

# LEICESTER SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP



## YEARLY REPORT 2024 - 2025



# Foreword

We are pleased to present this report of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership that covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

In 2023, there was the publication of the current version of the statutory guidance, Working Together, and national reforms to Children's Social Care began. The implementation of the reforms continues, as set out in the Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive policy paper published in November 2024, and the upcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. In 2024-25, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership, alongside the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership, has embedded changes at a system and practice level influenced by these national updates.

In December 2024, we published our updated Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. In particular, these better reflect the role that Education and the Voluntary and Community Sector play in safeguarding children and address how these sectors influence work at both a strategic and operational level.

Across 2025-26, we will continue to implement quite significant changes to our quality assurance, scrutiny and communication and engagement arrangements, with a new Performance Group and Audit Group and the commissioning of a Young Scrutineer. This demonstrates our continued commitment to ensuring our work is led both by the voices and lived experiences of the children and families we seek to support and keep safe.

We want to thank all the dedicated workers in organisations across Leicester that are working to support the welfare and safety of children and families.

The Safeguarding Partners for Leicester

| Key Achievements in 2024-25  | Key Challenges in 2024-25   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formed a new Education Subgroup, which promotes and strengthens the role of local schools, colleges, early years and childcare settings in safeguarding arrangements</li> <li>Expanded the reach and membership of the Leicester, Leicestershire &amp; Rutland Voluntary and Community Sector Forum to strengthen engagement with this sector</li> <li>Quickly addressed and started to implement any learning required as a result of national reviews published by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel</li> <li>Delivered high quality and well-attended large scale training events alongside our regular training programme</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing the changes required as a result of Working Together 2023 and ensuring that the measures agreed were suitable and proportionate</li> <li>Progressing our Transitions Business Priority. The issues faced have been addressed and for 2025-26 there will be new vigour and focus to this work</li> <li>Having the capacity to fulfil our audit schedule, in light of competing priorities linked to the Joint Targeted Inspection programme. As a result of the issues faced, for 2025-26, the work of the Assurance and Audit Group will be split and taken up by two separate subgroups – the Performance Group and the Audit Group</li> </ul> |

# Observations from our Independent Scrutineer

Throughout the period April 2024 to March 2025 I have continued to work alongside members of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) partnerships in the role of Independent Scrutineer. The Leicester and Leicestershire and Rutland partnership work closely. This results in the ability to maximise learning to continuously improve safeguarding practice, align processes and use the available resources efficiently. LLR partnerships have been very open to scrutiny, which has resulted in reflection and a clear commitment to drive improvements, ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the multi-agency arrangements in effectively safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In undertaking scrutiny, a scrutiny framework has been established and agreed by partners. The scrutiny framework reflects the functions as described in Working together to safeguard children (2023) and adopts the 'Six Steps to Independent scrutiny' model. The framework aligns with the priorities identified and documented in the Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan. The scrutiny plan continues over a two-year period to allow evidence of both progression of areas identified as priorities and impact of the activity.

During the last year of undertaking the role I have attended a range of meetings of the partnerships, scrutinised agendas, minutes and a range of reports.

I have participated in a range of meetings with Safeguarding Partners to discuss governance, areas of priority, safeguarding activity, staffing and funding requirements of the partnerships.

In undertaking scrutiny I have had the pleasure of meeting a range of partners, professionals and of hearing the voice of children. This has allowed the opportunity of triangulating the evidence of the effectiveness of the work undertaken by the partnership.

As part of the scrutiny framework, I have undertaken a range of scrutiny activity to support my assessment of the strength of the partnership safeguarding arrangements.

Areas of scrutiny have included:

- ❖ Scrutiny of work undertaken by the sub-groups to progress the identified priorities
- ❖ Scrutiny of the partnership data and quality assurance processes, providing challenge and advice re areas of development
- ❖ Scrutiny of the readiness of the partnership to respond to the requirements of Working Together (2023)
- ❖ Scrutiny of the rapid review and Local Child Safeguarding review process and activity undertaken to embed the emerging learning and assess impact

- ❖ Supporting the work undertaken to continually progress a joined up approach across the LCSPs and SABs with a focus upon the safeguarding of those transitioning to adulthood
- ❖ Scrutiny of approaches used to hear the voice of children, supporting the plans to develop opportunities for children and those transitioning to adulthood to support the partnership as young scrutineers
- ❖ Ongoing scrutiny of the embedding of the developments in response to Working Together 2023
- ❖ Participation in regional and national fora

In triangulating the findings from the range of scrutiny activity there is clear evidence of robust child focused leadership with commitment to ensuring that children in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are safeguarded and their welfare promoted.

The system of rotating chairing responsibilities among partners, introduced within the last year is effective. Education have an increasingly strong voice and all statutory partners are fully committed to the safeguarding ambitions of the Partnership. There is a culture of openness, respectful challenge, and a willingness to learn and continually improve.

In the coming year the partnership face a number of challenges including the need to consider the local response to implementing the children's social care reforms alongside significant changes within partner organisations. The impact of such changes needs ongoing monitoring.

As the Independent Scrutineer, I am committed to hearing directly from children, young people, families, and frontline practitioners to understand what is working well and how multi-agency working can be improved. Given the plans to recruit a young scrutineer are progressing I look forward to working with them to ensure the voice of children, young people and families continue to inform the partnerships work.

While challenges lie ahead, I have confidence in the ability of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships to build upon its strengths and I will continue to scrutinise and support the Partnership in navigating risks and challenges.

# The Partnership

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) brings together organisations across Leicester with a vision.

Our vision is for children and young people in Leicester to be safe, well and achieve their full potential.

The local Safeguarding Children Partnership was established in 2019 to oversee the multi-agency safeguarding children arrangements under the [Children Act 2004](#), as amended by the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#).

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should be based on Local Authority areas. Arrangements can cover two or more local authority boundaries by agreement. As we share a number of partners with Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (LRSCP), we publish joint [Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) (MASA). In 2024-25, we reviewed our arrangements in light of the updated government guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#). These were re-published in December 2024, in line with government timescales.

Our principles and aims across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland are:

- for clear accountability
- for clear and demonstrable influence
- for equitable and fair contributions from all partners

Amendments made by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to the Children Act 2004 placed duties on Police, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), and Local Authorities, as statutory safeguarding partners. Safeguarding partners are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

In accordance with the requirements and inclusions outlined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#),<sup>1</sup> these arrangements aim to ensure that at a local level:

- there is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account

<sup>1</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 24, paragraph 40.

- the voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- effective collection, sharing and analysis of data, enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies
- senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

Further information about the structure and governance of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is available in the “Progress against statutory guidance” section of the report.

Working Together 2023 states that “Safeguarding partners must jointly report on the activity they have undertaken in 12-month period”.<sup>2</sup> This Yearly Report fulfils this requirement.

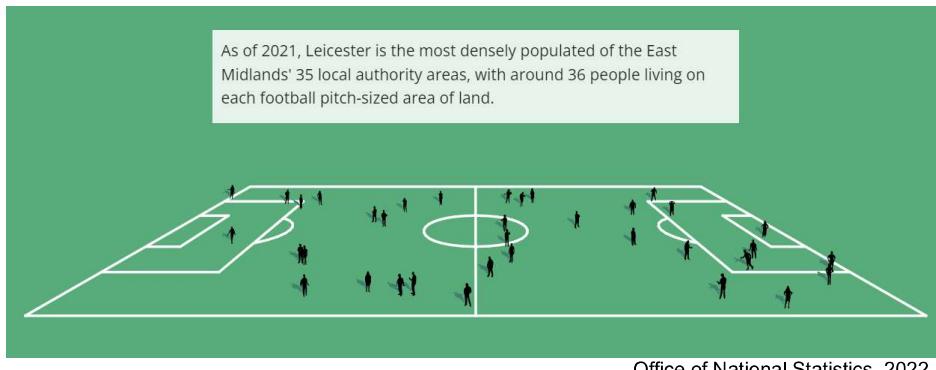
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<sup>2</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 40, paragraph 106.

# Area profile

## Local Context

During 2021 Leicester's population reached nearly 370,000 and Leicester was noted as the most densely populated local authority area across the East Midlands (Office of National Statistics, 2022)<sup>3</sup>. It is home to around 36 people per football pitch-sized piece of land.



At the end of 2024-25 the population of 0–17-year-olds in Leicester was 88,725. The percentage of households including dependent children rose by 1.8% from 2011 to 2021. During the same period, the percentage in the East Midlands as a whole fell by 0.9%.

According to the Office of National Statistics in the 2021 census around 213,600 Leicester residents said they were born in England and this represented 57.9% of the local population. The 5 most common countries of birth for the population of Leicester in 2021 were England, India, South and Eastern Africa (other than Kenya, Somalia, South Africa and Zimbabwe), Poland, and Kenya.

In 2021, 43.4% of usual residents in Leicester identified their ethnic group as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh followed by 40.9% who identified themselves as White, 7.8% as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, 4.1% as Other ethnic groups and 3.8% as Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups (Office of National Statistics, 2022) .

The Spring (January 2024) School Census recorded at least 182 languages spoken by children in schools across Leicester whilst the Spring (January 2025) School Census recorded 48.4% of school children in Leicester as Asian / Asian British, 28.2% as White / White British, 10.9% as Black / Black British, and 8.2% as Mixed.

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics (2022) How the population changed in Leicester: Census 2021  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000016/>

## **Review of use of restraint in secure establishments**

There are no Youth Custody homes within the local authority area but those which are in the region which house young people from the area will be required to report on arrangements as and when necessary.

### **Recent Inspections**

#### Leicester City Council local authority children's services

Following an Ofsted inspection that took place in September 2024, Leicester City Council's local authority children's services was rated as requires improvement to be good by Ofsted.

The [full report](#) was published on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

Ofsted noted the 'supportive environment' leaders have maintained for staff, ensuring that caseloads remain at manageable levels. They found that handovers happened clearly and swiftly; staff knew how to escalate children's cases appropriately and that social workers 'know their children well and speak about them with knowledge and sensitivity.' The use of child protection plans and processes to bring children into the care of the local authority were appropriate.

The council's fostering service was also highlighted as an area of significant strength, with carers receiving 'very good' support.

Their report says that in order to achieve a judgement of 'good', leaders in children's services need to improve the information they have to evaluate performance, and that care plans and responses to some referrals also need to be more consistent if all children are to have the best possible outcomes. An improvement plan has been produced to address the points raised by Ofsted.

Inspectors also said that arrangements to support the very small group of most vulnerable children in care and care leavers could be improved, as well as support for young adult care leavers in prison or facing homelessness - areas which have been swiftly addressed by the authority since the inspection.

## **Multi-Agency Collaborations**

#### Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs)

Joint Targeted Area Inspections are carried out by inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).<sup>4</sup>

Locally, a JTA has not been completed since the process was implemented. However, supported by the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-targeted-area-inspection-of-the-multi-agency-response-to-identification-of-initial-need-and-risk--2/joint-targeted-area-inspection-of-the-multi-agency-response-to-identification-of-initial-need-and-risk>.

Children Partnerships, multi-agency partners carry out audits on current JTAI themes to measure their effectiveness and consider improvements.

In Summer 2024, the Planning & Delivery Group received the findings from the Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation audit – see the section on the “Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents” business plan priority for further information.

A new programme of Joint Target Area Inspections (JTAI) started in autumn 2024, with the focus being on the multi-agency response to children who are victims of domestic abuse. Since JTAs last focused on this theme in 2016, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has made clear that children are victims of domestic abuse in their own right if they have seen, heard or experienced the effect of the abuse.

As a result, Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland agencies carried out an audit of domestic abuse cases in December 2024. Single agency learning has been identified and is being taken forward.

# Progress against statutory guidance

## Implementation of changes set out in statutory guidance

In 2024-25, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership, alongside the Leicestershire & Rutland Children Partnership, reviewed their [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) in light of the updated government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. The review particularly considered:

- Reflecting the role that Education plays in safeguarding children
- Reflecting the role that the Voluntary and Community Sector plays in safeguarding children
- The role of Safeguarding Partners – Lead and Delegates
- The role of Partnership Chair
- Updating Scrutiny arrangements.

## Activities achieved

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships have strengthened the role of Education within the partnerships, with schools, early years and other settings now a core part of their arrangements.<sup>5</sup> A Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Education Group has been formed. Further information is provided below.

The reach and membership of the LLR Voluntary and Community Sector Forum has been expanded. It runs three times within each business year, and jointly with the local Safeguarding Adults Boards. It shares safeguarding updates with the Voluntary and Community Sector, faith-based organisations, and sport clubs / organisations, promoting the welfare of local children and adults with care and support needs. The qualitative feedback that members of the Forum provide can shape future agenda items and areas of focus for the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Strategic leadership and accountability within the Safeguarding Children Partnerships is provided by the Lead Safeguarding Partners. Working Together 2023 defines Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) as Chief Executives of Local Authorities, Chief Executives of Integrated Care Boards, and Chief Officers of Police forces.<sup>6</sup> Each Lead Safeguarding Partner should appoint a Delegated Safeguarding Partner (DSP) for its agency, sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of the Lead Safeguarding Partner and hold their organisation to account.<sup>7</sup> The Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners are documented in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.<sup>8</sup>

Previously, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships were chaired by an Independent Chair. As advised in Working Together 2023, a clearer distinction has been made between the leadership and scrutiny roles.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Lead Safeguarding Partners have appointed the role of Partnership Chair for the local multi-agency

<sup>5</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 33, paragraph 76.

<sup>6</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 24, paragraph 48.

<sup>7</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 28, paragraph 56.

<sup>8</sup> [Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) (December 2024), page 8.

<sup>9</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 29, paragraph 61.

arrangements to individual Delegated Safeguarding Partners, rotating on an annual basis.

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships are now supported by an Independent Scrutineer, rather than an Independent Chair.

### Impact of the activities

The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements recognise the central role that Education play in safeguarding children and ensure a more rigorous and effective independent scrutiny function, which provides challenge to local safeguarding partners.

### Future Plans

A Young Scrutineer will be appointed to work alongside our Independent Scrutineer to ensure the views and experience of a range of children across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are at the centre of the work of the partnerships. They will provide independent scrutiny from the perspective of a young person within a broader independent scrutiny framework and hold partnership members to account bringing challenge from a young person's perspective.

### **Updates to published arrangements**

In line with Working Together 2023, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements will be updated when there are key changes, such as changes to the Lead Safeguarding Partners, or the list of relevant agencies, and any updates will be sent to the Department for Education.<sup>10</sup>

### **Representation of Education sector**

#### Operational level

In the earlier part of 2024-25, the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships continued to run their LLR Independent Schools Forum. It met every six months and its purpose was to share information, with the schools selecting safeguarding topics for discussion that were specific to them.

The advent of the LLR Education Group recognises that all local schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) are relevant agencies for the purpose of our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. They are included in the local safeguarding arrangements through this subgroup, which promotes education engagement within the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and coordinates what is done across the education sector for the purposes of safeguarding. Safeguarding themes already discussed include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and healthier screen time.

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<sup>10</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), page 40, paragraph 105.

For several years, Education has also been represented on the Case Review Group, Keeping in Touch Group, Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group, and the Audit and Assurance Group. The plan is for this to continue.

### Strategic level

For many years, the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership has included representatives from primary and secondary schools and further education from Leicester on its membership.

The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements strengthen the role of Education on the partnership. The Chair of the LLR Education Subgroup will now join the Delegated Safeguarding Partners at the LLR Meeting of Safeguarding Partners.

### **Partnership Chair**

The Lead Safeguarding Partners appoint the role of Partnership Chair to individual Delegated Safeguarding Partners, rotating on an annual basis. Chairs and Deputy Chairs have been agreed until 2029-30 and their names are available via the LLR Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements.<sup>11</sup>

### **Partnership Governance Structure**

The membership of the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership comprises of Safeguarding Partners and other relevant agencies, including Education, Health agencies, Probation and other organisations working with children. The full membership of the partnership can be found in Appendix 1 of our [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#).

The engagement of all partners, at a Partnership and subgroup level, is monitored. If a partner agency does not attend a number of meetings, this is escalated to the Chair of the group. If the matter remains unresolved, it is further escalated to the statutory Safeguarding Partners.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the Chair of the LLR Education Subgroup attend the LLR Safeguarding Partners meeting. This meeting considers shared matters of governance, funding, and sharing intelligence as well as setting the forward agenda for meetings of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships. The Independent Scrutineer and Business Managers are invited to these meetings, where appropriate. Up to half of these meetings are joint with the statutory partners of the local Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) and the Independent Chair of the local SABs is invited to join these meetings, where appropriate.

Representatives from the Safeguarding Partner agencies form the Planning & Delivery Group, with chairing duties rotating through the membership. This group drives implementation of the Partnerships' Business Plans; scrutinises and responds to multi-agency safeguarding performance and assurance; has oversight of learning

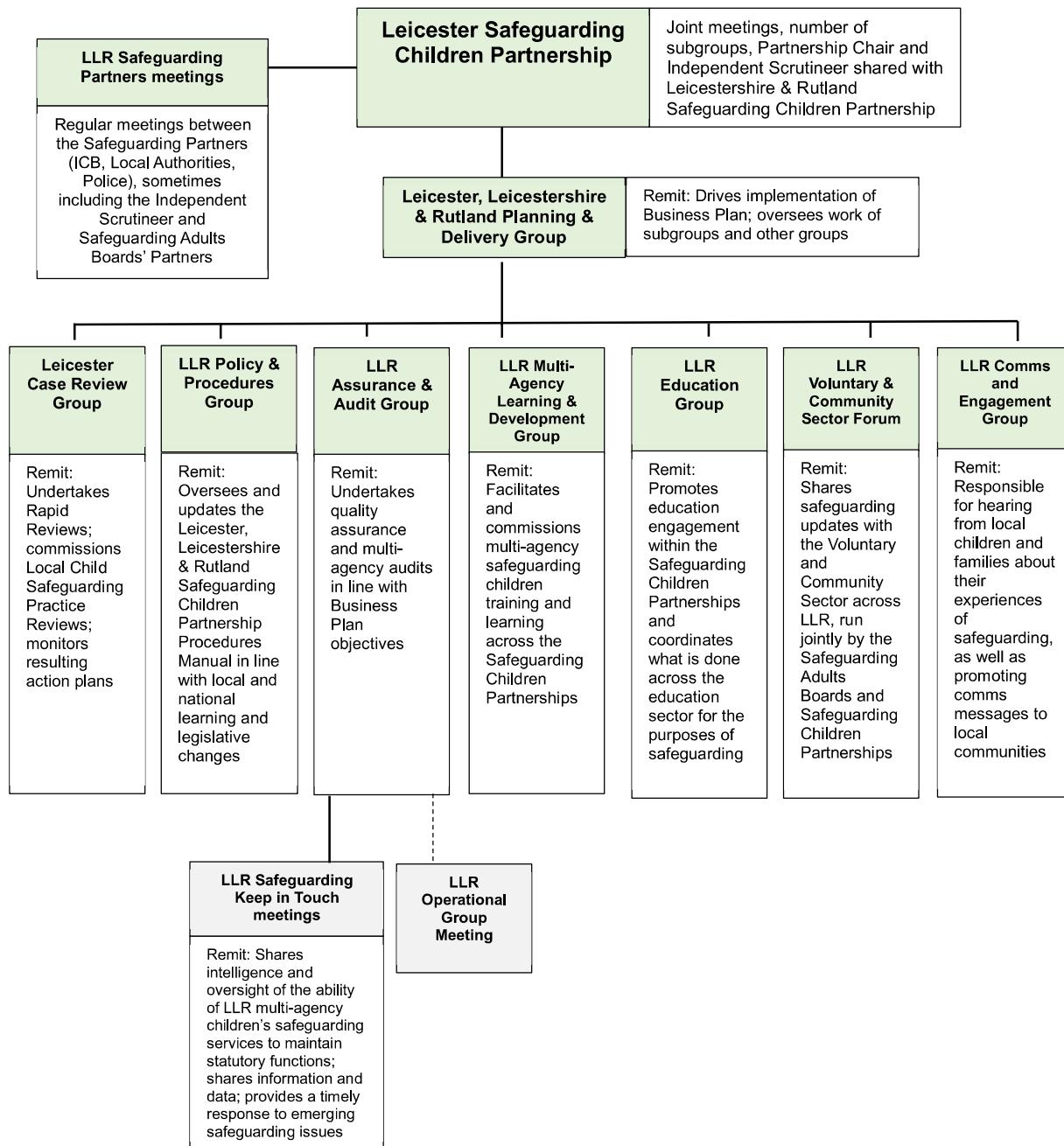
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<sup>11</sup> [Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) (December 2024), page 8.

from reviews; oversees work of the Partnerships' subgroups; and agrees learning and development arrangements.

Statutory Safeguarding Partner representatives also chair several subgroups. The Safeguarding Partners are accountable for decisions regarding Rapid Reviews and whether to proceed to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

The structure chart below demonstrates the governance of the Partnership and its subgroups.



The interface between the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and other local strategic boards ensures assurance and joint work, where appropriate. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships receive the annual report of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). They are provided with annual updates, within dedicated agenda items in meetings, from Domestic Abuse Boards and the Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board, which sits under the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB) and works to prevent and reduce involvement in violence through safeguarding, early intervention and diversion. Development days, to plan for future business plan objectives, include representatives from the Leicester Community Safety Partnership and local Safeguarding Adults Boards.

### **Financial breakdown and value for money**

The work of the Safeguarding Children Partnership is supported by the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnerships Business Office that also supports the Safeguarding Adults Board and carries out Domestic Homicide Reviews for Community Safety Partnerships in Leicestershire & Rutland. The Safeguarding Children Partnership is funded by contributions from its partners.

A single funding arrangement for the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards for 2020 onwards was agreed between the statutory partners for the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the Safeguarding Children Partnerships for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

**The contributions from partners for the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2024-25 can be seen below alongside contributions from the previous year:**

|   | <b>2023-24</b>  | <b>2024-25</b>  |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Leicester City Council  | £111,100        | £111,100        |
| Leicestershire Police   | £51,850         | £51,850         |
| Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board (LLR ICB) | £51,850         | £51,850         |
| DfE Grant Funding   | £47,300         | -               |
| Use of Reserves   | -               | £90             |
| <b>Total income for SCP</b>   | <b>£262,100</b> | <b>£214,890</b> |

**Expenditure for the SCP was apportioned as follows:**

|                              | <b>2023-24</b> | <b>2024-25</b> |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Staffing                     | £166,011       | £180,466       |
| Independent Chair/Scrutineer | £10,391        | £13,973        |
| Professional Membership      | £914           | £914           |
| Training                     | £5000          | £14,915        |

|                          |                 |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Policies and Procedures  | £3,400          | £3,129          |
| Engagement and Comms     | £1,000          | £0              |
| Case Reviews             | £0              | £1,375          |
| Miscellaneous            | £154            | £118            |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b> | <b>£186,870</b> | <b>£214,890</b> |

Staffing costs increased as a result of the agreed Leicester City Council pay award (as the staff are hosted by this Local Authority). The cost of the Independent Advisor was higher in 2024-25. Their contract started part way through the previous year hence the lower cost. Throughout the year, the Scrutineer also completed additional work in relation to Working Together 2023. Whilst there was no expenditure on Case Reviews in 2023-24, there was a small cost in 2024-25 in relation to work stemming from a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. Training costs have increased due to the commissioning of a large-scale multi-agency training event.

Costs have risen and we spent just over the amount we received from partners' contributions. The shortfall of £70 was made up from reserves. Although costs have increased, we believe that the output of the Partnership demonstrates value for money. Despite budget constraints, we have still achieved developments to enhance engagement of Education, the Voluntary Sector, and the Faith and Sports sectors and have introduced new Subgroups into our governance structure.

## Implementation of national reforms

### Children's Social Care reforms

In 2023, reforms to Children's Social Care began, supported by the Stable Homes, Built on Love strategy. The implementation of the reforms continues, as set out in the [Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive](#) policy paper, published in November 2024, and the upcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.<sup>12</sup>

### **Family Help**

In delivering the Family Help approach, we envision that the right professionals are involved at the right time and that consistent services are provided regardless of where the family's plan sits and that we build upon existing strengths and practice of delivering s.17 work to families through engagement with a range of differently qualified and experienced professionals, including social workers and early help practitioners.

Our integrated social care and early help front door (the Children's Advice, Support and Prevention Team) ensures that cases are allocated with the right thresholds in place and that families receive the most appropriate support promptly (including through an effective 24-hour duty and advice service). Leicester benefits from having clear processes in place which ensure that practitioners know how to step-up

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<sup>12</sup> See Community Care Inform Children: <https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/childrens-social-care-reforms/>

children's cases from early help to children's social care. Thresholds are clearly understood by professional partners and are applied appropriately by early help workers. Managers have oversight of this, ensuring they request cases step up to children's social care when risks and concerns escalate. Step down processes are also clear and social workers ensure that early help workers and families know the scope and nature of early help support needed.

There is strong recognition of the value and importance of early help, whole family and whole system working. There is a strong locality based early help and prevention offer, supported by effective collaboration with social work teams. The Signs of Safety approach enables positive, sustainable outcomes for children and families – utilising family networks and developing detailed safety plans to understand and reduce risks. There is an expectation that all families are offered family network meetings; we have a standalone family decision making service which is utilised in specific circumstances and is currently being expanded.

The vision is that under Family Help children will experience consistent, relationship-based support from trusted professionals who explain their involvement clearly. They will be surrounded by wraparound support, including family and community networks, without needing to repeat their story and feel heard, seen, and valued, with their voices actively shaping decisions and actions. We want children to see real change and follow-through from plans, helping them feel empowered and supported in achieving their own goals as well as be respected for who they are, including their culture, identity, and individuality.

As a result of the transformation, our vision is that parents and carers experience continuity of support and only tell their story once. They will feel better listened to and understood, with their perspectives respected and valued as well as being more connected to practice around children through their role in networks. We want parents and carers to access support more easily, with services that are delivered locally and designed to be more accessible. Parents and carers will understand the network of support that is available to them, knowing who is there to help and how to reach them.

We anticipate that the Families First programme will increase the confidence of the workforce tapping into the network of support around families, working as one team. Our vision is that the workforce will be better integrated with communities, with strong knowledge of and connection to local social resources.

A foundation of strong practice exists with Leicester's integrated front door and through the appropriate application of thresholds by staff across early help, prevention and social work teams (as evidenced by the use of step up/step down processes). We have effective assessment and planning templates that, with some minor adjustments, will form a robust, streamlined child and family assessment/plan. Shared approaches such as the Lundy Model, Signs of Safety and Trauma Informed Practice are well embedded across Children's Services.

### Family Hubs

[Family Hubs](#) aim to support any family with children aged 0-19 years, or 25 years for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), who may need

help. A Family Hub is not a single service; it is a group of services working together to make sure the right person with the appropriate skills offers their support.

There is a national framework for the delivery of Family Hubs,<sup>13</sup> and this sets out expectations of the types of activity and partnership working that is expected by the Department for Education.

Leicester's Family Hubs remains an excellent example of effective multi-agency collaboration and continues to provide key support services for children, young people and families. Particular successes over 2024-25 include the role out of family support training for partners across VCS, feedback from VCS partners through our Family Hub Network Mtgs to ensure continues progress and community cohesion.

One key area of success through multiagency collaboration in Family Hubs is the development of Leicester's Frenotomy service which is being launched in September 2025. This has been developed using funding committed from Leicester's Family Hubs in collaboration with Leicester Partnership Trust (LPT) and the LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB). As a result, we have been able to enhance existing infant feeding services in Leicester to include a weekly Frenotomy Clinic – this is in addition to conducting oral assessments and breastfeeding support. This creates a more holistic and comprehensive service, reducing the need for hospital or out of area referrals and improving access to care for infants with feeding difficulties. The service is now fully operational within Leicester's Family Hubs service, with an official launch date of 1st September 2025.

Leicester's Enhanced Infant Feeding service offers significant benefits for infant health, parental physical and mental wellbeing, and the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland healthcare system, including improved infant nutrition, reduced health complications, enhanced parental wellbeing, and decreased demand on NHS resources. The service also enables data collection, audits, and outcome assessments to evaluate long-term outcomes.

### **Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)**

As well as the six priorities set out in the 2023-25 LLR Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan, it stated that the Assurance and Audit Group would undertake a partnership wide self-assessment in relation to Child Sexual Abuse, linked to national findings on local multi-agency leadership from the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#) (October 2022). Since the implementation of that Business Plan, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published their national review, ["I wanted them all to notice": Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment](#), in November 2024. Consequently, for 2025-26, the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships have signed up to work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse (CSA) snapshot. This will be completed to inform the work of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' subgroups to evidence the effectiveness of the local response.

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<sup>13</sup> [Family hub model framework 2025-26: Family Hubs and Start for Life programme guide](#), Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education (February 2025).

## **National Care Records Service**

The National Care Records Service (NCRS) is a service that allows Health and Social Care professionals to access and update a range of patient and safeguarding information across regional integrated care system (ICS) boundaries. This is being rolled out across LLR: [National Care Records Service - NHS England Digital](#). This work is progressing at an appropriate pace in line with Information Governance criteria.

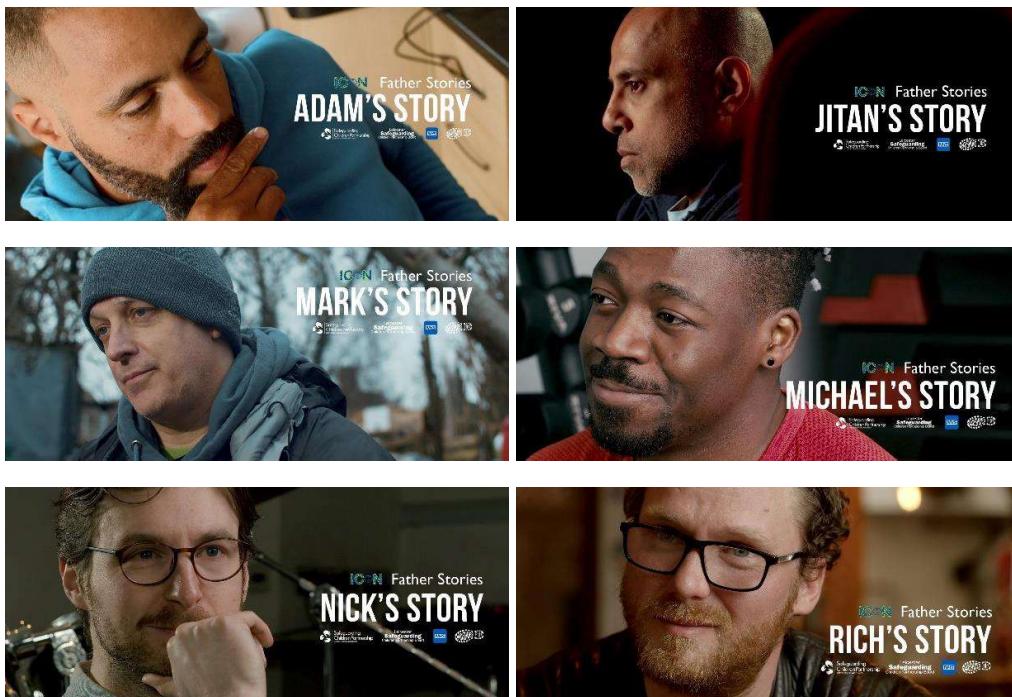
## **Moving Forwards**

Locally, we will work towards the delivery expectations for safeguarding partners set out in [The Families First Partnership \(FFP\) Programme Guide](#), published in March 2025. Safeguarding partners will receive updates and assurance on the local transformation activity for Family Help, multi-agency child protection, and Family Group Decision Making. The Policy and Procedures Group will lead on publishing a refreshed Thresholds document by the end of the transformation year (March 2026), confirming changes and setting out a broad continuum of Family Help.

# How feedback from children and families has informed our work and influenced service provision

During 2024-25:

- A range of Father Stories were launched in May 2024. These are short films, performed by actors, which have been scripted by local fathers to reflect their experiences of becoming parents, the impact on their mental health and how to seek support and to manage crying babies. These have been promoted widely with practitioners so that they reflect on working with Dads and use these resources to support them.



- The local Safer Sleep Champions continued to monitor any family feedback provided to frontline practitioners regarding the local [Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool](#). The Tool was updated in January 2025, taking into account feedback from a practitioner survey which sought their experiences of using the tool with families.

The Safeguarding Children Partnership wants to have meaningful engagement with children, young people and families that makes a difference to the work of the partnership. To acknowledge that engagement could be improved, two new initiatives have been introduced.

A Communication and Engagement Group has been introduced. It is responsible for hearing from local children and families about their experiences of safeguarding, as well as promoting comms messages to local communities. The group does not

promote comms to practitioners as this is the role of the Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group.

In the future, the Safeguarding Children Partnership will commission a Young Person Scrutineer.

**In Leicester Children and Family Services:**

Children's Social Care offers activities and services to help rebuild and strengthen children and young people's resilience. Parents have primary responsibility for and are the main influence on their children. Children's social care's role is to strengthen parenting capacity, while remaining clear about their duty to safeguard vulnerable children and young people. If you have any concerns for the health and wellbeing of a child, contact the Duty and Advice Service on 0116 454 1004.

Below is feedback that reflects the views of families in receipt of multi-agency services coordinated by Children's Social Care in Leicester.

**“we just wanted to express our sincere thanks for the way you chaired the meeting yesterday. Your balanced and fair approach made a real difference.... We felt heard, and it was reassuring to have someone guide the process such with clarity and professionalism”**

Feedback from Leicester parent/carer

**“Your support, patience, and genuine care have made such a difference in my life, and I truly don't know where I would be without your guidance. From the very beginning, you made me feel seen, heard, and understood... Thank you for being a steady presence during times that felt uncertain. Your compassion, encouragement, and honesty helped me grow in ways I didn't think were possible.”**

Feedback from Leicester young person

# The Business Priorities of the Partnership

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership worked with the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership to identify shared priorities for the [Joint Business Plan 2023-25](#). The annual Business Plan was replaced with a two-year-plan to allow time to embed the outcomes of the key deliverables and, subsequently, analyse the impact of these outcomes.

Updates on the joint business plan are provided throughout the business year to the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.



Progress on the following priorities was monitored throughout the year and assurance secured that actions were making a positive difference to the lived experience of local children and families.

**Safeguarding Babies:** Improving how we work together with families before and after births to safeguard babies and seek assurance that multi-agency working with families to safeguard babies is effective.

## What we did in 2024-25:

- Continued to raise awareness of the LLR SCP [Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure](#), last updated in April 2024 to reflect learning from local reviews and a [multi-agency audit](#) completed in 2023-24. The procedure was relaunched in June 2024. There were two in-person launch sessions held at County Hall, followed by a session at City Hall in September 2024. There was also a section on the procedure at Safeguarding Matters Live in July 2024. The [video of the session](#) is available on the LLR SCP YouTube Channel.
- Continued to promote and monitor the impact of [ICON](#), which was launched early in 2022-23. ICON is an evidenced-based programme focused on reducing abusive head trauma (AHT) triggered by crying. The pneumonic ICON outlines the key messages of the programme: Infant crying is normal,

**Comforting methods can help, It's OK to walk away, and Never, ever shake a baby.**

In 2023-24, it was recognised that further assurance of touch point messages being recorded by Maternity and GP services was still required. In 2024-25, an audit was carried out to continue to analyse the embedding of ICON in frontline practice and its impact. There remain issues with the recording of maternity ICON touch points and those for the GP final touch points. These are due to how they can be recorded with maternity systems changing and where the GP touch point is recorded. This is being monitored.

In May 2024, the ICON Father Stories were launched at the Phoenix Cinema and Arts Centre. These are 6 short films performed by actors that have been scripted by local fathers to reflect their experiences of managing crying babies. Research evidence indicates that 70% of AHT is perpetrated by men and, therefore, it is of importance to ensure men are given the ICON message as well as the support and resources to help them manage a crying baby and reduce AHT. Full and shortened versions of the stories are available on the YouTube Channel here: [LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships - YouTube](#).

The DadPad App, commissioned by Perinatal Mental Health, was made available to all fathers across the sub-region from Summer 2024 and includes national and local ICON information.

An ["Invisible" / "Hidden" / "Unseen" Men: Engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice Resource Pack](#) was published in September 2024 to collate information on local and national resources available.

- Undertook a spotlight audit of babies up to one year old, subject to Child Protection Plans, across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to consider whether there has been an improvement in safeguarding babies in recent years. Further detail on the audit is available in the "Quality Assurance and Service Improvement" section of this report.
- Considered the impact of the local [Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool](#) in Summer 2024, six months after its launch. A frontline practitioner survey was disseminated by the Safer Sleep Champions across the multi-agency partnership to understand how the tool works in practice and how it could be improved and further promoted.
- Through the Section 11 self-assessment process, this year completed using a frontline practitioner survey, assessed evidence of the impact of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool and improved approaches to working with males, in response to the publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review's third national review on ["The Myth of Invisible Men"](#).
- Supported "Baby Fortnight" in April 2024, which was held across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. There were two different strands to the fortnight: one for the whole workforce, with a variety of workshops for those working with parents/carers and children from pregnancy into the early years, and the other with a variety of sessions delivered to parents/carers in

Family Hubs. These sessions were delivered by the Family Wellbeing Workers in the Family Help Service, and colleagues working for Active Together.

#### **Outcomes and Impact:**

- ICON is well embedded locally with review and audit work evidencing that ICON messages are being shared widely and appropriately by local agencies. ICON messages are delivered by health staff to **all parents** through the 6 touch points and ICON is **targeted in greater detail** to families with specific vulnerabilities, for example, parents who misuse substances, young parents, and parents of premature babies. The voluntary sector support ICON messages through parenting sessions and ICON is also promoted to male prisoners.
- The ICON Father Stories have been well received with over 500 views on YouTube since their launch.

*“Powerful, beautiful, moving, important. Thank you to you and the team for creating these films. A personal note to the actor who did an incredible job. My partner was a mess after the film. His delivery and authenticity is superb. I’m very honoured to be part of this truly groundbreaking project. Thank you. It’s remarkable and I’m positive it’ll have an impact on many lives.”* – feedback from a father who provided his story for one of the films

- Across the county, 108 families with 126 children attended the Baby Fortnight sessions. At the end of the session, parents were given a QR code so they could give feedback. Over half of those attending completed the survey.

*“It is so important for the babies to interact with other babies and to build on their social skills. I needed this for my baby as we do not go out very much.”*

*“Today has made me think how I can do some activities at home with my Baby that do not have too [sic] cost much.”* – feedback from parents/carers attending Baby Fortnight sessions

- The feedback from the survey disseminated by local Safer Sleeping Champions informed the updates to the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool which was republished in January 2025. The update did not require extensive changes. The updated tool was widely promoted via the Safer Sleeping Champions and the Safeguarding Matters Digest to tie in with national Safer Sleep Week 2025 (10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> March).

The results of the Section 11 frontline practitioner survey, completed in late 2024, indicated that further promotion and awareness raising around the tool is required. 44% of respondents to the online survey<sup>14</sup> answered that they were aware of the tool, with 42% of those saying they had used it in

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<sup>14</sup> The majority of practitioners completed the online practitioner survey, but GP Practices participated in a different way, via an Integrated Care Board managed process.

practice. Of those that had used the tool, there were some positive responses, with 58% saying they found it very useful.

*“Good conversation point for parents and also identifies risk in a clear manner and enables practitioners to document their concerns.”*

*“It is a protective measure to help both the child and parents whilst giving useful advice on sleeping arrangements to keep the baby safe. This tool can be used with the parents to also help recognise the pitfalls to co sleeping and how it could impact them and their baby.”* – comments made by survey respondents

- The results of the Section 11 frontline practitioner survey indicated more limited knowledge than hoped of the [“Practice Principles – Engaging Fathers, and Male Carers in Effective Practice”](#), launched in September 2023, with 39% of respondents to the online survey<sup>15</sup> saying they were aware of them. Around a third of those that were aware of the principles had used them and most found them useful.

*“I find the Practice Principles helpful because they guide me in effectively engaging fathers and male carers in a child’s life. They promote inclusive, strength-based approaches, ensuring fathers are active participants in care and support, benefiting the child’s overall well-being.”*

*“Helpful to focus on engaging fathers in all care from checks to consultations. Gives us a better understanding of family situations.”* – comments made by survey respondents

#### **Moving Forwards:**

The Safeguarding Babies priority has been in place since 2021-22 and a lot of work has been completed in this time, with the implementation of ICON, an updated Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure and the launch of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool. Also, during this time, there have been numerous training events and individual courses, both in person and online, and a range of learning and development resources have been produced and disseminated.

The national analysis of Serious Incident Notifications for 2023-24, published in May 2024, noted that “Despite the fall in notifications for under 1s, this remained the most common age group in 2024, accounting for 1 in 3 notifications (33%).”<sup>16</sup> In line with the national picture, under 1s accounted for 1 in 3 local Serious Incident Notifications during 2023-24.

It is evident that this business priority has achieved a good level of assurance and so it will not be carried over to the 2025-27 Business Plan. It is acknowledged, though, that further awareness raising is required around key guidance and resources, particularly with a large and dynamic workforce. Therefore, babies will

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<sup>15</sup> As above.

<sup>16</sup> Serious Incident Notifications: Reporting year 2024, Child Characteristics section (May 2024) – <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/serious-incident-notifications/2024>

always be seen as a key cohort of focus for the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**Child Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing:** Seek assurance that partnership working supports good mental health for children and that mental health and safeguarding are effectively addressed together.

**What we did in 2024-25:**

- Received information and assurance, via the Planning & Delivery Group, regarding the Complex Care Escalation Process, which supports leaders within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland to access timely support to progress the care arrangements of local children and young people. This includes the management of care for children and young people with mental health, learning disabilities and/or autism and/or placement needs.
- Formed a Task & Finish Group on “Capturing the Voice of the Child in the Child Protection process”, which considered the experiences of local children subject to safeguarding arrangements and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Recommendations and learning from the LLR Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) themed review informed the review and update of the LLR SCP [“Practice Guidance: Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm and/or have Suicidal Thoughts”](#).
- Continued to consider the local implications of [“Right Care, Right Person”](#) (RCRP). This is a collective national approach from the Home Office, Department of Health & Social Care, the National Police Chiefs' Council, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and NHS England which aims to work to end the inappropriate and avoidable involvement of police in responding to incidents involving people with mental health needs and ensure that individuals in mental health crisis are seen by the right professional.
- Following the multi-agency dip sample audit of referrals to Children's Social Care (CSC) across the three Local Authorities where the contacts were labelled as 'child's mental health', the Assurance and Audit Group have initiated a follow-up audit on young people open to CAMHS and subject to Child Protection Plan.

**Outcomes and Impact:**

- The CAMHS Young Person's Team provided information to the Voice of the Child Task & Finish Group on the activities undertaken in capturing the voice of the child. CAMHS sessions, which are in the main face-to-face, include the voice of the child. Several approaches are used to facilitate engagement and communication such as play and alternate communication forms, such as written or flashcards. Also, events have been held such as the 'my voice' event, where young people were invited to join poetry and rap

music workshops to share their views on mental health. This was followed by an 'Active' event where young people were invited to join CAMHS staff for professional led physical activities such as yoga and kickboxing with themes of emotional wellbeing fed through and staff available to talk during physical movement. A Learning Disability Nurse is embedded within the team, who offers consultation and support around adapting communication and resources. For young people for whom English is not their first language, interpreters are booked to ensure communication needs are met.

The CAMHS Young Person's Team reported that this work has enabled an understanding of the impact for our young people of often having multiple professionals in their lives. They have voiced that they feel unheard at times or that their paperwork is shared and people draw judgement from this rather than getting to know them. Groups and events such as 'my voice' and 'active' have helped them to break down some of these barriers. They recognise, though, that these were one-off events rather than an ongoing resource they can offer. Having a Learning Disability Nurse in their team has made a huge difference in enabling them to expand their ability to offer differing layers of communication.

*"The nurses in the Young Person's Team have changed my life."*

*"We can't thank you enough for the amazing care, kindness, sensitivity and professionalism you have given to our family especially our child over the last 12 months. When we really needed it, you were there and we felt so supported when things didn't always feel great. You are the epitome of the NHS at its best and we wish you all the very best for the future."* – feedback provided to the CAMHS Team

- The LLR SCP "Practice Guidance: Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm and/or have Suicidal Thoughts" includes more information on referral pathways to the Children and Young People Mental Health Triage and Navigation Service which now has a self-referral portal. The updated guidance and procedure were re-launched at the Safeguarding Matters Live event in December 2024.

*"Learning more about self-harming behaviour as I am working with a young person that is displaying these behaviours."* – feedback from attendee of Safeguarding Matters Live regarding what went well and what impact this will have on my work

*"It's brilliant to have. We use with families and children to look at what self-harm means."* – feedback from attendee of VCS Safeguarding Forum

#### **Moving Forwards:**

The learning from the audit on young people open to CAMHS and subject to Child Protection Plan will be reported to the Safeguarding Children Partnership and any procedural or training needs will be considered.

Since its inception in 2021-22, it is felt that this business priority has achieved a good level of assurance and so it will not be carried over to the 2025-27 Business

Plan. It is acknowledged, though, that children's mental health continues to be a subject of both local and national importance. Therefore, the Planning & Delivery Group will continue to seek assurance that mental health and safeguarding are effectively addressed together locally by receiving CAMHS highlight reports.

**Keeping Adolescents Safe / Supporting Safe Adolescents:** Seek assurance that there is a clear governance and approach for safeguarding children from harm outside the home and that it is effective.

**What we did in 2024-25:**

- Continued to receive assurance from the Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board which provides governance to the Strategic Partnership Board's work relating to child exploitation (under 18s) and violence affecting young people (under 25s). It has been agreed that the Adolescence Safety and Diversion Board Chair will attend the Safeguarding Children Partnership meetings each year to present, within a dedicated agenda item, the progress of the ASD Board and delivery plans.
- Representatives from the Business Offices and several partner agencies of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships attend meetings of the Child Criminal Exploitation and Serious Violence Delivery Group.
- Received the findings from the multi-agency Serious Youth Violence and Child Exploitation audit, completed as part of the JTAI preparation. Learning was identified regarding the link between school exclusion and exploitation, support required for neurodiverse children, risk assessment and screening and transitional safeguarding. Recommendations have been taken forward with awareness raising with schools and work around risk assessment tools.
- Supported promotion to schools and wider partners of '[Tips for a Healthier Screen Time](#)', which is a useful guide for parents, carers, children and young people produced by Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE, Senior Consultant Paediatrician at the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre and Leicester Children's Hospital. It raises awareness of the effects of screen time on the health, well-being and safeguarding of children and young people.
- Linked to the national discussion regarding online harm and abuse, in relation to both children and adults, the December 2024 Safeguarding Matters Live Event was focused on Safeguarding and the Internet, with a presentation on the impact of social media on children, delivered by [Warning Zone](#), and a presentation on Prevent.

**Outcomes and Impact:**

- Assurance work informs training requirements and procedural reviews, with procedures on "Safeguarding Children and Young People from Child Sexual Exploitation" and "Online Safety" being updated in April 2025.

- The focused Safeguarding Matters Live led to some positive feedback about how the information presented will help professionals in practice:

*“Interesting information about online platforms and I will be able to use this knowledge in direct work and safety planning with children and young people.”*

*“Increased knowledge and understanding about online platforms, in particular how many very young children access these.”* – feedback from attendees of Safeguarding Matters Live.

#### **Moving Forwards:**

A priority on Harm Outside the Home has been included in the [Business Plan for 2025-27](#), which will build on the progress made since 2022-23 around this priority.

This acknowledges the continued prevalence of this theme nationally, with persistent concern about the themes raised in the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), including group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and grooming gangs. Implementation of the Online Safety Act 2023 is also at the forefront of national interest, following the release of the Netflix drama Adolescence, and with Ofcom’s child safety measures due to come into force for social media, search and gaming apps and websites in July 2025.<sup>17</sup> Assurance around the local response to these themes continues to be required.

**Safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds:** Understand and improve how well partners work together with children and families from diverse backgrounds.

#### **What we did in 2024-25:**

- Continued to promote the locally agreed definition of cultural competency and the standard of expected practice. It has been shared with the Safeguarding Children Partnerships’ Trainers’ Network as something to include in training wherever relevant and appropriate.
- Ensured that the impact of abuse and neglect on protective characteristics are analysed during the Rapid Review process.
- Continued to plan how best to provide multi-agency learning and development around immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting, to sit alongside already existing training and resources that consider safeguarding children from diverse backgrounds.

A Task & Finish Group is researching data and information about the demography of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and engaging with key contacts within those communities who can become specialists/advisors. It is recognised that the required learning and development cannot be

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/new-rules-for-a-safer-generation-of-children-online>

achieved through one training course. The group is planning a multi-faceted approach, including consideration of a practitioner workbook/tool/resource of where to go for help/support; delivering some basic awareness information courses/sessions about different communities that live in LLR and the experience of being a migrant – what that journey might have looked like/what some of the terms mean – such as ‘no recourse to public funds’; and providing practice forums and/or resources for building confidence for practitioners working in child protection/safeguarding, informed by local and national learning.

- Started to promote the learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel’s Briefing [“It’s Silent”: Race, racism and safeguarding children](#), published in March 2025. This has been included in the annual Learning from Reviews resource disseminated to Case Review Group members to share within their individual agencies.

#### **Outcomes and Impact:**

- Cultural competence and intersectionality are considered in audits and reviews across the Safeguarding Children Partnerships improving our understanding of how well partners work together with children and families from diverse backgrounds. It is acknowledged, though, that further work is required to improve this understanding, particularly in light of the questions raised by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel’s Briefing.

#### **Moving Forwards:**

A priority on Belonging has been included in the [Business Plan for 2025-27](#), which will build on the progress made since 2021-22 around this priority. This will continue to seek assurance around the work already in progress and address the questions for Safeguarding Children Partnerships raised in “It’s Silent”: Race, racism and safeguarding children’.

**Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings:** Work with faith groups, independent schools, community organisations and other settings to support them to play an effective role in safeguarding children.

During 2022-23 a Task and Finish Group, chaired by Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), developed and promoted [information leaflets for parents and carers](#) about keeping children safe in out of school settings. These leaflets were added to the websites of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

#### **What we did in 2024-25:**

- Safeguarding out of school settings and the associated leaflets were promoted via schools, as well as at the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Safeguarding Forum at their July 2024 meeting.

- Continued engagement via the local Independent Schools Forum, with the schools selecting topics for discussion that were specific to them. The Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway was a featured theme.
- Continued to expand the reach and membership of the LLR Voluntary and Community Sector Forum, which includes voluntary and community organisations, faith-based organisations, and sport clubs / organisations. Topics covered in 2024-25, in addition to the included the Child Sexual Abuse Response Pathway, delivered by a guest speaker from the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse; Healthier Screen Time; and resolving safeguarding disagreements and how to escalate concerns.
- Received assurance from each Local Authority around the local picture regarding Electively Home Educated children. In May 2024, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published a [Panel Briefing on Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education](#), which highlighted that *“figures from the Department for Education show that as many as 92,000 children were taught from home at the date of the census in England in autumn 2023. This is an increase from an estimated 80,900 in the previous autumn term. It also represents a 67% increase to the estimated 55,000 highlighted in the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) 2019 Elective Home Education Survey.”*<sup>18</sup> The recommendations from the Briefing helped to structure the assurance questions posed to the Local Authorities.

A presentation on Electively Home Educated Children was given at Safeguarding Matters Live in July 2024 and referenced this national report.

In response to national and local learning, in September 2024, the Policy and Procedures Group published new guidance entitled “[Elective Home Education: An Approach to Safeguarding for LLR](#)”. Four training briefing sessions were delivered by the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group, with the last one taking place in February 2025. A [video of one of these sessions](#) has been made into a learning resource.

- Following publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel’s report on “[Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings](#)” (October 2022 and April 2023), the Local Authorities provided the Department for Education with assurance that children within this cohort were safeguarded in their accommodation. In 2024-25, Health audited records of out of area children living in educational residential settings. The audit was undertaken to further this assurance via a review of health records of those children previously audited by the 3 LLR Local Authorities. The outcome was a good piece of assurance in that ongoing review of these children’s health files is now taking place.

## Outcomes and Impact:

<sup>18</sup> [“Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education: Panel Briefing 3”](#), Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (May 2024), page 2.

- In line with Working Together 2023 and its guidance on working with schools, colleges, early years, and other education providers, as well as voluntary, charity, social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and sports clubs, the updated local [Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) enhance the systems to engage and collaborate at both the operational and strategic level with these organisations.

The Independent Schools Forum is no longer required, as all local schools (including independent schools, academies, and free schools), colleges, early years and childcare settings, and other educational providers (including alternative provision) are recognised as relevant agencies for the purpose of our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements and come together as part of the LLR Education Group. The formation of the subgroup enhances the scope of engagement to encompass awareness raising and operational and strategic influence.

The Voluntary & Community Sector Forum has encouraged and provided better links and increased engagement with faith organisations, sports groups and community organisations. The Forum dedicates time to hearing feedback and input from those organisations about their experiences and knowledge of helping, protecting, and promoting the welfare of local children.

#### **Moving Forwards:**

It is evident that this business priority has achieved a good level of assurance and has led to the embedding of key, and ongoing, forums and so it will not be carried over to the 2025-27 Business Plan.

The role of Local Authorities around safeguarding and supporting home educated children is due to increase, in light of the new duties and responsibilities to be introduced through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. This includes the creation of a Children not in School Register. These national changes will inform any required changes to local policies and procedures.

**Transitional Safeguarding:** Seek assurance that Transitional Safeguarding is being managed appropriately across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

#### **What we did in 2024-25:**

- The Task & Finish Group formed to consider if transitional safeguarding is being managed in the most appropriate and effective way continued to meet. To improve governance, the Terms of Reference and membership were refreshed and the group includes representatives from both children's and adults' services. It has been agreed that the group will map the progress made in response to the work plan produced following a previous report on transitional safeguarding.

- Due to issues around the remit of the group and what would be required for an overarching Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland strategy/policy for transitional safeguarding, the work has not progressed as intended.

#### **Moving Forwards:**

Transitional safeguarding will be carried forward to both the [SCP Business Plan for 2025-27](#) and SAB Business Plan for 2025-27. It will be incorporated into a thematic priority, on “Belonging” for the SCP and “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion” for the SAB, so that the cohort of children and young people to be addressed can be clearer and more targeted.

Further information on assurance processes, procedures and training, informed by the business priorities, is outlined in the following sections of this report.

#### **Analysis of areas with limited progress**

It has been acknowledged above that three existing business priorities will be carried forward to the 2025-27 Business Plan. This is due to both progress locally and additional national learning and reform. Transitional safeguarding saw limited progress. The issues were escalated and the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Boards and the Independent Scrutineer of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships have been engaged to support this work.

# Quality Assurance and Service Improvement

The Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership has a Performance and Assurance Framework shared with the Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership. This can be found here [LSCP Performance Management](#). This has been updated in the last year to reflect Working Together 2023.



## Performance data

Indicators of performance in multi-agency safeguarding have been identified by the Assurance and Audit Group to monitor effectiveness of the operation of the multi-agency safeguarding system. Data is reported by agencies with analysis, utilising existing reports where possible.

| Snapshot at end of year 2024-25  | 18-19 | 19-20 | 20-21 | 21-22 | 22-23 | 23-24 | 24-25 |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Number of Early Help assessments | 1587  | 1973  | 1601  | 1338  | 1225  | 1319  | 1006  |
| Number of Children Looked After  | 666   | 610   | 624   | 623   | 626   | 622   | 594   |
| Number of Care Leavers           | 264   | 277   | 269   | 257   | 277   | 287   | 306   |
| Number of Child Protection Plans | 350   | 325   | 394   | 395   | 413   | 418   | 455   |
| Number of Children in Need       | 1962  | 1963  | 1989  | 1834  | 2115  | 2150  | 2128  |

| 2024-25 Data                                    | Number |
|---|--------|
| Referrals to Children's Social Care - Education | 555    |
| Referrals to Children's Social Care - Health    | 578    |
| Referrals to Children's Social Care - Police    | 824    |
| Strategy Meetings                               | 2446   |
| Section 47 enquiries                            | 1666   |
| Initial Child Protection Conferences            | 286    |
| Review Child Protection Conferences             | 525    |
| Quorate Initial Child Protection Conferences    | 279    |
| Quorate Review Child Protection Conferences     | 495    |

The number of referrals and requests for information from different sectors evidence strong information sharing across partners.

In 2024-25, the numbers of children in care dropped to under 600 for the first time in the last 7 years. There were 594 children in care on 31 March 2025, with the number of children in care in the previous four years varying between 622 and 626, a decrease of between 4.5% and 5.4% and an overall decrease of 12% since 2018-19.

There has been significant work undertaken to support children to return home safely to their family members over the past 12 months or to exit care with a plan for permanence via Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) or Child Arrangement Order. This had an impact at the end of care proceedings, with children being safely supported to stay with parents or extended family members, using support via teams such as the Function Family Welfare Therapy team and assessment and intervention via the Families Together Service. Increased scrutiny of potential plans for children to return home and exits from care head of service tracking has increased with 36 SGOs granted in 2024-25 with a significant proportion being made for those who had been looked after for a number of years.

There has been a rise in numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans. Regional data from LLR has been analysed within the LLR SCP Performance Group and shows a similar increase in child protection plans across the region. Spotlight auditing and review of cases and threshold application has been completed and has provided assurance around threshold for child protection plans being consistently applied.

## Use of data and information sharing

Quantitative data and qualitative information are shared to evidence that safeguarding arrangements are effective. An Annual Assurance Statement is delivered to the LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships, in line with the Performance and Quality Assurance Framework, to enable the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to hold local agencies to account for their safeguarding work, including prevention and early intervention. The Safeguarding Children Partnerships can request additional data and narrative from partners to strengthen assurance, where required.

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards have a local [Information Sharing Agreement \(ISA\)](#).

An excellent example of how information sharing has continued to improve practice and outcomes has been the continued development of externally led Early Help Assessments with our School Ambassadors Programme.

The School Ambassadors Programme is a collaborative initiative, now involving 39 Leicester City schools. The programme has ensured strong partnerships between schools and the local authority to enable the delivery of externally led Early Help Assessments (EHAs). This collaboration has enabled schools to support children, young people and their families who may not have otherwise reached out for, or accepted, non-statutory support. By enabling families to work with a trusted professional within their school setting, the programme helps to build relationships, reduce the need for families to repeatedly retell their stories, and facilitate early intervention at the point of need.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of externally led EHAs recorded on our case management system – from 15 in 2023-24 to 52 in 2024-25. This demonstrates both the growing confidence of schools in the process and the programme's positive impact in ensuring earlier support for families.

Working in partnership, we now have a comprehensive offer that includes:

- A Sway-based digital toolkit for schools, which provides up-to-date signposting information, details of upcoming events, and access to local services such as Family Hubs, housing support, and community resources.
- Read-only access to the Liquid Logic system for schools, enabling better contextual understanding of a family's support history.
- Advice and guidance from Early Help Coordinators, who support schools in initiating new externally led EHAs on Liquid Logic and input information provided by schools, helping to build a full chronology of support for each family.

We have a well-established Partnership Support Panel, chaired and facilitated by the local authority and including core members from the school ambassador programme as well as key local authority services. This panel is to support the progress of cases where an external lead is seeking further guidance or support from local authority partners. The panel is a safe space to discuss case progression, emerging risks and next steps. Where there are immediate safeguarding concerns, schools continue to follow their established safeguarding procedures.

## Self-Assessment

Section 11 self-assessments are undertaken by agencies as part of their duties under Working Together 2023.<sup>19</sup> In previous years, the safeguarding partners and specific relevant agencies have carried out a Section 11 self-assessment audit of their safeguarding effectiveness. For 2024-25, to enhance the process of obtaining safeguarding assurance from agencies, it was agreed to undertake Section 11 self-assessments using a different methodology.

A survey of frontline staff and managers was carried out to enable the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to obtain assurance of the impact of recommendations and actions resulting from safeguarding reviews and multi-agency audits.

- There was a total of 344 responses to the Section 11 online practitioner survey.
- A further 62 GP Practices participated in the Integrated Care Board (ICB) managed process.
- There was a good mix of responses across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland agencies and departments.
- Schools throughout the sub-region were included for the first time in this Section 11. Their inclusion was managed by Local Authority School Liaison departments.
- The survey was used as an awareness raising tool by including links to the relevant resources within the questions.
- Questions were asked about awareness, use and usefulness of key resources and procedures.

The majority of online respondents were aware of the Neglect Toolkit (63%), the Escalation procedure (64%) and the Bruising, Marks or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children procedure (58%), and the Information Sharing Agreement (67%). Less were aware of the Practice Principles on Engaging Fathers and Male Carers in Effective Practice (39%), the Building Confidence in Practice Resource on Professional Curiosity for Practitioners (37%), the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool (44%) and the Children of Parents with Mental Health Problems procedure (27%).

The awareness of some of these resources was less than expected. Positively, though, where these figures were lower, the majority of people who used the procedure/resource stated that they found it useful.

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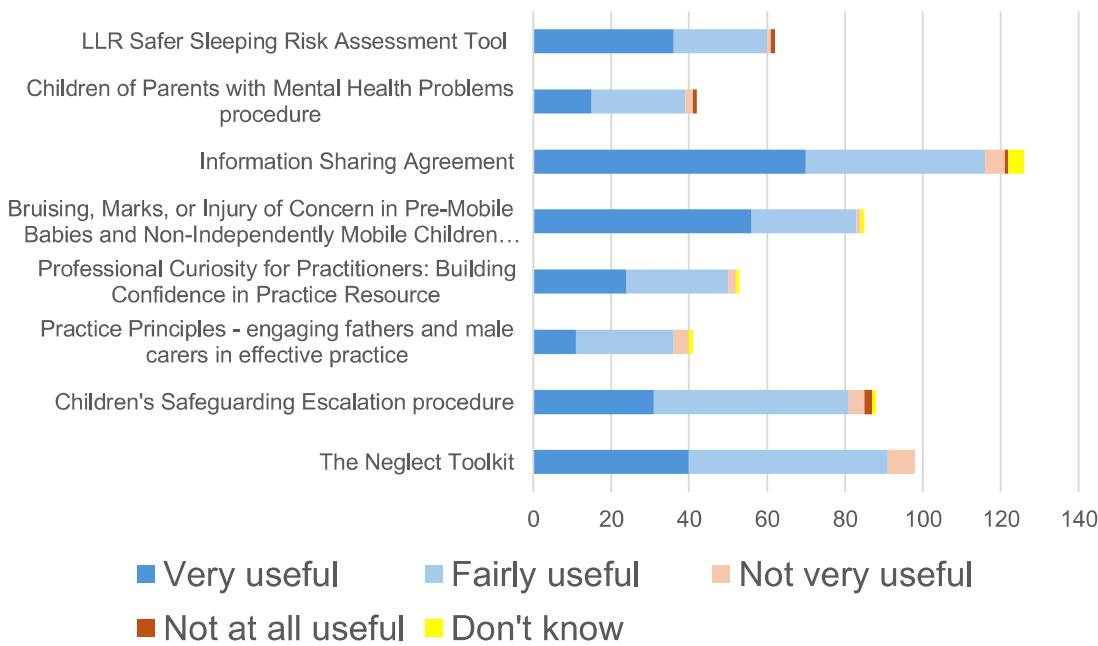
<sup>19</sup> [Working Together 2023](#), Chapter 4, pages 104-107.

### Are you aware of...?



■ No ■ Yes

### How useful, if at all, did you find...?



■ Very useful ■ Fairly useful ■ Not very useful  
 ■ Not at all useful ■ Don't know

The Planning and Delivery Group considered the results, in terms of identifying areas to inform the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' priorities for 2025 onwards and if any further partnership action was required across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Whilst the majority of online respondents were aware of the Neglect Toolkit, the percentage of people still seemed low considering the Toolkit was originally launched in July 2016 and was updated and re-launched in 2021 to include adolescent neglect. A lack of awareness of the Toolkit has also been identified in multi-agency audit learning. Moving forwards, Neglect is a business priority for 2025-27 and further work will be completed on promoting the Neglect Toolkit.

We will continue to raise awareness of the suite of resources available to practitioners through learning and development.

## Audits

Learning from audits leads to recommendations and actions that are progressed and monitored. The learning is disseminated and informs changes required at both a system and practice level. The impact of action outcomes is analysed once the outcomes have been embedded.



### Repeat Contacts Spotlight Audit

In 2022-23, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships carried out a dip sample audit of referrals to Children's Social Care (CSC) across the three Local Authorities. The audit was focused on children with more than one contact recorded by Children's Social Care.

The aim of this 2024-25 spotlight audit was to understand improvements to responses to initial contact, following the learning identified from the previous audit on this theme. Ten cases were audited: four from Leicester City Council, four from Leicestershire County Council and two from Rutland County Council.

The audit found that:

- There was evidence that LLR procedures had been applied in all the cases and that the intervention made a difference for the child and family.
- There was appropriate intervention and Local Authorities, in most cases, completed appropriate children and family assessments.
- In some cases, children and family assessments were not as thorough as they could have been, and this led to the re-referral.
- The Local Authorities demonstrated contact with the family and network to explore issues; more needs to be done, though, to strengthen this through seeking the voice of the whole family and child, and in particular separated partners.
- There was evidence of multi-agency collaboration, but there were pockets where this could be further strengthened. For example, professionals were not always sharing information in Health services around Adult Mental Health, resulting in gaps, incomplete information and impact on assessments and planning.

There is continuous work to improve the quality of assessments and to promote the recording of the voice of the child and whole family. Regarding the learning around health information sharing, “Best Practice Guidance for Health Staff: Sharing health information with Children’s Social Care and partner agencies” is due to be published in 2025-26.

#### Babies under 1 year on a Child Protection Plan Spotlight Audit

Linked to the Safeguarding Babies business priority, a spotlight audit was carried out looking at cases involving babies under 1 year on a Child Protection Plan. Ten cases were audited: four from Leicester City Council, four from Leicestershire County Council and two from Rutland County Council.

Pre-birth planning was a feature of six of the cases. Four cases had not had a pre-birth plan; in some cases, the foetus/infant was referred just prior to birth or soon after birth. For six of the cases, the category of abuse for the Child Protection Plan was Neglect; for two of the cases the category was Physical Abuse; the category for one case was sexual abuse; and emotional/sexual abuse was the category for the final case.

The audit found that:

- All the babies were deemed to have been safeguarded and the intervention had made a difference for the child and family with progress being made, leading to many of the families being closed to Social Care.
- There was evidence in many of the cases that the intervention was timely and ensured the child has the right service at the right time without delay.

- There was good information sharing across agencies, particularly Children's Social Care and Health, in many of the cases, with relevant agencies attending meetings or providing reports.
- There was consistent and timely use of the procedures, thresholds and plans were noted in most of the cases.
- There was evidence of consistency in speaking to mothers and including mothers and the wider family network in processes.
- There was poor use of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool. There was too much reliance on Health staff, either the Midwife or Health Visitor/Public Health Nurse talking to parents and carers about safer sleep.
- The voice of the child was not consistently evidenced and/or captured.
- Although there was evidence of the father of the baby being known in many of the cases audited, there was a lack of consistency in them being engaged and involved in the processes and plans.

Work continues to embed use of the Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool and Practice Points on Engaging Fathers in everyday practice. To extend the training already offered, as well the resulting learning and development videos, there will be further training on the Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure in 2025-26.

### **Other assurance work**

#### LLR Safeguarding Keep in Touch Meeting

There is direct governance between the Safeguarding Keeping in Touch meeting and the Assurance and Audit Group.

The Safeguarding Keeping in Touch meetings bring together senior safeguarding leads to share intelligence and joint oversight of the ability of LLR multi-agency children's safeguarding services to maintain statutory functions in relation to safeguarding children. They share information and data and provide a timely response to emerging safeguarding issues with partnership support.

Discussions in 2024-25 have included how each agency has managed significant workforce issues and how these are being resolved. For example, there has been successful recruitment of qualified international social workers in Children's Social Care in Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, which has had a positive impact on providing stability of staffing and decreasing the need to employ agency Social Workers. Other positive messages communicated include the Looked After Children Nursing Team managing to deliver all review health assessments within timeframes. They have also managed to add in an additional keeping in touch point at 6 months for children.

Each agency has provided monthly assurance that safeguarding work is prioritised and they have maintained full engagement with required safeguarding processes.

## LLR Operational Group Meeting

The LLR Operational Group is a standalone group that feeds into the LLR Assurance and Audit Group.

The remit of the Operational Group is to allow managers, responsible for safeguarding children from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, a forum to discuss and work through identified issues.

## Internal Quality Assurance Processes

The Assurance and Audit Group seeks annual assurance from partner agencies around their internal quality assurance processes. The aim is to provide a picture of activity that agencies have completed over the previous twelve months, giving an overview of what the key successes have been, what are the areas for development and any key actions for the forthcoming year linked to the business plan priorities.

## Safeguarding in Education

Safeguarding in Education support schools with all safeguarding concerns and signposting to Safeguarding Children Partnership safeguarding procedures.

They deliver:

- Initial Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) training and Refresher DSL training alongside whole school training and training to Governors
- The Safer Recruitment Training
- Allegation Management training in partnership with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Additionally, they:

- Host the Designated Safeguarding Leads Forum once a term to share local and national safeguarding updates to include learning from case reviews
- Create termly safeguarding newsletters
- Undertake safeguarding health checks and audits of schools and alternative provisions
- Respond to Ofsted complaints about Leicester City schools in collaboration with Education and LADO colleagues
- Research, draft and maintain safeguarding policies for City schools annually
- Provide bespoke training for other areas within Leicester City Council, such as Museums and other services such as universities and colleges
- Develop and deliver responsive and bespoke training packages annually, dependent on need, for example, training on harmful sexual behaviours and contextual safeguarding

## **Moving forwards**

It has been acknowledged that the remit of the Assurance and Audit Group is very large. To address this and to reflect the structure successfully employed by the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Adults Boards, from 2025-26 two new groups will be implemented to replace the Assurance and Audit Group. There will be a Performance Group and an Audit Group, which will fulfil the requirements of the Performance and Quality Assurance Framework of the Safeguarding Children Partnerships.

The Performance Group will analyse performance data; plan, scope and task multi-agency assurance processes; and analyse findings from multi-agency assurance processes, including findings from agencies' internal assurance processes and Section 11 audits. The LLR Safeguarding Keep in Touch Meeting and LLR Operational Group Meeting will feed into the Performance Group.

The Audit Group will complete multi-agency audits as informed by the Performance Group and Business Plan priorities, learning from case reviews, national learning and Section 11 audits and analyse the findings from multi-agency case file and spotlight audits.

It is anticipated that this change will allow for more audits to be completed and improve our ability to evidence how information sharing has improved practice and outcomes.

### **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures**

Together, the Leicester and Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Partnerships ensure that procedures are in place for multi-agency safeguarding in line with Working Together 2023.

Throughout 2024-25, the Policy and Procedures Group has revised procedures and created new guidance in response to learning from local and national reviews and assurance processes.

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Procedures Manual can be found online: <https://llrscb.trixonline.co.uk/>

A full list of amendments made can be found on the '[Amendments](#)' page of the manual. Individuals who want to sign up for alerts regarding the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' procedures can [register for updates](#).

# Workforce development through multi-agency learning and development and training

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership's training co-ordination and delivery function is shared with the Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership to support consistent and effective partnership working.

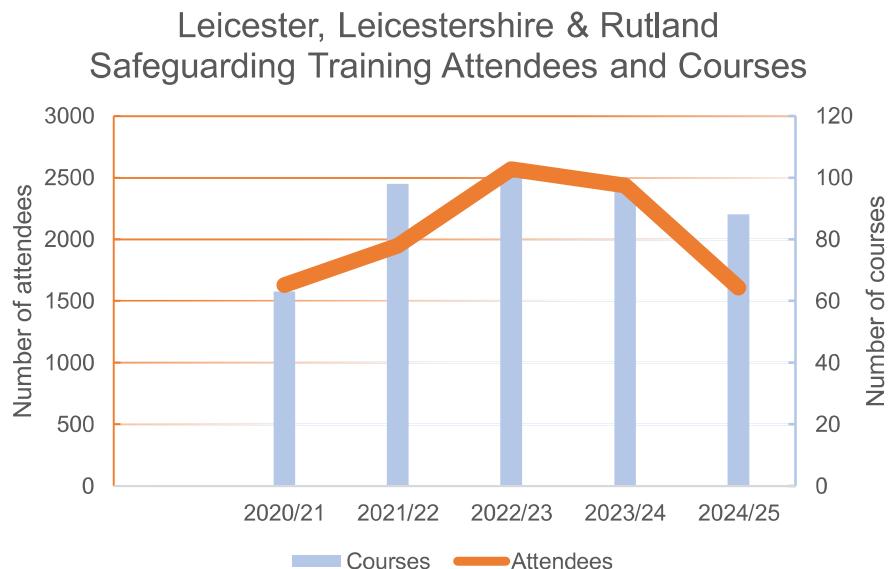
The Safeguarding Children Partnerships provide:

- A [Multi-Agency Training Programme](#), which offers high quality training, with a core programme focusing on basic safeguarding / business as usual training, supplemented by commissioned training on key safeguarding themes and specific types of abuse/neglect, as well as large scale events
- A [Competency Framework](#) to support individuals and organisations to undertake their safeguarding roles and responsibilities in a confident and competent manner
- A [Trainers Network](#) that offers regular meetups between trainers to share knowledge, skills and to help develop the delivery of safeguarding children training

A blended approach to learning is taken, incorporating video resources and resource packs alongside online and face-to-face training sessions.

## Training Delivery

The Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group (MALDG) is responsible for the sharing of learning across the children's workforce in support of the Business Plan Priorities and learning from reviews.



This year the Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Programme delivered 88 courses to over 1609 attendees. There are events where data is not available. Firstly, because of a cyber-attack in April 2024, impacting on the systems and ability to collect information, and also because, when sessions are commissioned, the data is not always effectively shared. It is fair to say that there must have been over 2,000 practitioners who were able to attend events from the multi-agency safeguarding children programme.

The 88 courses included a Conference on Child Sexual Abuse which was hosted by the Safeguarding Children Partnerships and delivered by the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse in May 2024. Over 180 practitioners attended this event from agencies across the partnership including Police, Health, Early Help and Social Care and aligned services in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). In support of this area of work, there was also a session delivered on disclosure of child sexual abuse by The Reign Collective, which was attended by 43 practitioners. The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group is looking to include sessions on sexual abuse in their programme moving forward.

Also, four sessions were delivered to 102 people to inform them of the new Elective Home Education guidance uploaded to the local procedures.

Training has been delivered in person and online. Obviously, online it is possible to share information with greater numbers, as there is no room space barrier; however, evaluation has shown that participants welcome a return to in-person sessions.

#### Training linked to the Business Plan Priorities

- Safeguarding Babies

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group supported the delivery of Baby Fortnight in April 2024. This was a series of events for practitioners working with those expecting and new parents to support the first critical 1001 days of life. In particular, there were sessions on “Involving and Supporting Dads and Partners”, “The Voice of Babies and Non-Verbal Children”, “ICON”, and “Safer Sleeping for babies in LLR”, all of which reflect learning locally and nationally. The event had sessions for expectant and new parents that ran alongside and was a great success.

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group supported the launch of the new “Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning” procedure, providing two launch sessions in June 2024 for 51 participants and a further session in September where 13 people attended.

In addition, for this priority, to support the ICON message, and in support of working with fathers, films were commissioned which are a collection of experiences of new fathers. The films are called “Father Stories” and are available in short or long format. There was a launch of the films at the Phoenix Theatre which some of the dads who shared their stories were able to attend with the actors who committed them to film, as well as practitioners.

- Child Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

To support this business plan priority, the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group shared the training that is available from CAMHS and agencies such as Papyrus with the wider workforce.

It is also an area that is covered in other sessions, such as “Hidden Sentence”, “Child Exploitation” and core safeguarding courses.

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group worked with ADHD Solutions to deliver sessions on how to work with and understand children with ADHD. This will continue even though the charity ceased to exist from the end of 2024. Over this period, 3 sessions were delivered with 48 participants.

- Keeping Adolescents Safe/Supporting Safe Adolescents

The programme of safeguarding children training offers a session on “An Introduction to Child Exploitation” and two courses were delivered on this topic in the last year for 38 attendees.

- Safeguarding Children from diverse backgrounds

This priority had a specific action for the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group which was to “provide multi-agency learning and development around immigration status, culture, faith, and parenting.” To help meet this action point, a Task & Finish Group has been established and a proposal with an action plan to fulfil this action by the end of 2026.

- Effective Safeguarding in independent and out of school settings

The Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group, in support of this Business Plan Priority, has been trying to extend its reach by using social media and voluntary sector networks to encourage agencies to book onto training. Twilight and evening sessions have been delivered too to reach a different audience.

In addition, there have been more Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) sessions because every agency that works or volunteers with children must have a Designated Safeguarding Lead, who would need to complete this training. The programme has delivered 16 sessions, including refresher sessions, to 268 participants in a mixture of different formats such as online, in person and 2-part with e-learning. This should help to keep children safe who are attending out of school settings.

### Safeguarding Matters Live

In addition to the 88 courses, the Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group also supported the delivery of Safeguarding Matters Live events. Two Safeguarding Matters Live are held each year. These are live online briefings for staff across the children and adults multi-agency partnerships. They share learning from reviews and audits, procedure and guidance updates, resources to support practice, and share messages around key national issues and from key national reports. The slides from the events are made available via the website and sessions are available to watch on the YouTube Channel.

Over the 2 events delivered in 2024-25, with one in June and one in December, 795 practitioners attended.

Topics covered in July 2024 included the Pre-Birth and Post Birth Planning procedure, Child Sexual Abuse and Electively Home Educated children. The December 2024 event focused on safeguarding and the internet, with presentations including the impact of social media on children and Prevent.

### Trainers Network

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships co-ordinate a Trainers Network to look at development/practice issues in this area. The focus of the network is to look at the trainers' support needs and offer regular meetups between trainers to share knowledge, skills and to help develop the delivery of safeguarding children training.

### Training Impact

The link between training and change in behaviour is difficult to measure although we do try to do this through evaluation.

The evaluation returns from the multi-agency safeguarding children programme have been much poorer this year, with only 288 completed forms. Although the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse and Safeguarding Matters were evaluated separately, this equates to roughly one fifth (20%) of training being evaluated which is down from a third last year. This could be because there have been more in-person courses and the evaluation is online. There was also a pilot where certificates were linked to the evaluation form but this was unsuccessful and so a return to a manual system was required.

The evaluation asks participants to assess their level of knowledge, skills and confidence before and after the training session. The results are as below:

| Average Scores of | Knowledge | Skills | Confidence |
|-------------------|-----------|--------|------------|
| Before            | 6.4       | 6.4    | 6.2        |
| After             | 8.5       | 8.4    | 8.4        |
| Average Increase  | 2.1       | 2      | 2.2        |

It can be seen that, for every area participants assessed, their knowledge, skills and confidence had increased by at least 2 points. There is also feedback that supports this data.

*“The trainer was very knowledgeable and I enjoyed the interactive elements. It was a very engaging workshop, thank you.”*

*“I am from a very small, independent organisation. It was good to share this training with more skilled and experienced practitioners from social care settings. I learnt from their knowledge during the case study section.”*

*“The use of real life examples enhanced my understanding.”*

Feedback from participants of Core Awareness training

*"I liked the fact that it was held in the evening, so it was more inclusive for people who work during the day. Online at night did help for those who can't travel to a venue. More short courses, e.g. the signs of safety, would be very useful if was held online of an evening."*

*"The case studies (although difficult due to the nature of the content) made the training relevant and brought it to life."*

Feedback from participants of Designated Safeguarding Lead training

*"Fantastic, really interesting and inspiring. A subject that hasn't had the time or acknowledgement that it needs. Lots of food for thought and definitely the start of an ever-growing conversation."*

*"Such honesty and sharing from a place of knowledge and experiences creates a culture of confidence to make changes."*

*"The talk from [the expert by experience] was incredibly insightful. It's very rare that you would have the opportunity to hear first-hand from a survivor of sexual abuse."*

Feedback from attendees of the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse

*"I found the course to be very informative especially the facts and figures which were quite astounding."*

Feedback from attendee of Pre-Birth and Post Birth procedure launch

*"Really interesting session in which I increased my knowledge and skill set in relation to ADHD. Makes me reflect and reevaluate some of my practices for the better. Thank you to the trainer who made the training enjoyable, manageable and accessible."*

Feedback from participant in Practitioners ADHD Toolkit training

Of respondents that completed a survey on the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse, 80% felt it would lead them to do things differently in their role. Several described improving their own practices in relation to child sexual abuse, increasing awareness amongst their own and other teams, and supporting colleagues to use the CSA Centre's resources.

During 2024-25, more than 80 additional people requested they be added to the Safeguarding Matters distribution list, with nearly 800 people now signed up.

*"Some of the content may be helpful for safeguarding training. I can merge it into my existing content, update, review, refresh etc. I can also cascade to staff using our comms channels for awareness raising."*

*"The presentations were brilliant. It's made me aware of services available."*

*"Really great information – find these really useful to share with providers/settings."*

*“Really useful categories, mixed content and very relevant in trend topics – will share through safeguarding effectiveness meetings.”*

Feedback from Safeguarding Matters Live Events

During the 2024-25 business year the Safeguarding Children Partnership website was viewed 63,985 times by 25,619 users.

### Learning and Development Resources



During 2024-25, three print issues of the [Safeguarding Matters newsletter](#) were published, including special issues on [Learning from Safeguarding Children Reviews and Audits](#) and the [Mental Capacity Act](#). The Safeguarding Matters newsletter focuses on disseminating local and national safeguarding learning and promoting procedural updates.

Updates on local and national safeguarding information are also delivered in a concise email format via the Safeguarding Matters Digest.

The Safeguarding Matters newsletters and Live PowerPoints and videos are available via the website and YouTube channel. Individuals can request to be added to the distribution list so that they are informed of publication and event dates by emailing [lrspbo@leics.gov.uk](mailto:lrspbo@leics.gov.uk). The Safeguarding Matters Digest is disseminated via email to those that have signed up to receive it. To be added to the distribution list, individuals can email [lscpb@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:lscpb@leicester.gov.uk).



The [LLR SCPs' YouTube channel](#) provides a bank of safeguarding videos that capture presentations from multi-agency training events and other resources that can be utilised by partners for learning and development – for example, in single agency training and supervision.

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnerships and Safeguarding Adults Boards also offer a set of [Building Confidence in Practice Resources](#). These resource packs aim to focus on often complex issues that arise for practitioners when they are working with people whether they are children or adults.

### Moving forwards

Commencing in June 2025, the LLR Safeguarding Children Partnerships will be extending their Trainers' Network to include colleagues who are in safeguarding supervisory roles. It will then be known as the SCP Supervisors' and Trainers' Network. Meetings will take place three times a year. Membership will be by invitation, and only available for staff who are named in their agency as a Safeguarding Trainer or a Safeguarding Manager/Supervisor.

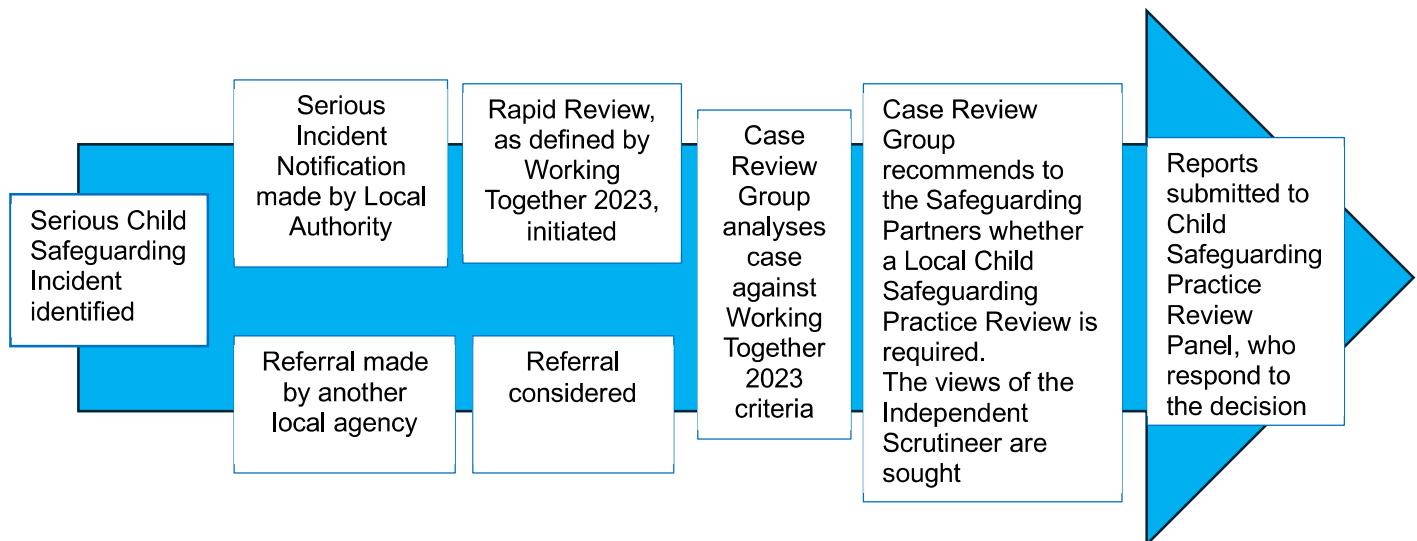
The reason for the change is to ensure that those who are in responsible supervisory positions are fully briefed about the learning from the children's Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, audits, national safeguarding recommendations and the work that underpins the Safeguarding Children Partnerships' Business Priorities.

It is anticipated that having the opportunity to discuss and explore the learning will facilitate the sharing of this information during supervision, team meetings and when advising on specific safeguarding issues.

# Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

## Local Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Responsibility for how a system learns lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents rests at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and at a local level with Safeguarding Partners. The Safeguarding Children Partnership assesses serious safeguarding incidents, as defined by Working Together 2023, in cases where abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected, and the child has died or been seriously harmed.



### Key decisions and actions taken

Six notifications/referrals for potential Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, were received by the Case Review Group, resulting in six Rapid Reviews being completed in line with Working Together 2023.

No Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were commissioned in 2024-25 but one Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review commissioned in January 2024 was progressed during 2024-25 and the completed report will be presented to the Safeguarding Children Partnership at the start of the 2025-26 business year.

No other reviews remain outstanding. The Safeguarding Children Partnership [published](#) the following review documents on their website throughout July 2024:

- An Improvements Made Briefing concerning 'Child E'
- A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review concerning 'Children C & D'
- A Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review Briefing concerning 'Patricia'
- A Serious Case Review (SCR) Learning Briefing concerning 'Baby William'

### Themes and learning identified from Rapid Review completed in 2024-25

The five rapid reviews completed during 2024-25 identified learning including the need for:

- Improved awareness across the partnership of free-birthing and doulas.
- Recording of information and sharing of information including out of area.
- Specialist medication continues to be prescribed for a child moving areas.
- Improved awareness of adultification across the partnership.
- Improved understanding interface between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).
- Plans to be written wherever possible with the young person, using language that makes sense to them and is meaningful.
- Improving multiagency awareness around safer infant sleeping including recognising and responding to risk, and the need for urgency in responding to emerging vulnerabilities, through the ongoing roll-out and embedding of the local [Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment resources](#).
- Ongoing promotion of [ICON](#) across the partnership.

### Actions from reviews

Action plans are in place to respond to and monitor areas of learning from reviews. During 2024-25 the Partnership completed 7 of the 11 action plans that were in place at the start of the year. The Partnership also completed 31% of actions that were created during the year as a result of undertaking five new rapid reviews.

| <b>Actions from existing rapid reviews and LCSPRs on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Ref.</b>  | <b>Number of outstanding actions as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024</b> | <b>Number of outstanding actions as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b> |
| A  | 1  | 0   |
| B  | 4  | 0   |
| C  | 5  | 0   |
| D  | 10   | 0   |
| E  | 6  | 3 (50%)   |
| F  | 16   | 2 (12.5%)   |
| G  | 17   | 0   |
| H  | 11   | 1 (9%)  |
| I  | 16   | 0   |
| J  | 17   | 0   |
| K  | 15   | 3 (20%)   |

### **Actions from new rapid reviews completed during 2024-25**

| <b>Ref.</b> | <b>Actions created</b> | <b>Number of outstanding actions as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b> |
|-------------|------------------------|---|
| L           | 5                      | 3 (60%)   |
| M           | 7                      | 4 (57%)   |
| N           | 16                     | 13 (81%)  |
| O           | 10                     | 10 (100%)   |
| P           | 5                      | 4 (80%)   |

During 2024-25 the following actions from learning has been progressed across the Partnership:

- Help me tell you anything, a 7-minute briefing supporting disclosure of child sexual abuse, was published in October 2024
- The Pick up the phone campaign was included on our website in October 2024.
- The procedure Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Mobile Children was added to our multi-agency procedures.
- Paperwork in UHL's Adult Emergency Department now includes a space on the forms for staff to record if the adult attending has any dependents under the age of 18 years. The level 3 Safeguarding children training for Emergency Department staff covers what to do if an adult self-discharges from the department citing childcare as the issue. This includes exploring where the children are and documenting details of the children.
- The LPT Adult Autism Team have updated discharge letters with additional signposting information to include Crisis contact numbers.
- LPT health visitor standard operating guidance has been updated to reflect the 'must do' when a child has a sole carer, regardless of sex.
- The UHL Level 3 and level 2 Safeguarding Children Training packages (e-learning and face-to-face) includes information on hidden men.
- The Emergency Department electronic notes system allows for staff to document the family/social history i.e. who the child lives with.
- An article was published in Safeguarding Matters ([issue no. 33](#)) to raise awareness on the impact of parental use of cannabis on children.
- Awareness-raising took place in relation to the distinction between strengths and safety and understanding the potential vulnerability of children who present as confident and achieving well (in relation to Child Sexual Abuse).
- UHL has created a standard operating procedure for free births to support staff.

### Ongoing work

Following the Conference/Roadshow delivered in 2024-25 and the publication of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's National Review on Child Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment, the Multi-Agency Learning and Development Group has been looking at how they can include an offer of multi-agency child protection training focused on sexual abuse as part of their regular offer. This analysis is being

informed by work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) that the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SCPs have signed up to for 2025-26 to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse (CSA) snapshot.

Until June 2024, Trauma-Informed Practice training was delivered by Barnardo's, on behalf of the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), but this commissioned training has now ended. Discussions about a long-term, sustainable training model moving forwards are ongoing and the issue has been escalated to the LLR SCP Planning & Delivery Group (PDG).

### Dissemination of learning

Learning is shared with practitioners across organisations through single and multi-agency training, briefings and learning events, including to communicate updated guidance and changes in procedures. Also, the Safeguarding Children Partnership communicates learning to the workforce through:

- The [Safeguarding Matters newsletter](#) and [live events](#) and the Safeguarding Matters Digest
- [7-minute briefings](#) which are designed to convey key messages from reviews and encourage managers and workers to reflect on their practice
- The Leicester 'Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews: Common themes for learning from LCSPRs and Rapid Reviews' document, which was first produced in 2023. It provides key learning points for all practitioners and managers from audits and reviews, both local and national. This is a live document and is updated regularly.

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships published a [Special Issue of Safeguarding Matters on Learning from safeguarding children reviews and audits](#). It also ran Curious Practitioner training in August 2024 to share some of the Rapid Review learning that had been similar or the same across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR). It was open to anyone who works with children and families across LLR. A [video of the training](#) is available via the LLR SCP YouTube channel.

### How we are measuring impact

The Section 11 in 2024-25 was completed using a frontline practitioner survey. Some of the questions posed related to learning from Rapid Reviews and resources linked to learning, such as the "Practice Principles – Engaging fathers and male carers in effective practice", the "Bruising, Marks, or Injury of Concern in Pre-Mobile Babies and Non-Independently Mobile Children" procedure, and the LLR Safer Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool.

The Curious Practitioner Training was attended by 168 practitioners from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. At the end of the training, attendees were asked "In your opinion what went well and what impact will this have in your work". Some of the responses are listed below:

*"Really good information. Will make me think more when doing assessments."*

*“The session was very informative. It was good to take time to reflect and hear other agencies’ views. Very useful to hear the learning from rapid reviews.”*

*“This was informative training and hearing the examples of using professional curiosity will help me to gain the confidence to ask further questions.”*

*“Gave me lots of thinking for the team I manage and how in a very brief intervention we still ensure we work in-depth.”*

*“It made me think about triangulating information, which I did after the training; contacting the school to ask if the information mum reported was correct.”*

Agencies were asked to document how they disseminated the Learning from Reviews resource. All agencies responded and there was positive feedback. For example, one agency stated that the format of it really helped their practitioners understand the wider picture. Education reported that it had a really good impact, particularly with the reference to actual cases.

## National Reviews

We continue to incorporate the learning from national reports and out of area reviews into our work. For example, they are considered during our Rapid Reviews and other SCP subgroups continue to incorporate their learning into their work. National reviews are used for benchmarking and ensuring best practice.

| Date     | Publication  | How national learning has been considered in local work  |
|----------|--|--|
| May 2024 | Serious Incident Notifications   | A report allowing for comparison of Leicester notification data with that of other areas for 2023-24 was produced and shared with the Case Review Group.   |
| May 2024 | Safeguarding Children in Elective Home Education: Panel Briefing 3<br><br>Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel | A presentation on Electively Home Educated Children was given at Safeguarding Matters Live in July 2024 and referenced this national report.<br><br>The new LLR SCP <a href="#"><u>“Elective Home Education: An Approach to Safeguarding for LLR”</u></a> guidance was published in September 2024.<br><br>Four training briefing sessions have been delivered by the LLR SCP Multi-Agency Learning & Development Group (MALDG), with the last one taking place in February 2025. A video of one of these sessions has been made into a learning resource. |

| Date          | Publication  | How national learning has been considered in local work  |
|---------------|--|--|
| November 2024 | <p>“I wanted them all to notice”: Protecting children and responding to child sexual abuse within the family environment – National Review</p> <p>Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel</p> | <p>A report on how the recommendations for SCPs are going to be addressed locally was presented to the Case Review Group in February 2025.</p> <p>For 2025-26 Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland SCPs have signed up to work with the NSPCC (funded by the Home Office) to undertake a local system-wide child sexual abuse (CSA) snapshot.</p> <p>There was a presentation on the report in Safeguarding Matters Live in December 2024, with a follow up article in the April 2025 print issue.</p> <p>The Briefing for Practitioners was shared via the Learning from Reviews 2024-25 resource.</p> <p>A 7-minute briefing...</p> |
| December 2024 | <p>Annual Report 2023/24: Patterns in practice, key messages and 2024 to 2025 work programme</p> <p>Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel</p>   | <p>A paper on key points from the Annual Report was presented to the Case Review Group in their February 2025 meeting.</p> <p>The Briefing for Practitioners is to be shared via the April 2025 print issue of Safeguarding Matters and was shared in the Learning from Reviews 2024-25 resource.</p>  |
| March 2025    | <p>“It’s Silent”: Race, racism and safeguarding children: Panel Briefing 4</p> <p>Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel</p>   | <p>The Briefing for Practitioners is to be shared via the April 2025 print issue of Safeguarding Matters and was shared in the Learning from Reviews 2024-25 resource.</p> <p>Further guidance is awaited from the LLR SCP Planning &amp; Delivery Group (PDG) regarding further work.</p>   |

During 2024-25 Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership took part in The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel ‘Learning Support & Capability Project’ run by Research in Practice, University of East Anglia, and the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme. The project aimed to find out more about the current approach to safeguarding reviews and how learning can be generated. The project report and priorities for change will be published by The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel during 2025-26.

# Future planning

Throughout the Yearly Report, future changes to be implemented have been highlighted around scrutiny, engagement with children and families, quality assurance and training.

## **Priorities for 2025-27**

Having reviewed learning from local and national reviews, and from local assurance and engagement work, as well as considering the impact of the 2023-25 priorities, the Safeguarding Children Partnerships have determined that its priorities for 2025-27 will be:

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Neglect
- Harm Outside the Home
- Belonging

For each of these areas, we have set out our rationale for prioritising the topic, and presented the key deliverables, leads, timescales and impact measures. This will enable us to monitor progress and secure assurance that our actions are making a positive difference to the lived experience of our children and families. The [Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Plan for 2025-27](#) is published on our website.

## Conclusion

In 2024-25, we have achieved a lot both strategically and operationally in light of significant national reforms, changes to statutory guidance and pressures linked to workforce capacity. Agencies have reported that, despite challenges with workforce capacity, safeguarding children has remained a priority. Our approach is system-led but child-focused. We are improving how we adapt to and adopt changes required as a result of both national and local learning. Moving forwards, we are aware of our strengths and the challenges we face. We have initiated implementation of changes to address some of these challenges. In particular, in the future, we believe that our quality assurance processes will be both increased and have more of an impact on our decision making and priority identification. Our new Young Person Scrutineer and Communications and Engagement Subgroup will make sure that we are driven by the views and wishes of the people we work to support and see thrive.