



BIRMINGHAM
**Safeguarding
Children**
PARTNERSHIP



Annual Report 2023/24

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Foreword from the Lead Safeguarding Partners

As the Lead Safeguarding Partners, we share equal responsibility for providing strong, collaborative leadership focused on continuously improving our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to protect and promote the welfare of children and young people.

In April 2023, the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) published its '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-2025](#)', setting out its shared vision and strategic safeguarding priorities for the next two years. As Safeguarding Partners, we have worked closely with a wide range of partnerships and organisations, collectively referred to as 'relevant agencies', to coordinate our intervention and resources to make real progress on our key priorities.

This annual report covers the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, and charts our progress in implementing the identified actions for the first year of the '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'. The report also captures our transition as a partnership to embed the new national safeguarding framework and guidance set out in '[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)'.

We are extremely grateful to all our partners, frontline practitioners, volunteers, and those special individuals in our community for their steadfast commitment to keeping children safe in Birmingham, improving their life chances, and helping us achieve our shared ambition that Birmingham is a great place to grow up!



Craig Guildford
Chief Constable
West Midlands
Police



Joanne Roney
Managing Director
Birmingham City
Council



Paul Athey
Finance Officer and
Deputy Chief Executive
Birmingham and Solihull
Integrated Care Board



Introduction

This annual report sets out how agencies have worked together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Birmingham during the 2023/24 financial year. It also provides a rigorous and transparent assessment of the effectiveness of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) and charts progress on the implementation of the first year of our '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'.

During this period, the Independent Chair of BSCP, Penny Thompson CBE, worked in close collaboration with strategic leaders to continuously improve multi-agency working and to assist in the smooth transition to the new statutory roles and functions as defined in the national guidance.

This annual report will be formally presented to Birmingham City Council's Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and NHS Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board Quality Committee. A copy will be sent to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care. It will also be available to read and download from the BSCP website: www.lscpbirmingham.org.uk, together with the '[Independent Chair's Accountability Report 2023-24](#)' covering the same period.

The report comprises of seven sections:

Part 1 – Our Shared Ambition, Governance, Leadership and Accountability Arrangements

This section sets out the shared ambition, purpose, and strategic priorities of the safeguarding partners for the last two years, together with details of the changes in governance, leadership, and accountability arrangements undertaken during the year.

Part 2 - Context and Key Facts about Birmingham

This section provides background information and statistical data to provide a local context to protecting and safeguarding children and young people in the second largest local authority in Europe.

Part 3 – The Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements

In April 2023, BSCP published its two-year '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'. This section provides an evaluation of progress in year one, detailing evidence of effective implementation against each of the four strategic safeguarding priorities and 49 specific actions.

Part 4 – Learning and Improvement Framework

This section provides an overview of the Partnership’s workforce development programme, public awareness campaigns and regional collaboration to develop and share good practice.

Part 5 – Learning from Audit and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

This section provides an overview of the key learning to emerge from Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and the Partnership’s audit and quality assurance activity.

Part 6 – Funding and Business Support

This section provides a breakdown of BSCP’s budget, details of individual agency contributions and an analysis of key areas of expenditure during the 2023/24 financial year.

Part 7 - Conclusion and Priorities for the Year Ahead

The conclusion reflects on progress made, the challenges from the first year of the [‘Business Improvement Plan 2023-25’](#), and sets out the safeguarding priorities for the year ahead.



Part 1 – Our Shared Ambition, Governance, Leadership and Accountability Arrangements

In January 2023, Safeguarding Partners hosted a development session with strategic leaders from across the city to review the current multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, identify areas for improvement, and to reflect on the impact of partnership action on safeguarding priorities. The outcome was the establishment of our shared ambition, purpose and safeguarding priorities for the next two years.

The Safeguarding Partners agreed new arrangements to enable education to be fully engaged with multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, including:

- Formally recognising the Safeguarding in Education Group as a sub-group of BSCP
- Education's continued membership of all other sub-groups of the Partnership
- Schools Forum/Head Teacher representation on the BSCP Executive Board
- Appointment of the Director of Thriving Children and Families as a member of the BSCP Executive Board

In December 2023, the Safeguarding Partners commenced work to streamline and strengthen the governance, structural and accountability arrangements of BSCP to embed the statutory changes brought about by [‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023’](#).

Our Shared Ambition, Purpose, and Strategic Priorities

BSCP works in close collaboration with key statutory partnerships across the city to keep children safe and endorses the shared strategic ambition set out in the [Change for Children and Young People Plan 2023-2028](#).

Our Shared Ambition - Birmingham: A Great Place to Grow Up

Our Shared Purpose

Providing strong leadership and partnership to ensure local delivery, partnership practice, shared risk and accountability by:

- setting standards, providing guidance and procedures for multi-agency safeguarding practice and holding partners and partnerships to account;
- ensuring sound practice with a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people;
- ensuring a programme of learning and development that supports leadership and practice, while also learning from the best and from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews;
- modelling a culture of evaluation, learning, and continuous improvement;
- communicating effectively with the wider safeguarding system of organisations and individuals, including voluntary organisations and service users;
- driving progress through sub-groups and workstreams which regularly account to our Executive Board;

The '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)' sets out our shared ambition, purpose, principles, values, and how we will hold partners and partnerships to account in implementing our safeguarding priorities over the next two years.

The '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)' complements and builds upon partnership collaboration overseen by the Birmingham Children and Young People Partnership Board, as we share the same ambition for children and young people in the city. The '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)' should be read in conjunction with BSCP's '[Governance Arrangements](#)'.

Our Shared Priorities

The Safeguarding Partners have identified four safeguarding priorities for the next two years, which Delegated Safeguarding Partners will oversee the effective implementation through its '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'.

Priority 1: Ensuring effective implementation of '[Working together to Build Strong Family Foundations \(Childhood Neglect Strategy 2022-2026\)](#)'.

Priority 2: Assuring a coordinated and coherent inter-agency response to children impacted by domestic abuse and violence in families.

Priority 3: Developing a joint approach to understanding and responding to children who are, and who become, invisible to services.

Priority 4: Enhancing anti-discriminatory practice, by improving partnership focus on the work we do, in the context of equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Governance, Leadership, and Accountability Arrangements

In March 2024, the Independent Chair facilitated a development session with Safeguarding Partners to determine the necessary changes, timetable, and milestones for the smooth transition to the new governance, leadership and accountability arrangements as prescribed in '[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)'.

Our new [Governance Arrangements](#) were updated in December 2024.

The published [Governance Arrangements](#) clarify how the partnership arrangements operate in Birmingham. It also explains the new statutory roles and functions of Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs), Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs), the new co-chairing arrangements (being introduced in October 2025), and the development of our independent scrutiny arrangements. The new governance, leadership, and accountability arrangements places a joint and equal responsibility for the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements on the LSPs.



The LSPs are:

- Chief Executive Officer for Birmingham City Council (BCC)
- Chief Constable for West Midlands Police (WMP)
- Chief Executive Officer for Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care Board (BSOL ICB)

LSPs within the seven safeguarding partnerships[1] in the WMP force area are exploring opportunities for greater regional collaboration and sharing of emerging good practice regarding cross-cutting safeguarding themes and issues that transcend local boundaries.

In 2023, WMP adopted a more localised operating model, with Birmingham becoming one Local Policing Area (LPA) under one senior leadership team, headed by a Chief Superintendent. The Independent Chair held regular one-to-one meetings with the LPA Police Commander to ensure that the partnership's priorities were incorporated into local delivery.

LSPs have nominated DSPs to speak with authority, make decisions on behalf of the LSPs, and hold their organisations to account. The DSPs provide oversight of the quality of safeguarding practice, with a specific focus on our shared safeguarding priorities.

The DSPs are:

- Strategic Director Children and Families, Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham Local Policing Commander, West Midlands Police
- Chief Nurse, Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care Board
- Chief Executive, Birmingham Children's Trust

Independent Scrutiny

National guidance prescribes that Safeguarding Partners must ensure that there are arrangements in place for the effective independent scrutiny of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. '[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)' sets out seven core functions of independent scrutiny.

Functions of independent scrutiny role

- 1.** Provide safeguarding partners and relevant agencies with independent, rigorous, and effective support and challenge at both a strategic and operational level.
- 2.** Provide assurance to the whole system in judging the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements through a range of scrutiny methods.
- 3.** Ensure that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place, and that Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and national reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.
- 4.** Ensure that the voice of children and families is considered as part of scrutiny and that this is at the heart of arrangements through direct feedback, informing policy and practice.

[1] Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall & Wolverhampton.

5. Be regarded as a 'critical friend' and provide opportunities for two-way discussion and reflection between frontline practitioners and leaders. This will encourage and enable strong and clear strategic leadership.
6. Provide independent advice when there are disagreements between agencies and safeguarding partners and facilitate escalation procedures.
7. Evaluate and contribute to published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the annual report, alongside feeding into the wider accountability systems such as inspections

Independent scrutiny helps the Partnership to drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that the arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. Many of the above functions have been carried out by the Independent Chair, who has acted as a 'critical friend'; helping to develop and strengthen our partnership and governance arrangements over the last eight years. The Independent Chair facilitated a strategic workshop in March 2024 to plan the timetable and key milestones for the implementation of the new national safeguarding framework and assist the smooth transition to the new co-chairing arrangements. Safeguarding Partners identified this as a priority area as we develop our Independent Scrutiny Framework over the next twelve months and phase out the role of Independent Chair.

The Safeguarding Partners valued independent scrutiny that Penny Thompson CBE provided on the effectiveness of the multi-agency arrangements and the planning for the transition to the new arrangements. The Independent Chair published a separate ['Independent Chair's Accountability Report 2023-24'](#) in April 2024, which highlighted that the partnership must complete the transition to the new governance and accountability arrangements to ensure compliance with ['Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'](#). Within the accountability report, the Independent Chair recognised the successful delivery of progress against the four priorities in the ['Business Improvement Plan 2023-25'](#).

The role of Independent Chair ended on 30th September 2024 and Safeguarding Partners wish to formally thank Penny Thompson CBE for her outstanding contribution and commitment to safeguarding children and young people in Birmingham over the last eight years. In keeping with her final thoughts in her Accountability Report: "Never give up!", you have our assurance we won't!

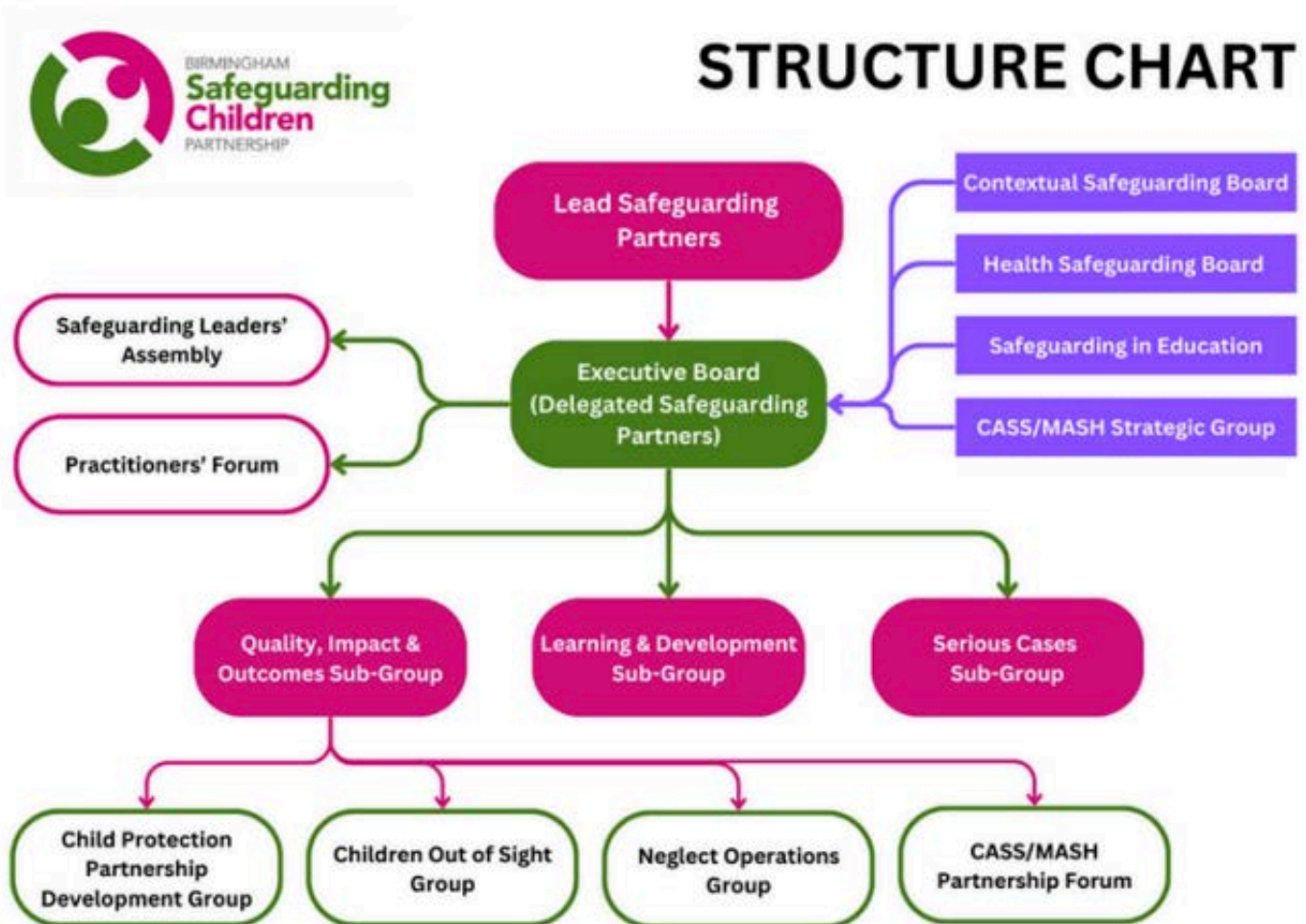
The Safeguarding Partners have now appointed an Independent Scrutineer, Jo Proctor, who commenced her role at the end of January 2025.



Organisational Structure

To support the revised governance, leadership and accountability arrangements, we have strengthened the partnership's infrastructure and Business Support Unit. We have introduced co-chairing arrangements throughout the safeguarding structure, demonstrating shared leadership, accountability and active engagement in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding Partners co-chair the Executive Board, Safeguarding Leaders Assembly, Practitioner's Forum, sub-groups, and Task and Finish groups, all of which have clear terms of reference and an agreed work programme aligned to delivering on the priorities set out in the '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'. There is a dedicated Business Support Team which assists in the coordination and delivery of the Partnership's structure and priorities.

Sub-Group Structure Chart



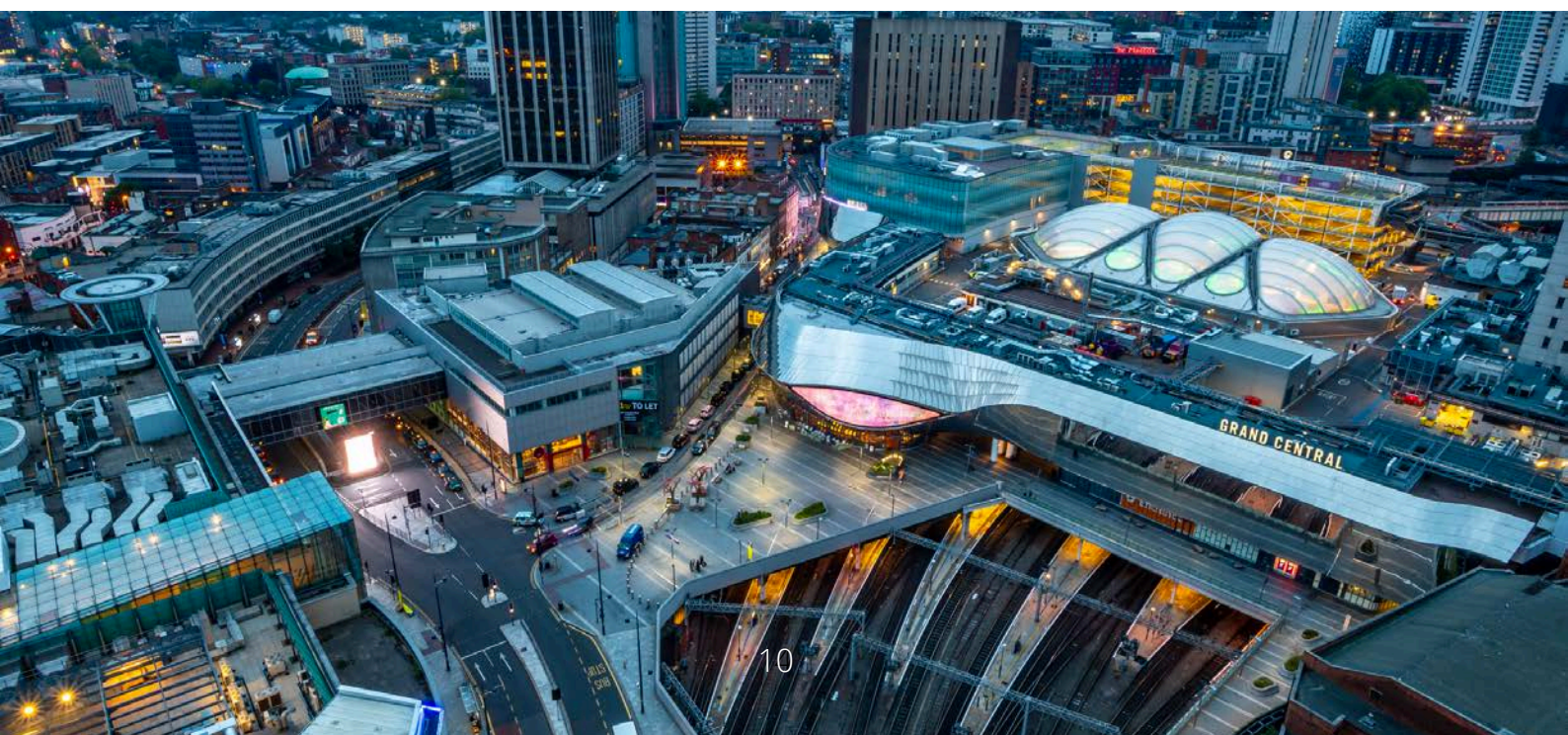
Part 2 - Context and Key Facts about Birmingham

Birmingham is the second largest city in the UK, with an estimated population of over 1.14 million residents. The vibrant heart of the city is home to iconic buildings such as Grand Central, the Library of Birmingham, and Cadbury World. The city stretches from Sutton Park in the North to Longbridge Technology Park in the South, and is home to the famous Bullring Shopping Centre.

Birmingham is a super-diverse city. 51% of residents come from a minority ethnic group (national average 19%), with about 90 languages spoken in the city [ONS Census 2021]. Birmingham is one of the youngest cities in Europe, with an average age of 35 and over 255,000 residents under the age of 16, 22% of its overall population.

With air and rail transport links to the rest of the UK and beyond, living in Birmingham presents exciting opportunities. It boasts more green space than any other European city and more canals than Venice. In 2022, the city was the home of the Commonwealth Games, bringing together five million visitors from across the world.

However, 46% of Birmingham's children are growing up in poverty, up 10% in the past decade. The city's population is projected to grow to 1,186,000 (3.9%) in 2028 and to 1,230,000 (7.8%) by 2038. This growth will have an impact on public services, such as Education, Housing, and Health.





38.4%
of children are eligible for free school meals, significantly higher than the national average

(% of pupils eligible for FSM 2022/23 (academic) for Birmingham and All English metropolitan boroughs)



1,323
Number of Children with a Child Protection Plan

(Children in Need 2023 Report, Department of Education)

2,665 Children in Care

(Change for Children and Young People: 2023-2028, Birmingham City Council)



46% of children live in poverty

(Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

An estimated 85% of our under 5s live in 40% of the most deprived areas. 9.4% of households are overcrowded.

(Birmingham City Council)



27% of 10 and 11-year-olds are obese or severely obese. Higher than the national average of 22.7%

(National Child Measurement Programme, 2022-23, NHS)



Birmingham has a 32.7% Youth Reoffending rate, lower than the national average of 38.4%

(An inspection of youth offending services in Birmingham, HM Inspectorate of Probation)

In 2023 6% of 16-17 years olds were not in employment education or training, compared to the national mean of 5.4% across all metropolitan boroughs.

(Proportion of 16 and 17 year olds who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), or their activity was not known in Birmingham)

Part 3 - The Effectiveness of Safeguarding Arrangements

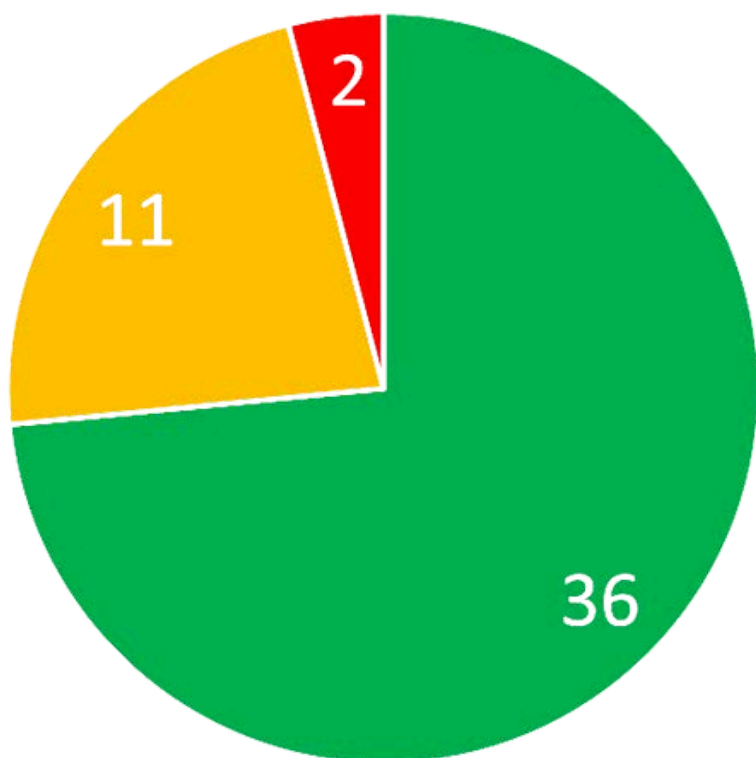
In April 2023, BSCP published a two-year '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)', which sets out four key safeguarding priorities and 49 specific actions to enhance the partnership arrangements to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in Birmingham. The partnership has made significant progress in implementing the identified actions for completion in year one of the plan.

Nearly three quarters (73%) of the key actions have been completed, with significant progress on the remaining outstanding actions.

However, there has been slippage on two actions. Firstly, the delivery of planned cultural awareness training, which has been delayed whilst we secure a suitable provider to deliver this specialist training, and secondly the delay in publication of the 2023/24 Annual Report.

The below pie chart (Figure 1) provides an overview of implementation of actions in year one.

Figure 1: Overview of Implementation of Actions in Year One



The '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)' sets out 49 specific actions:

- 36 actions have been completed (73%)
- 11 actions are ongoing (22%)
- Slippage on 2 actions (5%)

The golden thread that links these priorities is ensuring that the voice and lived experience of children, young people and families informs and influences the continuous improvement in partnership working across the city.

A summary of key activity and progress in respect of the four safeguarding priorities is outlined below. Appendix 1 contains a more detailed overview of activity.

Priority 1: Ensuring effective implementation of ‘Working together to Build Strong Family Foundations’ Strategy 2022-2026 (Childhood Neglect Strategy).

BSCP established a Neglect Operational Group in 2020 with the primary aim of reviewing the existing neglect strategy and developing a new strategy to include the implementation of the NSPCC GCP2 assessment tool, which was initially piloted in Hodge Hill and Northfield. The development and implementation of the strategy has been supported by a Neglect Lead Manager, hosted in Birmingham Children’s Trust and funded by BSCP.

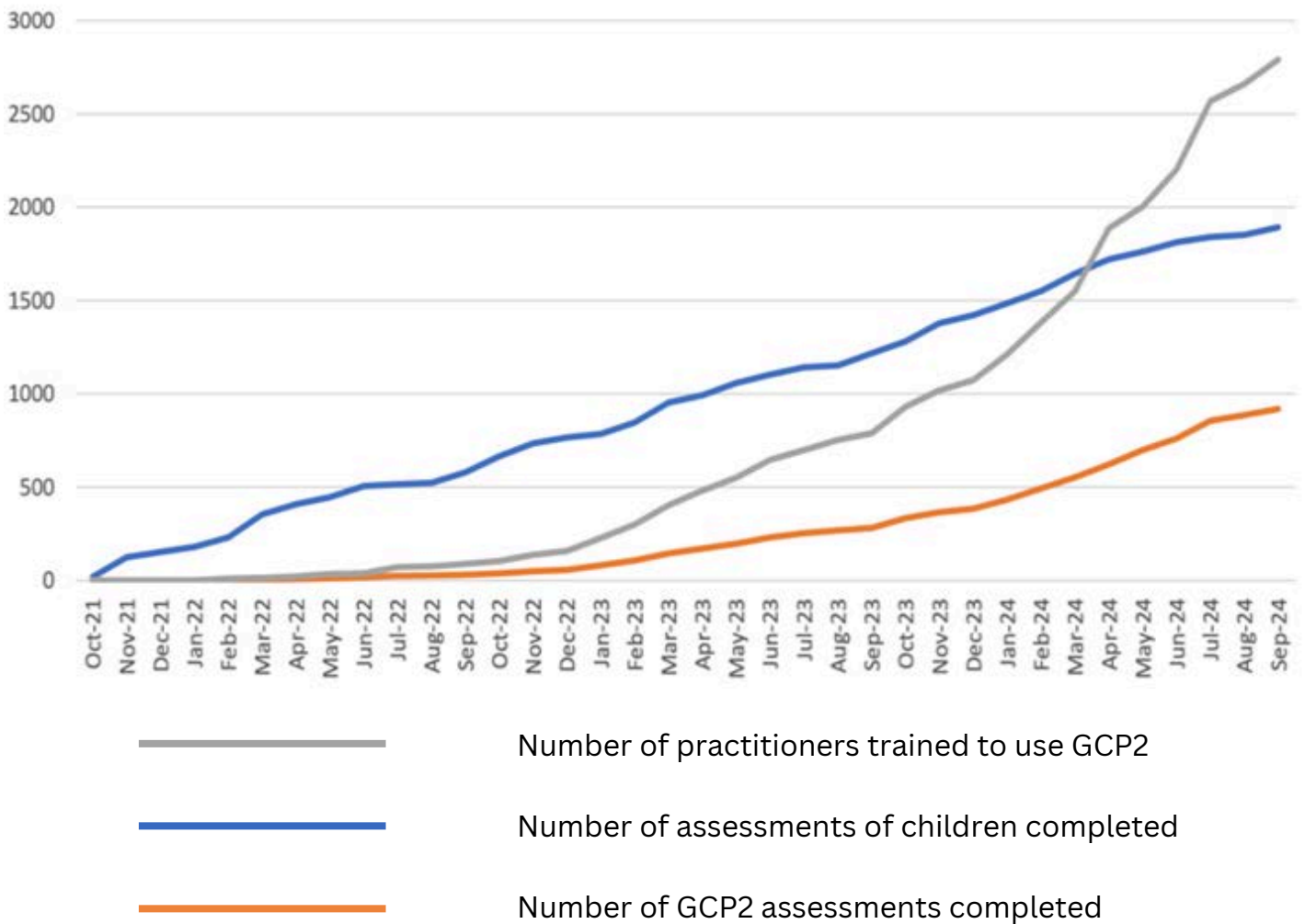
BSCP launched its [Neglect Strategy 2022-2026 – ‘Working Together to Build Strong Family Foundations’](#) in September 2022. The strategy outlines four strategic priorities. The strategy aims to enable practitioners to recognise the signs of neglect and respond by taking action to address it.

The Neglect Operational Group developed and published a Neglect Toolkit and coordinated the delivery of NSPCC Grade Care Profile 2 Training across the city. The partnership makes a commitment to quantify and use data to improve practice and to evaluate the impact of the work in improving outcomes for children.



The chart below (Figure 2) shows the upward trend of numbers of practitioners trained to use GCP2 and the number of assessments completed between October 2021 and September 2024.

GCP2 use (partnership)



Impact reports completed by the Neglect Lead Manager provide some evidence of improved quality of assessments, notably resulting in the right support being provided earlier or more effectively, and therefore leading to better outcomes for children and families.

Priority 2: Assuring a coordinated and coherent inter-agency response to children impacted by domestic abuse and violence in families.

BSCP hosted a practitioner conference in November 2023: ‘Working as Partners to Safeguard Children from Domestic Abuse’. Over 200 delegates attended the conference, participated in workshops and had an opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the development of the Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy.

The event was used to evaluate the confidence of practitioners in supporting child victims of domestic abuse. The findings have helped to share the strategy and commissioning of the Partnership's multi-agency learning and development offer.

In November 2023, at the Strategic Leaders Assembly hosted by the BSCP, safeguarding leaders across the city were consulted on the six key priorities that featured in the draft Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy. The feedback helped shape and inform the [‘Birmingham Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy - Working to Transform Lives’](#), that was published in November 2024. Safeguarding children and young people as victims of domestic abuse is one of six strategic priorities within the strategy.

Priority 3: Developing a joint approach to understanding and responding to children who are, and who become, invisible to services.

BSCP have established a Children Out of Sight Group to explore the reasons, risk and vulnerability of different cohorts of children who are out of sight of statutory partners. The group have implemented support for practitioners, clarifying pathways to enable better access to specialist advice and support where there are concerns for a child out of sight.

At the spring 2023 Practitioners Forum, the Co-Chair of Children Out of Sight provided a training session on the risks to children that are electively educated at home. At the Safeguarding Leaders Assembly in November 2023, the Co-Chairs of the Children Out of Sight Group provided an overview of progress and received a mandate from leaders to create a resource within the Children’s Advice and Support Service, to enable practitioners to access expert advice on complex cases involving children who are out of sight.

Priority 4: Enhancing anti-discriminatory practice, by improving partnership focus on the work we do, in the context of equity, equality, diversity, and inclusion.

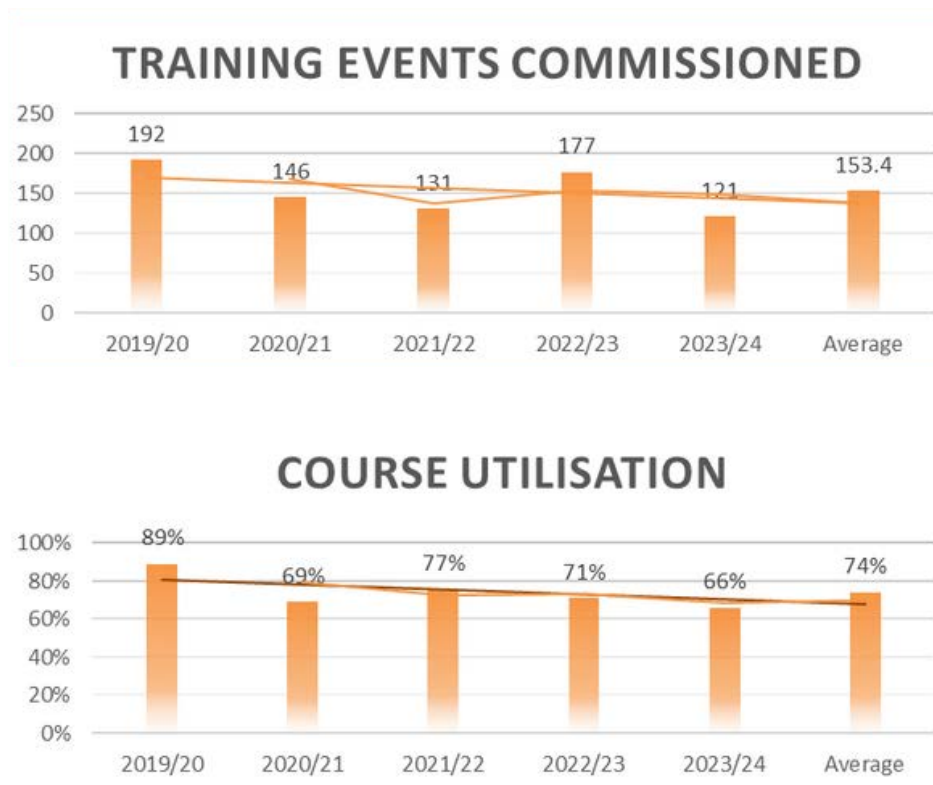
The Department for Education has provided seed funding to support the ‘Safeguarding in Faith Communities’ project, which is being led by BSCP in close collaboration with the Faith Covenant Partnership and the Birmingham Council of Faiths. The Faith Project has four key strands of the project: focus on the development of a faith directory, delivery of core safeguarding training for places of worship, development of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Faith Network, and development of online adults and children’s Safeguarding Guidance.

BSCP has delivered bespoke safeguarding training for places of worship in Birmingham. The faith directory and online guidance, ‘Protecting the Rights of Children and Adults at Risk’ is scheduled to be launched in spring 2025. The DSL Faith Network is in the early stages of development and the Partnership will focus on this taking forward during the next year.



Part 4 - Learning and Improvement Framework

BSCP has an established Learning and Development Sub-Group that oversees the commissioning and evaluation of the multi-agency safeguarding workforce development programme. In March 2023, the Executive Board approved the multi-agency training offer for 2023/24 which details the commissioning and delivery of one-to-one learning events. Appendix 2 'Multi-agency Training Offer for 2023/24' provides a breakdown of the learning event and number of training modules commissioned for each topic.



To account for the changing training needs of frontline practitioners and agencies, there was a reduction in the training budget for 2023/24. Due to operational demands, many safeguarding agencies were unable to release employees to attend face-to-face training events. The Partnership has responded by taking a more blended approach to our training offer by expanding the range of virtual training options, with greater use of webinars and eLearning to support its face-to-face training. We launched a neglect eLearning course in early 2024 and are looking to introduce more 'bite size' learning opportunities such as 'lunch and learn' sessions. The reduction in demand for in-person training impacted on the course utilisation rate of 66%. This is an area that the Learning and Development Sub-Group is seeking to address.

The partnerships across the region are trying to encourage more training providers to deliver bespoke safeguarding training. Birmingham introduced a Dynamic Procurement System in 2023/24 to help secure the right training at the right price. The Learning and Development Sub-Group oversee the evaluation of training provision, with members of the

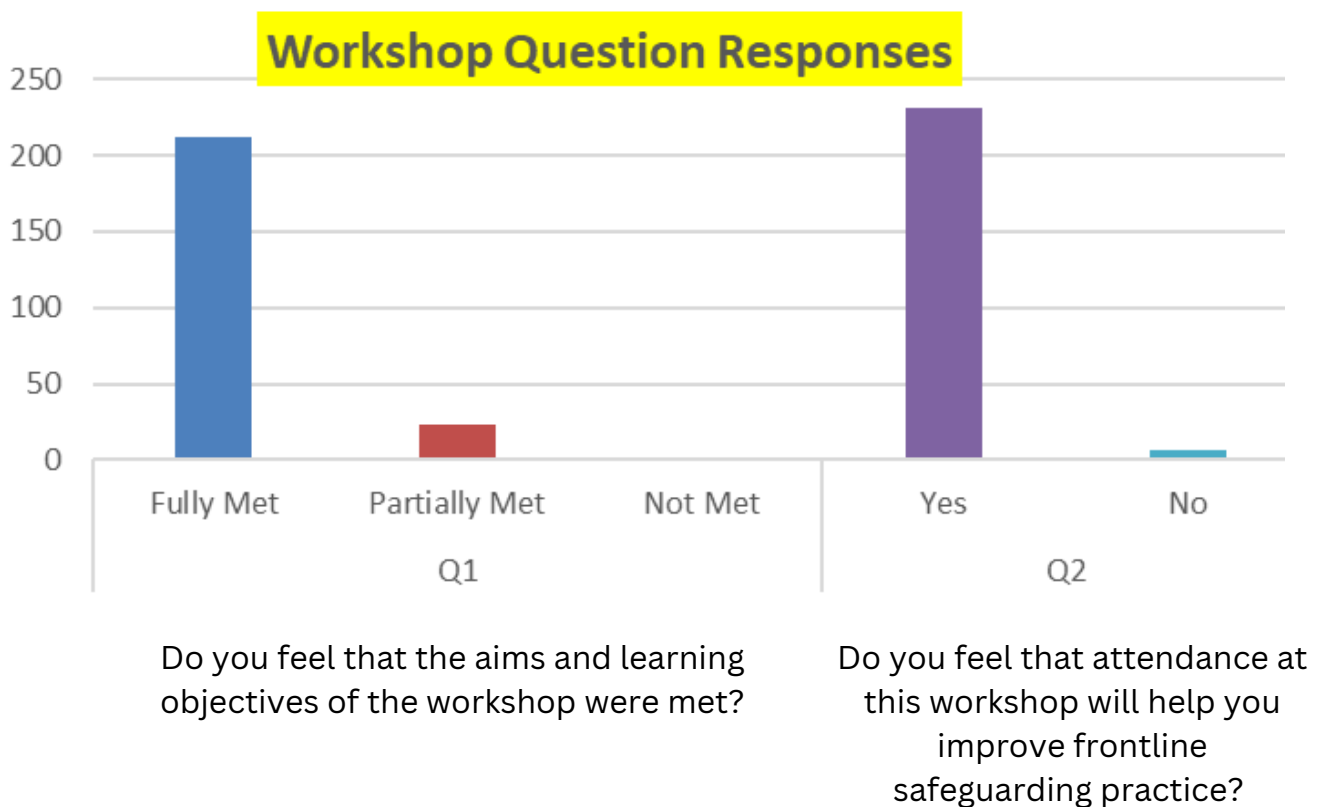
sub-group approving the course content, observing training, and analysing delegates' feedback. Each course has a tailored evaluation linked to the course objectives, but the pivotal question included in all evaluations is 'will this course benefit your practice?'; 99% of delegates who completed a course evaluation in 2023/24 answered 'yes'.

The Partnership hosted a conference in November 2023 entitled '[Working as Partners to Safeguard Children from Domestic Abuse](#)', which was attended by 220 frontline practitioners. Keynote speakers included Nicola Jacobs, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England, and Dr Emma Katz, an expert on coercive control. The conference delivered six workshops examining different aspects of protecting children living in violent households. Delegates attending the workshops were asked two key questions:

- Question 1: Do you feel that the aims and learning objectives of the workshop were met?
- Question 2: Do you feel that attendance at this workshop will help you improve frontline safeguarding practice?

Figure 2 provides an analysis of delegate feedback regarding the workshops which was extremely positive. The conference exit poll captured that 87% of attendees indicated that the conference had exceeded their expectations, an increase of 2% over the 2022/23 Conference.

Figure 2: Workshop Question Responses



Communications and Public Engagement

BSCP actively supported and has continued to promote the key messages from the 'Who's in Charge' and 'Never, Ever Shake a Baby' public-facing campaigns to raise awareness of the risks of caring for children whilst under the influence of alcohol and how to cope with an infant crying.

BSCP is a member of the Birmingham Against Female Genital Mutilation (BAFGM) group; to mark International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation 2024 we collaborated with Birmingham Children's Trust to create two campaign films with Sarian Karim Kamara, a prominent anti-FGM campaigner. The films were shared via our website and social media accounts and were promoted to practitioners across the city.



Part 5 - Learning from Audit and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

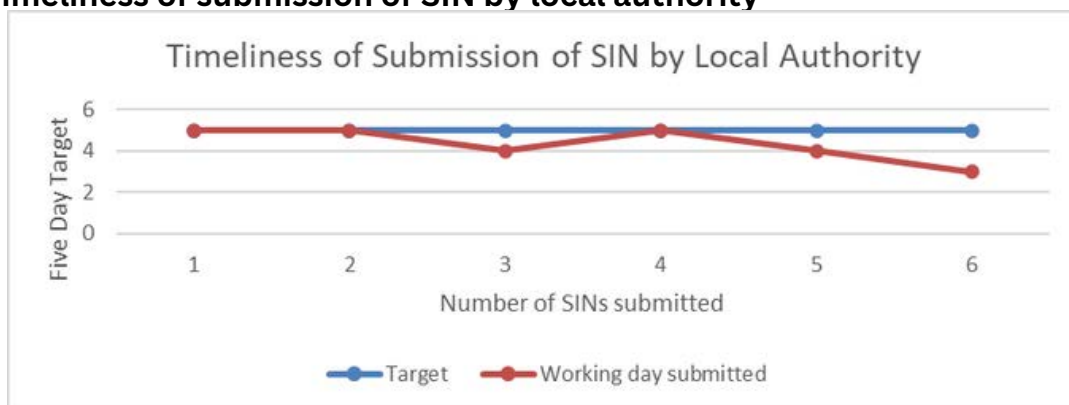
The Partnership has a dedicated Serious Cases Sub-Group which oversees the timeliness, independence and quality of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. This is the point of submission of a Serious Incident Notification (SIN), the Rapid Review process and dissemination of early learning, through to the finalisation and publication of the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review. The priority for all these processes is ensuring that emerging learning is identified early and effectively implemented. Our Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews focus on identifying systemic learning that can drive improvement in safeguarding practice.

The national guidance prescribes that where a child has died or been seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is suspected, a Serious Incident Notification should be submitted to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel within five working days of the incident. Serious Incident Notifications trigger the Rapid Review process, which should be undertaken in 15 working days. Where a Child Safeguarding Practice Review is commissioned, the review process should be completed within six months. However, where there are ongoing criminal proceedings, this can delay finalisation and publication of Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. In these cases, BSCP ensures that agencies act quickly to embed the emerging learning.

Timeliness of Serious Incident Notifications

From the 1st of April 2023 to the 31st of March 2024, Birmingham Children’s Trust submitted six SINs. Figure 3 provides a breakdown of timeliness. All notifications were submitted within the 5 working day target.

Figure 3: Timeliness of submission of SIN by local authority

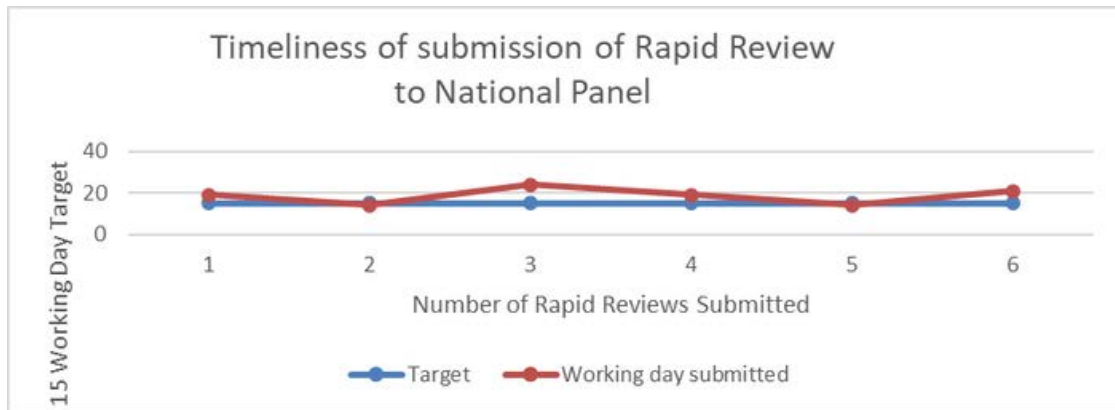


Rapid Reviews -Timeliness and Quality of Decision Making

During the 12 month period, six Rapid Reviews have been undertaken and identified important learning, which safeguarding partners have quickly acted upon to further enhance local safeguarding practice and systems. The National Panel concurred with the decision of Safeguarding Partners that none of the cases met the criteria for either a local or national Child Safeguarding Practice Review. Liaison took place with the National Panel

in relation to several complex cases where further time was required to complete the Rapid Review process. Four out of the six Rapid Reviews were extremely complex and focused on child criminal exploitation and serious youth violence. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the timeliness of Rapid Reviews submitted to the National Panel.

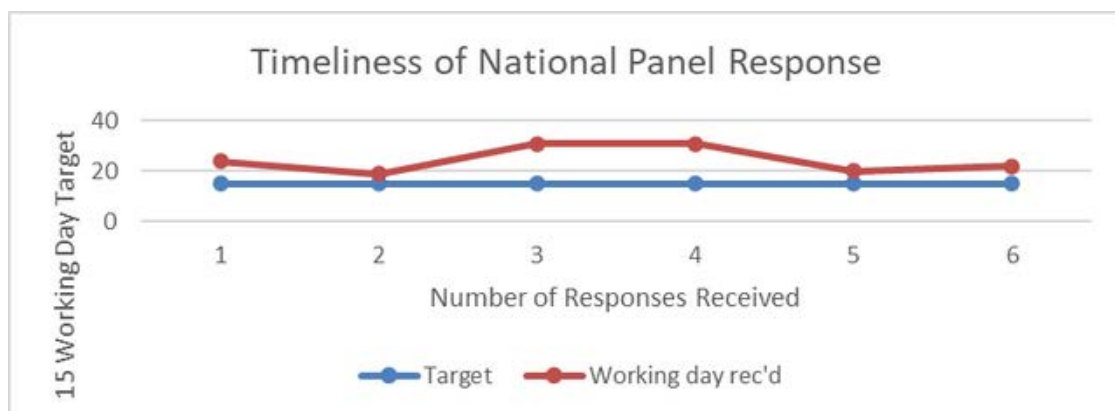
Figure 4: Timeliness of submission of Rapid Review to National Panel



Timeliness of response by National Panel to Rapid Review decision

The National Panel endeavour to respond to partnerships within 15 working days. Figure 5 provides an overview of the timeliness of the response from the National Panel in all six Rapid Reviews.

Figure 5: Timeliness of National Panel Response



Finalisation and Publication of Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

In April 2023, BSCP had one complex ongoing Serious Case Review (SCR) and 11 ongoing Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs), which were at different stages of the review process. BSCP did not commission any further LCSPRs during the year.

During 2023/24 two reviews were finalised and published, a brief overview of the circumstances of each review is detailed below. Both reports are available to download from our website.

Case 1 - 'Child A' LCSPR was published October 2023. The review found that services involved with the family didn't fully understand Child A's lived experience and the impact of their childhood trauma. This was an incredibly distressing and unusual set of circumstances in which an innocent young man was killed by his partner's 14-year-old child. 'Child A' was living in West Sussex at the time of the fatal incident in October 2020 but had spent most of her life in Birmingham.

Case 2 – Our final SCR was published in February 2024. This review focused on a 3-year-old child who suffered a life changing head injury, requiring lifelong specialist care and support. The medical team found evidence of old fractures and previous bleeding on the brain. The child's parents were young, married asylum seekers. They came to the UK from abroad. They had been known to agencies since the child's premature birth.

To assist in the wider dissemination of learning the Partnership produces a one page 'Learning Lessons from Serious Cases' Briefing Note and presentation pack for use in team meetings and supervision sessions. In addition, the BSCP hosts a webinar to share the learning with frontline practitioners. Following the publication, a copy of the review is sent to the National Repository of Learning from Case Reviews hosted by the NSPCC and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care to assist in maximising the dissemination of learning.

A webinar titled 'Are you listening to me?' was held on the 14th of November 2023 in relation to Case 1. The learning session was facilitated by Jahnine Davis from Listen Up, who explored adultification and intersectionality. The webinar was attended by 258 frontline practitioners from both Birmingham and West Sussex. A webinar in relation Case 2 was held on the 7th of March 2024, focusing on the importance of early planning and continuity of care for children with complex health needs.

'Are you listening to me?'
Webinar
Tuesday 14th November 2023, 14:00 - 16:00

In October, Birmingham and West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnerships jointly published the 'Child A' Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review; the review found that services involved with the family didn't fully understand Child A's lived experience and the impact of her childhood trauma. This is an incredibly distressing and unusual case where tragically an innocent young man lost his life.

The webinar will begin with an overview of the case, led by Joanna Nicolas, which will focus on the emerging themes and learning identified from the review. This will be followed by a session delivered by Jahnine Davis on adultification and intersectionality, and the impact this has on safeguarding practice from a practitioner's perspective.

Book your place

Joanna Nicolas
Lead Reviewer of 'Child A'
LCSPR

Jahnine Davis
Leading Specialist in
Adultification

Learning from Serious Cases
Briefing Note for Team Meetings
February 2024

The importance of early planning and continuity of care for children with complex health needs

The 3-year-old child in this case suffered a life changing head injury, requiring specialist care and support for the rest of their life. The medical team found evidence of old fractures and previous bleeding on the brain.

The child's parents were young, married asylum seekers. They came to the UK from abroad. They had been known to agencies since the child's premature birth. Prior to the incident there had been several safeguarding referrals made about the child, and there was a history of the child not being brought to medical appointments. The child had five unplanned hospital attendances, including three for significant injuries.

The severity of the child's injury led to an initial focus on palliative care. Whilst the child's prognosis improved, the complexity of their needs meant it took another two years before the child was discharged from hospital.

The child's injuries were thought to be non-accidental and the mother was subsequently charged and found guilty of child neglect.

Key Learning
The review findings echoed learning from previous reviews:

- More could have been done to understand the child's lived experience and the parents' vulnerabilities as a young, migrant couple with no experience or understanding of the health, benefits or housing systems in the UK.
- Opportunities for a holistic assessment were missed, which could have resulted in better co-ordination of both early help and health services.
- Child protection processes weren't initiated, which delayed completion of parenting assessments.
- Convening of child protection Strategy Meetings could have led to better co-ordination of social work and hospital intervention, contingency and discharge planning.
- Absence of an agreement over the supervision and contact arrangements for the parents, meant that over time, the mother (perpetrator) became the child's main carer.

Improving Practice

- Make sure you consider the experiences and trauma of asylum-seeking parents when assessing their parenting capacity.
- When working with asylum-seeking families, take the time to find out what services and support are available for their specific needs and whether they are actually receiving it. Please don't assume support is in place.
- Find out who else is working with the family so work is coordinated (this applies to early help and discharge planning in health). Is there a Lead Professional for the child who you can work with? If multiple agencies are working with the family and there isn't a Lead Professional, raise this! This is explained in the [Eight Hubs, Eight Teams](#) guidance.
- It is so important that a child attends their health appointments. Make sure you understand and follow your NHS Trust's 'Was not Brought' policy.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and seek advice if you have ANY concerns about unexplained or suspicious injuries to a child. Non-accidental injury should be considered until there is definitive evidence of another cause of injury.
- It's crucial that all organisations follow child protection processes and that assessments, care planning and court processes take place in a timely way. Follow the escalation protocol if you don't think this is happening.

Next Steps

- Circulate this Learning Lessons Briefing Note to all members in your team.
- Please visit the [West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership website](#) for guidance and resources for services for asylum-seeking families.
- Familiarise yourself with the [Child Protection Medical Assessment Pathway - Toolkit for Practitioners](#) which outlines what to do if children have marks, injuries or bruising.
- Make sure you understand the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership [Resolution and Escalation Protocol](#) and don't be afraid to use it if you feel the actions, inaction, or decisions of another agency do not adequately safeguard or promote the welfare of a child.
- Look out and sign up for the forthcoming Practitioners' Webinar on Thursday 7th March, where we will explore in more detail the emerging learning from this review and tips for improving safeguarding practice.

Key Themes

This section is drawn from our analysis of learning from all serious incidents including those which led to a Rapid Review and LCSPR. The key themes and messages for frontline practitioners and managers working with and supporting children and families were:

Working with Asylum-Seeking Parents

- There is a need for practitioners to consider the experiences and trauma of asylum-seeking parents when they are assessing parenting capacity.
- Take time out to find out what services and support are available for their specific needs and whether they are receiving it. Practitioners must not assume support is in place.

Asking the ‘So What’ Question:

- In everything a practitioner does, single and multi-agency, they need to always ask the ‘so what’ question. What difference is this plan/action/visit making to this child’s life? Are the interventions making this child’s life better, and if not, what needs to be done differently?

When Faced with Unexplained or Suspicious Injuries:

- Practitioners must not be afraid to ask questions and seek advice if they have ANY concerns about unexplained or suspicious injuries to a child. Non-accidental injury should be considered until there is definitive evidence of another cause of injury.

Was Not Brought:

- It is important that a child attends their health appointments. Practitioners need to make sure they understand and follow their NHS Trust’s ‘Was Not Brought’ policy.

Use of the Escalation Protocol:

- It’s crucial that all organisations follow child protection processes and ensure that assessments, care planning, and court processes take place in a timely way. Practitioners should follow the escalation protocol if they don’t think this is happening.

The ‘Bigger Picture’ and Taking a Holistic View:

- When working with a child, a practitioner needs to look behind the child’s presenting behaviours. Recognise and act on signs of abuse and trauma and never underestimate the impact this could have.
- Significant adults in a child’s life do not have to be living in the family home; practitioners need to consider their strengths and risks too. Family history is ALWAYS relevant. Practitioners need to listen to family members. The best chance of effecting positive change for a child is to understand where the child and their family are coming from.

Information Sharing with Other Local Authority Areas:

- When a child moves areas, practitioners need to ensure that information is passed on as quickly as possible, to assure continuity of care and support for the child and family.

Effective Discharge Planning:

- Practitioners must identify who else is working with the family so work is coordinated (this applies to early help and discharge planning in health). Is there a lead professional for the child who you can work with? If multiple agencies are working with the family and there isn't a lead professional, raise this!

Adultification and Intersectionality:

- Practitioners need to be aware of their own adultification biases and those of others. This can result in children being seen as more streetwise, savvy, and grown, losing sight of them still being children.
- There is a need to also be mindful of intersectionality where the interconnected nature of race, class, gender, and other factors, could impact simultaneously on both discrimination and disadvantage.

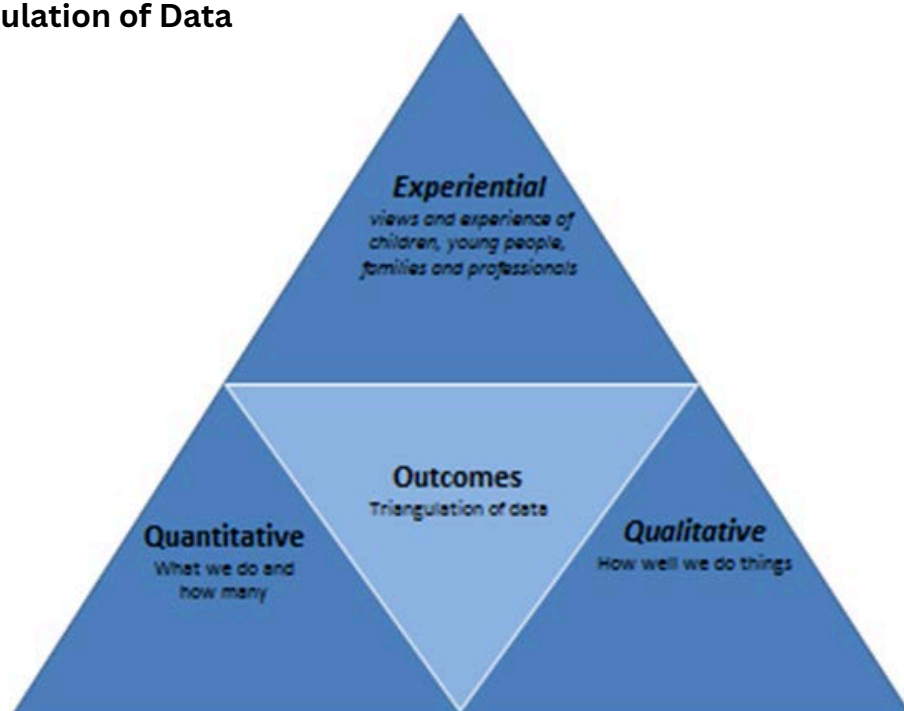
Learning from national reviews

The Serious Cases Sub-Group routinely considers learning arising from LCSPRs undertaken by other Safeguarding Children Partnerships as well as thematic reviews undertaken by the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

Multi-Agency Audits

The Quality, Impact and Outcomes (QIO) Sub-Group oversee an annual programme of quality assurance, data analysis and audit activity linked to the strategic priorities set out in the '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'. The Quality Assurance Framework (Figure 6) was updated in spring 2023 to provide a holistic picture of safeguarding performance and practice through the triangulation of qualitative, quantitative, and experiential data to help evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding children and families across the city.

Figure 6: Triangulation of Data



The QIO sub-group examines outstanding practice, both regionally and nationally, to identify transferable learning that can be shared across the Partnership. This work incorporates the review of the findings from statutory inspections of partners in Birmingham, to identify trends and themes and seek assurance from strategic leaders that the learning has been implemented. The QIO Sub-Group oversees Section 11 and Section 175 audits undertaken by partners and considers good practice and areas for improvement arising from these processes. The sub-group also seeks assurance from partners following regulatory inspections such as those conducted by Ofsted, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The QIO Sub-Group has undertaken five themed multi-agency audits during 2023/24. The audits focused on evaluation of safeguarding partnership practice and the impact of intervention for children, young people and families.

The audits looked at:

- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) in respect of high-risk victims of domestic abuse
- Long-term and multiple episodes of agency intervention for childhood neglect
- Domestic abuse re-referrals
- Neglect – use of the Graded Care Profile (GCP2) assessment tool
- Children living in temporary accommodation

Key Themes

Analysis of the emerging themes from multi-agency audits identified six cross-cutting themes:

- Parental substance misuse and domestic abuse
- Lack of professional curiosity and confidence
- Poor information sharing between agencies and local authority areas
- Understanding the lived experience of the child
- Parenting capacity – the impact of parental mental illness
- Quality of safety planning

Lived Experience of Children & Families

All learning review and multi-agency audit processes contain specific questions in respect of the voice and lived experience of children and their families. The safeguarding partners engage children and families in practice and service improvement activity and use a variety of methods to capture the lived experiences of children, young people, and their parents/carers. For example, Birmingham Children's Trust established a Family Advisory Board (FAB group) to engage parents of children who have been the subject of multi-agency safeguarding.

BSCP is actively considering ways to strengthen opportunities for their collective voices and lived experiences to influence multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Data and Information-Sharing

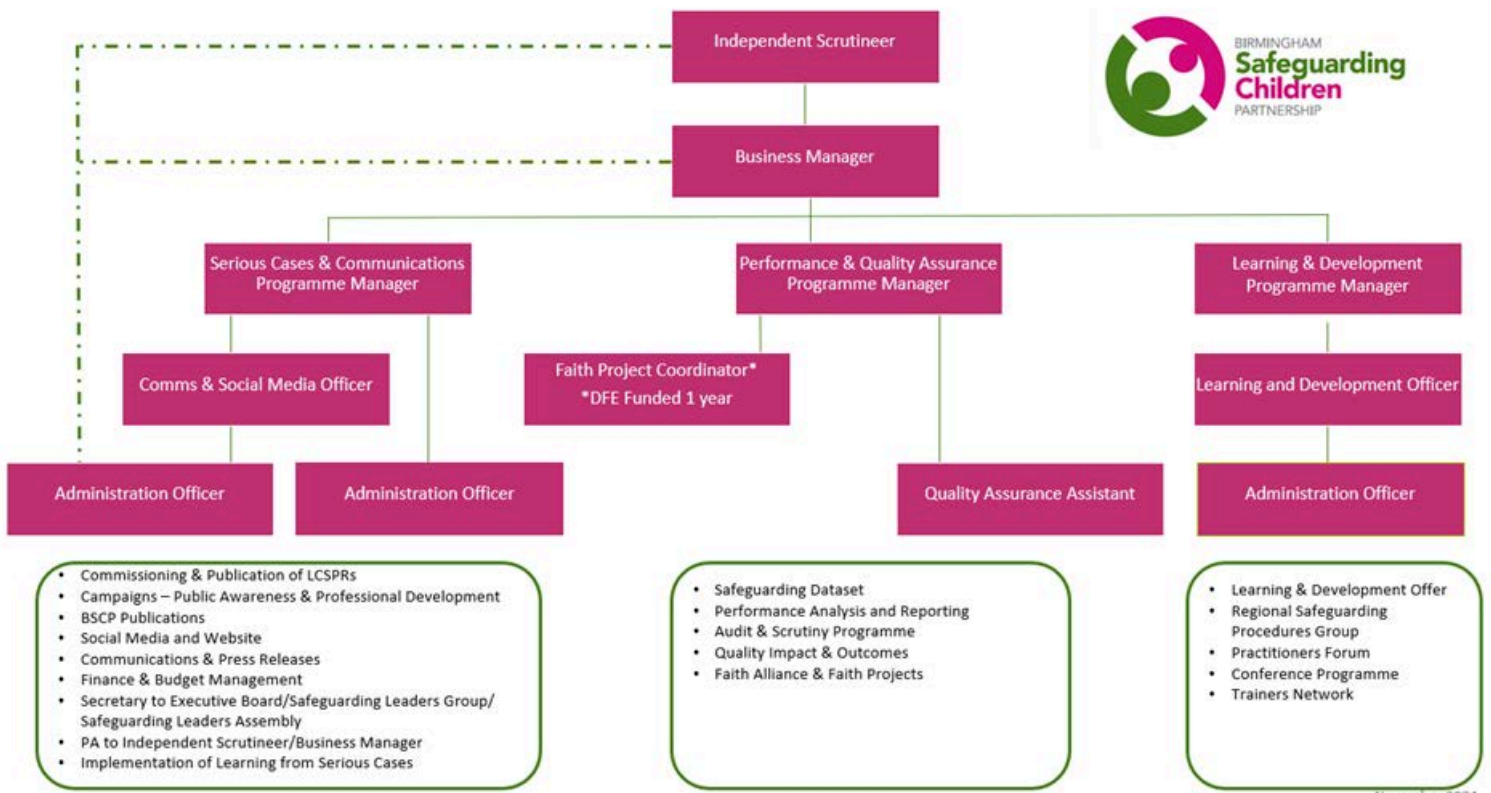
There have been improvements in the use of data to inform practice within specific areas of multi-agency working, for example, the CASS/MASH ('front-door'), children who are missing or at risk of child exploitation, and children who are potentially 'out of sight' to universal services as a result of missing in education or being electively home educated. Further work is taking place in respect of an over-arching multi-agency dashboard to support Safeguarding Partners in their understanding of the effectiveness of multi-agency working.

Information-sharing is a common theme arising from learning reviews and quality assurance processes. BSCP has revised its threshold guidance, '[Right Help, Right Time](#)' to provide additional clarity to frontline practitioners and managers in respect of consent and information-sharing when there are concerns about the safety and welfare of a child.



Part 6 - Funding and Business Support

The statutory partners have an equal and joint responsibility to ensure there are sufficient and effective resources to support the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The work of the BSCP is supported by a dedicated Business Support Unit, which is hosted by Birmingham Children’s Trust.



November 2024

The Lead Safeguarding Partners are committed to equitable and proportionate funding of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements to enable targeting of resources on delivery of the safeguarding priorities set out in the ‘[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)’. The BSCP had an operating budget of £918, 687 for 2023/24, including a carry-forward of £197, 544 from 2022/23.

Figure 7 provides a breakdown of agencies contributions during 2023/24.

Figure 7: Financial Contributions 2023/24

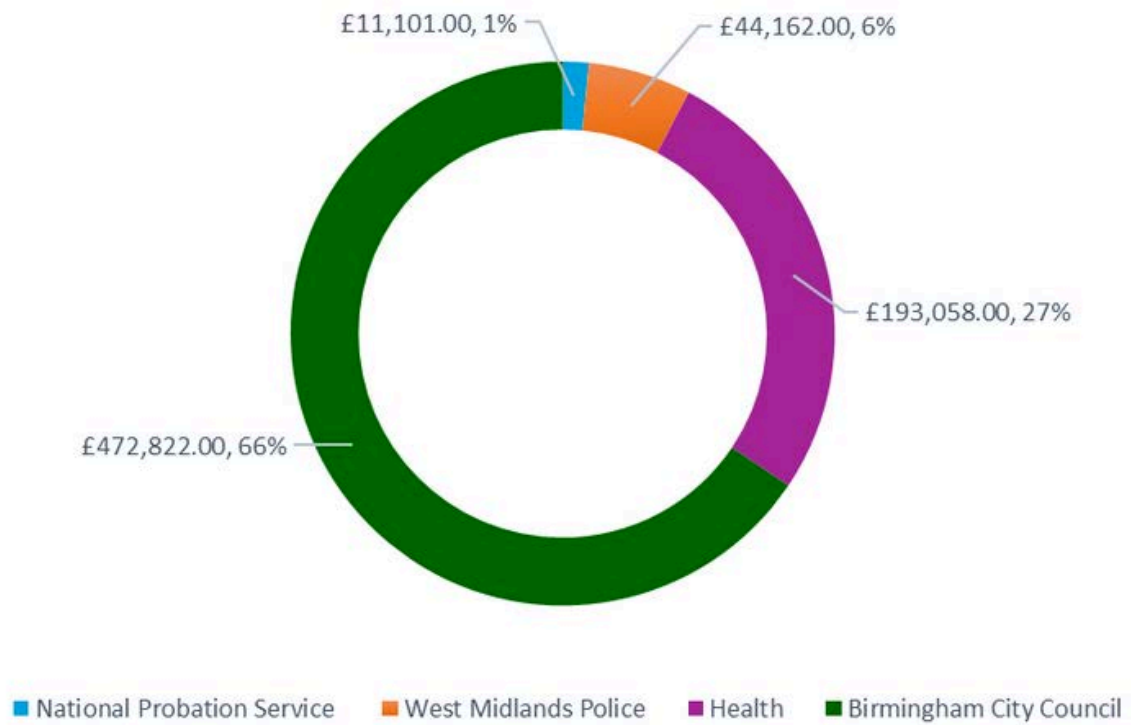
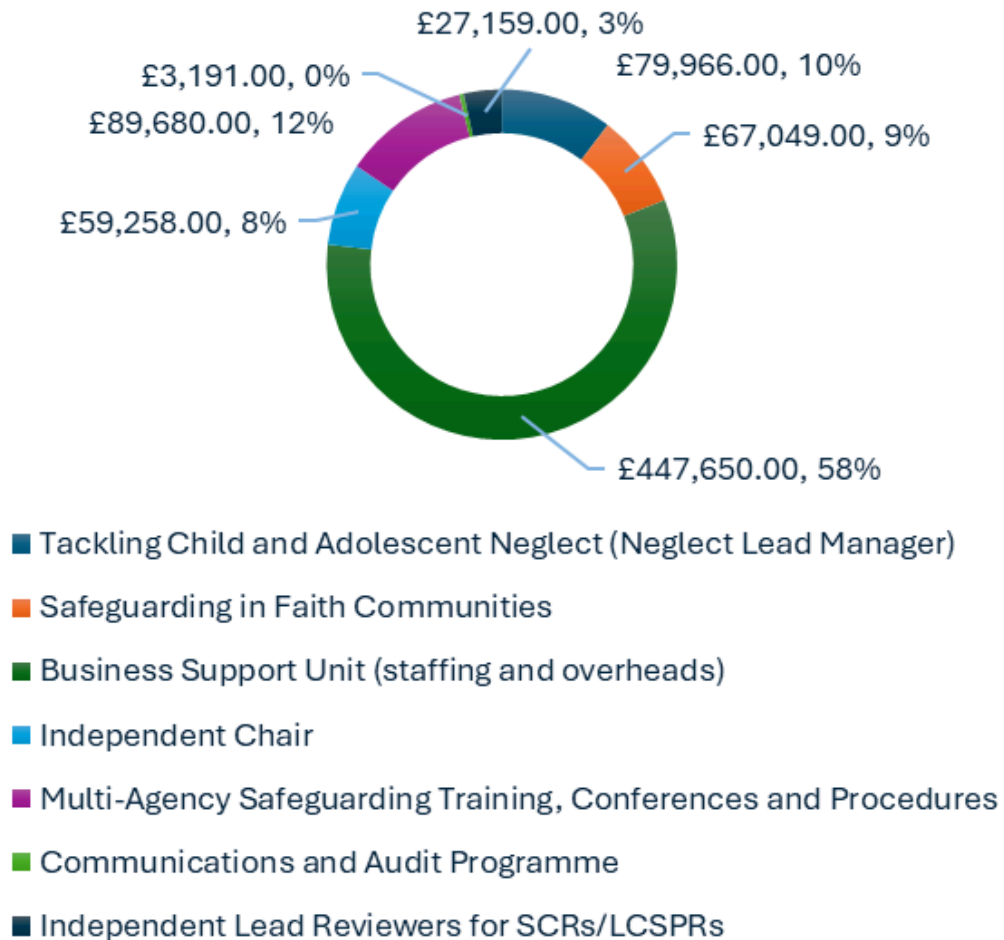


Figure 8 provides a breakdown of expenditure during 2023/24, which concentrated on seven core business areas.

Figure 8: Expenditure 2023/24



Part 7 - Conclusions and Looking Forward

During the last 12 months, Safeguarding Partners have strived to continuously improve the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, whilst focusing and coordinating partnership intervention on implementation of the key actions set out in year one of the two-year '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)'. BSCP has made significant progress, completing 73% of specified actions. Safeguarding Partners have sought independent verification of progress and an assessment of the effectiveness of the arrangements. In Penny Thompson CBE's final '[Independent Chair's Accountability Report](#)', published in April 2024, she concluded that there is continued improvement in partnership practice, whilst recognising the challenge and implications of sustaining service improvements during a period of austerity.

In December 2023, the Department for Education published new national guidance '[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)'. Safeguarding Partners have acted quickly to embed the new governance, leadership and accountability arrangements, which needed to be in place by the 31st of December 2024. In March 2024, Safeguarding Partners convened a strategic development session to discuss the timetable and milestones for the smooth transition to the new arrangements. Safeguarding Partners agreed the following key milestones:

- Penny Thompson CBE's role as Independent Chair to end on the 30th of September 2024.
- The new co-chairing arrangements to commence on the 1st of October 2024.
- A programme for interim independent scrutiny support to commence in December 2024.
- BSCP to publish future annual reports by the 30th of September each year.
- BSCP to publish revised governance arrangements by 31st December 2024.
- The appointment of an Independent Scrutineer to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements by January 2025.
- Lead Safeguarding Partners to agree equitable funding of the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- To collaborate in the regional development and piloting of a Regional Lead Safeguarding Partners Group from spring 2025.
- To undertake a formal 12-month review of the new arrangements in October 2025.

Looking ahead - Safeguarding Priorities 2024-25

Looking ahead at year two of the '[Business Improvement Plan 2023-25](#)', BSCP will continue to concentrate on our four safeguarding priorities and completing the remaining outstanding actions.

The key priorities for the second year of the [‘Business Improvement Plan 2023-25’](#) are:

Priority 1: Ensuring effective implementation of [‘Working Together to Build Strong Family Foundations’](#). ([Childhood Neglect Strategy 2022-2026](#)).

Priority 2: Assuring a coordinated and coherent inter-agency response to children impacted by domestic abuse and violence in families.

Priority 3: Developing a joint approach to understanding and responding to children who are, and who become, invisible to services.

Priority 4: Enhancing anti-discriminatory practice, by improving partnership focus on the work we do, in the context of equity, equality, diversity and inclusion.

Safeguarding Partners have also identified areas for further improvement in our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements during the next year. The first is to develop the Partnership’s capacity and ability to utilise analytical data, intelligence and information to drive improvements and enhance our evaluation of the impact of partnership intervention.

We also want to enhance how we capture and harness the voice and lived experience of children and young people across the city, aimed at the co-design of services for children. We will be doing this in keeping with Article 12 of the [‘UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child’](#), by involving children in decisions that affect them, adopting an approach of ‘nothing about us without us!’. We have started to commission some independent support to help develop our arrangements in this important area.

There has been a delay in finalising the annual report for 2023/24, Safeguarding Partners are reviewing our approach to ensure that future reports are published by September each year, in accordance with national guidance.

The Partnership will also ensure that the multi-agency training offer for 2024/25 incorporates specific training around the impact of cultural awareness on enhancing safeguarding practice.

BSCP held a development session in January 2025 to further review progress in relation to its current priorities and consider the degree to which these remain ongoing priorities for the coming 12 months and beyond. The key priorities for BSCP for 2025/2026 will be formally agreed by the Designated Safeguarding Leaders by the end of February 2025 and included within a new Business Improvement Plan.

The Independent Chair and Safeguarding Partners want to express their gratitude to the whole of the children’s workforce for their outstanding contribution and continued commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people in Birmingham.

Remember - Safeguarding is **Everyone's** Responsibility!

Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership has published '[Right Help, Right Time](#)' Threshold Guidance to ensure that everyone understands and is able to act appropriately where there are safeguarding concerns.



If you are worried about a child may be being abused or neglected, then please act. Please contact the Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) on 0121 303 1888 (Option 2, Option 2) CASS operates between 8.45am and 5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 4.15pm on Friday. Outside these hours, please call the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0121 675 4806.

In an emergency where a child's safety is at immediate risk of significant harm, contact the Police on 999.

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This report can be downloaded from the BSCP website:
www.lscpbirmingham.org.uk

You can contact us at BSCP.contactus@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk
or call 0121 464 2612

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of key activity together with an overview of progress on each of the four safeguarding priorities

Appendix 2: Multi-Agency Training Offer for 2023/24

Glossary

BASB	Birmingham Adult Safeguarding Board
BCC	Birmingham City Council
BCSP	Birmingham Community Safety Partnership
BCT	Birmingham Children's Trust
BSCP	Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership
BSOL ICB	Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care Board
CASS	Children's Advice and Support Service
CIC	Children in Care
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
EHA	Early Help Assessment
JTAI	Joint Targeted Area Inspections
L&D	Learning and Development
LCSPR	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review
MASA	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
QIO	Quality Impact and Outcomes
RHRT	Right Help, Right Time
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SHF	Strategic Health Forum
WMP	West Midlands Police



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