,011
Expenditure	2025/2026
	Actual
Salaries (SCP Lead & SCP Co-ordinator)	116,430
Independent Scrutiny/Independent Review	24,553
Travel & Other expenses inc staff training & subscriptions	6,424
Support Services Recharges	35,400
Combined Total	182,807
Balance Underspend	-1,204
EMR INCREASE	1,204
Final Balance	0

Figure 2 – SCP Funding

3) Progress against statutory guidance

Responding to Working Together 2023

The SCP is meeting the expectations of Working Together 2023 and the four SCP priorities in the following ways:

- The contribution of each safeguarding partner to the functioning and structure of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is explicit within the terms of reference and memorandum of understanding. The SCP subgroups are chaired by representatives of each of the three Safeguarding Partner agencies and the remit of each agency is explicit within the strategic priority action plans
- Supported effective engagement with relevant agencies in ensuring they understand their roles and responsibilities, and the strengthening of the input from education providers at operational and strategic level decision making. The representation of the different elements of education across the partnership at both an operational and strategic level was reviewed following the publication of Working Together 2023. Education, including schools and colleges and Children's Services Education Inclusion and Integration are now consistently represented on the SCP subgroups across the SCP partnership and governance structure. The SCP Co-ordinator also now routinely attends the termly child protection co-ordinators meeting
- The four SCP priorities are being actively delivered through the partnership and governance arrangements. The delivery of the neglect and the child sexual abuse strategic plans are overseen by the SCP Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group. The delivery of the Early Help Strategy is overseen by the Early Help Strategic Group, and the Child Exploitation Strategy is overseen by the Child Exploitation Strategic Group. The delivery of the strategies is supported by performance analysis, associated practice guidance, tools and training. On a quarterly basis, subgroup chairs have evidenced progress to the SCP Board against the priority strategic delivery plans and any areas of exception or identified development. The delivery of the Scrutiny and Assurance Framework has enabled aggregated scrutiny, including the use of the Independent Scrutiny Officers, thematic, case specific learning line of sight audits, and section 11 audit leading to robust oversight of the implementation and impact across the scope of our Local Arrangements
- The Safeguarding Practice Performance Assurance Group has actively overseen performance analysis and the local application of thresholds aligned to the practice approach and the delivery of the four SCP priorities. The Safeguarding Practice Leading and Development Group has actively overseen the impact of the Scrutiny and Assurance Framework, including actions and impact from practice learning line of sight audits, rapid review action plans, the impact of SCP workforce development and training arrangements, and development of SCP policies and procedures, leading to learning actively informing practice in multiagency working to safeguard and promote children's welfare
- The provision of clear and appropriate challenge by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners has ensured partner agencies are accountable and Local Arrangements operate effectively (see record of key decisions). Key decisions and actions taken by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners have enabled high challenge and support in delivering the Local Arrangements and have provided assurance across the system as part of the assurance reporting to the SCP Board
- One such key decision made by the three Delegated Safeguarding Partners was that the Director of Children's Services would continue to undertake the function of the partnership chair for a longer period than the two years previously agreed, which commenced in December 2023, in order to provide consistency of leadership. The three Delegated Safeguarding Partners have provided strong joined up leadership and clear accountability over the last year, in delivering multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the effective delivery of functions
- The embedding of strengthened data analysis and independent scrutiny arrangements has provided the delegated safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with an accurate local picture of effective local services are being delivered
- While there have been no rapid review in year, the SCP has delivered high quality timely practice learning events which provide the opportunity for reflection and analysis to

ascertain what worked well, but significantly where improvements need to be made and the implementation of learning into practice. Oversight, dissemination and impact of learning on practice has been overseen by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development group and endorsed by the SCP Board

- The SCP have strengthened the system conditions for effective multi-agency child protection work overseeing the quality of practice and local outcomes for children, young people and families through the effective delivery of the governance arrangements
- The SCP have continued to seek and respond to, feedback from children, young people and families about their experiences of services across the scope of the children's social care system to ensure children can access the help, support and protection they need. Quarterly reporting by partner agencies, through assurance reports to the SCP priority subgroups, has provided assurance that mechanisms are in place which have enabled children's lived experiences to be understood and responded to
- The SCP are undertaking work with adult services in developing local transitional safeguarding arrangements. A transitional safeguarding steering group has been established, and the principles are being developed. The work is aligned to the NEL local Preparation for Adulthood Group (under the auspices of the SENDAP Partnership governance arrangements) and the Child Exploitation Strategic Group

Responding to the Families First Partnership reforms

The SCP responded swiftly to considering and developing the local response to the three pillars in the context of the Families First Partnership arrangements, in relation to family help, family group decision making and multi-agency safeguarding teams (MACPT). Position papers were presented to June 2025 SCP Board on the scope of the reforms, local response and next steps, and following this, a reforms governance structure was developed aligned to the SCP governance structure, which included a multi-agency reforms steering group to oversee the partnership response, and on which there has been robust partnership representation. A reforms codesign event was held on the 2 September 2025, which was well attended across the partnership, following which three deep dive partnership sessions were held in October 2025 focussing further on the 3 pillars.

There is full buy in from partner agencies which has been supported by the establishment of a Children's Strategic Lead within the Local Authority, as well as leads within the Police and Integrated Care Board. Some education strategic support was established to focus on SEND reforms, and there are opportunities to reflect on whether further strategic support continues to be required to support the wider socialisation, engagement and implementation of local reforms, across the education landscape. The NEL Families First Partnership development plan was submitted to the DfE in December 2025, and task and finish subgroups have been established for each of the three pillars and delivery plans developed. The work is fully aligned to the local practice model and local thresholds. A children's reforms communication and engagement plan is in place, and the current position around the reforms was shared at the SCP Local Arrangements event on 15 January 2026 and again in March 2026, and children's reforms is a standing agenda item at each SCP Board. The reforms data that is required within the SCP dashboard is being developed and the additional data analysis support resources required. Progress against the delivery of the local reforms will be reported through the SCP dashboard on a quarterly basis.

Key Developments and Successes

SCP dashboard

The SCP dashboard, was originally reviewed, reset and relaunched across the partnership in

June 2024, has been continuously reviewed and refreshed in year to better reflect available information and our local position across the scope of the Local Arrangements, including key statutory data, partner agency data, and information aligned to the SCP priority areas.. A multi-agency SCP data review group was established and is progressing further areas identified for data development, including the availability and analysis of Elective Home Education and Education Health Care Plan data, and the further development of early help data after assessment aligned to the SCP priorities.

The use of the SCP dashboard is embedded into practice and supports the SCP Board to understand the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, provides clarity and assurance of our populations and demand, and enables board members to challenge and support developments across the system. The SCP dashboard actively informs progress against the SCP priority strategic subgroups in delivering and measuring the impact of the strategic delivery plans.

Use of data analysis in informing learning

Data analysis was used in identifying the current four SCP priority areas of focus. The low number of referrals in respect of child sexual abuse and the low number of children subject to child protection plans (as a result of child sexual abuse) in this area informed the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and delivery plan. This included the decision to commission child sexual abuse training as a priority and the need to develop practice guidance and Child Sexual Abuse Toolkit for practitioners. Current data analysis evidences that assessments of child sexual abuse have increased as has the number of children subject to a child protection plan for child sexual abuse which was directly informed by the delivery of child sexual abuse training and through the child sexual abuse strategic delivery plan.

The SCP dashboard is actively informing the delivery of the SCP priorities and key functions in providing assurance to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners of both progress and impact against the priorities made by the SCP strategic subgroups. The analysis of local data on neglect and the previous learning from local line of sight learning events, rapid reviews and practice reviews in respect of neglect, led to an independent review being commissioned in March 2024. The review, which was undertaken by Jane Wiffin, an expert in neglect, subsequently led to the development and delivery of local neglect training to over 600 practitioners and the development and roll out of the Neglect Toolkit, which is supporting practitioners to fully understand the nature of neglect and how to respond to improve outcomes for children. The number of children subject to a child protection plan for neglect has increased to 69% in 2025/26 from 54% in 2024/25 which has been informed by the training and awareness raising in respect of neglect.

There has been an increase in both children subject to a child protection plan at risk of child exploitation and in assessments where sexual harm was a factor. The increase has been directly informed by the delivery of child sexual abuse training across the partnership. The increased focus on child exploitation has led to increased awareness across the partnership. In 2024/25, 36 children were identified at MACE as being at risk of experiencing child exploitation compared to just 16 in 2023/24/. Work is ongoing in raising awareness and intelligence reporting.

The Safeguarding Practice Performance Practice Assurance Group uses the data in driving practice standards and where further understanding and assessment is required, they commission audits through the Learning Audit and Development Group. The Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group utilises the dashboard to assess the impact of safeguarding education and training and on quality assurance and independent scrutiny activity. The Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group (Neglect, Child Sexual Abuse), the Early Help Strategic Group and the Child Exploitation Strategic Group have all started to

use the dashboard to measure the impact of identified outcomes within the respective strategic delivery plans.

How information sharing has improved practice

Information sharing requirements are reflected within all of the SCP safeguarding procedures and practice guidance, including the local approach, the Threshold Document, and the Local Protocol for Assessment and Support which is an essential element of safeguarding children at both an operational and strategic level. Information sharing practice guidance is published on the SCP website and is consistent with Department for Education information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers. SCP quality assurance and independent scrutiny activity has evidenced that information sharing between agencies is positive. Locally, information sharing has been used when undertaking line of sight learning events and has enabled a holistic understanding of specific themes relating to safeguarding, what works well and areas for development. An example is the development of the Risk Analysis Framework and practice guidance in which multi-agency working and information sharing is a key element of, and which has impacted positively on the consistency of agency reports to child protection conferences.

Strengthening the consistency of practice through the Threshold Document, Practice Approach and Risk Analysis Framework

Under the auspices of Working Together 2023 there is a requirement:

- that Delegated Safeguarding Partners should agree, publish and deliver a local Threshold Document across agencies so that the right children receive the right support at the right time
- to ensure a systematic approach to the delivery of a comprehensive assessment of all children
- that the Local Authority, with Delegated Safeguarding Partners and relevant agencies should develop, agree and public a local Protocol for Assessment and Support which reflects the local practice framework

Established in June 2024 in full consultation with partners, and refreshed in 2025, our **Helping Supporting and Protecting Children and Families in NEL Threshold Document** reinforces our local ambition for 'Our Children, Our Future' and clearly articulates the levels of need and types of activity at each level, with the aim for all children to be safe from harm and enjoy growing up in loving homes, have the best start in life and a happy, healthy, fun childhood.

In the context of the Children's Social Care National Framework 2023, we are also committed to ensuring that:

- Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need
- Children and young people are supported by their family network
- Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes
- Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

The Threshold Document is now embedded across partner agencies and has led to more consistent application of thresholds resulting in an increase in the number of children supported earlier and a safe reduction in the number of children in need, children in need of protection and children in our care. The document is in the process of being refreshed to reflect the changes within Working Together 2026 and the Families First Partnership reforms.

Originally established in 2024, over 2025/26, we have continued to work in the context of our practice approach, which provides the framework for how every practitioner should work with children, young people, and families, and with each other, across the Borough. It is based on our NEL culture, values and beliefs, and our ambition for 'Our Children, Our Future.' At the heart of the approach is our commitment to being:

- **Relational** – to have strong, positive, trusting relationships across the partnership that builds co-operation and constructive challenge, that everyone engages constructively to deliver effective support to children, young people and families
- **Strength based** – to work with children, young people, parents and carers to find and amplify their strengths to effect positive change and achieve the best possible outcomes
- **Solution focused** – to help people explore their strengths and resources and drawing up a plan about what needs to be achieved to overcome concerns

The Practice Approach continues to be integral to and has supported the embedding of the Threshold Document, and the Risk Analysis Framework is now embedded across the partnership workforce as a way of working with our children, young people and families, but also with each other. The Practice Approach sits alongside the Assessment Framework which enables a systematic approach to undertaking enquires and in achieving a comprehensive assessment for children. **Assessment Framework:** It investigates three domains:

- The child's developmental needs
- The capacity of parents or carers (resident and non-resident) and any other adults living in the household to respond to those needs
- The impact and influence of the family network and any other adults living in the household as well as community and environmental circumstances

The Risk Analysis Framework continues to provide a consistent model for the assessment, analysis and management of risk across the partnership. Any assessment and / or intervention undertaken across the partnership by NEL Children's Services and partner agencies due to concern about a child's welfare, or that a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so is underpinned by the Risk Analysis Framework.

It is acknowledged that it is impossible to remove all risk from a child's life. The assessment, analysis and management of risk takes place within the three domains of the national Assessment Framework:

- The child's developmental needs – and the risks that they are experiencing
- Parenting capacity – and ability and willingness to meet the child's needs
- Family and environmental factors – including extra-familial contexts and the family network

The use of the Risk Analysis Framework into practice is now established and supported by the delivery of partnership training. Feedback from partners agencies has been very positive on the impact of its use within child protection conferences, and the framework is used by social workers and health, schools and wider partner agencies in informing reports to conference. This has led to consistent assessment of risk and need, and an increased understanding of risk by families.

The Local Protocol for Assessment and Support reflect the Practice Approach for working with children and families and sits alongside the SCP safeguarding procedures and Threshold Document. The protocol responds to the requirements for Local Authorities, with their

Delegated Safeguarding Partners and any relevant agencies, to develop, agree, and publish local protocols for assessments and support.

The protocol reflects the Practice Approach contained within our Threshold Document and it sets out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into North East Lincolnshire (NEL) Children's Services. The protocol is an overarching document and is aligned to NEL SCP safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance including the NEL Early Help Strategy and early help pathway. [Using this Manual](#)

4) Area profile

Headlines and summary of performance and populations

North East Lincolnshire child population 0-18 (33522*)

1% of our population are receiving targeted family help
 4% of our population are open to children's social care
 1% of our population are Child Protection
 1% of our 16-25 population are a Child in Care
 1% of our population are a Care Leaver

North East Lincolnshire School population

6% of our school population have an EHCP
 14% of our school population have SEN Support
 35% of our school population are eligible for free school meals

Headlines which indicate our system is working and making a difference to children, young people and families include:

The vast majority of performance and activity information relating to our help and protection system continue to show sustained high performance and compliance with local practice standards and statutory timescales which demonstrate the success and effectiveness of our local practice

- **Early help assessments.** The number of Local Authority (LA) Early Help assessments in 2025/26 at 701 is largely in line with 718 LA assessments which were completed the previous year. Partner agencies continue to lead early help assessments with 692 Team Around the Family (TAFs) started by external partners in 2025/26, which is a 19% increase compared with the previous year. This reflects the partnership commitment to meeting need early and preventing escalation. The increasing number of partner led TAFs is helping to reduce families requiring statutory intervention. The largest contributing agencies are still pre-schools / schools / further education which account for 89% of all external TAFs. Small numbers are led by health providers (6%) or by the voluntary sector (4%).
- **The number of referrals has increased by 13%.** 2258 referrals to children's social care were received in 2025/26 which is a 13% increase on the 2004 referrals received during 2024/25. This gives an end of year rate of 673 per 10,000 which has moved higher than comparators (England average 519 and statistical neighbour 614). May-August saw high levels of demand which has then settled back to a level more in line with the volume seen over 2024/25 and averaging at around 150 referrals a month. Co-located partners at the Integrated Front Door means timely information sharing and better-informed decision-making Timeliness of decision making remains high averaging

at 98% of decisions made within 24 hours for safeguarding contacts and referrals. This clarity of support/advice and guidance and better case management has also resulted in less repeat referrals.

- **The number of repeat contacts and referrals have reduced.** Referrals to children's social care within 12 months of a previous referral during 2025/26 have reduced to 18% compared with 21% in 2024/25. This has now better than comparators. (England 22% and statistical neighbour 21%). This, combined with a drop in repeat safeguarding contacts at the Integrated Front Door, reduced from 22% to 19% over 2025/26 which demonstrates more robust and consistent decision making, understanding and application of thresholds and more effective case working. Children and families are now more likely to access appropriate support and intervention to reduce the need for re-referral to children's social care.
- **Assessment timeliness increased again during 2025/26** to 95%, a further improvement from 93% in 2024/25, demonstrating consistent high performance across the last 2 years and ensuring there is little drift in children progressing through the system. Following the implementation of the assessment team, there has continued to be a noticeable improvement in the quality and timeliness of assessments for children ensuring children receive the right support at the right time.
- **The overall number of open cases has decreased** by 6% to 1660 on 31 March 2026 compared with 1768 the previous year, meaning we have 100 less children with a social worker than at the end of 2024/25. This gradual reduction in the number of open cases is as a result of consistent thresholds at the Integrated Front Door, better case management and step-down planning at closure to ensure less re-referrals. There is a sharpened focus on the timeliness of closures and the intensity of intervention, thereby effecting change more swiftly. Our CIN rate of 495 per 10,000 which although gradually reducing, remains much higher than comparators (England 330 and statistical neighbour 416 per 10,000).
- **Children on a CIN plan have decreased** to 555 on 31 March 2026 from 592 the previous year. The reduction in cases requiring assessment during the last 7 months of the year and better case management has seen our numbers of children on CIN plan start to decrease over recent months, ensuring children are supported at the lowest level.
- **The number of section 47 enquiries has increased.** 1418 Section 47 enquiries were initiated during 2025/26 which is a 38% increase from 1024 initiated the previous year. NEL's rate of 423 per 10,000 is now well above statistical neighbour rates of 254 and England average rate of 189 per 10,000. Reviews and case sampling have identified section 47 enquiries are being initiated appropriately and aligned to significant harm with a lot of section 47 enquiries relating to harm outside of the home. There continues to be oversight of strategy discussions and Section 47s due to the populations and there continues to be regular audit and thematic reports which has been reported into the SCP Board. Positively, despite the recognised increase, the oversight completed has identified that threshold has been applied appropriately and children are subject to a discussion when there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. There is evidence of good partnership attendance and contribution to the meetings, ensuring that proportionate information is being shared to make safe informed decision based upon the presenting risk. Strong partnership attendance ensures appropriate sharing of information and partnership decision making.

Numbers of children subject to child protection have increased. 266 children were the subject of an initial child protection conference during 2025/26 which is a 66% increase on the previous year however the number of children subject to an initial child protection conference (ICPC) during 2024/25 was low compared to the historic trend. This increase has moved NEL's rate of 79 per 10,000 just above statistical neighbours (England average 52, statistical neighbour 73). The number of children on a child protection plan has increased by 44% at the

end 2025/26 to 213 on 31 March 2026 from 148 on 31 March 2025. This recent increase in children on child protection plans is in the context of an overall reduction compared with our historic rate. The rate of children starting child protection plans is just above statistical neighbours/England average. There has been a sharpened focus across the workforce and partnership on identification and responding to abuse and neglect and understanding of the impact of intergenerational abuse and harm outside the home. There continues to be a sharpened focus on supporting children to be in their family. This has enhanced the use of child protection and PLO as a vehicle to effecting meaningful change. There has been external scrutiny of children on a child protection plan to ensure thresholds continue to be appropriate and proportionately aligned to risk and there remains a focus in ensuring children step down timely and proportionately.

- **The timeliness of initial child protection conferences has remained at an improved level.** 89% of ICPCs held in 2025/26 were in timescales, in line with 2024/25. There is room for improvement on the timeliness of ICPCs, though performance is better than comparator averages (England 81%, statistical neighbours 78%).
- **Most child protection review conferences were held within timescales.** 99% of child protection review conferences happened in timescales during 2025/26 maintaining the high performance seen each year in this area. 98% of children in our care reviews were held in timescales.

There has been a 4% increase in the number of children going missing and a 21% increase in the number of episodes of children missing: 229 children had one or more missing episodes during 2025/26 compared with 221 children the previous year. In total there were 731 episodes of missing during 2025/26 compared with 604 in 2024/25. 95% of children receive an offer of a Missing Catch Up from a professional in North East Lincolnshire, a slight increase from 2024/25. The number of missing episodes for children in our care has also increased. 51 children in our care had one or more missing episodes during 2024/25 accounting for a total of 257 missing episodes during the year, up from 43 children and 195 episodes in 2024/25. 10% of children in our care on 31st March 2026 had one or more missing incidents. This has moved higher than comparators (England 11%, statistical neighbours 9%). As partnership working has strengthened, we can better identify previously hidden missing episodes, especially for those children at risk of exploitation and harm outside the home. The Missing from Home or Care Protocol has been updated and the Missing Children Meeting refreshed to sharpen focus across the partnership on children in our care living outside North East Lincolnshire.

- **Better identification of children at risk of sexual harm:** 426 referrals had sexual harm as the presenting issue during 2025/26, up 20% from 356 in 2024/25 and a second yearly increase. Children on a child protection plan with a category of sexual harm has increased from 5% in 2024/25 to 7% on 31st March 2026. 312 assessments had factors of sexual harm identified after assessment in line with last year's increase. The increase has been informed by the delivery of child sexual abuse training across the partnership through the delivery of the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy.
- **Social care cases with factors of domestic abuse have reduced but remain high and the most common reason for contacts and referrals and factors identified after assessment.** 29% of contacts to the Integrated Front Door during 2025/26 had a primary concern of domestic abuse, which is more than double the proportion of contacts received for our 2nd highest reason of neglect. 29% of referrals made during 2025/26 related to families where domestic abuse was a presenting factor. 36% of assessments completed had parents who were subjects of domestic abuse, reduced from 44% in 2024/25 and 12% of assessments completed concerned children who were subject of domestic abuse, reduced from 14% in 2024/25. Although reduced, these figures remain

consistently high and above comparators. Nationally 32% of assessments related to parents who were subject to domestic abuse and 11% where children were subject to domestic abuse.

- **Management of children at risk of neglect:** The number of children with an assessment factor of neglect has decreased, with neglect being a factor after assessment in 17% of assessments completed compared with 19% in 2024/25. This is now in line with statistical neighbour average (17%) but below England average (19%). Children on a child protection plan for neglect has however increased during 2025/26 with 69% of children on a child protection plan for neglect. This has increased from 54% in 2024/25 and is now above comparators (England 49%, statistical neighbour 56%). 28% of children subject to strategy meetings in 2025/26 had concerns around neglect alleged.
- **Better identification of children at risk of child exploitation:** 36 children were identified after MACE to be at risk of / experiencing child sexual exploitation (CSE) and 21 children at risk of /experiencing child criminal exploitation (CCE) during 2025/26. The number of children with an open exploitation marker at year end has increased over the year with 14 children at risk of CSE and 22 children at risk of CCE compared with 11 at risk of/experiencing CSE and 10 children at risk of/experiencing CCE at end of 2024/25. 5% of child and family assessments identified factors of child sexual exploitation after assessment compared with 4% in 2024/25. This remains above comparators (England and statistical neighbours 2%). 7% of child and family assessments identified factors of CCE after assessment, up from 5% in 2024/25, which is also above comparators (England and statistical neighbours 3%). The Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting processes continues to be in place with an enhanced coordinated partnership response which is impacting positively on partners information sharing and outcomes for children. There has been a strengthened focus regarding exploitation, and the underpinning principles are overseen within the Child Exploitation Strategy Group which is chaired by Police and attended by the Partnership. Partnership and workforce training to identify the signs has been revised and delivered to equip and upskill the workforce and the partnership. The development work across the partnership has led to greater identification of children vulnerable to and at risk of exploitation to ensure needs are met and risk is reduced.
- **Local Authority Designated Officer Referrals has remained at an increased level comparable with 2024/25:** 238 LADO referrals were received in 2025/26 compared with 227 in 2024/25.
- **Numbers of children who are Electively Home Educated (EHE)** is consistently tracking at a lower number than the previous academic year, demonstrating the preventative work done with the partnership to ensure parents have the correct information, advice and guidance prior to making the decision to EHE. The EHE cohort is monitored with robust oversight in the service and within the Education Assurance Meeting.

Oversight of children in our care and care leavers

We have continued to have oversight of the outcomes for children in our care and care leavers, from a safeguarding perspective, through performance reporting, and going forward through the Safeguarding Performance Practice Assurance Group. System leaders and managers who attend the SCP Board, are also represented through the Corporate and Community Parenting Board governance arrangements, and as such, there is a robust interface and a strong focus on helping, supporting and protecting children in our care and care leavers.

Children in our care

There has continued to be successful interventions and planning to enable children to leave care. Alongside this there are several children who have entered our care following review at legal tracking meetings or via remand by the courts. There continues to be significant oversight of the entrants to care, both via senior management and independent scrutiny, with decisions being identified as appropriately aligned to the safety and needs for children.

- **416 children were in our care on 31 March 2026**, which is 22 children less than the 438 children in our care on 31 March 2025. Despite this continued decrease, NEL's rate of 124 per 10,000 remains higher than comparators (England average 67 and statistical neighbour 104). 115 children entered care during 2025/26 which is a 15% increase on 97 children who entered care the previous year, though our rate remains at a much lower level than historically. Our rate of 33 new entrants into our care per 10,000 children sits just above statistical neighbours (33 per 10,000). Over 2025/26 we have seen an increase in babies and teenagers aged 15 -17 entering our care. The 16/17-year-old homeless protocol has been strengthened and has resulted in more teenagers entering care to receive the support and stability needed.
- **Over 2025/26 North East Lincolnshire has seen some positive movement in the number of children being placed out of area or living in external provision.** 41% of our children were living out of area on 31st March 2026, compared with 47% at previous year end. The proportion of children living within our own provision on 31 March 2026 has risen to 61%, up from 54% at the previous year end. This is now much higher than the last published comparator data (statistical neighbour 42%, England 43%) This shift is the result of an increase in local sufficiency with 15 new fostering households approved in year; a 150% increase on the 2024/25 and the result of a continued and intensive fostering recruitment campaign. The impact of this is a 9% reduction in the number of children in our care placed with external foster carers and a 12% increase in children living with our own foster carers. There has also been an increase in the number of children living in our own children's homes and this is likely to increase further in the future with the registration of two new children's homes. This increase in local sufficiency has enabled children to return to the area to live in their local community and networks.
- **Slight decline in short-term stability of children in our care but a slight increase in long-term stability:** Over 2025/26 there has been a slight decline in the short-term stability of children in our care with 10% of children having 3 or more placement moves in the year, up from 8% in 2024/25. Our rate, although increased, does however remain in line with comparators (England 10%, statistical neighbours 11%). Our long-term stability of children in our care for 2.5 years or more and living in the same placement has improved slightly from last year to 60% from 57% in 2024/25 but remains lower than comparators. (England 69% statistical neighbours 65%). The work undertaken to review children's placements to ensure suitability, our work to return children to our area and our reunification work returning children to live with their parents or family networks has all had an impact on our placement stability measures. There continue to be increasing numbers of children living in agreed long-term fostering placements and children are consistently having the opportunity for permanent stable relationships.
- **Families engaging and receiving support from their family network:** 34 children left our care due to a Special Guardianship Order granted (25%), allowing the children to be cared for within their family networks. This accounts for 25% of our children leaving care and is proportionally higher than comparators (England 12%, statistical neighbours 16%). 17 children left our care due to a Child Arrangement Order being granted, which is 13% of children leaving our care and again this is higher than comparators (England 9%, statistical neighbours 12%).
- **The number of children in our care involved in offending has reduced.** During 2025/26 there were 4 children in our care who committed offences which equates to 2%. This is a reduction from 7 children (3%) in 2024/25, and our lowest number seen in the last 5 years.

Quality of life for Care leavers

The commitment of North East Lincolnshire Council to care experienced people has been demonstrated by the adoption of care experienced as a protected characteristic and the promotion of the needs of care experienced people across the Council. The development of the Family Enterprise, a refreshed offer, and creation of a new dedicated Care Leaver Hub has further demonstrated the whole Council commitment to achieving better outcomes for care leavers.

- **We are keeping in regular contact with all our care leavers open to services and are having lifelong contacts with care leavers no longer receiving services.** During 2025/26 NEL were in touch with 100% of care leavers aged 17-18 and 99% of our care leavers aged 19-21 at their birthday window. NEL are now performing above comparators (England average 93%) for both age groups.
- **In 2025/26, 100% of care leavers aged 17-18 and 97% of care leavers aged 19-21 were living in suitable accommodation** which is an increase from last year. NEL are performing better than the national average for care leavers in suitable accommodation (England average 91% for 17-18 yrs and 89% for 19-21yrs). We have built on and improved the accommodation quality and availability for care leavers including increased accommodation provision, bespoke support to young people and dedicated staff within the North East Lincolnshire Council's Housing Team. Building on this, work continues in partnership with colleagues in the Council's Housing Team and local housing providers to continue to develop and increase the choices of accommodation for care leavers.
- **Increase in care leavers aged 17-18 in education, employment and training but decrease in care leavers aged 19-21.** During 2025/26, 59% of care leavers aged 17-18 were in education, training or employment, (EET) up from 57% in 2024/25. NEL remain below comparators but are nearing statistical neighbours (England average 64% and statistical neighbour 60%). 48% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in EET, down from 51%. NEL are also below comparators for this age group (England average 54% and statistical neighbour 52%). During 2025/26 a Family Enterprise scheme has been established which is a dedicated programme designed for care leavers, to provide support to become work ready, and to enter the world of work. The adoption of protected characteristics for care experienced people in North East Lincolnshire Council will also be a significant enabler in building on and developing employment opportunities.

Inspection activity across North East Lincolnshire

ILACS Inspection

In July 2025, Ofsted completed an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) within North East Lincolnshire. The gradings received, were as follows:

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Figure 3 – OFSTED grading

Ofsted found key strengths across the partnership, including:

- Trust in children's social care has been rebuilt with key stakeholders and local agency partnerships. These strengthened relationships, greater strategic consensus and shared accountability across agencies have enabled these partnerships to work effectively together to improve outcomes for children, young people and care leavers in North East Lincolnshire.
- Early help arrangements are now a strength. There is a clear and effective strategy that underpins the delivery of these services. Families have easy access to support when they need it in locality family hubs, with signposting to a variety of universal services that help families to address their needs. Determined efforts have been made to strengthen partnerships across the borough. As a result, partners are now engaged and invested in the delivery of the early help offer.
- Multi-agency working is now prioritised and effective. Senior leaders have fostered a shared approach and accountability across agencies to deliver high quality help and support to children and their families. Trust has been re-established between partner agencies and children's social care. Partners have been reintroduced into the Integrated Front Door. They provide constructive challenge and support to practitioners and contribute to effective information-sharing. This is ensuring that the right decisions are being made for children.
- Children who are at risk of exploitation benefit from effective multi-agency information-sharing and planning.
- Since the last inspection, senior leaders have had a specific objective to understand the risks and better safeguard their children in care. Social workers, alongside wider partners, act swiftly to better safeguard children and young people from harm and try to disrupt and prevent exploitation to reduce risks. Risk assessments are now dynamic, and they are regularly updated and reviewed through a vulnerability risk management process.
- Partnership engagement is now a real strength. Previously, local agency partners lost trust and confidence in children's social care. The Director of Children's Services has made the rebuilding of these crucial relationships to become fully involved in the improvement agenda a key strategic priority. There is now mutual respect and common purpose, with priorities aligned across the partnership.

Ofsted found three areas for improvement within the inspection with work being undertaken to strengthen these areas.

1. The response to disabled children in need of help and protection

- Progress continues to create stability and consistency within the workforce in the disability team supported by the recruitment of permanent staff and managers. There has been a focus upon understanding the direct payments and short breaks cohort to ensure practice reflects need, to ensure proportionality to the families. Work is also progressing to review all children in receipt of resource allocation aligned to annual review processes.
- Developments have been made for all children to open to overnight short breaks and high levels of direct payments are open to one social worker to allow for consistency. This is where the children and family do not need support within CIN or CP planning.
- Training has been offered to the children's disability team regarding communication with children and the team also have access to a wide training calendar as part of Academy NEL and the SCP delivery.
- The children's disability team are becoming more aligned to the practice within CASS which further strengthens consistency across the system for children. There have been opportunities for shadowing, and the practice standards are increasingly met for children within the children's disability team..
- There continues to be increased management capacity and oversight, alongside observations of practice to ensure quality of practice which is consistent.
- There has been an appointment of an EHCP Social Care Co-Ordinator to support responses for EHCPs and ensure increased quality of information.

2. The timeliness and quality of recordings relating to the pre-proceeding process as part of the Public Law Outline (PLO)

- The timeliness and quality of recordings has been improved.
- There is improved senior manager oversight of the quality of PLO planning, supported by robust tracking of practice standards.
- There are weekly mechanisms in place to monitor the timeliness of the initial PLO letters and meetings, and the PLO protocol has been reviewed.
- The consistency of timescales is being monitored and there is clarity of review points within PLO, with oversight via the Legal Tracking and Support Panel, for which the terms of reference has been reviewed and refined.
- The PLO minute template has been reviewed to support consistency of recording, that it is SMART and that there are clear expectations of all parties.

3. How well care leavers are supported to understand the purpose of/and sharing of pathway plans

- Care leavers have been further supported to understand their pathway plans.
- A pathway plan development workshop package has been designed and delivered by the Deputy Service Director and Service Lead in NEL Council to focus on co-design with young people, aspirations and voice.
- Work has been progressed and implemented to improve the recording system which is contributing to improved records relating to pathway plans, which are now being shared consistently with our care leavers
- The focus on relational recording continues to be developed, where officers are writing more directly to our young people, ensuring that the records are clear about how and when the pathway plan has been reviewed together, and how the young person has contributed to and understood this.
- Digital solutions are also being explored to further enhance the sharing of, completing and engaging in pathway planning, through the development of a care leaver app.

Children's Homes

Children's Home inspection outcomes show all 7 of our Local Authority owned Children's Homes in North East Lincolnshire are graded as good (as of April 2026).

5) Voice and stakeholder engagement

'Voice and influence' is not just a phrase we use in North East Lincolnshire, and 'Your Voice Matters' is not just the title of the strategy for the voice and influence of children, young people and families across Children's Services.

Simply but significantly, our children are our future, and we are passionate about listening to and taking account of their views and experiences, and of their families, parents and carers, to better understand and shape their individual journeys, and their lived experiences, and for them to shape and influence how we need to work better together, and what we need to focus on to make a difference to their outcomes.

Our Children Our Future and Growing Stronger together Strategy communicate the importance of children young people and their families' voices being first last and central to all decision making.

The 'Your Voice Matters' Strategy shares how we do this and the Your Voice Matters annual report shares what we have been doing over the year and the difference this is making.

The voices gathered through voice and influence work and used across our services appropriate to what the voices are telling us. Following are some highlights from the year. You can find out more about these through the Your Voice Matters Annual report 2025-2026.

Your Voice Your Vote

Your Voice Your Vote is the annual consultation of young people aged 11-19 years to understand the priority areas they would like to see improved over the coming year. The vote is carried out in schools and youth projects across the borough and the top issues identified by young people are taken forward for further understanding and action to improve them. The schools responses are shared with them as well as the area votes so they can use them if they choose to in their school setting. Once every three years the Your Voice Your Vote question is carried out as part of the Adolescent Lifestyle Survey.

The top three votes during 2025 were:

1. Reduce knife and violent crime and help me feel safe on the streets 27%
2. More things to do and places to go 17%
3. Joint - Better mental health / More jobs and opportunities for young people 10% each

To learn more about these topics from young people we have created 'Quarterly Questions and Creative Conversations.'

Quarterly Questions and Creative Conversations

Using the Your Voice Your Vote Priority areas and others raised by young people we now regularly explored further through the use of a quick Quarterly Questions survey that is shared through social workers, youth workers and other key supporting staff for children and young people to tell us what they think about a topic. We have covered a range of these including

healthy relationships, health, employment and feeling safe. We are currently exploring things to do, places to go and how do it know.

The responses from the Quarterly Questions along with other data is used at a Creative Conversation bringing together children and young people with decision makers from the topic area being covered. For example, the 'feeling safe' Creative Conversation involved representatives from Community Safety Partnership, Children's Services and Humberside Police.

The conversations included violence against women and girls, anti-social behaviour in our communities and places that feel safe or unsafe. A number of actions were agreed to be taken away, which include arrangements to be made with the PCSO's to meet and check the welfare of our care experienced young people living in their own accommodation. It was identified that the police communications team would share contact cards to ensure that young people are aware of different ways of contacting the Police, what they can report, how to report and keeping themselves safe.

In addition to the Quarterly Questions and Creative Conversations, children and young people have shared their views and ideas as well as experiences through a range of events such as the Growing Up Well in NEL Charter. During this process to inform and influence the charter they told us that:

- Police should regularly visit schools and help children
- A need to create places or spaces where children can have access to animals
- Teachers need to listen to kids more
- The importance of learning 'life skills'
- They'd welcome help to keep them safe online and on their phones

Children's Independent Advocacy

North East Lincolnshire Council commissioned independent advocacy for children and young people from October 2022 to September 2025. During the final year of the three-year contract with NYAS, options for the future of the service in order to manage the service at an increased capacity were considered and a decision was made through Children's Services Leadership that the service would be managed within the Children's Assurance Partnerships and Evaluation (CAPE) Service of North East Lincolnshire Council after the completion of the contract with NYAS.

The current Independent Children's Advocacy Service started on 1 October 2025. In this report we first outline the numbers from the NYAS delivered service and it should be noted that this service had a smaller capacity than the service in place from 1 October.

From 1 April to 30 September 2025 the total number of advocacy requests was 16. Of the 16 requests there were 10 made for children in our care and 6 for children in need of protection. For children in our care, 6 were living in foster care, 2 lived in children's homes and 2 didn't state this in their form. The reasons for advocacy included issues with where they live and living arrangements, mental health and 2 were supporting a complaint. The ages of the children ranged from 4-18years with majority being 12-16 years.

From October 2026 the service is managed through the CAPE Service. This is at an increased capacity and increased service. We are now offering the service to care leavers in addition to children in our care and in need of protection. We are able to offer the service to more children and young people as a result of the increased capacity. The total number of requests for advocacy service from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026 was 71.

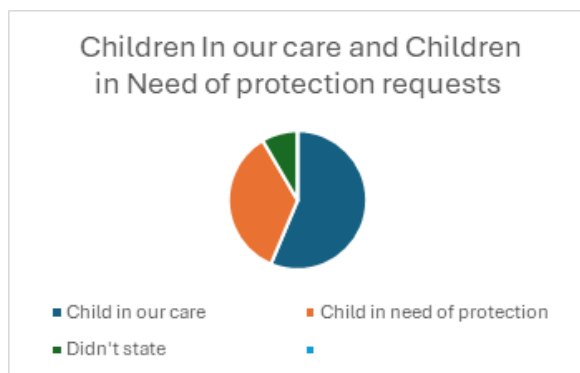


Figure 4 – CIC and CIN requests

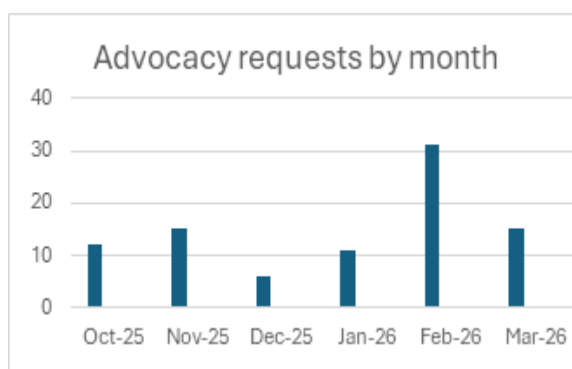


Figure 5 – Advocacy requests

The ages of the children requesting the service range from 4-18 years old with the majority being aged 14-17 years. The children in our care who requested advocacy during this period live in foster care (50%) children's homes (35%) and a small number with parents or in a specialist home (15%). For the children in our care with additional needs there were 10 requests for advocacy. There were 10 children requesting advocacy who live out of the area during this period. Around a third of the requests so far have been for children in need of protection. This is an improvement from the first part of the year where the requests for advocacy for children in need of protection was low. Initial feedback from children and young people receiving advocacy, as well as their parents/carers and the professionals supporting them, is really positive.

Wishes and feelings surveys

Just under 100 children and young people in need of protection chose to complete their wishes and feelings using the online form for their review meeting during the year. This is an option that is offered to the children and young people in advance of their meetings to enable them to share their voice for the meeting in a way they are comfortable. This is not instead of but to enhance the direct work with their social worker and child protection conference chair. This enables us to explore and identify any emerging themes from the responses shared.

For example, **49%** of children aged 7-10 reported that the conference / review had been explained to them, and they knew why it was taking place. **36%** selected no. **77%** of young people aged 11+ reported that they knew about their conference / review meeting and understood why it was needed, **15%** stated that they did not know about their conference. Across both survey's 12 children/ young people said they were not sure about their conference / review meeting.

Young people were asked if they wanted to attend their meeting, **51%** of 7–10-year-old, selected no, whilst **44%** of 11+ also selected no. Of 100 responses across both surveys, 35 young people said they would like to attend their meetings, 16 were not sure.

So What?

From using the information from the responses both individually and as a cohort the team have been creating better information for the children and young people and are helping to review future questions asked of them, and format of this, to make it easier to access and so we can receive more responses from children and young people in the future.

The core questions have been developed from the learning from this work and input from children and young people. The core questions are six questions asked to children, young people and families across the whole of Children's Services at review and closure stage.

These help us to understand the experiences of the people using our services throughout their journey and inform how we might improve our services as a result. Core questions are being set up in Liquid Logic and results will be reported into key decision-making meetings.

Children in our care and care leavers

Our Voice Listen Up is the mechanism for us to engage and hear the voices of children and young people in care and leaving care. The opportunities available to them to get involved include:

Influencers – bringing young people together to discuss and plan with decision makers as to how we can improve things for them. Their work this year has included sharing their views with the Independent Reviewing Service about how we can make review meetings more child friendly from their perspective, with the fostering team about what they can be looking for when assessing potential foster carers including a checklist for the home, with the CAPE Service to inform the corporate and community parenting offer for children in our care.

Bakers – meeting termly to create sweet treats, connect through cooking and learn new skills with some healthy competition thrown in. This brings children, carers and staff together through a common interest and the children and young people taking part in this have been involved in informing the reviewed core questions and their format for sharing their views, wishes and feelings before their review meetings. Their views have also influenced what to bake in the future, and the creation of posters, flyers and suggestions for prizes for future events. These events see children and young people returning time after time and looking forward to each one.

Creatives – this year has seen a choir that cares running weekly term time where children, carers and staff coming together to sing together. Although the numbers of children engaging have been relatively low, those who have taken part have gained a lot from the experience. We also published a book by a care leaver which was written by her about her experiences of care. She intended for this to be given to children in the area coming into care, though once the book launch happened there has been a lot of interest in her book and talents. Hundreds of the books have already been given to children in our care and carers in the area, and she has also sold hundreds of the book and created some resources to go with the book to be used by social care staff. She has been delivering extracts from the book at key events such as World Social Work Day and Corporate and Community Parenting Fortnight.

Socials – a variety of events through the year are arranged and delivered including discos, easter fun and crafts and a silly summer sports day. Where possible we had themed engagement activity within these events such as capturing thoughts on growing up well in NEL while planting seeds to grow at home. These events create an environment children and young people can come together for fun activities and share what they think in a fun way connected to the event.

Independent visitors, is something that is available in each Local Authority. It offers children in our care who would like a trusted adult who volunteers their time to build a positive and trusted relationship with them, meeting on a regular basis over a sustained period of time. They do fun things together and it is incredibly rewarding for the child as well as the adult volunteer. We know how trusted adults can provide safety for children and young people. Over the past year we have worked hard to recruit and train more buddies for our children, and we now have 25 Buddies available, most of whom are currently matched with children and young people. The relationships have been so important especially for some of the children who have experienced a lot of change and their Buddy has been a positive and consistent person throughout this change.

Children and young people meeting decision makers

The Corporate and Community Parenting Board receives a regular report on the voices of children and young people as well as having three young people as members of the board. This includes the report on the Quarterly Questions and Creative Conversations, and sections arising from them are monitored through this meeting.

The Children's Senior Leadership Team and Corporate and Community Parenting Board members regularly meet with children and young people through Our Voice Listen Up activities and take account of their views and experiences to shape individual plans and outcomes, as well as wider practice and service delivery.

The Director of Children's Services regularly meets with children in our care for 1-1 conversations and to consider how we can learn from experiences. This has resulted in a lived experience workshop and celebration event and there are plans to do some work around sharing differing experiences to learn from them and understand the experience of moving into independence.

6) Progress / achievements made against 2025/26

Priority area: Early Help

Progress on delivery plan

- The Early Help Strategic Delivery Plan 2024/26 has continued to be progressed across the partnership, with priority areas including improved health and wellbeing, early years, education, training and employment, whole family working, parental conflict and domestic abuse, hidden harm, and harm outside the home. Progress has focused on strengthening a consistent, co-ordinated and evidence-based multi-agency response to children and families, supported by improved use of data and partnership assurance. This has been further strengthened by strong representation and engagement from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, contributing to a more holistic and inclusive approach to Early Help delivery.
- Significant progress has been made in strengthening a whole-family, relational approach to practice, supported by the embedding of the Risk Analysis Framework and revised Early Help Assessment. Workforce development has been a key enabler of this, with ongoing training and workshops supporting practitioners across priority areas, including trauma-informed practice, parental conflict, domestic abuse, SEND and substance misuse. This has strengthened practitioner confidence and supported more consistent, strengths-based assessments and plans co-produced with families.
- Multi-agency working has been strengthened through the continued development of Team Around the Family arrangements, supported by increased capacity within Early Help co-ordination. This has improved partnership involvement in supporting families at an earlier stage and contributed to reduced duplication and more coordinated responses.
- Family Hubs and the Start for Life programme have continued to be embedded, providing accessible, community-based support for children and families, including co-located health practitioners. This has strengthened integrated delivery and improved access to universal and targeted early help services across North East Lincolnshire.
- Targeted delivery has progressed across key priorities, including parental conflict and domestic abuse, hidden harm and harm outside the home. This includes strengthened partnership working with Police, Health and Community organisations, development of targeted programmes, and increased focus on early identification and prevention.

- The voice of the child and family continues to be embedded across Early Help practice, with a focus on understanding lived experience and ensuring that assessment, planning and intervention are co-produced with families, supporting resilience and improved outcomes.

Impact statements

- Data indicates a strengthening Early Help system, supported by improved partnership working, workforce development and the embedding of a whole-family, relational approach across priority areas.
- Early Help demand and activity remains stable, with Local Authority assessments broadly in line with the previous year. At the same time, there has been an increase in partner-led Team Around the Family (TAF) arrangements, demonstrating improved multi-agency engagement and a continued shift towards earlier identification of need.
- The increase in partner-led TAFs, particularly within education settings, reflects a strengthened partnership approach to early intervention. This is supporting more coordinated responses and contributing to a reduction in duplication across services.
- There has been a reduction in the number of children stepping up to children's social care, suggesting that more children and families are receiving appropriate support at an earlier stage, helping to prevent escalation to statutory intervention.
- Domestic abuse remains a significant presenting need across the Early Help and safeguarding system and is recognised as a major public health issue impacting both adults and children. Whilst levels have reduced across contacts, referrals and assessments, they remain high and above national comparators, reinforcing the importance of continued focus on early identification, prevention and targeted support.
- Children in North East Lincolnshire continue to be less likely than the national average to become first-time entrants to the youth justice system, reflecting a strong preventative approach and effective use of diversionary and early intervention pathways.
- Workforce development strengthened partnership arrangements and the continued embedding of a whole-family approach are contributing to improved consistency in practice and more effective, targeted interventions for children and families.

Overall, this reflects continued strengthening of Early Help arrangements, supporting earlier identification of need, improved partnership working and more effective prevention of escalation to statutory services.

Next Steps:

- Support the embedding of national reforms, including the Family First Partnership programme, ensuring alignment with local Early Help arrangements and informing the revision of the Early Help Strategy and Delivery Plan for 2026–2027. This includes strengthening alignment with wider community planning activity.
- Strengthen the partnership response to domestic abuse and whole-family risk, including rollout of the Safe and Together model alongside wider workforce development to improve identification, assessment and coordinated multi-agency responses.
- Further develop the Early Help offer in response to key areas of need, including parental mental health, SEND and hidden harm, ensuring improved understanding of pathways and more consistent access to support across the partnership.
- Enhance community-based and preventative provision, including Family Hubs, Best Start, volunteer programmes and community-led activity, ensuring services remain accessible, integrated and responsive to local need.
- Strengthen support for families through improved access to childcare and short breaks provision, including consideration of school holiday childcare, recognising the impact on family stability, wellbeing and employment.

- Ensure the Early Help offer remains responsive to emerging risks and needs, including online behaviours such as gambling, through ongoing review and adaptation of services.

Priority area: Child Sexual Abuse

Progress on delivery plan

- The Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group have overseen progress on the delivery of the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy. The Child Sexual Abuse Strategic Delivery Plan was refreshed in April 2025, informed by the SCP's review of the recommendations from the Louise Casey National Audit and wider Government guidance. The Strategic Delivery Plan sets out clear priority outcomes focused on embedding the Child Sexual Abuse strategy to ensure a consistent and effective multi-agency response; strengthening the use of data and intelligence to inform local understanding of risk; developing a confident, skilled workforce through high quality education and training; and increasing awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse among children, families and communities.
- A child sexual abuse Practice Learning Line of Sight thematic review was undertaken, identifying learning relating to the importance of professional curiosity, understanding the full family context, timely and effective information sharing, practitioner knowledge of sexual harm and risk indicators, and the need for consistency in the use of safeguarding tools and procedures.
- A partnership wide baseline assessment identified that most organisations rely on partnership arrangements, statutory guidance and national specialist resources to support child sexual abuse practice, rather than bespoke internal tools. While this reflects strong multi-agency working, the findings highlighted variation in awareness and access to child sexual abuse resources and training. This has informed a targeted programme of communications and practice support to strengthen consistency across the partnership.
- Significant progress has been made in strengthening workforce capability through a coordinated training programme. This included delivery of an intrafamilial CSA Train the Trainer programme in September 2025, with 10 partner practitioners trained to support sustainable training capacity. Targeted child sexual abuse training for social workers was delivered in November 2025, strengthening specialist practice within Children's Services.
- Multi-agency Child sexual abuse training informed by the Train the Trainer programme has been embedded within the SCP training pool, with bi monthly delivery from March 2026. Joint child sexual abuse training has also commenced within the Police, delivered collaboratively by Children's Services and Police colleagues, strengthening shared understanding and a consistent multi-agency response. Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) training is embedded within the SCP training programme and remains accessible via the SCP website, with associated practice guidance subject to annual review.
- CSA awareness continues to be embedded within education settings through the PSHE curriculum, alongside ongoing access to NSPCC resources to support prevention, healthy relationships and early disclosure.
- Oversight of national learning, including the Louise Casey national audit on child sexual exploitation, has provided assurance that local priorities remain appropriate. Delivery of actions arising from this audit is embedded within the Child Exploitation Strategic Group, ensuring clear governance and accountability.

Impact statements

- Data indicates improved identification and recognition of child sexual abuse across the safeguarding system, supported by increased training and awareness activity.

- Between April 2025 and March 2026, 426 referrals were received where sexual abuse was the presenting concern, with 295 assessments identifying sexual abuse as a factor. On average, 10.25% of completed assessments identified sexual abuse as a contributing factor. Compared with 2024/25, referrals presenting with sexual abuse increased (from 356 to 426), while the number of assessments identifying sexual abuse as a factor reduced slightly (from 302 to 295), alongside a reduction in the proportion of completed assessments identifying sexual abuse as a contributing factor (from 12% to 10.25%).
- An average of 16 children were subject to a child protection plan under the category of sexual abuse, representing 8.25% of children on plans. During the same period, 381 strategy meetings were held where concerns of sexual abuse were present. This compares with 2024/25, when an average of 7 children were subject to a Child Protection Plan under the category of sexual abuse, representing 5% of children on plans.
- Although the number of children subject to child protection plans due to sexual harm remained broadly consistent with Quarter 3, this was double that seen in Quarter 4 of the previous year, indicating improved identification and response. Despite this, the proportion of Child Protection Plans related to sexual abuse reduced slightly, from 9% to 7%, within an overall increase in plans.
- Allegations of sexual abuse accounted for 23% of strategy discussions in Quarter 4, reflecting increased professional confidence in recognising risk and initiating appropriate safeguarding action.
- Preventative and early-help activity continues to demonstrate positive impact. Delivery of the NSPCC Speak Out, Stay Safe programme reached 744 children between April and July 2025. Feedback highlighted increased staff confidence, strong child engagement, and increased disclosure of safeguarding concerns.
- Learning from Practice Learning Line of Sight activity is supported by clear action plans, with progress monitored through partnership governance arrangements. This includes delivery of Professional Curiosity training to Children's Services staff in March 2026, alongside the embedding of the Professional Curiosity Tool via the SCP website to support consistent application in practice. In addition, sexual harm training is being rolled out across the partnership using the Centre of Expertise introductory course, facilitated by locally trained practitioners, strengthening practitioner understanding of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. Training attendance, engagement with SCP policies and procedures, and use of practice tools are monitored and reported quarterly through the SCP dashboard, enabling the Partnership to evidence impact and identify areas for continuous improvement.

Next Steps:

- Maintain CSA as a core partnership priority, with continued reporting through SCP governance arrangements and strategic oversight via the Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group.
- Further strengthen community and professional awareness of child sexual abuse through a co-ordinated communications approach aligned to the SCP Communication Strategy, including education settings and wider partner networks.
- Continue to embed and sustain multi-agency training, including intrafamilial and Harmful Sexual Behaviour, through the SCP training pool, with a stronger focus on translating learning into improved practice consistency and outcomes for children.
- Maintain alignment with national learning and reviews, including ongoing oversight of actions arising from the Louise Casey national audit through the Child Exploitation Strategic Group, ensuring continued assurance and impact.

Priority Area: Neglect

Progress on Delivery Plan

- The Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group have overseen progress on the delivery of the Neglect Strategic Delivery Plan since it was refreshed in April 2025. The plan sets out clear priority outcomes required to embed the NEL Neglect Strategy and to strengthen and enable a consistent, effective and evidence-based multi-agency response to children at risk of, or experiencing, neglect. Progress has focused on improved use of data-driven insights and partnership assurance, alongside working to embed the neglect screening tool, wider neglect toolkit and practice guidance. This has been supported by workforce development, increased community awareness as evidenced through SCP scrutiny, a sustained focus on the voice of the child, as demonstrated through partner assurance reports, and recognition of dental decay as a potential indicator of neglect and work in supporting identification.
- A Neglect Practice Learning Line of Sight thematic review was undertaken during the year. The review identified areas of good practice, including effective multi-agency co-ordination, timely responses to families moving into the area, strong practitioner–child relationships, appropriate housing responses to unsafe home conditions, and relationship-based practice that supported collaboration with families and wider family networks. Learning highlighted the importance of effective information sharing to ensure that historical and current service involvement is known and visible, alongside consistent application of professional curiosity, analytical practice and use of key assessment tools, including neglect screening tools, genograms and chronologies in order. There was some identification of variability in multi-agency practice.
- A SCP partnership-wide communication awareness baseline assessment identified that neglect practice is largely supported through local safeguarding arrangements, based on professional judgement, multi-agency working, supervision and training, rather than reliance on a single standardised assessment tool. While some organisations have developed internal resources, most partners rely on shared partnership tools, statutory guidance and local processes. The assessment highlighted variation in awareness and use of neglect tools and training across sectors, identifying a clear opportunity to strengthen communication, engagement and access to the SCP neglect training offer and core resources.
- Partnership oversight has been further strengthened and embedded through the introduction and consistent returns of an agency reporting form within the Thematic Strategic Group, providing assurance on how agencies are embedding the Neglect Strategy in practice. This has supported improved organisational ownership and leadership oversight, including the identification of a neglect champion within the Police, with ongoing governance activity maintaining focus on policy embedment, tool usage and consistent practice.
- The voice of the child continues to be captured within Early Help assessments through a focus on understanding children's lived experiences. A range of tools is available to practitioners, including resources hosted on the SCP website, to support the effective capture and representation of children's voices within assessment, planning and decision making.
- Workforce development has been a key enabler of progress, with over 600 practitioners across the partnership having completed neglect training. This has included bespoke delivery to partner agencies, such as housing, alongside the continued roll out of SCP training through the multi-agency training pool. Training provision has been strengthened through new learning materials, including practitioner video resources developed with a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) author and Practice Improvement Advisor. This has supported increased practitioner confidence, improved consistency in assessment and delivery, and a shared understanding of neglect across the partnership.

- Neglect awareness continues to be embedded within education settings through safeguarding training, practice assurance and routine capture of the child's voice, alongside access to NSPCC programmes and resources, including school-based preventative education and national helplines, supporting early identification, prevention and safe disclosure.

Impact statements

- Data indicates a developing picture of identification and recognition of child neglect across the safeguarding system, supported by strengthened assurance activity, workforce development and increased use of tools and frameworks.
- Between April 2025 and March 2026, 482 children had an assessment where neglect was identified as a factor, with 16.5% of completed assessments identifying neglect as a contributing factor which is lower than the same period in 2024/25). This, alongside the rising proportion of children subject to Child Protection Plans for neglect, identifies the need for intervention at an earlier point potentially preventing a higher level of need
- The proportion of children subject to a child protection plan under neglect has increased during 25/26 with 69% of children on a child protection plan for neglect.
- Concerns relating to neglect accounted for a significant proportion of strategy activity, with an increase in strategy meetings where neglect was alleged (43% in Quarter 4, compared with 23% in Quarter 3). This follows a reduction earlier in the year (Quarter 1: 103; Quarter 2: 96; Quarter 3: 65), with a sharp increase in Quarter 4 (164), and may reflect improved recognition and escalation of neglect, supported by workforce development and multi-agency learning.
- Newly reported data for 2025/26 shows a slight overall reduction in neglect-related offences (16 to 14), with a decline across Quarters 1 to 3 followed by an increase in Quarter 4 (14). This aligns with wider partnership data, including increased numbers of children subject to child protection plans under neglect towards year end, and may indicate improved identification and escalation of concerns, supported by the uptake in neglect training.
- Preventative and early help activity continues to demonstrate impact, supported by the embedding of the Neglect Strategy, training and partnership tools, contributing to strengthened early identification, professional curiosity and multi-agency response. Public Health and Public Health Nursing, including Health Visiting and School Nursing, play a central role in early identification of need, prevention of harm, and reducing health inequalities across North East Lincolnshire.
- Learning from Practice Learning Line of Sight activity is supported by clear action plans, with progress monitored through partnership governance arrangements. This has strengthened multi-agency practice, particularly in relation to professional curiosity, a key learning area also identified and progressed within the CSA Strategy. Workforce development, including professional curiosity training and the embedding of partnership tools, is further enhancing practitioner confidence and consistency in recognising and responding to neglect.

Overall, this reflects a strengthening partnership approach to the identification, assessment and escalation of neglect, supporting more timely, coordinated and effective multi-agency responses for children and families.

Next Steps:

- Further strengthen information sharing across agencies, including the development and implementation of escalation arrangements where information is not received from partner agencies or other local authorities, particularly where children and families move

into North East Lincolnshire. Further integration of health data and routine contacts into neglect pathways would strengthen earlier identification and intervention.

- Improve consistency in the use of assessment tools, including neglect screening tools, genograms and chronologies, supported through targeted communication, learning and ongoing practice assurance.
- Continue to embed professional curiosity across the workforce through ongoing multi-agency training, supervision and application of partnership tools, aligned with learning from Practice Learning Line of Sight and national reviews.
- Enhance partnership awareness and engagement with the SCP neglect training offer and core resources, addressing variation identified through baseline assessment activity
- Maintain a focus on early identification and prevention through strengthening the impact of Early Help, education and community-based activity, including recognition of wider indicators of neglect such as dental health, and the effective capture and use of the child's voice.

Priority Area: Child Exploitation

Progress on delivery Plan

- The Child Exploitation Strategic Group have overseen progress on the delivery of the Child Exploitation Strategy. The Child Exploitation Strategic Delivery Plan was refreshed in April 2025, setting out clear priority outcomes to support delivery of the Child Exploitation Strategy. The delivery plan was informed by oversight of national learning, local assessment against this, including the Louise Casey national audit on child sexual exploitation and the national enquiry into Grooming Gangs, in addition a partnership Child Exploitation practice event held in November 2025 in response to emerging local concerns and learning from children's direct experiences. This learning continues to inform the ongoing development and revision of the Child Exploitation Strategic Delivery Plan for 2026/27. Delivery of actions are embedded within the Child Exploitation Strategic Group, ensuring clear governance, accountability and a shared understanding of partnership priorities.
- Systems and processes have been strengthened to support partnership oversight and response to child exploitation, including the development of a multi-agency exploitation profile and improved reporting into the Child Exploitation Strategic Group.
- Strategic co-ordination across the partnership has progressed, supporting the identified need for the development of a dedicated Child Exploitation and Development Co-ordinator, strengthened governance arrangements and clearer delivery priorities.
- Workforce development and awareness have been strengthened through the development and delivery of mandatory child exploitation training across Children's Services, in addition to the SCP multi-agency child exploitation training, the use of the child exploitation risk assessment tool and current development of a Child Exploitation toolkit has supported wider partnership learning, alongside engagement with community and business sectors.
- Multi-agency engagement has been strengthened, including improved information sharing arrangements and increased collaboration with key partners, both at an operational level through the Multi-agency Child Exploitation meetings and at the Child Exploitation Strategic Group supporting a more co-ordinated response to children at risk of exploitation.
- Activity has continued to focus on earlier identification, prevention and learning, including strengthened return home interview processes and the use of partnership learning including from the November CE event, to inform ongoing practice and service development.
- A partnership-wide communication, awareness baseline assessment identified that most organisations rely on partnership arrangements, statutory guidance and national

resources to support child exploitation practice, rather than bespoke internal tools. While this reflects strong multi-agency working, the findings highlighted variation in awareness and access to child exploitation resources, including tools and training, particularly across services less routinely engaged with exploitation activity. This provides a baseline understanding of current practice and will be used to inform targeted communications, workforce development and partnership improvement activity.

Impact Statements

- Increased workforce awareness and training has contributed to improved identification of children at risk of exploitation, reflected in rising numbers across 2025/26 (CSE increasing from 9 to 13; CCE from 13 to 26). While identified children are supported through multi-agency plans with oversight via MACE arrangements, intelligence submissions remain variable across the partnership, particularly in relation to Community Police Intelligence Forms, which continue to limit the partnership's full understanding of risk and activity. Further work is therefore required to strengthen the consistency and quality of intelligence submissions to support more effective disruption and safeguarding responses.
- Strengthened governance and oversight through the Child Exploitation Strategic Group has improved clarity of partnership roles and responsibilities, supporting a more co-ordinated and accountable multi-agency response.
- Learning from national reviews and local partnership activity has informed strategic priorities and the ongoing development of the Child Exploitation Strategic Delivery Plan, ensuring delivery is aligned to identified risks and areas for improvement.
- The local partnership practice learning event in November 2025 was based on local children's experiences of exploitation. The event identified the link between alcohol and substance use being used as a mechanism to exploit children. The need for further strengthening of relationships between the SCP and drug support services and housing in respect of the use of B&Bs and Air B&Bs in child exploitation. A number of actions were taken forward from the event which are now integral parts of the child exploitation strategic delivery plan.
- The Local Arrangement partnership event in January 2026 raised awareness on both child sexual and criminal exploitation and the local context including learning from children's experiences. The indicators of exploitation were shared and the signs and symptoms and agencies responsibility in completing the Community Police Intelligence Form. There was a focus on the danger of victim blaming language adultification of children and the impact of child of child exploitation on the child and the community and the importance of disruption.
- Improved multi-agency engagement, including strengthened links with key partners, is supporting a broader partnership response to exploitation, recognising the wider contextual risks affecting children and young people.
- Learning from partnership events and practitioner feedback has strengthened understanding of exploitation as abuse and highlighted key areas for further development, including intelligence sharing, use of language and professional curiosity.

Next Steps

- Continue to embed learning from partnership activity, national reviews, local events and baseline assessment findings into the refreshed Child Exploitation Strategic Delivery Plan for 2026/27.
- Strengthen the consistency and quality of intelligence submissions across the partnership, including increased use of community police intelligence forms, supported

by clear expectations, workforce development and strengthened governance oversight to improve understanding of risk and inform disruption activity.

- Further develop partnership co-ordination and leadership through implementation of the Child Exploitation and Development Co-ordinator role, supporting delivery of strategic priorities and improved multi-agency working.
- Deliver a partnership Child Exploitation Conference in June 2026, including national expertise from the guest Speaker Dez Holmes, on how adolescent development can inform our safeguarding response, responding to the national cross government tackling child exploitation principles in strengthening shared understanding across agencies and inform future strategy development.
- Undertake a child exploitation Practice Learning Line of Sight thematic review in June 2026 to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements, including MACE, and identify areas for further improvement.
- Further develop the quality, consistency and integration of multi-agency data to strengthen understanding of risk, cohorts and emerging themes and better inform partnership response and disruption activity.

7) Scrutiny and Assurance Including Independent Scrutiny

Scrutiny and Assurance Framework Activity

The SCP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework is well established and alongside the SCP dashboard is actively driving assurance and scrutiny of the quality and impact practice to safeguard children. Scrutiny and assurance have been undertaken in relation to multi-agency case audit practice learning line of sight learning events, case specific line of sights as evidenced above, independent review of learning from local reviews, challenge and support from the Independent Chair, Section 11 audit and annual education establishment safeguarding audit, leading to local learning, partnership action, changes in practice and outcomes.

Following the publication of Working Together 2023, a decision was made by the SCP Board to develop independent scrutiny arrangements and to cease the role of the Independent Chair and for one of the Delegated Safeguarding Partners to chair the SCP Board. A job description was developed for the independent scrutineers, and four Independent Scrutiny Officers were commissioned / recruited to, who are representative from across the three statutory safeguarding partner organisations. They have undertaken assurance activity aligned to the scrutiny and assurance framework and SCP priority areas of focus (for 2024/25 and beyond).

Practice Learning Line of Sight events are a key element of the SCP Scrutiny and Assurance Framework, providing a structured opportunity for multi-agency reflection on practice. Events may be either thematic, taking place three times per year around an agreed theme, or case-specific, undertaken following agreement by safeguarding partners to explore multi-agency learning from agencies' involvement with a specific child and family.

During 2025/26, five practice learning line of sight events were undertaken, comprising two thematic managed by a panel of agencies independent of the cases and three case-specific reviews chaired by the SCP independent scrutiny officers.

Following each event, a concise seven-minute practice learning briefing, drawn from the experiences of the children and families discussed, is shared with practitioners to support

the wider dissemination and embedding of learning. Briefings from thematic events are also published on the SCP website.

Identified learning and areas for development are progressed through partnership governance arrangements via action plans overseen by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group. Key themes are reported to the SCP Board, with actions monitored to completion and formally signed off.

Key findings, progress against actions and impact from Practice Learning Line of Sight activity include:

Event	Key Findings	Progress	Impact
Thematic Child Sexual Abuse November 2025	Professional curiosity and exploring the full family context are essential to ensure children are seen and treated as children The need for clearer multi-agency processes where families move into North East Lincolnshire, including escalation where information is not received from other Local Authorities A strong understanding of sexual harm and the risk indicators is vital, with specialist guidance informing timely and effective risk assessment and analysis The consistent use of available safeguarding tools is important, including the Neglect Toolkit, sexual harm resources and escalation procedures, to strengthen assessment and planning Workforce stability plays a key role in reducing drift, with consistent social workers supporting timely progress for children.	Professional Curiosity training delivered (March 2026), alongside further partnership learning informed by national reviews in April and May 2026. Sexual harm training is being rolled out across the partnership to strengthen understanding of intra-familial child sexual abuse and practitioner confidence. To support consistent practice, training, tools and guidance are routinely promoted via the SCP website, newsletter and subgroups, with engagement and impact monitored through the SCP dashboard to inform continuous improvement. Work is underway to strengthen multi-agency processes for families moving into North East Lincolnshire, including development of a Children's Services escalation pathway where safeguarding information is not received.	The training and associated tools contributes to earlier identification of risk, improved information sharing, stronger professional challenge and timelier, coordinated multi-agency intervention. Strengthened cross-boundary processes support more consistent responses where families move into the area, reducing the risk of key safeguarding information not being available. This also supports more effective identification and assessment of sexual harm and improved multi-agency responses to safeguard children.
Three Case Specific were	Opportunities for earlier safeguarding intervention	Professional curiosity and core practice tools,	Training and the co-ordinated multi-agency

Event	Key Findings	Progress	Impact
undertaken between April 2025 to April 2026	were missed due to inconsistent professional curiosity and challenge. Risk was not consistently analysed holistically, including the interaction between home, family and wider contextual factors. Language and recording did not always reflect the child's lived experience, with some use of minimising or inappropriate terminology. Information sharing across agencies was inconsistent, with key information not always recorded, shared or visible at critical points. Multi-agency planning and oversight lacked consistency, particularly where cases were complex or crossed geographical boundaries. Greater focus is needed on understanding and responding to children's emotional wellbeing, lived experiences and the impact of neglect and domestic abuse. Practice needs to better reflect trauma-informed approaches, including during transition periods and when working with vulnerable young people (e.g. out of area moves or transition to adult services). The need for clearer joint working arrangements across services (e.g.	including chronologies, genograms and assessment frameworks, continue to be embedded to strengthen professional challenge and support consistent multi-agency planning and analysis. Multi-agency training and learning activity is being delivered to strengthen understanding of holistic risk assessment, including the interaction between family, environmental and contextual factors. Work is progressing with partners (including housing, health and education) to support more coordinated responses to vulnerability, including transitions, out-of-area placements and strengthening the implementation of a transitional safeguarding approach. Workforce development activity continues to promote language that reflects the child's lived experience, including trauma-informed approaches. Work is underway to strengthen multi-agency information sharing, oversight and escalation processes, supported by SCP guidance and tools, including improved joint planning in complex and cross-boundary cases.	approach is supporting earlier identification and response to risk, with improved professional curiosity, more consistent information sharing, and stronger multi-agency analysis of children's needs and lived experiences. Strengthened joint planning and oversight are contributing to more coordinated and effective multi-agency intervention, particularly in complex, cross-boundary and transitional safeguarding contexts. A greater focus on trauma-informed practice and children's emotional wellbeing is supporting more appropriate and responsive interventions, improving outcomes for children and young people.

Event	Key Findings	Progress	Impact
	housing, health, education), including shared ownership where responsibility is unclear.		
Thematic Neglect March 2026	Information sharing between agencies and across local authority boundaries was inconsistent Probation involvement and domestic abuse related information was not always known/visible within the multi-agency response Professional curiosity and analytical practice varied with reliance on parental accounts in some cases Inconsistent use of tools such as neglect screening, genograms and chronologies limited assessment and planning	Workforce development continues to strengthen consistent recognition and response to neglect, including strengthening professional curiosity and reducing reliance on parental self-report. A strengthened focus on the consistent use of tools, including the Neglect Screening Tool, alongside core practice tools such as chronologies and genograms, to support earlier identification of cumulative harm and strengthen assessment. Work is underway to strengthen multi-agency information sharing across local authority boundaries, including improved visibility of probation involvement and domestic abuse-related information. Practice development activity is supporting more consistent analysis and joint planning across agencies, particularly where risk is complex or extends across family and contextual factors. Ongoing partnership work is strengthening coordinated responses to neglect, including improving clarity of roles and responsibilities across services.	Work force development, information sharing and practice development across the is supporting more consistent recognition and response to neglect across the partnership, with improved multi-agency information sharing and greater use of tools to identify cumulative risk as evidenced within data analysis. Strengthened analysis and joint planning are contributing to earlier and more coordinated intervention, particularly where neglect is complex, long-term or linked to wider contextual factors. This is supporting a stronger focus on the child's lived experience and improving the consistency and effectiveness of multi-agency responses.

Figure 6 – Practice Learning key learning

In addition to independent scrutiny, the SCP Board commissioned assurance activity and reports across the partnership and from specific partner agencies as part of high challenge and support where additional assurance and oversight was required across the safeguarding system. Key areas of assurance, including progress, difference and impact, are summarised below.

Key area of assurance	Progress and difference	Impact
Schools Safeguarding Audit The annual schools safeguarding audit provided assurance on the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across education settings, with audit methodology updated to align with Section 11 requirements and multi-academy trust timescales.	Revised audit methodology and digital approach improved accessibility and strengthened alignment with Section 11 requirements. Audit completion increased from 63% to 100%, providing a more comprehensive assurance picture. Limited areas requiring improvement identified, with targeted support and monitoring in place for a small number of settings. Strengthened quality assurance through SCP secondary scrutiny and use of wider intelligence, including Ofsted complaints. Emerging themes identified, including variability in safeguarding supervision and increasing concerns relating to SEND provision.	Strengthened assurance and consistency of safeguarding arrangements across education settings, supported by improved audit coverage and more robust quality assurance, enabling more targeted support.
Elective Home Education (EHE) The SCP received assurance on EHE arrangements, including safeguarding oversight, local trends and emerging national developments.	Stable and comparatively lower growth locally, with a 7% increase against a 12.8% national rise and a recent reduction in overall numbers. Improved oversight of children known to services, including reductions in those with a social worker and high levels of contact with families. Strengthened early intervention approaches, including cooling-off periods in schools and reduction in NEET outcomes for EHE cohorts. Enhanced understanding of local drivers and demographics, including links to mental health, SEND and deprivation.	Improved safeguarding oversight and understanding of Elective Home Education locally, supporting earlier identification of risk and more informed multi-agency responses.

Key area of assurance	Progress and difference	Impact
	Further development underway to strengthen partner reporting, address health inequalities and align with national reforms.	
Child Death Review Annual Report The SCP received the Child Death Review Annual Report 2023/24, providing analysis of local child deaths, patterns and associated learning to inform preventative activity.	Continued low number of child deaths locally, with consistent patterns identified, including neonatal deaths and deaths linked to deprivation and prematurity. Enhanced understanding of risk factors, including substance use in pregnancy and the risks associated with water safety. Identification of gaps in cultural competency and understanding of ethnicity and access to services, with ongoing partnership work to strengthen practice in this area. Increased focus on equity of care for children with complex and lifelong conditions. Plans to strengthen learning through regional collaboration to support a more robust evidence base.	Improved understanding of local child death patterns and risk factors, supporting a more targeted and preventative approach to reducing harm and strengthening learning across the partnership.
Child Exploitation (CSE/CCE) – National Audit Response to Baroness Louise Casey Report Assurance was provided on the local response to the national audit on group-based child sexual exploitation, including partnership activity to respond to the recommendations and inform the Child Exploitation Strategic Delivery Plan.	Progressed a coordinated partnership response to the national audit, embedded within strategic delivery arrangements and overseen through the Child Exploitation Strategic Group. Evidence that the Local Arrangements are well developed, with the partnership identifying it is ahead in responding to a number of the national recommendations. Increased focus on key themes, including ethnicity, identification of perpetrators, and improving understanding of children's experiences. Development of workforce learning and awareness, including	Strengthened partnership preparedness and strategic oversight in response to national expectations, supporting a more coordinated and informed approach to identifying and responding to child exploitation.

Key area of assurance	Progress and difference	Impact
	partnership events and e-learning to support identification and response.	
Domestic Abuse and MARAC (including Operation Terrestrial) Assurance was received on MARAC processes and the local domestic abuse response, including findings from a commissioned review, development of governance arrangements, and the introduction of Operation Terrestrial.	Strengthened governance through revised terms of reference for the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board and Operational Group. Progressed strategic planning through development of the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment and commissioning of refuge and community provision. Introduction of Operation Terrestrial and establishment of multi-agency oversight, with early indications of more consistent triage and reduced MARAC referrals. Improved understanding of local need, including the scale of children affected and gaps in co-ordination and service provision.	Strengthened partnership oversight and clearer governance of domestic abuse and MARAC arrangements, supporting a more consistent and structured approach to managing risk.
Children with Disabilities and Complex Health Needs (including out of area placements) Further assurance was received on arrangements for children with disabilities and complex health needs, including those placed out of area, in response to national review findings and ongoing local oversight.	Strengthened commissioning, quality assurance and monitoring arrangements for external placements. Increased oversight through regular multi-agency review processes, including six-monthly placement reviews and partnership resource group oversight. Improved understanding of the cohort, including an increase in identified children and clearer intelligence on placements and needs. Actions underway to strengthen joint oversight between the Local Authority and Integrated Care Board, including consideration of joint visiting and enhanced corporate parenting oversight.	Strengthened oversight and assurance arrangements for children with disabilities and complex health needs, with improved understanding of this cohort and a clearer focus on joint partnership oversight to support their safety and wellbeing.
Integrated Care Board Safeguarding Arrangements	Increased clarity on future Integrated Care Board arrangements, including confirmation that safeguarding	Continued assurance that safeguarding responsibilities remain prioritised within

Key area of assurance	Progress and difference	Impact
Updates were provided on changes to Integrated Care Board structures and safeguarding responsibilities, including workforce reductions and the transition to a new operating model.	responsibilities will remain within the Integrated Care Board Ongoing engagement with partners to understand implications of significant workforce reductions and restructure. Strengthened partnership planning to mitigate potential gaps, including consideration of how statutory safeguarding functions will be maintained. Continued Integrated Care Board representation and commitment to SCP governance arrangements throughout the transition period.	Integrated Care Board arrangements during significant system change, with improved partnership understanding of risks and arrangements to mitigate capacity pressures.
Children's Public Health Nursing Assurance was received on Children's Public Health Nursing, including delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, workforce capacity and the development of a long-term service model.	Increased understanding of workforce capacity challenges, including significant vacancies and their impact on universal provision, alongside progression of workforce planning to build capacity through recruitment, partnership support and 'grow your own' models. Development of a Children's Public Health Nursing strategy to support sustainability and respond to service pressures. Continued delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, with prioritisation of safeguarding and children with higher levels of need. Strengthened alignment with wider reforms, including the role of public health nursing within early help and the Families First Partnership agenda.	Assurance was received on Children's Public Health Nursing, including delivery of the Healthy Child Programme, workforce capacity and the development of a long-term service model.
Probation Service Assurance (post-inspection) An assurance report was provided following the HMIP inspection findings relating to	Evidence of improvement activity in response to inspection findings, including strengthening of training, management oversight and reporting processes. Increased assurance provided to partners on progress made against identified areas of concern.	Strengthened safeguarding oversight within probation services, providing increased assurance to the partnership in response to inspection findings.

Key area of assurance	Progress and difference	Impact
safeguarding practice within probation services.		
Pitstop (multi-agency early intervention) An audit of Pitstop arrangements provided assurance on multi-agency early intervention processes.	Increased demand, with a 74% rise in discussions, prompting a multi-agency deep dive to assess effectiveness. Strong multi-agency information sharing, with evidence that discussions are appropriate and supporting timely identification of need. Development of processes to improve consistency, including enhanced recording, identification of repeat cases and strengthened Police oversight. Actions underway to address gaps, including improving outcome tracking, strengthening agency attendance and revising the terms of reference.	Improved understanding of the effectiveness and pressures within Pitstop arrangements, supporting more consistent multi-agency decision-making and clearer actions to strengthen oversight and reduce repeat presentations.
Training Attendance, No Show and Cancellation Audit An audit was undertaken in response to increased training cancellations and non-attendance.	High levels of training engagement maintained, with over 1,500 participants attending SCP training. Increased understanding of patterns of non-attendance and cancellation across the partnership. Development of proposals to strengthen accountability and improve attendance, including clearer expectations for partner agencies. Improved monitoring arrangements to support better tracking of attendance and engagement.	Improved oversight and accountability of workforce engagement in safeguarding training, supporting more effective use of training to inform practice.
SCP Subgroup Attendance Audit An audit of subgroup attendance provided assurance on partner engagement in SCP	Generally strong and improving partner engagement across SCP subgroups over a 12-month period. Increased understanding of attendance patterns, including areas	Strengthened partnership accountability and more consistent representation across SCP governance arrangements, supporting effective oversight and delivery of local priorities.

Key area of assurance	Progress and difference	Impact
governance arrangements.	of inconsistency in representation and membership. Actions identified to strengthen attendance, including clarifying membership, improving deputy arrangements and reviewing invite processes. Enhanced monitoring arrangements to support consistent partner representation and accountability.	
Strategy Discussions Thematic (including SARC arrangements) A thematic review was undertaken to assess the quality, decision-making and outcomes of child protection strategy discussions, alongside consideration of arrangements for Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provision.	Increased volume of strategy discussions, with evidence that thresholds are being applied appropriately and proportionately to risk. Strong multi-agency attendance and engagement, including appropriate involvement of SARC in cases relating to sexual harm. Evidence of timely responses, appropriate escalation to Section 47 enquiries and effective multi-agency information sharing. Identified areas for improvement, including consistency of joint working with Police, quality of recording, and clarity of decision-making and investigation plans. Strengthened workforce development, including updated multi-agency training and ongoing learning to support consistent practice.	Strengthened partnership confidence in multi-agency decision-making and the application of thresholds within strategy discussions, supporting more consistent and proportionate responses to risk.

Figure 7 – Key areas of assurance

Safeguarding in Education

Education plays a key part in the safeguarding of children in North East Lincolnshire, taking a role across all layers of our multi-agency arrangements. At the lowest level, schools are our predominant holder of cases in the Early Help sphere, and there is a designated education representative in our Integrated Front Door. This role is the cornerstone of effective multi-agency decision-making: supporting initial fact-finding which ensures a child's development and education is considered as part of any judgment on required actions. This role has also bolstered direct support for schools as a primary safeguarding contact for advice and guidance, and challenge where required.

Half-termly Child Protection Co-ordinators Meetings are held for the Designated Safeguarding Leads of all schools, colleges, and training providers, including the independent sector. These fora are well-attended and are used to promote awareness of the SCP training offer, emerging themes, and promoting opportunities for engagement with services and wider partnership working; as well as standing agenda items such as our Virtual School, Police Safer Schools, and Health.

Education are represented in all aspects of SCP Governance, ensuring the role for children in our care and those who require help and protection are considered at operational and strategic levels. A senior education leader is also present as a standing member at SCP Practice Learning Line of Sight events.

Education facilitate the School's Safeguarding Audit on behalf of the SCP. This can form part of the S157 or S175 requirements for a school, depending on their status. In 2025 there was a 98% return rate, with one school submitting late after challenge posed. This audit provides assurance on policies, procedures, training, curriculum and other aspects of a school or academy's safeguarding arrangements. A similar survey is being developed for issue across our Early Years settings in the 2026/27 year.

Our Virtual School are instrumental in ensuring the children for whom we are corporate parents have access to education, and that they are attending, achieving and thriving. Whilst only guidance in the year of this report, the Virtual School of North East Lincolnshire has been firm in its commitment to the Extended Duties remit, taking its role further for children who have a social worker at Child in Need or Child in Need of Protection levels. A Deputy Head has been employed in a substantive post to drive the attendance and achievement for children with a social worker.

Whilst in its infancy, internal auditing of Children's Social Care, Family Help and Youth Justice has had a robust education section created for the audit tool. This is driving the inclusion of education as a crucial part of every child's plan, aimed at improving educational outcomes for children with a social worker.

Section 11 Audit

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations, agencies, 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 NELSCP has a statutory requirement under Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 to assess whether agencies in their area are fulfilling their statutory obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children as described in 'Section 11 of the Children Act 2004'. NEL SCP has made a commitment that the Section 11 audit process.

The SCP facilitated the section 11 audit during April 2026. Agencies undertaking the audit included, Local Authority Children's Social Care (including youth justice and youth services, regulated services), Local Authority Education and Inclusion, Local Authority Public Health, Local Authority Housing, Local Authority Sport Culture Leisure, Local Authority Licensing, Local Authority Adult Services, Adult Social Care Focus, Integrated Care Board, NLaG, Navigo, General Practitioners, Police, British Transport Police and Probation Service. The audit focused on the following areas of assurance.

1. Accountability for the provision of services to safeguard children and for the commissioning of services to safeguard children

2. Senior board level Safeguarding Leadership responsible for the organisations safeguarding arrangements
3. Safeguarding procedures and processes
4. Arrangements which clearly set out processes for Information sharing with other professionals and with the SCP
5. There is a culture of listening to children and account of their wishes both in individual decisions and the Development of services
6. Appropriate supervision and support for practitioners including Safeguarding Training
7. Safe recruitment/ safe working, including vetting procedures and complaints
8. Effective practice interagency working

The findings of the audit are being collated and finalised, however emerging themes are that there was clear evidence that agencies had in place robust arrangements to safeguard children and clear actions in place to progress identified areas of development. The findings of the report will be reported to the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group in August 2026 and to the SCP Board in September 2026.

Independent Scrutiny of the Local Arrangements

One of the three SCP independent scrutineers was commissioned in March 2026 to undertake a review of the leadership provided by the three Delegated Safeguarding Partners and effectiveness of Local Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The work involved a desk top exercise to scrutinise the multi-agency working arrangements that have taken place throughout the reporting period of 2025 to 2026. This involved the provision and consideration of key documents, frameworks and SCP strategic subgroup minutes in evidencing the work of the SCP and impact in delivering the Local Arrangements. In addition, the independent scrutineer met with the SCP subgroup chairs and key agency leads in triangulating information and seeking further assurance which was a direct recommendation from the 2024/25 independent scrutiny of the Local Arrangements.

Areas identified for consideration of further development have actively informed the SCP Local Arrangements 2026/27.

The independent scrutineer findings were as follows:

“This is the second occasion that I have been tasked with applying independent scrutiny to the multi-agency working arrangements of NEL SCP.

It is really pleasing to open this report with an overarching summary statement that the findings are, yet again, overwhelmingly positive.

I feel that the multi-agency arrangements within NE Lincolnshire continue to be strong, with evidence of collaborative working that I feel has developed practice to improve outcomes for children and young people in this area. I feel that key partnership achievements outlined within the 2024/2025 annual report, have continued to evolve during 2025/2026, namely strengthening governance, enhancing education and training, and reviewing child safeguarding practice and I hope that this is reflected within the findings of this report.

What is particularly pleasing to find is that improvements have been made in each of the recommendations made in the review of the 2024/2025 multiagency working arrangements. Those recommendations were:

1. *There is attention to detail needed with the administration of finalised minutes*
2. *Agency attendance at subgroup meetings is addressed*
3. *Evidence as to the dissemination of relevant communications is recorded*

4. Wider multi-agency support with the chairing and deputising for strategic subgroup meetings

I have been asked for the second year to complete a desktop exercise scrutinising the multi-agency working arrangements that have taken place throughout the reporting period of 2025–2026. In order to further support the findings, however, I have also been afforded the opportunity to meet with key senior leads from across the multi-agency community. I wish to thank each of these individuals for taking the time to meet with me and for their candour and honesty with my key lines of enquiry.

A raft of key relevant documents have been made available for me to view, the majority being available on the NE Lincs website for public view, but I have also had access to all subgroup finalised minutes and relevant action trackers. Again, as part of due diligence, I have scoped to see what is readily available for public view on the internet. I would like to thank the SCP Co-ordinator for the transparency in the sharing of these documents.

In order to complete this piece of work I have also tried to consider the five core elements and six cross cutting themes from Working Together 2023.

The five core elements are:

- *A shared responsibility*
- *Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements*
- *Help, support and protection*
- *Decisive multi-agency child protection*
- *Learning culture*

The six cross cutting themes are:

- *Voice and influence*
- *Information sharing and communication*
- *Working in partnership*
- *Leadership*
- *Governance*
- *Impact/Scrutiny*

For the purposes of meeting with key stakeholders, prior to the meetings we shared that the key lines of enquiry were going to be:

- *The effectiveness of the Local Arrangements*
- *The quality and impact of the work of the subgroups*
- *How we are measuring impact*
- *How learning from reviews informs practice*
- *Voice and lived experience of the child*

What is working well

An overarching summary comment is that I feel there is evidence of the both the five core elements and six cross cutting themes not only within the raft of documentation reviewed, website also visited, and evident during the conversations.

- *It is pleasing to see that all of the recommendations made in the previous reporting period have been addressed and it is pleasing to see the improvements. In particular the chairing responsibility of subgroup meetings now being held by senior leads from*

other key partners as opposed to the reliance on the local authority is excellent evidence of collaboration.

- *Voice of the child is evident through the subgroup minutes, not solely based upon seeing case studies, but I feel is evidenced by those in the meeting striving to seek improvements to service delivery, which ultimately impacts on the lives of those who are vulnerable.*
- *During all the conversations with the senior leads, it is very evident that there is a culture of striving for improvement. I feel that this is evidenced within meeting minutes and strategies that I have reviewed.*
- *The effective use of data within subgroup meetings is particularly evident in the SPAAG and SPLAD groups. Senior leads consistently reference how data is being utilised to drive improvements. A strong example is the SCP dashboard indicating an increase in referrals categorised under neglect and child sexual abuse, which appears to directly correlate with the training offer. Additionally, the reduction in the number of children being re-opened to child protection processes may suggest that the targeted training on neglect and child sexual abuse is equipping agencies with the skills to identify needs earlier and appropriately signpost to relevant support services.*
- *Subgroup chairs highlighted the need to continue developing the use of data to more effectively inform and accelerate improvement activity. While there is clear evidence that data is being used effectively, leaders recognised the opportunity to deepen analysis, enhance interpretation and ensure it consistently translates into measurable impact across services.*
- *It is evident that the quality assurance arrangements operationalised in relation to the production of meeting minutes has seen an improvement in the quality of the meeting minutes that I have appraised. Furthermore, the administration of the groups with action trackers that are up to date and robust is also evident. This was a recommendation made in my initial report, and it is pleasing to see that improvements have been made.*
Comments from some of the new sub-group chairs, have been that their ability to step into their role, which can be daunting for staff, has been made significantly easier due to the efficiency of the administration of their specific group. This should be applauded.
- *Effective communication across the partnership remains evident, particularly through the accessibility of key documents on the website and the sustained quality of the publicly available newsletter. The breadth of documentation available supports transparency within the partnerships working arrangements. The quarterly newsletter is a key mechanism for communication, clearly articulating both the impact on practice and the expectations of partner agencies following each board meeting. This consistent approach demonstrates a commitment to openness and provides clear evidence of effective governance.*
- *The training offer through the NE Lincs Academy is excellent, not only with the variety of courses available, but the expertise of those delivering the training. This is particularly evident in the Neglect training offer, with the course having been delivered by a nationally recognised expert in this field.*
- *As part of the scrutiny and assurance framework (SAF) and practice learning line of sight audits frequently asked questions have been developed and disseminated across partner agencies in supporting understanding of the process in addition to the guidance with the SAF.*
- *The wide range of approaches adopted across subgroup activity to scrutinise working arrangements is clearly evidenced within meeting minutes and is contributing to tangible improvements in practice. A notable example is the work undertaken to progress the co-location of Navigo staff and children's advocacy services within the front door, which strengthens multi-agency collaboration and should be commended. There is clear evidence of impact arising from targeted child sexual abuse and neglect training, reflected in increased referral rates relating to these forms of harm. Learning through practice is consistently captured, particularly within the SPLAD minutes and reinforced*

through the quarterly newsletter, demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous improvement across the partnership.

- *There is significant evidence of effective and robust governance arrangements for the Partnership, with responsibility shared by the three statutory partners. Despite the many challenges already outlined in relation to competing priorities for workloads, significant organisational changes and financial austerity review of the minutes reveals that engagement is good, work is delivered at pace – which I feel demonstrates leadership and attention to good governance.*

An example of the cohesive working of this group is that of the work associated with challenging the decision to only have the expertise of the SARC delivered from services in Sheffield. I feel this is evidence of the partnership coming together to challenge a decision that they feel does not best meet the needs of children and young people for this area. Although the challenge did not result in reversing the decision, I feel it is an example of collaboration and leadership.

Considerations for improvement

An overarching summary comment is that, in truth I am struggling to be able to find areas for improvement from the review of the documents shared with me and the conversations held.

- *Consideration as to wider scrutiny opportunities which reflect the revised principles outlined within Working Together 2026, in relation to independent scrutiny emphasis moving from a general oversight function to a more rigorous evidence-based assessment of Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA). Although recognising that there will be a revision of Working Together anticipated for 2027, liaison with other independent scrutineers on a national level does not lead me to feel that there will be a shift in the recommendations as to the approach for independent scrutineers to become more visible across the multi-agency workforce.*

Examples as to why I feel additional scrutiny would be beneficial are:

[1] I cannot see any evidence of an independent scrutineer present for the SCP Board meetings, and so really to demonstrate openness and transparency it may be a consideration to invite a scrutineer to this forum

[2] It is difficult to see the voice of the operational staff within the documentation, and it would add value to working in an open and transparent way for scrutiny to ensure that from 'board to floor' really is evidenced within the multi-agency workforce of NE Lincolnshire.

- *Attendance from partner agencies within subgroup activity is, in the main, strong. Where agencies are unable to attend, the expectation to submit a report is consistently met, ensuring that all partners maintain a voice within discussions and decision-making processes. Consideration could be given to further strengthening engagement through the rationalisation of meeting structures, for example, aligning or co-scheduling subgroup meetings on the same day or within the same timeframe may support agencies in managing capacity more effectively and sustaining high levels of activity.*

Conclusion

In conclusion, this independent scrutiny of the NEL SCP Local Arrangements 2025/26 provides strong assurance that multi-agency safeguarding practice in the area continues to be highly effective, collaborative and outcome-focussed. The evidence reviewed demonstrates that the partnership has not only sustained the strengths identified in the previous reporting period but has also made meaningful progress in addressing all prior recommendations.

There is clear and consistent evidence of robust governance, shared responsibility across statutory partners, with an embedded culture of continuous improvement. The quality of multi-agency working is reflected in the improved administrative processes, strengthened subgroup leadership and effective use of performance data to inform decision making and drive service development. Communication remains transparent, with accessible public-facing information, and the training offer continues to support workforce development through high quality specialised provision. Importantly the partnership demonstrates a strong commitment to improving the outcomes for children and young people, with the voice of the child increasingly evident in both discussion and practice. Professional relationships are characterised by respect, openness, and a shared ambition to deliver the best possibly safeguarding response despite the pressures outlined.

Whilst areas for further development are limited, there is an opportunity to build on the current strengths by enhancing the visibility and reach of independent scrutiny, particularly through greater engagement with frontline practitioners and wider operational staff. Aligning future scrutiny activity with the evolving expectations set out in Working Together 2026 will further strengthen the partnership's ability to evidence impact and transparency.

Overall, the findings of this report confirm that NEL SCP is, in my opinion, operating effectively, with strong foundations in place to support continued improvement, resilience, and positive outcomes for children and families."

Rachel Stanton, Independent Scrutineer

Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews / Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel / National Reviews

Rapid reviews / practice reviews

The process and procedure for undertaking rapid reviews and consideration of practice reviews following identification of cases meeting the serious harm criteria is embedded, and when required, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) Group is prepared to be enacted to take responsibility for overseeing the undertaking of rapid reviews where the serious harm criteria is met, and for overseeing practice reviews on behalf of the SCP Board. The Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group continues to assume responsibility for monitoring progress against all rapid review and practice review action plans and for the overseeing the implementation and embedding of learning.

There have been no serious incident notifications to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners during the year where a child has died or has been seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect. The Local Authority made two separate serious incident notifications to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel during the year, one in respect of a looked after child and one in respect of a care leaver. The criteria for serious harm was not met in either case. The SCP were informed, and the Delegated Safeguarding Partners supported a recommendation to undertake a case specific learning line of sight audit in respect of one of the cases which is reflected in learning from the cases specific line of sights. The other was subject to a review by the Principal Social Worker Children's Services, the learning from which will be shared with the SCP in order to take account of and develop practice.

A previous rapid review was undertaken on 12 June 2024, where a decision was taken that sufficient learning had been identified to enable an action plan to be developed, and there was no further notification to the National Panel for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review. The action plan was overseen by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group, and as a result of progress, this was signed off by the SCP Board in June 2025.

Key learning and areas of consideration from the rapid review included:

- The child's lived experience to be consistently assessed across agencies and shared within key forums to ensure a full understanding of the impact of parenting on meeting the needs of the child
- Domestic abuse to be considered as an enabler for neglect and staff need to understand, recognise, and name neglect for children with numerous vulnerability factors
- Missed health appointments and/or ongoing failure to thrive should be considered together across families and across different services in the context of indicators of neglect: where a service is concerned, they should share information and seek further support or advice
- Staff should utilise the neglect toolkit to inform their assessment when they identify any neglect indicators and staff should access the neglect training
- Parental engagement with the child's plan must be evidenced, to include an assessment of the impact of this on the child needs being met

The impact of the learning and actions from the rapid review

- The Early Help Strategy was revised and launched and is embedded into practice
- The embedding of the Threshold Document has led to more consistent application of the thresholds in ensuring children receive the right level of support at the right time by the right person
- The learning was disseminated to partner agencies through a seven-minute briefing
- The local neglect strategy was revised and strengthened and a neglect screening tool developed to assist practitioners in identification and management of neglect
- Over 600 practitioners were trained in neglect, delivered by Jane Wiffin an expert in neglect, which raised awareness and led to a better understanding of neglect and the impact on children as evidence by feedback from practitioners

Implementation of previous Rapid Review Action Plan

An action plan was developed and delivery and impact on practice overseen by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group. The action plan was completed and was signed off by the SCP Board in June 2025.

Communications and engagement

There is a commitment to effective communication across safeguarding partner organisations,, and relevant agencies, in the delivery of the Local Arrangements and the requirements of Working Together 2023. Arrangements for the delivery of communication as part of the SCP Communication Strategy has been further strengthened over the last year.

The partnership and governance structure is an integral part of element of ensuring effective communication across the partnership. Any new developments in practice and procedure are communicated through the SCP strategic subgroups and communicated through the SCP Newsletter and separate SCP communications as appropriate.

The SCP dedicated website, which was launched in May 2025, is central to our communications strategy and the delivery of the four SCP priorities and core statutory functions. The website actively supports practice to support the delivery of the Local Arrangements and is regularly refreshed to ensure there is a variety of resources, tools and learning from local and national reviews for professionals to access. The site is regularly

reviewed and updated, and website development is informed by data analysis of practitioner's use of the website to ensure it remains accessible and user friendly.

SCP newsletters are published quarterly and are used to communicate information and messages relating to the Local Arrangements to key stakeholders through the SCP communication list. The newsletters provide key details of the delivery of the SCP priorities, and key areas of focus and the impact of practice and make explicit the responsibilities and expectations of partner agencies in delivering these. The learning and impact of any rapid reviews, case specific line of sight learning and scrutiny and assurance activity is also routinely communicated through the newsletter and through the seven-minute briefing process aligned to the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group.

Regular email communications related to changes in local / national policy are communicated across the partnership through the SCP communications list alert. This has been an important mechanism to increase the reach of key messages across the partnership and there continues to be high levels of engagement with the information circulated. The communication list includes all relevant and local partner agencies across all sectors including the statutory and community sector and two local Diocese.

Examples of communication activity include:

- The new dedicated SCP website was launched at an event on the 6 May 2025; the event also provided a focus on the SCP achievements in delivering the Local Arrangements so far. In addition, there was a focus on the changes to the local Harmful Sexual Behaviour procedures and process and a presentation on the local Child Exploitation profile and national guest speaker Gavin McKenna on their own experiences of exploitation and what works in supporting arrangement in working with children and young people affected.
- The website launch also launched the new SCP logo which was developed by local children and young people and which represented, family, being cared for and safe.
- A joint SCP agency networking event was held on the 8 April 2025 with the voluntary and community sector and Adult Services, with 30 agency stalls and over a hundred practitioners attending. The feedback was great and felt to be a good opportunity to connect with partner agencies and learn more about their role and remit.
- A further joint SCP agency networking event was held on the 25 October 2025 with the voluntary and community sector and Adult Services. It was a fantastic networking opportunity with excellent feedback. A donation was made to Nunny's Farm by the SCP and Adult Services which enabled the first 50 practitioners to have a tour of the local farm and animals.
- A partnership event was held on the experiences of local children of child exploitation in November 2025, the event considered the national findings from the Louise Casey group-based audit on child exploitation and local findings in greatly informing the child exploitation delivery plan.
- An SCP Local Arrangements event was held in January 2026 to celebrate the publication and achievements within the SCP Annual Report 2024/25 and the Local Arrangements 2025/26. There was a focus on child exploitation, the signs and symptoms and agencies responsibilities in responding including reinforcement of the need the use of the Police Community Intelligence Form.
- A further joint SCP agency networking event was held on the 6 March 2026 in Immingham with the voluntary and community sector and Adult Services, with 30 agency stalls and over a hundred practitioners attending. The event further built on existing networks and connections across partner agencies.

Key themes messages communicated through the quarterly newsletter

Newsletters are disseminated across the partnership following each SCP Board and provide a report of the key activity of the partnership in delivering local arrangements including impact, for example:

- Activity and impact of the SCP subgroups in delivering the local arrangements including data analysis through the SCP dashboard
- Reference to the SCP annual report 2024/25 and Local Arrangements 2025/26 and focus on the four SCP priorities
- Voice and engagement, key messages from activity undertaken by the Delegated Safeguarding Partner agencies and impact
- Scrutiny and assurance activity and impact, including links to 7-minute practice briefings
- SCP website launch and focus on child exploitation, focus on the revised Harmful Sexual Behaviour guidance
- A focus on the national Families First Partnership reforms and expectations of partner agencies
- A summary of the learning from the national group-based child exploitation audit and meaning for practice
- A focus on SCP training aligned to the SCP priorities and key areas of focus
- Feedback from the Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partners meeting
- Key learning from the child exploitation partnership development session and local arrangement event including expectations on partner agencies in responding to exploitation
- Launch of the SCP Achievement Award and celebration of winners of the award across the partnership in demonstration outstanding practice in safeguarding children
- Detail around the Children's Social Care National Framework March 2026
- Key findings and learning for practice from the Protecting all Vulnerable Babies Better national review
- The publication of Working Together 2026 and key changes
- The Youth Violence which was the local response to the serious Violence Duty
- The promotion of the Growing Stronger Together strategic framework which brings key strategic approaches across the partnership, including principles, priorities and based on the practice approach

Multi-agency education and training

Development and impact of safeguarding education and training

The SCP education and training arrangements have been reviewed and revised in order to be fully aligned to the delivery of the four SCP priorities and key areas of focus. This work is ongoing and monitored via the SCP Education and Training Working Group and reporting mechanisms are in place for quality assurance of our education and training packages, with oversight by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group. This has involved the review and revision of all existing education and training packages and the delivery of a broad programme of training is in place, which includes child sexual abuse, substance misuse, risk analysis framework, child exploitation and early help training, in addition to the core introduction and intermediate safeguarding training.

The delivery of training on the local Risk Analysis Framework, which is closely aligned to the Threshold Document alongside our Practice Approach has greatly supported with the implementation of the framework into practice, which is leading to more consistent assessment of risk and need. In addition, several interactive resources have been developed through Page Tiger, in key areas, for example professional curiosity and neglect. This is to support

professionals in their work with children, young people and families, aligned with learning from assurance activity and practice.

The face-to-face SCP training is delivered by practitioners from Children’s Services, the Police and Health, all of which are experts in their own field and provide a true multi-agency perspective, which has been positively received by learners. The training is now free of charge to attend, following a decision by the Delegated Safeguarding Partners to remove charges to all agencies. This was fully implemented in April 2025 and has removed the financial impact of accessing safeguarding training.

The delivery of multi-agency training is having a clear impact on agencies understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the delivery of the SCP priorities and in responding to abuse and neglect. The impact is also reflected within the training feedback and within the data analysis. The publication of the SCP education and training brochure and the newly updated training page on the dedicated SCP website, has made training accessible to all and easy to navigate.

Education and training undertaken in 2025/26 in informing safeguarding practice

A comprehensive programme of SCP education and training has been delivered again this year. Demand continued to be high for the core safeguarding children training, with 21 events held in total for the Introduction to Safeguarding Children and the Intermediate Safeguarding Children training.

There has been high demand for the Risk Analysis Framework, Heads Up Substance Misuse and Minimising Harm to Children and Young People and the Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse training. This is being delivered as part of our SCP priority of child sexual abuse. These courses have been delivered via single and multi-agency delivery and there has been a strong take-up from the Police, in particular, which is positive.

109 courses were held during the year, a slight decrease on last year’s figures. However, there have been 1739 training completions by learners attending face to face or virtual training events and 342 completions of e-learning, totalling 2081 training completions over the year. This is a decrease on last year’s training completions. This is mostly due to the ending of our e-learning commission and time needed to develop in-house e-learning training, plus a change in delivery method for our introductory training.

Cancellations and No-Shows

Number of Learner Cancellations	Number of Learner Non-Attendance	Number of Course Cancellations (entire workshop cancelled)
541	254	19

Figure 8 – Cancellations/No Shows for training

Due to a large number of cancellations and no-shows at our training, North East Lincolnshire Council implemented a process in October 2025 to follow up on all learner cancellations and no-shows with the individual, their manager and via reports submitted to senior managers. This work will continue in 2026-27 and be developed for all organisations, to enable action to be taken to try to reduce the impact of cancellations on our SCP training programme.

Training Attendance

The data below shows courses delivered and attendance by agencies:

Course Name	Number Trained	Number of Courses Held
Introduction to Safeguarding Children	170	7
Intermediate Safeguarding Children	307	14
Neglect Training	0	0
Child Exploitation	94	6
Developing Effective Relationships Using Restorative Principles	0	0
Domestic Abuse Awareness – Part 1 – What is Domestic Abuse?	49	4
Domestic Abuse Awareness – Part 2 – Practitioner Updates	51	4
Coercive Control Workshop	40	3
DASH and How to Assess Risk	22	2
Domestic Abuse from a Child's Perspective	46	3
Domestic Abuse and Online Safety	9	1
Harmful Sexual Behaviour Workshop	35	2
Sharing the Science	47	3
Relationship Matters (Reducing Parental Conflict)	0	0
Strategy Discussions	15	1
LADO Workshop – Managing Allegations Against People who Work with Children	46	4
Risk Analysis Framework Workshop	165	20
Child Sexual Abuse Sessions	8	1
Introduction to Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse – Taking a Multi-Agency Approach	123	5
Independent Reviewing Officer Workshop	7	1
Heads Up: Substance Use and Minimising Harm to Children and Young People	407	16
Early Help Assessments and Team Around the Family	73	10
Supporting Missing Children	25	2
Total Face to Face/Virtual Training Completed	1739	109
E-Learning Training Completions	342	N/A
Total Training Completions	2081	109

Figure 9 – Training delivered and attended

The data below shows attendance by agency and across face to face and e-learning events*:

Organisation/Department	Number of Training Completions
Schools/Academies and Other Learning Providers	307
Voluntary/Community Organisations and Charities	222
North East Lincolnshire Council:	
• Children's Services	612
• Foster Carers	105
• Public Health	54
• Other North East Lincolnshire Council Services	27
• Housing	0
Recovery Together Partnership	0

Organisation/Department	Number of Training Completions
Health – Integrated Care Board	2
Health – Primary Care (Medical Centres etc)	0
Health – Northern Lincolnshire & Goole Hospitals NHS Trust	12
Health – NAVIGO	84
Health – East Midlands Ambulance Service	0
Health – Unknown	7
Care Plus Group/Focus	0
Nursery Providers and Childminders	128
Police	367
Fire Service	0
Probation	0
CAFCASS	0
Other	13
Total Training Completions by Agency (Face to Face and E-Learning)	1940*

* (excludes digital e-learning in this section (PageTiger learning), as only able to record number of completions currently and not agency data..

Figure 10 – Training delivered and attended by agencies

Evidence of Impact

Examples of feedback and evaluation from our courses:

How to engage with a young person around safe drug use. The different drug categories. The different effects drugs produce. The trends within the local area, recognition of potential substance use, and how to implement harm reduction.

(Heads Up: Substance Misuse and Minimising Harm to Children and Young People)

Increased confidence in completing the RAF, a better understanding of how and why it is used, and increased knowledge. Mapping protective factors against risk. How risks link. Importance of risk analysis. Analysis of likely outcomes and what is needed. Assessing risk helps bring out protective factors which helps inform further assessments

(Risk Analysis Framework)

Informative in regard to the signs and indicators of sexual abuse and the impacts that it has on children. Interactive. Reassurance about use of language such as 'can you ..' and direct signs and indicators. Professional curiosity, advice and guidance booklets for parents, consider the risk and protective factors

(Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse)

The signs and symptoms of abuse/neglect in children and young people. The processes of Child protection meetings and the usual outcomes. The importance of adequate and effective communication and multi-agency working.

(Intermediate Safeguarding Children)

A better understanding of recognising signs of coercive control; a better understanding of the different stages the abuse takes; a better understanding of how you open conversations with victims

(Coercive Control)

The importance of knowing those (early) signs and how they piece together to form a bigger picture. If a young person isn't engaging, question why and try a different approach.

(Child Exploitation)

8) Record of key decisions and actions taken by Delegated Safeguarding Partners and impact

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners have made a number of key decisions and taken actions relating to the expectations of Working Together 2023, in delivering the Local Arrangements, including the priority areas of focus and in implementing recommendations from local and National Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, which are demonstrated throughout the report. Key strategic decisions include:

Date	Decision	Actions Taken	Impact
7.5.2025	Decision made for the Lead / Delegated Safeguarding Partner annual meeting to be held in November 2025 due changes to the Police, Local Authority and Integrated Care Board Lead Safeguarding Partners and decisions in principle were made at the Lead Safeguarding Partner/Delegated Safeguarding Partner meeting in February 2025 due to the Integrated Care Board Lead Safeguarding Partner not being present due to unavoidable reasons	Meeting held on 10.11.2025, Lead Safeguarding Partners fully supported the SCP Local Arrangements and agreed with identified risks and controls in place in respect of the national Families First Partnership reforms and reduction to the Integrated Care Board offer as part of the Blueprint. The Lead Safeguarding Partners fully supported the need for an amplified commitment to tackling child exploitation based on Childrens experiences as part of the child exploitation strategic delivery plan.	Quarterly Lead Safeguarding Partner assurance/ impact updates through the SCP newsletters, distribution of the key documents including the annual report and Local Arrangements, and individual Delegated Safeguarding Partner assurance to their associated Lead Safeguarding Partner. Assurance provided of the NEL SCP baseline assessment against the recommendations from the Louise Casey Group Based audit of Child Sexual Exploitation.
	Decision made for a facilitated partner session to take place at the 6.6.2025 SCP Board to further consider the wider design and delivery of the national Families First Partnership reforms	Children's Strategic Lead post established, leading on the national reforms. Establishment of a reforms working group under the SCP governance. Families First Partnership reforms three pillars aligned to the SCP governance arrangements	The Delegated Safeguarding Partners responded quickly to the national reforms, a reforms lead was established within the Integrated Care Board, Police, Children's Social Care and Education Robust oversight of the local development of the reforms and communication of

Date	Decision	Actions Taken	Impact
		Dedicated SCP reforms sessions held and full consultation with partner agencies. Task and finish groups established for each of the three pillars	expectations across partner agencies All partner agencies have an understanding of the Families First Partnership reforms and there is full buy in across the partnership
16.6.2025	Decision to sign off a local rapid review action plan following completion of all actions	The delivery of the action plan was overseen by the Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group	The rapid review action plan was embedded and has informed practice in relation to neglect including the development and embedding of the Risk Analysis Framework and over 600 people trained in neglect over the year
	The Delegated Safeguarding Partners and relevant agencies endorsed the SCP Annual report 2024/25 and Local Arrangement Plan 2025 to 26	The Annual report and Local Arrangements were published in June 2025 and communicated to partner agencies through the SCP newsletter. A Local Arrangement event was held in January 2026 which focussed on the achievements in delivering the Local Arrangements	Local Arrangements event held on 15.1.2026. Evidence of impact included the development and embedding of the Risk Analysis Framework and the consistent application of local thresholds. Strengthened independent scrutiny arrangements, and increased awareness raising through the strengthened SCP training and education arrangements
7.8.2025	The Delegated Safeguarding Partners endorsed the SCP partner Achievement Award, which was an action from a previous SCP Board	An awards process for outstanding practice was developed and launched across the partnership, in recognising practice beyond the norm and the impact on children	Four separate nominations and awards were presented to practitioners across the partnership including education, Children's Services and the police for practice that made a real difference to children
	Decision following consideration of the implications of the Louise	The implications and learning from the audit were shared and	The local baseline assessment against the 12 recommendations

Date	Decision	Actions Taken	Impact
	Casey national audit on group-based child exploitation to develop a local plan against the 12 recommendations	informed both the child sexual abuse strategic delivery plan and the child exploitation strategic plan.	completed by agency leads across the partnership provided assurance that mechanisms were in place in response to the recommendations. The NEL SCP action plan was shared as good practice across neighbouring authorities
31.10.2025	Decision to escalate the decision by NHS England to move the Sexual Assault Referral Centre SARC provision from Hull to Sheffield with the Lead Safeguarding Partners	Concerns around the impact of the change in the SARC provision on children's experiences was raised with NHS England by the Lead Safeguarding Partners and on a regional basis	Data requested by the SCP collated on the impact of the move on children's experiences. This confirmed that children had not been negatively impacted and there was ongoing support provided by the Hull Anlaby Suite
	Decision to write to the Director of Public to seek assurance in respect of the Childrens Public Nursing Review and the review of the MARAC process and operation Terrestrial Review	The Associate Director of Public Health provided an assurance report to the 6.1.2026 SCP B and a further report on progress at the 19.3.2026 SCP Board	Assurance and clear actions provided on the review of the MARAC process and domestic abuse strategy to the January and SCP Board. The alignment between the SCP and Public health in respect of domestic abuse has been further strengthened
06.01.2026	The Delegated Safeguarding Partners requested a thematic be undertaken into PITSTOP and strategy discussions, due to the rise in both areas as identified through the SCP dashboard	A multi-agency review of the increase in demand at Pitstop was undertaken and reported to the 19.3.2026 SCP Board. A thematic on the increase in strategy discussions was undertaken and presented to the 19.3.2026 SCP Board	Improved understanding of the effectiveness and pressures within Pitstop arrangements, supporting more consistent multi-agency decision-making and clearer actions to strengthen oversight and reduce repeat presentations. Evidence that thresholds applied

Date	Decision	Actions Taken	Impact
			consistently re strategy discussions. Strengthened partnership accountability and more consistent representation across SCP governance arrangements
19.02.2026	The Integrated Care Board and Police Delegated Safeguarding Partners fully endorsed the Local authority decision to establish a Child Exploitation and Development Co-ordinator post funded by the LA sitting within the SCP	The post was advertised and successfully recruited to in March 2026 and commences in June 2026.	The dedicated post has added additional capacity and will enable further traction in the delivery and impact of the child exploitation strategic delivery plan
	Decision to make the fixed term SCP Co-ordinator role permanent	Funding secured within the SCP budget due to an agreed uplift in Delegated Safeguarding Partner organisation contributions in order to enable the SCP Co-ordinator role contract changed to permanent	The role has been in place for seven months and has made a huge impact to the pace of delivery of the SCP core functions and is essential to the effective delivery of the Local Arrangements
19.3.2026	Decision to undertake local benchmarking against the recommendations of the national review "Protecting all Vulnerable Babies Better"	The key learning from the review presented to the March SCP Board A partner event has been arranged for June 2006 which will develop a baseline assessment/ action plan against the recommendation's	The learning from the protecting babies better review was shared across the partnership within the SCP newsletter in informing practice. The SCP delivered two sessions on the learning from national child safeguarding reviews including the protecting vulnerable babies review which informed practice and reinforced the need for professional curiosity

Figure 11 – Strategic decisions

9) Priority areas of focus for 2026/27

The priority areas of focus have been identified through performance analysis, local practice, learning from local reviews including the children's lived experiences, the experiences of practitioners and on national research. The priority areas of focus remain the same as 2025 to 2026, in order to fully embed the four SCP priorities by building on the progress and impact made by further developing our Local Arrangements and in assuring the consistency and the quality of practice in these areas.

Priority areas of focus			
Priority area of focus	Lead partnership	Governance	Anticipated action and system change
Measure the effectiveness and impact of the SCP Neglect Strategy and quality of practice in responding to children at risk of and experiencing neglect, with a focus on the impact of the neglect training and tool	Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group	SCP Board	- Oversee the impact and effectiveness of the Neglect Strategy delivery plan and the quality of practice in responding to neglect - The use of neglect screening tool and wider neglect toolkit to be further embedded into practice and used consistently across NEL. This will be through clear pathways to improve uniformity in neglect cases across the partnership - Multi-agency neglect training to continue to be delivered across partner agencies by the SCP multiagency training pool on indicators of neglect, the impact on children, roles and responsibilities of agencies - Undertake further work in the recognition and understanding of oral health and dental neglect in ensuring and clear pathways and a consistent response - Raise community awareness and engagement, underpinned by the creation of a communications plan to develop and deliver internal and external communications on neglect
Measure the effectiveness and impact of the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy and quality of practice in responding to children at risk of and experiencing child sexual abuse,	Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group	SCP Board	- Oversee the impact and effectiveness of the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy delivery plan and quality of practice - Multi-agency child sexual abuse training to continue to be delivered across partner agencies on indicators of child sexual abuse the impact on children, roles and responsibilities of agencies

Priority areas of focus			
Priority area of focus	Lead partnership	Governance	Anticipated action and system change
with a focus on awareness raising and assessment of risk and need			• The use of Child Sexual Abuse Risk Assessment tool to be further embedded into practice and used consistently • Further development of data in understanding the local prevalence of child sexual abuse and in informing and measuring the impact of the local response • Raise community awareness and engagement, underpinned by the creation of a communications plan to develop and deliver internal and external communications on child sexual abuse
Measure the effectiveness and impact of the Early Help Strategy and quality of practice with the focus on helping and supporting children and families at the earliest point, and to reduce the need for statutory intervention	Early Help Strategic Group	SCP Board	• Oversee the impact and effectiveness of the revised Early Help Strategy delivery plan aligned to the delivery of the national Families First Partnership reforms and Family Help requirements • Continue to deliver the early help training offer, which includes early help training and working with resistant families and the impact of domestic abuse and neglect on families • To review and reintroduce the fed-up programme of support to families to reduce the impact of parental substance use and to oversee its impact through the strategic delivery plan • Test and learn pilot to be completed as part of the Families First Partnership reforms within part of the local community in respect of Family Help • Further develop the 11-19 offer within Family Hubs including building connections with community resources
Further develop the multi-agency approach to Child Exploitation, including Sexual Exploitation, Child Criminal	Child Exploitation Strategic Group	SCP Board	• Implement and oversee the impact and effectiveness of Child Exploitation Strategy and delivery plan to maximise opportunities to prepare, prevent, protect and pursue leading to better experiences and outcomes

Priority areas of focus			
Priority area of focus	Lead partnership	Governance	Anticipated action and system change
Exploitation and online sexual harm with a focus on disruption of exploitation, local profile, awareness raising campaigns and transition to adulthood			• Review the current child exploitation practice guidance in light of national research and guidance • Further develop the local child exploitation profile in understanding child exploitation in the local area • Undertake independent scrutiny of the MACE meeting/MACE triage and a desktop review on the impact of MACE/MACE triage • Finalise the SCP Child Exploitation toolkit and oversee its implementation into practice • Align the local development of the local youth offer in providing safe spaces for children and young people to the child exploitation strategic delivery plan • Development and implementation of child exploitation disruption arrangements • Review of the content delivery and impact of safeguarding training and education in respect of child exploitation • Further develop communication and awareness raising plans across children/ families, the workforce and community

Figure 12 – Priority areas of focus 26/27

10) Local Arrangements Delivery Plan 2026 / 27

As Delegated Safeguarding Partners and their respective safeguarding partner organisations, and with relevant agencies, we will continue to listen, learn, review and adapt in order to ensure our Local Arrangements best meet the needs of the children, young people and families in NEL, so they grow up happy and healthy, safe in their homes and communities with people that love them.

As well as the priority areas of focus and associated actions, our Local Arrangements are underpinned by a delivery plan, which is built around the following areas:

- Actions carried forward from the previous development plan, where progress has been made, but where a further focus is required
- Recommendations from independent scrutiny of the Local Arrangements
- Actions associated with key policy drivers

Development Plan		
Priority Area Focus	Lead Partnership	Anticipated Action and System Change
Governance	SCP Board	Further develop the partnership and governance structure, including subgroups and membership in delivering the Local Arrangements and in meeting the requirements of Working Together 2026 Further build operational standards to further enhance the quality of governance and reporting arrangements
Scrutiny and Assurance (including independent scrutiny)	Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group	Further develop and implement our scrutiny and assurance programme which will contribute to improved practice and outcomes for children In addition to the independent scrutiny in association with the priority areas of focus, as a minimum, there will also be independent scrutiny in relation to: • The Section 11 Annual Audit • Annual audit of the effectiveness of the Local Arrangements • Family group decision making • Designated Safeguarding Partner observation assurance of SCP subgroup functioning To develop the involvement of children, in independent scrutiny arrangements and the involvement of children young people and families in wider scrutiny and assurance processes
Data Intelligence and Performance	SCP Board	Further develop availability of partner agency data and the quality of the data analysis of the SCP dashboard and framework in evidencing the impact of the delivery of the four SCP priorities, key functions and progress against the Families First Partnership reforms in informing and supporting the delivery of our Local Arrangements
Child and Family Engagement	Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group	Further develop ways in which the partners seek and use feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence decision making and evidence the impact on improved outcomes for children Commit to ensuring that each partner agency (in addition to Designated Safeguarding Partner agencies) share work undertaken and impact of voice and engagement as part of the standing agenda item at SCP Board meetings
Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews	Safeguarding Practice Learning and	Review and build on the annual independent scrutiny of the identification and notification process for serious child safeguarding cases to seek assurance of our local decision making and partnership processes

Development Plan		
Priority Area Focus	Lead Partnership	Anticipated Action and System Change
	Development Group	
Education and Training	Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group	Further strengthen mechanisms to measure the impact of the revised education and training offer across the partnership aligned to the SCP priorities Continue the development of e-learning safeguarding courses / resources in informing practice related to neglect, cultural competency and transitional safeguarding Measure the impact of processes to address the number of no shows and cancellations at SCP training Ensure the SCP education and training arrangements fully reflect the Families First Partnership reforms and the local model Oversee the revision of the SCP procedures aligned to Working Together 2026 and the Families First Partnership reforms Develop a survey to be disseminated across the partnership to generate understanding regarding the impact of training
Safeguarding policies / procedure and practice guidance	Safeguarding Practice Learning and Development Group	Revise the SCP safeguarding policies procedures and practice guidance in line with Working Together 2026 and the national Families First Partnership reforms Measure how partner agencies have embedded the revised guidance into practice through the Section 11 annual audit and SCP scrutiny and assurance arrangements
Safeguarding practice standards	Safeguarding Practice Thematic Strategic Group	Develop SCP practice standards, in relation to expectations of subgroup chairs, partner agencies, in delivering the SCP priorities, Local Arrangements and Working Together 2026, aligned to the scrutiny and assurance framework and section 11 audit process
Funding	SCP Board	Continue to review and increase the safeguarding partners contributions to the SCP, and continue to be creative in the way in which we deploy the funding, and available capacity, to ensure we continue to develop and deliver our Local Arrangements
Communication and Stakeholder engagement	SCP Board	Review and revise the SCP Communication Strategy in supporting the delivery of communication / awareness raising in delivering the Local

Development Plan		
Priority Area Focus	Lead Partnership	Anticipated Action and System Change
		Arrangements and in supporting the delivery of the four SCP priorities Hold an event to share the key messages from the SCP Annual Report 2025/26 and to celebrate the partnership contributions to the Local Arrangements Further develop the SCP dedicated website in ensuring it fully supports the partnership in the delivery of the Local Arrangements and provides practitioners with resources, procedures and training in supporting effective practice
Responding to National Reforms	SCP Board	Governance and oversight of the effective delivery and impact of the Families First Partnership reforms through the SCP governance arrangements Quarterly reporting of the progress against the implementation and impact of the Families First Partnership reforms through the SCP dashboard and key related performance indicators Focus on data development, and opportunities to further explore alignment with National Children's Social Care Framework The local model in response to the Families First Partnership reforms to be explicit within SCP training and education arrangements and within the SCP policies and procedures
Transitional Safeguarding	SCP Board / Adult Services	Principles for transitional safeguarding to be developed in informing the development of the local approach to transitional safeguarding Undertake the research in practice transitional safeguarding benchmarking tool in informing the development of the local approach Following the completion of the benchmarking tool and establishment of the safeguarding transitional principles, present the work to a multi-agency all partnership in seeking a whole system steer in informing the local approach to transitional safeguarding

Figure 13 – Local Arrangements 26/27

11) Glossary

Annual Safeguarding in Education Audit: The purpose of the audit is to both assist establishments in ensuring they remain up to date with legislation, guidance and good practice and assure the SCP that safeguarding procedures are in place and are effective. The audit comprises of 14 'yes' or 'no' questions which gives clear criteria on the procedures required by establishments in order to answer 'yes'. There was also an opportunity to make any extra comments relating to the Integrated Front Door, Early Help, Channel referrals, areas of achievement in relation to safeguarding, inter-agency working, suggestions for future audits and any training providers which are used.

Child Criminal Exploitation: As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

[Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines)

Child Sexual Exploitation: Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) 230 Serious Violence Strategy 155 in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

[Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sexual-exploitation-definition-and-guide-for-practitioners)

Early Help: Early Help is not an individual service, but a wider system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners, who, by sharing resources and taking a collective responsibility, we can use the knowledge, skills and expertise of all our partners to ensure the right help is available at the right time. This collaborative model that is underpinned by the Working Together 2023 enhances the quality and effectiveness of services by ensuring that early conversations, interventions and support drawn from our universal provision afford children the right to support at the earliest opportunity which is tailored to their specific circumstances.

Helping, Supporting and Protecting Children and Families in NEL Threshold Document 2024/28: The Threshold Document sets out how services support children, young people, and families to participate, find help online and in their networks and communities, to be resilient, stay safe and independent. It is set in the context of our SCP that includes the three statutory safeguarding partner organisations, the Police, Integrated Care Board and North East Lincolnshire Council, and other relevant partners. Specifically, it sets out the levels of need and the local criteria for action.

Integrated Front Door: The Integrated Front Door is our initial point of contact for professionals and the public if they are worried or concerned that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm in NEL. The Integrated Front Door is a multi-agency team consisting of Children's Services, Police, Health and Education, and including interfaces with others i.e. education and domestic abuse services, who share information to consider next steps on all contacts and referrals. Where it is assessed that a child is in

need, in need of protection or becomes a child in our care, children and families are supported through a statutory plan.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education

Practice Review: The purpose of serious child safeguarding case reviews, at local and national level, is to identify improvements that can be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally but has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

Rapid Review: When a serious incident becomes known to safeguarding partners, they must consider whether the case meets the criteria and guidance for a local review. If the safeguarding partners determine that the criteria are met to undertake a local child safeguarding practice review, then a serious incident notification and rapid review must take place. The aim of this review is to enable them to:

- gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established
- discuss whether any immediate action is needed to ensure children's safety and share any learning appropriately
- consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- decide what steps they should take next, including whether to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

Scrutiny and Assurance Framework: The SCP Board arrangements have been developed to create an arena conducive to robust scrutiny and constructive challenge that aims to improve outcomes and experience for children and families, support staff to strive for excellence in practice, and to hold a mirror up to ourselves through a lens of transparency. The arrangements include opportunities to proactively support local agencies and organisations to grow and improve, as well as a partnership approach to learning and multi-agency safeguarding system growth and development.

Section 11: Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key persons and bodies to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging its functions, they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and that the services they contact out to others are also having regard to need. The main objective of the NEL Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) is to ensure that in line with the Care Act 2014, local safeguarding arrangements and partners act to help and protect adults in NEL who have

care or support needs and are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect *and* are unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect as a result of their care needs.

Figure 13 – Glossary

12) Contact us

For general enquiries NEL.SCPEnquiries@nelincs.gov.uk

NEL SCP Website <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/scp/>