

Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees

Safeguarding Children Partnership

Annual Report 2024-25



Executive Summary from HSSCP Lead Safeguarding Partners

It has been a privilege to Chair of the Hartlepool and Stockton on Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSSCP) for 2024 – 2025 and to introduce this year's annual report.

This report sets out our key successes and achievements over the last year, responding to the Governments 'Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023, a guide on multi agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children', which is central to delivering on the strategy set out in Stable homes built on love (2023). During the first two quarters of 2024-25, we undertook a review of our existing partnership arrangements, informed by an Independent Scrutiny 'Health Check' that had concluded that the HSSCP was a highly effective safeguarding partnership and in a strong position of readiness for Working Together 2023, immediately putting into place arrangements to review and effectively implement the revised changes through 2024.

The report sets out the breadth of work that has been undertaken by the HSSCP, with strong evidence of highly effective multi agency safeguarding arrangements, in line with our key priorities:

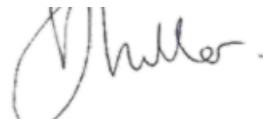
- Engagement with Children and Young people.
- Strengthening assurance,
- Harm outside the Home, and
- Consultation Engagement and Development.

The annual report of the Independent Scrutineer for the HSSCP completed an annual scrutiny report which identified good and outstanding practice is taking place every day, right across the partnership. This report does identify and shine a light on areas of significant strength, including strong governance for the Multi-agency safeguard arrangements (MASA), strong evidence of effective strategic leadership and collaborative work with a shared commitment and responsibility for the partnership.

We pride ourselves on being a learning partnership and the new Performance and Quality Framework will support the HSSCP to better evidence how system wide learning is having a demonstrable impact on practice, improving outcomes for children, young people, and their families.

My thanks to all involved across the partnership who work collectively on a daily basis to ensure 'Every Child in Hartlepool and Stockton feels safe, secure and protected from harm, enabling them to reach their full potential'.

Denise McGuckin, Chair of HSSCP on behalf of the Lead Safeguarding Partners

			
Victoria Fuller Chief Constable, Cleveland Police 	Mike Greene Chief Executive, Stockton Borough Council 	Sam Allen Chief Executive North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board 	Denise McGuckin Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council 

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Section 1: Area Profile

Geographical Boundaries



The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership covers the two local authority areas of Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils. These neighbouring local authorities are already closely aligned and have a willingness to work together; underpinned by a shared Children's Hub which is the front door to Children's Services across both local authorities.

Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees also share a co-terminus Integrated Care Board and Police force.



Section 1: Area Profile - About Hartlepool

HARTLEPOOL DEMOGRAPHICS



Hartlepool has a population of
95,366
living in...

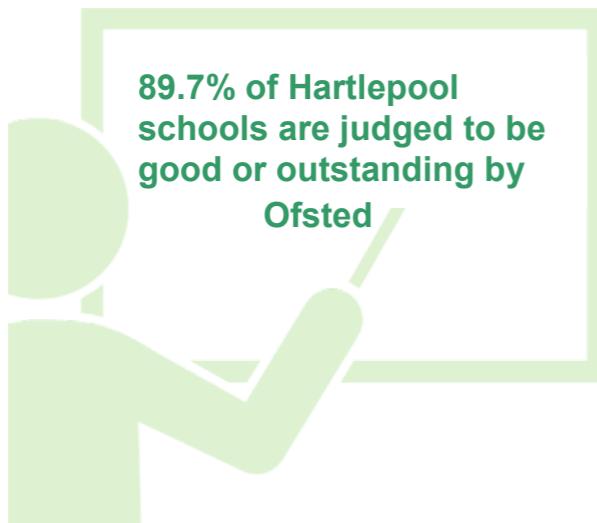


With...



and...

32.9% children in poverty



Hartlepool Context

There are **40 schools** in Hartlepool with 30 mainstream primary, 5 mainstream secondary, 2 special schools (one primary, one secondary), 2 Independent School and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. With **89.7%** of Hartlepool schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted, the potential for children achieving positive outcomes is high. The **number of children who are home educated is 259** which, although small when compared to all children accessing school, is monitored and reviewed by the Partnership annually to ensure oversight of this cohort of children and young people. Based on **2025** January School Census, **22%** of the Hartlepool compulsory school age population were **SEND** (EHCP and SEN Support). The number of children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans or Statements of SEN issued by Hartlepool (January school census) is 672 (262 primary age, 349 secondary and 61 post 16).

In 2024, the End Child Poverty data shows the proportion of **children living in poverty being 32.9%**, compared to 32.3% across the North East and 28.7% nationally. Living in an area of high deprivation, the children and young people of Hartlepool, their families and the professionals who work to support them, therefore face many challenges. There is a large body of evidence and research to show that **children who live in poverty are more likely to face additional traumatic experiences** or be exposed to a range of risks that can have a serious impact on their mental health and life chances. It is therefore important for the Safeguarding Partnership to be fully aware of this cohort of children and young people and ensure that these are considered within aspects of the partnerships work programme.



HARTLEPOOL SAFEGUARDING SNAPSHOT



Throughout 2024-25 there were approximately:

20,417 children & young people under 18

 **32.9%** of children living in poverty

 **38%** of primary school children in receipt of free school meals (the national average is 24.6%)

 **722** average contacts to the Children's Hub* per Month



2020 referrals to children's social care

 **26.7%** were re-referrals

 672 Early Help assessments completed

 99 Early Help cases escalated to Social Care

 1341 open Child in Need cases

 **173** children subject to a Child Protection Plan



3301 children and young people receiving services through Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support

5 children and young people identified as being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation

21 children and young people identified as being at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation

 821 missing episodes by 276 young people

332 missing episodes by 56 Hartlepool looked after young people

 **332** children and young people looked after



208 cases discussed in MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

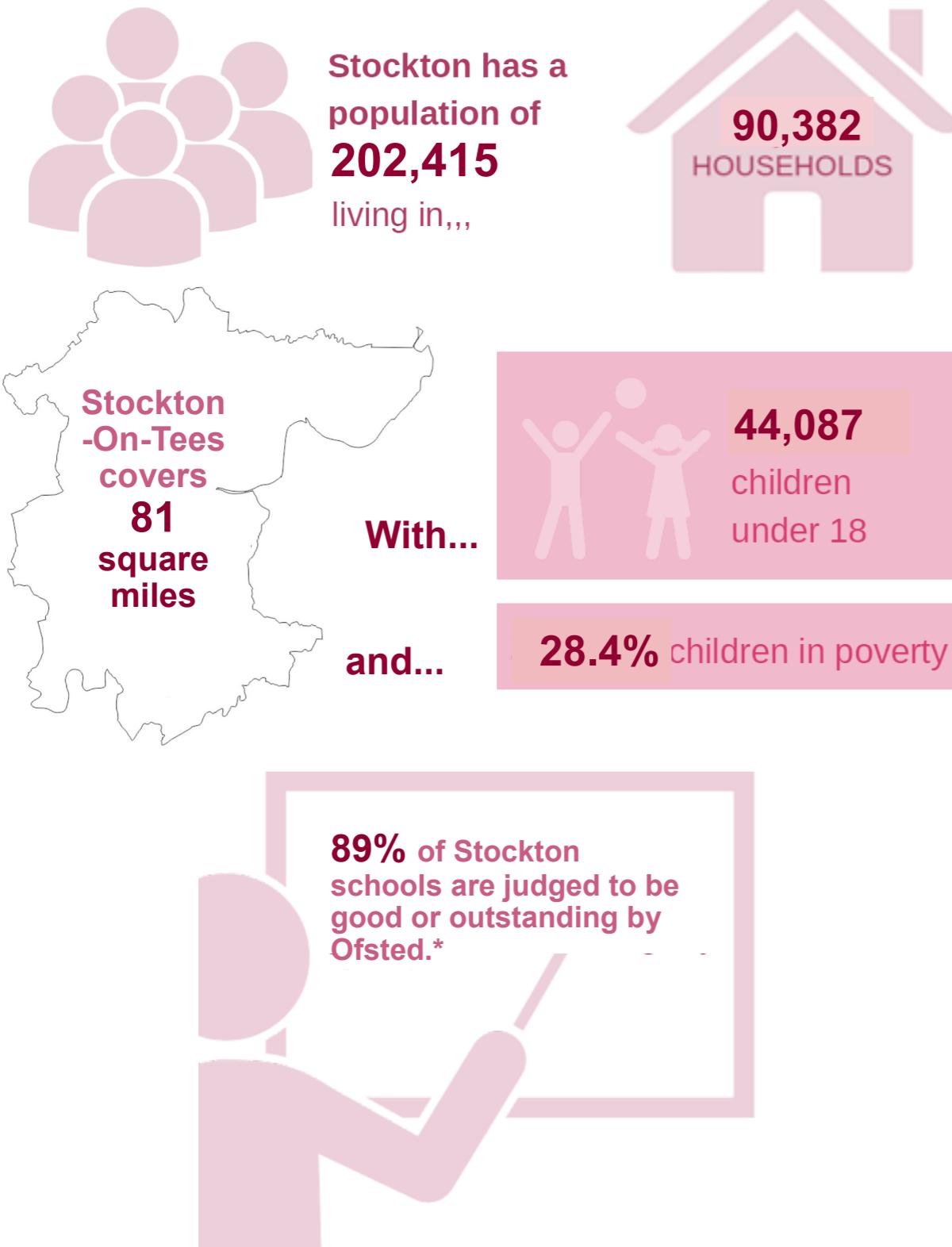
452 children involved in MABAC

46 referrals in relation to allegations against staff working with children and young people

0 new Private Fostering arrangements reported

Section 1: Area Profile - About Stockton-on-Tees

STOCKTON-ON-TEES DEMOGRAPHICS



Stockton Context

There are 90 schools in Stockton with 68 primary (45 academy, 14 maintained, 6 special and 3 independent schools), 22 secondary (12 academy, 1 maintained, 6 special and 3 independent schools). 6 of the schools cover both primary and secondary provision (2 independent and 4 special). With 89% of Stockton schools judged to be good or better by Ofsted, the potential for children achieving positive outcomes is high. The **number of children who are home educated is 452** which, although small when compared to all children accessing school provision, is monitored and reviewed by the Partnership annually to ensure oversight of this cohort of children and young people. Based on the School Pupil Spring Census January 2025, **18.8% of the school population were SEND** (Special Education Needs and Disabilities). This figure includes those that had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) /Statement and those that have SEN support. The number of children with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans or statements of SEN in Stockton is 2430 (1030 primary age children, 969 secondary, 431 post-16).

The latest available data from End Child Poverty (June 2024) shows **28.4% of children are living in poverty in Stockton-on-Tees** (after housing costs are included), compared to an average of 32.3% in the North East and 28.7% nationally. Living in an area of deprivation, the children and young people of Stockton-on-Tees, their families and the professionals who work to support them, therefore face many challenges. There is a large body of evidence and research to show that **children who live in poverty are more likely to face additional traumatic experiences** or be exposed to a range of risks that can have a serious impact on their mental health and life chances. It is therefore important for the Safeguarding Partnership to be fully aware of this cohort of children and young people and ensure that these are considered within aspects of the partnerships work programme.



STOCKTON-ON-TEES SAFEGUARDING SNAPSHOT



Throughout 2024-25 there were approximately:

44,087 children & young people under 18

Which equates to:

22% of the total population

 **28.4%** of children living in poverty
(Source - End Child Poverty data May 2021)

 **29.1%** of mainstream primary school children in receipt of free school meals (the national average is 23.8%)

 **1104** average contacts to the Children's Hub per month

 **3959** referrals to children's social care



 **24%** were re-referrals

 **2724** new Early Help episodes

 **258** Early Help cases escalated to Social Care

 **2097** open Child in Need cases

 **282** children subject to a Child Protection Plan

 **5719** children and young people receiving services through Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) support

 **18** children and young people identified as being at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation

 **1510** missing episodes by 475 young people

 **638** missing episodes by 105 Stockton looked after young people

 **564** children and young people looked after

 **6** new Private Fostering arrangements reported



 **2305** children present during a domestic abuse incident

 **332** cases discussed in MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)

 **618** children involved in MARAC

 **133** referrals in relation to allegations against staff working with children and young people

Section 2: About HSSCP - Meeting the requirements set out in statutory guidance

Section 2: About HSSCP - Meeting the requirements set out in statutory guidance

On 15th December 2023 the Government published 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023', a guide on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children'. This statutory guidance sets out what organisations and agencies who have functions relating to children must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people under the age of 18 in England. The 2023 edition replaced Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. This new edition of Working Together is central to delivering on the strategy set out in Stable homes, built on love (2023) which outlines the Government's commitment to support every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home.

During the first two quarters of 2024-25, the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSSCP) undertook a review of their existing partnership arrangements, informed by an Independent Scrutiny 'Health Check' (See page [X](#)). An implementation plan was put in place, monitored by the LSPs via their Chief Executives group, and in December 2024 HSSCP published their updated Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) - which sets out how the HSSCP meet the requirements of Safeguarding Children Partnerships, as per the statutory guidance. The new MASA for HSSCP went live in January 2025.

Implementation of changes

What HSSCP did:

- Undertook a 'Health Check' led by the Independent Scrutineer.
- Identified Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partners
- Undertook a series of consultation and engagement events to capture and act upon the voice of local young people, practitioners and key stakeholders.
- Removed the Independent Chair role - with the chairing role for the partnership being undertaken by one of the LSPs for the Chief Executive Group and one of the DSPs for the Executive group.
- Reviewed funding arrangements and agreed a stand-still budget of equal contributions from all four Lead Safeguarding Partner agencies.
- Reviewed and updated the governance arrangements and partnership structure and sub-groups to ensure compliance with Working Together 2023.
- Strengthened the role of education within the partnership arrangements with the addition of a new 'Safeguarding in Education' sub-group, and the addition of education representatives on all of the partnerships' other sub-groups.
- Strengthened links with, and role of, the voluntary sector within the partnership arrangements—with representation from the sector at a strategic and operational level
- Reviewed and updated Independent Scrutiny arrangements



Impact and Evidence of Impact:

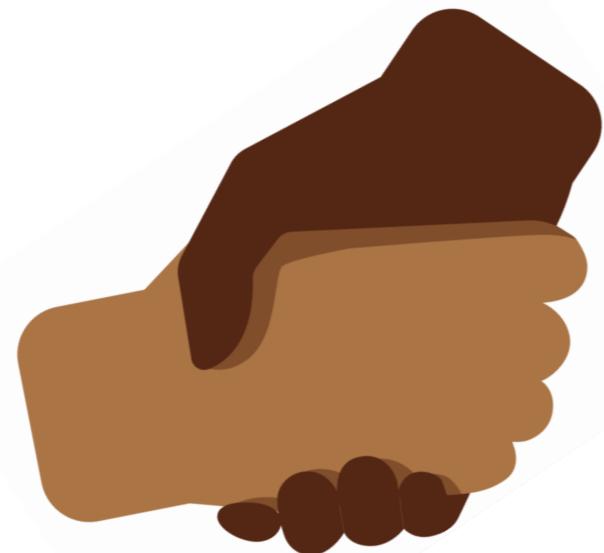
In April 2025, the HSSCP Independent Scrutineer undertook an Independent Scrutiny review of the HSSCP MASA and partnership achievements for 2024-25. Detail on the impact and evidence of impact from this scrutiny review can be found on pages 27-28.

HSSCP Safeguarding Partners

During 2024-25 HSSCP reviewed their representation and chairing arrangements in line with Working Together 2023. Lead and delegated safeguarding partners were agreed and the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements were published in December 2024, going live in January 2025.

HSSCP Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs)

Chief Constable, Cleveland Police
Chief Executive, Stockton Borough Council
Managing Director, Hartlepool Borough Council
Chief Executive North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board



The four lead safeguarding partners retain an equal and joint responsibility for their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs) in line with Working Together 2023. They set the strategic direction, vision, and culture of the local safeguarding arrangements, including agreeing and reviewing shared priorities and the resource required to deliver services effectively. The LSPs form the HSSCP Chief Executive group (See page 14).

The lead safeguarding partners have identified delegated safeguarding partners (DSPs) who have responsibility for the delivery of multi-agency safeguarding functions and processes. The LSPs selected the DCS for Hartlepool as the Partnership chair for 2024-25. This is to be a yearly term and will be undertaken by the DSPs on a rota basis.

HSSCP Delegated Safeguarding Partners

Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services, Hartlepool Borough Council And Partnership Chair
Detective Superintendent, Cleveland Police
Director of Nursing, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
Director of Children's Services, Stockton Borough Council

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners form the HSSCP Executive group, which is made up of the DSP's and lead representatives from relevant agencies, including schools and the VCS.

HSSCP Relevant Agencies



HSSCP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Chief Executives Group

The Chief Executives Group is made up of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) and delegated safeguarding partners (DSPs). They meet quarterly to maintain strategic oversight and governance of the MASAs, to assure themselves that their local arrangements are effective and keep children safe and to undertake their core functions as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023.

The HSSCP Executive

The HSSCP Executive is made up of the DSPs from the four statutory agencies and selected strategic leaders from HSSCP relevant agencies, including education and the VCS. They meet bi-monthly to ensure delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures.

The Executive is accountable to the Chief Executives Group and is responsible for ensuring delivery of the agreed HSSCP business plan, as well as governance of Rapid Reviews and LCSPRs.

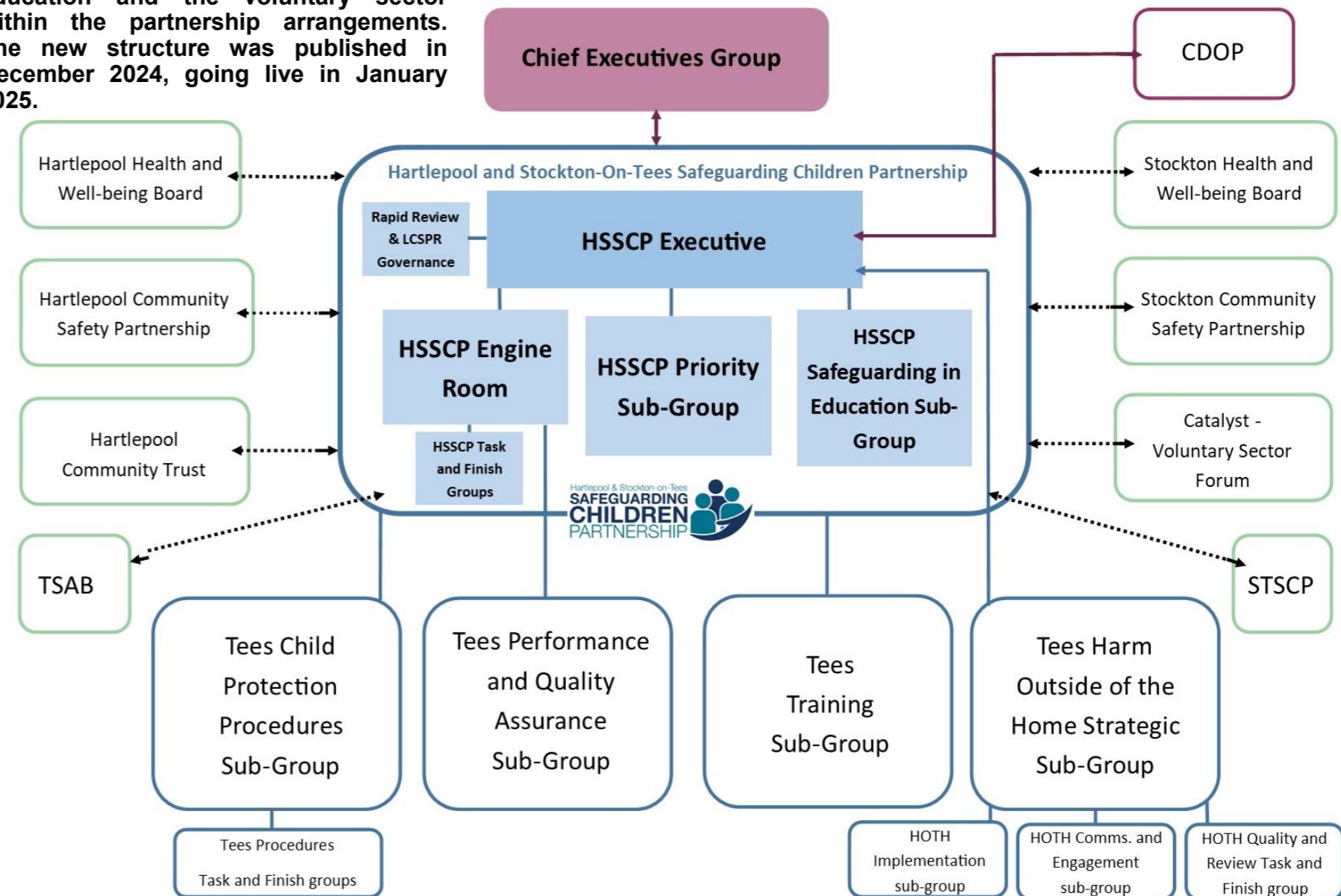
The HSSCP Sub-Groups

There are three core HSSCP sub-groups:

- HSSCP Engine Room
- HSSCP Priority Champions Group
- HSSCP Safeguarding in Education Sub-Group

These sub-groups undertake work to drive forward the partnerships business and priorities and are accountable to the HSSCP Executive.

During 2024-25, HSSCP reviewed their governance structure and sub groups with the aim of strengthening the role of education and the voluntary sector within the partnership arrangements. The new structure was published in December 2024, going live in January 2025.



Tees-wide Groups

HSSCP share 4 subgroups with their neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnership, STSCP. These are:

- Tees HOTH Strategic Sub-Group
- Tees Performance & QA Sub-Group
- Tees Procedures Sub-Group

Other Partnerships and Boards

HSSCP have close relationships with other local partnerships and boards; with two way communications in place, shared agenda items where relevant and cross partnership representation.



HSSCP FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Partner Contributions

LSPs agreed a standstill budget for 2024-25 with contributions for the four lead safeguarding partner agencies remaining equal, as follows:

Contributor	Value of Contribution
Lead Safeguarding Partner Agency Contributions:	
Hartlepool Borough Council	£65,620
Stockton Borough Council	£65,620
Cleveland Police	£65,620
North-East and North Cumbria ICB	£65,620
Relevant Agency Contributions	£9534
Hartlepool and Stockton Schools	£31,950
Total Contributions	£303,964
Release of HSSCP reserve	£38,356
Total Income 2024-25	£342,320

An Independent Scrutineer assessment of the impact and value for money of this funding is as follows:

- The 4 statutory partners provide an equal contribution to the HSSCP
- This provides sufficient resources and value for money, but largely due to the highly effective business management of the HSSCP which is outstanding.
- The support, co-ordination and quality of reports produced by the HSSCP Business Manager are of an exceptionally high standard.
- The HSSCP Unit support and coordinate extremely well, arrangements for Rapid Reviews and LCSPR to an exceptionally high standard.
- The co-ordination, administration and delivery of Tees wide Safeguarding Training and Tees wide Safeguarding Procedures are equally managed to a high standard by the HSSCP Business Unit.



Section 3: Key Successes and Achievements in 2024-25

HSSCP Priorities - Engagement with Children and Young People

The HSSCP 2022-25 business plan had an element remaining at the start of 2024-25 - Key Priority 2: Engagement with Children and Young People. This key priority continued to be delivered against throughout the year.

What we did:

- A redesign of the HSSCP website took place, led by local Children and Young People. As well as shaping the design and layout of the HSSCP website, local Young People chose important safeguarding topics to feature of the website and created the written and video content for these.
- 32 focus groups were held with young people across 7 different settings (schools and youth clubs).
- HSSCP established a new Safeguarding in Education multi-agency sub-group. This came from the development work arising from Working Together 2023 implementation and MASA publication.
- Schools across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees committed to either establish a dedicated Safeguarding Council for young people to discuss important safeguarding topics or they included a standard agenda item of safeguarding to existing schools council meetings.
Each term, discussion topics are posted on the HSSCP website, with resources differentiated by age for schools to use with their pupils. Schools return the output from these discussions via a survey. These are discussed in the new Safeguarding in Education sub-group.
- HSSCP established links with existing Early Years forums. The HSSCP Engagement Officer attends these to act as a two way link to feed key messages into and out of the partnership from this key group.
- Two engagement events were held with Hartlepool and Stockton young people and the Delegated Safeguarding Partners to capture and act upon the voice of children and Young People to help shape HSSCP priorities moving forwards.
- HSSCP has invested in PolEd, a resource to support schools' PSHE curriculum and raise awareness of risks, citizenship and the law.



Children and Young People

What is Safeguarding?

The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership work together with the Police, NHS, Council, Schools and voluntary organisations to help keep young people safe.

Watch our video made by young people at Cornerhouse Youth Project in Stockton-on-Tees for more information on what safeguarding is.

On this page, you will find information, help and support on many different issues that may affect children and young people in Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees. All of this content has been created by local young people, for local young people. We are working hard to make sure we have the best, most up to date content for you, so please keep checking back for more information as it is created.



Important Topics

Anti-Social Behaviour

Bullying

Drugs & Alcohol

Exploitation

Impact and Evidence of Impact:

The Children and Young People pages on the HSSCP website has been created by young people for young people. The focus groups undertaken have established links with, and enabled HSSCP know what is important to, local young people. The website content is now more responsive to the issues and concerns of children across our area.

The safeguarding topics and resources for schools and the survey to feed pupils views into HSSCP has strengthened partnership links with schools across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees and provided HSSCP with another method of capturing the child's voice.

The newly established Safeguarding in Education sub-group has also strengthened the links and two-way communication between education and partners.

Evidence of impact can be seen through the independent scrutiny review - see page 27-28.

HSSCP Priorities - Strengthening Assurance

The HSSCP 2022-25 business plan had an ongoing workstream at the start of 2024-25 - Key Priority 3: strengthening Assurance. This key priority continued to be delivered against throughout the year.

What we did:

- The Performance Review group continued to meet to develop the new Performance and Quality Assurance Framework which was published on the HSSCP website in November 2024. This includes a newly agreed dataset and quality assurance model.
- The new Teeswide Performance and Quality Assurance Sub-group was established, chaired by a DSP from across the two Tees wide partnerships.
- The Tees procedures sub-group, facilitated by the Independent Scrutiniser, reviewed and updated the 'Professional Challenge, Escalation and Dispute Resolution' procedure which now includes an online recording form that will enable the dataset and Performance and Quality Assurance sub-group to report upon escalations.

Professional Challenge and Resolution of Professional Disagreement Recording Form

Overview
The purpose of this form is to enable the Safeguarding Children Partnerships to assure itself that professional challenge and dispute resolution takes place between agencies.

You should only complete this form if you have raised a professional challenge with another organisation, to further safeguard a child or young person. This does not replace the need and duty to keep detailed records in the way you would usually do.

When completing the form, please do not include any identifiable information about the child or young person, family or the colleague you have challenged.

PLEASE NOTE: This form should be completed by the agency who raised the professional challenge. It should be completed at the point of resolution.

[Complete form >](#)



Impact and Evidence of Impact:

The new Performance and Quality Assurance Framework will enable HSSCP to seek assurance and identify areas for further scrutiny. The newly established Performance and Quality Assurance sub-group will drive this forward across 2025-26 with collection of the new data commencing from Q1 of 2025-26.

The Independent Scrutineer scrutinises all multi agency performance information, audits and learning reviews. In addition, the Deep Dive review into the Professional Challenge procedure provided strong assurance of multi-agency practice, as well as learning opportunities that have been responded to via the new online form.

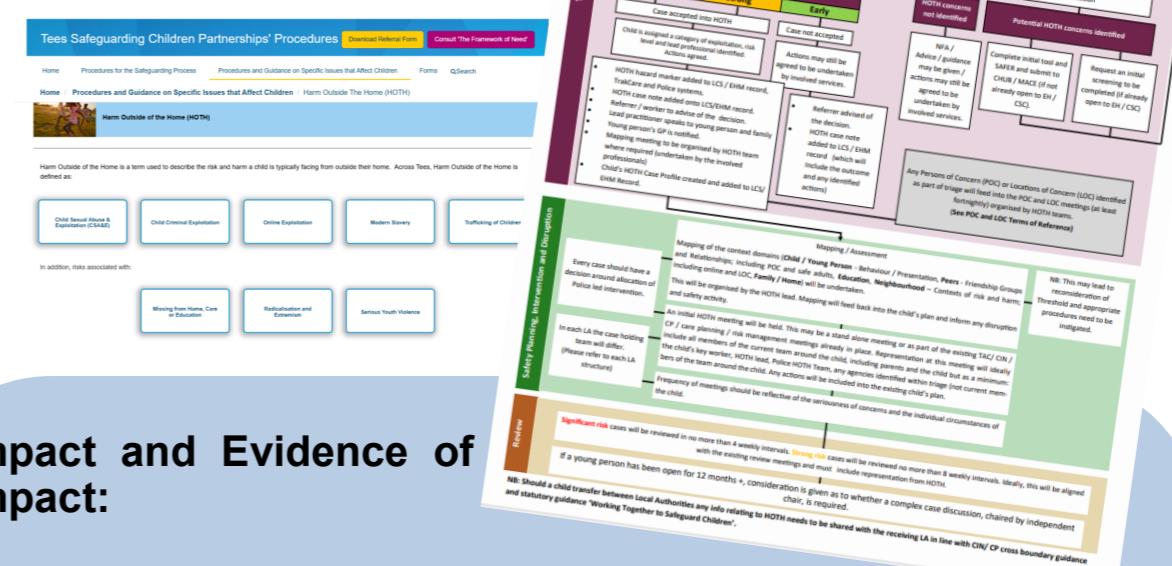
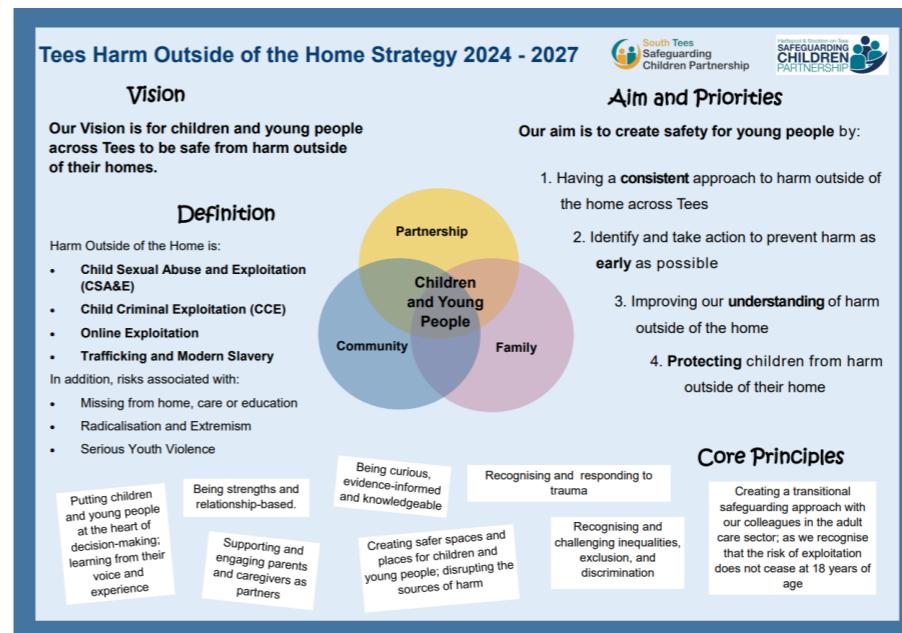
HSSCP Priorities - Harm Outside of the Home

Harm Outside of the Home (HOTH) has been a shared priority with HSSCP's neighbouring Safeguarding Children Partnership, STSCP, throughout 2024-25.

An Independent Scrutiny Review of Tees Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) and Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked (VEMT) Arrangements was undertaken by the two Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership Independent Scrutineers towards the end of 2023-24. This review provided recommendations for both HSSCP and the neighbouring South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership (STSCP) due to their joint sub-group for exploitation of children.

What we did:

- Refreshed the existing joint sub-group which became the Tees Harm Outside of the Home (HOTH) sub-group, jointly governed by HSSCP and STSCP.
- Developed and launched a Tees-wide Harm Outside of the Home Strategy and action plan.
- Established three task and finish groups to deliver against the action plan.
- Developed and Implemented a Standard Operating Procedure across Tees (4 Local Authority areas).
- Reviewed and revised the Tees Threshold document and screening and assessment tool to include context and sources of harm based on multi agency practice and partnership working.
- Reviewed and developed the Tees Harm outside of the home guidance pages available on the Tees Procedures website.
- Delivered briefings and a conference to raise awareness on the HOTH strategy and local processes and changes.
- Explored opportunities to align the children's and adults harm outside of the home strategies to ensure smooth transition and consistent approaches and response; resulting in an agreed HOTH Transition Standard Operating Procedure.
- Engaged with young people and families that have had involvement with local HOTH groups to hear and learn from their experiences.
- Worked alongside the chair for the Tees performance and quality sub-group to agree and implement performance data in relation to HOTH within a performance framework.



Impact and Evidence of Impact:

The work undertaken throughout 2024-25 has provided consistency of approach to children and families across Tees as well as to professionals working across the four local authority areas.

The work has been undertaken in three phases. Phase 1, the development phase, ran from July 2024 to December 2024. Phase 2, the implementation phase, ran from January 2025 to March 2025. The final phase is the review phase which will take place between April 2025 and October 2025. It is this review phase that plan to gather evidence of the impact of the work undertaken across the first 2 phases. As the Harm Outside of the Home strategy runs from 2024-2027, the 2025 review phases will feed into a second development day planned for October 2025. The review will be made up of audit work, direct observations and also the expert by experience work. All of this will feed into the development day to shape this key priority for 2025-27.

HSSCP Priorities - Consultation, Engagement and Development

2024 - 25 was a year of review and development for HSSCP. As well as undertaking a partnership Health Check and reviewing and publishing their multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, HSSCP undertook a series of stakeholder consultation events throughout 2024-25 - to help shape the partnership priorities for the coming year(s).

What we did:



Consultation with young people

Events were held with Young People in Stockton (July 2024) and Hartlepool (September 2024), where young people were asked to share the issues that they feel are the most important to them. DSPs attended and took part in workshops alongside local young people.



Consultation with parents and the public

The output from the event with young people shaped a consultation survey that accessed by parents and the public between November 2024 and January 2025.



Consultation with partners

The output from both consultation events shaped a development day for key partners stakeholders in February 2025. Partners from Lead Safeguarding Partners organisations and relevant agencies met to examine the voice of children and young people, views of parents and the public alongside learning from reviews. These inputs shaped HSSCP's new priority for 2025-28 which is 'Trauma-Informed'.



Priority and Business Plan Development

The new **HSSCP Priorities sub-group**, which went live as part of the new MASA structure in January 2025, took the lead in developing the '**Trauma-Informed**' priority within the HSSCP Business Plan. This was signed off by DSP's and LSP's for implementation from April 2025.

HSSCP Business Plan 2025-28	
Priority 1: Trauma-Informed Partnership	Aim: To develop and embed a trauma-informed culture across HSSCP that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children
Rationale: Every HSSCP Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Rapid Review undertaken over recent years has included some form of childhood trauma. Trauma, particularly in early childhood, can impact on children throughout childhood and into adulthood, often having a severe effect on both mental and physical health and is known to increase vulnerability to exploitation. These issues can continue to influence the way young people interact with others throughout their life, including their relationship with their own children in adulthood.	
For many children, the trauma they have experienced is expressed through their behaviour. Learning from HSSCP reviews shows the multi-agency workforce seeing the behaviour as the issue and seeking to fix it, rather than seeing the behaviour as a means of communication, essential that professionals working with children and families see beyond an individual's presenting behaviours to ask, 'What does this person need?' rather than 'What is wrong with this person?'.	
Relationships matter and every contact with someone who has experienced adversity and trauma can be an opportunity for healing and growth. To make every contact count, we need to adopt a professional curiosity about adversity and trauma. It is vitally important to talk to the people we work with, understand what lies behind the behaviours they present with, and avoid jumping to conclusions, assumptions or offer solutions. To work in an adversity and trauma-informed way, is to be sensitive to the wider context of the person, and how this impacts them, and any support you might be able to give them. Being trauma-informed is vital in making sure that the person is at the centre of practice and that practice empowers the person to make choices and to be the expert of their own care, support and safety planning.	

Aim: To develop and embed a trauma-informed culture across HSSCP that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children					
Phase	What we are going to do	How we are going to do it	Who is responsible	When by	Progress and RAG
Phase 1: Development May 2025 – September 2025	<p>Undertake a baseline (Seek to understand our starting point (where we are individually and collectively))</p> <p>Identify any unconscious biases or barriers, include voice of the child.</p> <p>Develop and agree HSSCP trauma-informed key principles / strategy (buy in)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree key principles and definition, value base. Youth voice (Education and VCSE) – gain children's experiences in line with these agreed trauma informed principles. Reflective session – use mapping of what is in place and what is needed alongside youth voice to draft HSSCP trauma-informed strategy and next steps for phase 2. 	<p>Exec</p> <p>HSSCP Project and Engagement Officer</p> <p>Priorities sub-group</p>	<p>May 28</p> <p>May 28</p> <p>1.7.28</p>	<p>The Priorities sub-group held their first meeting on 1.5.25. They endorsed trauma-informed framework and are proposing this goes document to form the foundations of the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees trauma informed principles and definition, value base.</p> <p>Executive members at their Executive meeting on 23.5.25 are asked to approve this for further development.</p>



Impact and Evidence of Impact:

The consultation and engagement that took place throughout 2024-25 ensured that HSSCP understood what was important to young people and their families across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees. This gave HSSCP the opportunity to root its priority focus in what matters to local children and what is affecting them which will enable HSSCP to be responsive to local needs.

This is positive in terms of impact on the visibility of HSSCP to children, families and the public and on them feeling heard.

The impact is evidenced in the Independent Scrutiny report - see page 27-28.

Audit and Review

The HSSCP Engine Room have responsibility for audit and review activity on behalf of the partnership.

What we did:

- The Engine Room have undertaken **four Rapid Reviews** for the four cases put forward by partners across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees as Serious Incident Notifications. The learning, recommendation and actions from these four cases have been taken forward and monitored by the partnership's Engine Room.
- The Engine Room have undertaken **four Learning Reviews** for 'near miss' cases. The learning, recommendations and actions from these four cases have been taken forward and monitored by the Engine Room.
- The DSP's via the HSSCP Executive have collective responsibility for governance of reviews. **Four** governance meetings were held to make a decision on whether the Rapid Reviews should progress to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR). One of the four cases will be a LCSPR and will commence in April 2025. HSSCP had no LCSPRs live during 2024-25.

What we did about the learning and recommendations:

- The learning was shared with multi-agency practitioners via a series of 'Learning from Reviews' briefings.
- A new 'Baby Safe Sleep' practice guidance was developed and rolled out.
- A 'Baby Safe Sleep' campaign was delivered with a series of briefings to multi-agency professionals.
- The Safeguarding the Unborn Baby' procedure was reviewed, updated and launched via a series of briefings.
- The Professional Challenge and Resolution of Professional Disagreement Procedure was reviewed and launched via a series of briefings, with the new online recording form to go live in April 2025.

Impact and Evidence of Impact:

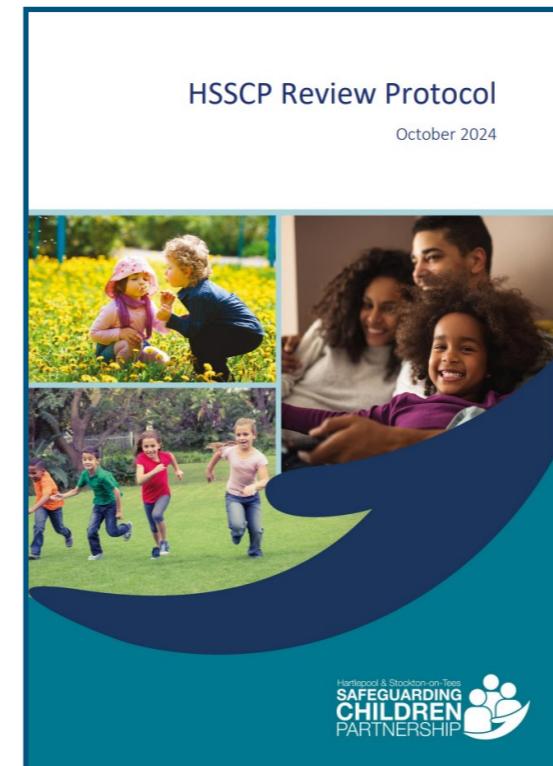
- HSSCP have received no further Child Death notifications in respect of unsafe sleeping conditions since the launch of the baby safe sleep guidance and campaign.
- Evaluations from the briefings delivered demonstrate increased knowledge and confidence of the multi-agency workforce.
- Independent scrutiny acknowledges that:
 - ⇒ Rapid Review meetings evidence strongly, a culture of system wide learning.
 - ⇒ Rapid Review minutes and reports are completed to a high standard, evidencing open, reflective and system wide, child centred learning.
 - ⇒ Governance arrangements for Serious Incident Notifications remain strong with evidence of a 'shared responsibility' at a strategic level.
 - ⇒ All Rapid Review recommendations are considered by the HSSCP Rapid Review Executive, with oversight provided by the Independent Scrutineer for independence.

Impact and Evidence of Impact:

The Engine Room have undertaken two multi-agency audits throughout 2024-25.

The first, carried out in December 2024, was on the theme of 'significant others' . Work was undertaken throughout 2023-34 to strengthen how multi-agency professionals across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees consider and include Fathers, partners and wider significant others. This work arose from learning and recommendations from reviews carried out during 2022-24 and the audit theme was selected in order to evaluate the success of that work and demonstrate impact. The audit gave strong assurance that the work to strengthen how significant others are considered, included and engaged with has been effective.

The second multi-agency audit, carried out in March 2025, was on the theme of 'Robust Assessments and Plans'. This theme was selected due to work undertaken throughout 2023-34 arising from learning from previous audit activity. Positive changes could be seen in the robustness of assessments and plans with recommendations made for further development. The learning, recommendation and actions from these are being taken forward and monitored by the Engine Room.



HSSCP have reviewed and refreshed their protocol for serious child safeguarding cases and strengthened the review and governance processes. This is published on the Tees Procedures website.

Audit and Review

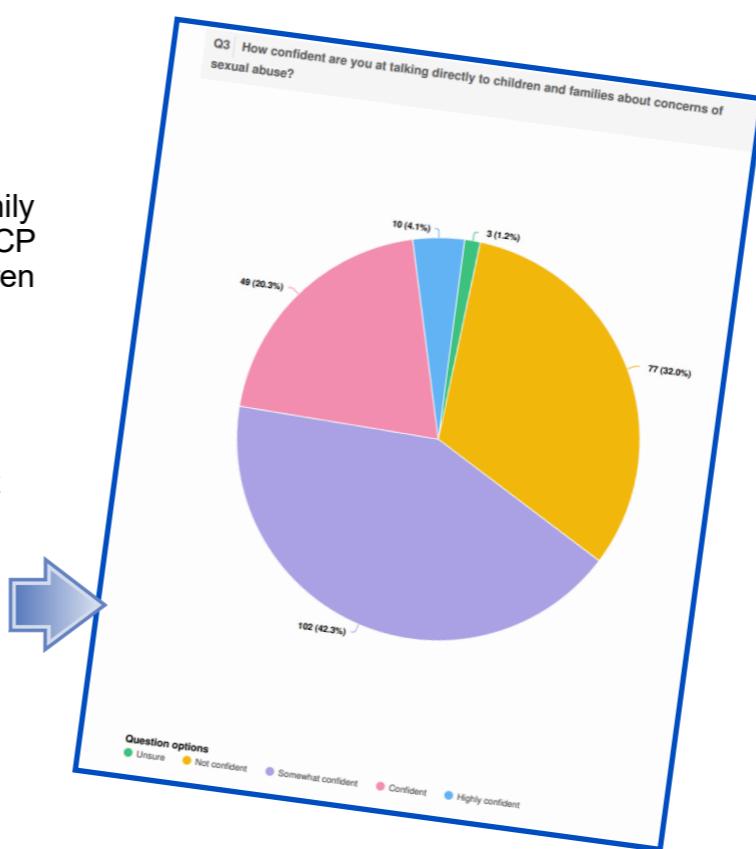
In December 2024, a report on the national review into child sexual abuse in the family environment (CSAFE) was published, entitled 'I Wanted them all to Notice'. HSSCP considered the six recommendations this report identified for Safeguarding Children Partnerships and agreed two key actions that would address these:

What we did:

- Firstly, the Joint Training sub-group undertook a skills and knowledge survey that was delivered in two parts:
 - Directed at the workforce development leads across partner agencies - to seek assurance on the skills of the workforce—13 responses were received.
 - Directly to frontline practitioners across partner agencies on their confidence and skill - 241 responses were received.

The joint training group plan to analyse the results of the survey, alongside the output from the CSAFE deep dive, in 2025-26.

Secondly, the partnership's Independent Scrutineer undertook a deep dive into local cases of children who have reported sexual abuse within the past year. The deep dive involved examination of CSA local reporting data, a review of the threshold documents about assessment of need and risk, an audit of cases and a live learning practitioner event; to review practice against the recommendations from CSAFE report, explore what is already working, areas for development and how to strengthen system wide practice across the HSSCP.



Impact and Evidence of Impact:

The Independent Scrutineer would cite this as an example of exemplary practice, where strategic leaders are proactive in responding to national learning and take full responsibility and ownership of recommendations.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Safeguarding Children Training Snapshot:



62 multi-agency training sessions delivered, covering 24 different subject areas



1,238 people attended multi-agency training



1072 attended Tees training events:

- Baby Safe Sleep (469)
- Harm Outside of the Home launch briefings (603)

146 practitioners attended the Learning from Reviews Briefings

64 practitioners attended the Neglect Active Learning Event

Impact and Evidence of Impact

This training has improved my confidence to identify high risk cases of domestic abuse, stalking and 'honor'- based violence and to decide which cases should be referred to MARAC and what other support might be required.

I feel the whole event will have an impact on my work with young people

I thoroughly enjoyed this training and couldn't recommend it enough. I feel I have gain a lot from it. It has really made me think about different approaches and provided me with a lot of new knowledge.

I would recommend this course to others. The trainer provided real life examples that really helped me to understand and relate this to practice.

The training has enabled me to confidently carry out my role as deputy DSL - working within our trust safeguarding team to ensure that everything runs smoothly.

Overall a brilliant day, very informative & structured, very hard hitting & thought provoking – excellent conference



COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Children and young people across Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees designed the new HSSCP website. HSSCP undertook 32 focus groups with young people across different settings (youth clubs and schools). The young people selected the topics they felt were important to young people and should be included on the website. They produced written and video content on each important subject.

HSSCP continued to engage with partners and professionals and share key messages across the multi-agency workforce. The partnership produced and circulated their monthly e-bulletins which provide a range of useful articles, resources and tools on key up-to-date safeguarding issues and themes. Quarterly newsletters, updating professionals on the work undertaken each quarter, were also shared.

- **7300** active users on the HSSCP website
- **24,200** page views on the HSSCP website
- **12** Monthly e-bulletins and **4** quarterly newsletters were circulated to **1597** partner representatives for wider distribution. These outlined key messages around pertinent safeguarding themes.
- **97,950** content views on the HSSCP Facebook page, with the most successful social media campaign being the Neglect Awareness Campaign in October which reached **68,468** views in total.
- A CSA Campaign was undertaken which reached:
 - **7917** children
 - **457** professionals
 - **242** parents

Children and Young People

What is Safeguarding?

The Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership work together with the Police, NHS, Council, Schools and voluntary organisations to help keep young people safe.

Watch our video made by young people at Cornerhouse Youth Project in Stockton-on-Tees for more information on what safeguarding is.

On this page, you will find information, help and support on many different issues that may affect children and young people in Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees. All of this content has been created by local young people, for local young people. We are working hard to make sure we have the best, most up to date content for you, so please keep checking back for more information as it is created.



Important Topics



Section 4: Independent Scrutiny

Independent Scrutiny

The Independent Scrutineer for the HSSCP completed an Annual Scrutiny Report for 2024 – 2025 using an evidenced based methodology, as set out under the Six Steps for Independent Scrutiny: Safeguarding Children Arrangements by Pearce, J (2019), Institute of Applied Social Research; University of Bedfordshire. The Independent Scrutineer (IS) also referenced the 5 core elements and 6 cross cutting themes from Working Together 2023.

During the reporting period, 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025 the Independent Scrutineer conducted the following scrutiny activities:

- Facilitated a Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 Self-Assessment Health Check of the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership HSSCP.
- Undertook an Independent Scrutineer's Deep Dive Audit: The Child's Lived Experience, HSSCP
- Facilitated a multi-agency evaluation of 'The Professional Challenge and Resolution of Professional Disagreements.'
- Facilitated and chaired a learning review (CG) by the Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Undertook an Independent Scrutineer's Deep Dive Audit: Children's Social Care Assessments Ending with No Further Action, Stockton-on-Tees.

The annual scrutiny report is informed by scrutiny of:

- Attendance and Independently Chairing the HSSCP Executive Meetings (April to July 2024)
- Attendance and Independently Chairing the HSSCP Executive Rapid Review Meetings (April to July 2024)
- HSSCP Annual Report 2023-2024
- HSSCP Memorandum of Understanding
- HSSCP Published Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (December 2024)
- HSSCP Communication Strategy
- HSSCP Media Strategy
- Safeguarding Children Training Strategy April 2025 to March 2026
- Scrutiny of HSSCP governance arrangements
- Scrutiny of all reports to HSSCP Executive meetings
- Attendance at HSSCP Chief Executive Meeting.
- Attendance at Stockton-on-Tees Childrens Improvement Board.
- One to One meetings with the Chief Executive, Stockton-On-Tees Council; the Directors of Children's Services, Hartlepool and Stockton-On-Tees Councils; the HSSCP Business Manager
- Scrutiny of Serious Incident Notifications; Rapid Review Meetings and LCSPRs.
- Scrutiny and comparison of best practice across Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements and JTAs (joint target area inspection) outcomes.



Independent Scrutiny

Areas of Strength

- Leadership, governance and a 'shared responsibility' for the HSSCP remains an area of significant strength.
- There are clear lines of accountability, with the HSSCP Executive attended by the Delegated Statutory Partners (DSPs), reporting to the Chief Executive Meeting, attended by the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSP), as defined under Working Together 2023.
- The Self-Assessment Health Check 2024 concluded that the HSSCP is a highly effective safeguarding partnership.
- The Independent Scrutineer concluded that the Self-Assessment Health Check 2024 provides strong evidence of the effectiveness of the multi-agency arrangements, supported by the sheer depth and breadth of work by the HSSCP and subgroup structure.
- In respect of joined up, multi-agency arrangements across both local areas, the Ofsted Inspection of Hartlepool Local Authority Children's Services (22 March 2024) found extremely strong and effective (Outstanding) arrangements for children who need help and protection, provided by the children's hub (CHub).
- The wider safeguarding partners (including relevant agencies) are appropriately informed of and engaged with the safeguarding children partnership arrangements, actively contributing to the HSSCP priorities, as set out under the HSSCP Business Plan. This includes partnership events to help shape the HSSCP Priorities for 2025-2028.
- There has been successful and highly effective consultation and engagement with children and young people across both local areas, with youth engagement events attended by the Delegated Statutory Partners (DSPs).
- Young people have been supported to share their experiences using a variety of different mediums, for example videos, and the power of their voices has directly influenced the Partnership priorities for 2025 onwards.
- The HSSCP website now includes a Children & Young Peoples page, with information, help and support on many different issues that may affect children and young people in Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees. All the content has been created by local young people, for local young people.
- In 2024 the Hartlepool & Stockton-On-Tees and South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnerships' agreed and published a new Performance and Quality Framework which sets out the Partnerships approach to the robust analysis of performance information and quality assurance across the children's safeguarding system, both on a single and multi-agency basis, bringing together in one place, a wealth of quantitative and qualitative information on the local arrangements for safeguarding children.
- HSSCP coordinate and deliver a comprehensive and effective Safeguarding Children Training Programme. Learning activities are delivered across various media, including live training events, E-Learning and Bitesize Briefings.

Areas for Continuous Development

- Implementing the Performance and Quality Framework to support the HSSCP to better evidence how system wide learning is having a demonstrable impact on practice, improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.



Next Steps

NEXT STEPS

HSSCP Priorities for 2025-26

HSSCP priorities are:

1. Trauma-Informed Partnership
2. Harm Outside of the Home



Priority 1: Trauma

The newly established 'Priorities' sub-group will lead the implementation of the Trauma priority. This priority will run between 2025 and 2028 through three phases: development, implementation and evaluation. The development phase will involve consultation and mapping of existing trauma-informed approaches and work across partner agencies, concluding in September 2025. The implementation phase will commence in October 2025.

Priority 2: Harm Outside of the Home

This is a Tees-wide priority shared with the South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership. As the priority commenced in 2024, the new Tees Harm Outside of the Home strategy and plan will continue to be implemented during 2025-26 with the evaluation phase taking place in quarter 2 and a development session scheduled for October 2025 to plan the next phase of this key priority area.

In addition to the agreed priorities, HSSCP will continue to implement the new Performance and Quality Framework throughout 2025-26. This will support the HSSCP to better evidence how system wide learning is having a demonstrable impact on practice, improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Equally, the reforms for children's services and the Families First Programme offer the opportunity for the HSSCP to co-produce new arrangements.

CONCLUSION by the Independent Scrutineer

The HSSCP Independent Scrutiny Report cannot fully reflect the tremendous commitment, with the good and outstanding practice that is taking place every day, right across the partnership. This Annual Report for 2024-25 does however, identify and shine a light on areas of significant strength, including strong governance for the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA). There is strong evidence of effective strategic leadership and collaborative working, with a shared commitment and responsibility for the partnership.

The Self-Assessment Health Check 2024 concluded that the HSSCP is a highly effective safeguarding partnership. The HSSCP were in a strong position of readiness for Working Together 2023, immediately putting into place arrangements to review and effectively implement the revised changes, throughout 2024.

In the Annual Report of the Independent Scrutineer 2023/24, the Independent Scrutineer challenged the Partnership in respect of pace and progress against the recommendations set out in the Independent Scrutiny Report 2022/23. With the additional investment and capacity agreed by the HSSCP, as well as the time and resources that DSPs and partners have themselves committed to the partnership, the Independent Scrutineer is pleased to report that significant progress has been made over this last year. Not least are the effective arrangements that have been put into place, to strengthen young people's voice and influence, so that they are now directly influencing the work of the Partnership, i.e. co-production of the HSSCP website page for C&YP.

Governance for Tees wide arrangements has significantly been strengthened. The new Performance and Quality Framework will support the HSSCP to better evidence how system wide learning is having a demonstrable impact on practice, improving outcomes for children, young people and their families.

From this position of strength and a year where real impact can be evidenced, the HSSCP face a period of further change in 2025/2026. It is too early for the Independent Scrutineer to comment on the impact of the government's recent announcement, to abolish NHS England with significant cuts to the NHS's 42 integrated care boards (ICBs). Additionally, the current Chair of the HSSCP, the DCS Hartlepool will be leaving her post imminently. Given her outstanding leadership, support and influence which has helped shape the Partnership over many years, this will be a significant gap. Whilst the reforms to children's services offer real opportunities to the children's partnership, these are in the context of all agencies facing continuous financial pressures.



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