

# Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board

## Annual Report 2015-2016

Report of Paula Mead, Independent Chair

Report originator Robin Harper-Coulson, NSCB Business Manager



## 1.0 Introduction / Forward to the annual report

I am pleased to present my second annual report as chair of the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB). Our work as a partnership has taken place during a period of continuing intensive change, in which safe practice has to be set in the context of achieving significant efficiencies. Despite this, the NSCB and its members have continued to work well together, remaining focused on our priority of protecting children and young people in the county.

During the year we received the review of the NSCB undertaken by Ofsted who viewed the LSCB as “Good” which reflected our own self-assessment (Appendix 1)

The review report (Appendix 2) commented that

*“Governance is a strength and partnerships across adults and children’s service are well established. Partners challenge each other constructively and hold each other to account. The Board has played a key role in driving and monitoring strategic developments, such as sexual exploitation, radicalisation, early help and neglect. Sub-committees, such as the sexual exploitation sub-committee, the prevent strategy group and child death overview panel (CDOP) have joint accountabilities. This has further promoted a joined up approach with partners and neighbouring local authorities”*

The governance of the Board can only be achieved by all partners engaging actively with the Board and its sub-committees, working together to deliver on the priorities we had set in the previous year.

We hope that this report demonstrates where this has been achieved, and where we still may need to focus in order to meet those priorities.

The year on year increases in the number of children and young people being referred for support and/protection in Northumberland are a challenge, but they also evidence positive progress in partnership safeguarding practice. The increase in the number of notifications reflects on-going work to raise awareness of children’s safeguarding, and the development of early help strategies to improve the prospect of children enjoying better lives.

We hope this report demonstrates that staff across all board partner agencies continues to work in a proportionate, safe and effective manner; taking abuse and neglect seriously whilst also seeking to listen to those affected, and learning from cases that go well, and those where things have not gone so well.

Our priorities for 2015/16 will focus on strengthening the work of the past year, maintaining high quality responses to safeguarding situations and ensuring that partners continue to work together during a process of change and challenge for LSCBs in the light of the Wood report and the Children and Social Work Bill.

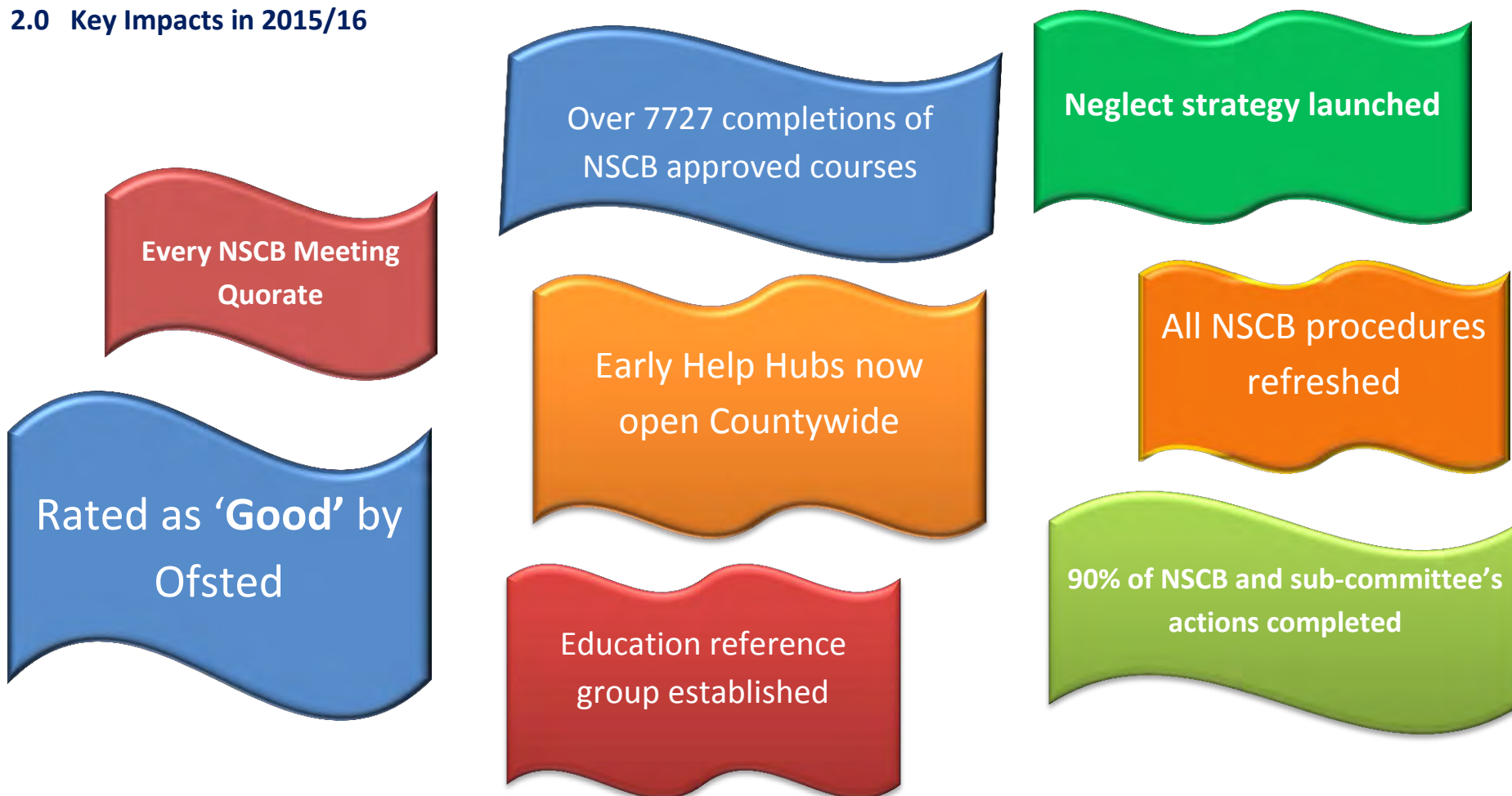


Paula Mead  
Independent Chair Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board

## Executive Summary

A full executive summary of this report identifying key findings, analysis and challenges for 2015/16 is available on the NSCB website.

### 2.0 Key Impacts in 2015/16





## Contents of the report

(3.0) The NSCB, its statutory responsibilities and the purpose of the annual report

(4.0) NSCB vision, values and principles

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(7.0) Safeguarding arrangements for children and young people  
in Northumberland

(8.0) Links to other Strategic Bodies

(9.0) Assessment of the extent to which NSCB functions are being  
effectively discharged

(10.0) Challenges for 2016/17

(11.0) Conclusions

**Appendices** – (these are provided in the form of web links to online documents)

Please note that every effort has been made to reduce the use of acronyms in this,  
the full report. However, this has not been possible for all of the appendices.

(Appendix 3 provides a glossary for use with all the other appendices)

### **3.0 The NSCB, its statutory responsibilities and the purpose of the annual report**

Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) is a statutory body established under the Children Act 2004. It is independently chaired (as required by statute) and consists of senior representatives of all the principle stakeholders working together to safeguard children and young people in the county. The Board's membership for 2015/16 is set out in (Appendix 4).

Its statutory objectives are to:

- Co-ordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people
- To ensure the effectiveness of that work.

The full Board currently meets bi-monthly and a business group meets monthly in order to maintain the momentum that completion of the Board's workload requires. It has a collective and corporate responsibility for fulfilling its statutory functions and for holding the system to account whilst 'holding the ring' on how the system works together. The Board has a number of sub-committees and reference groups, each with its own work plan, focused on key elements of the Board's work. The board manager is supported by a Business Unit which supports the varied elements of the Board's work. (See 3.1 below)

Guidance underpinning the safeguarding of children and young people is provided by the Department for Education

through iterations of 'Working Together', a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

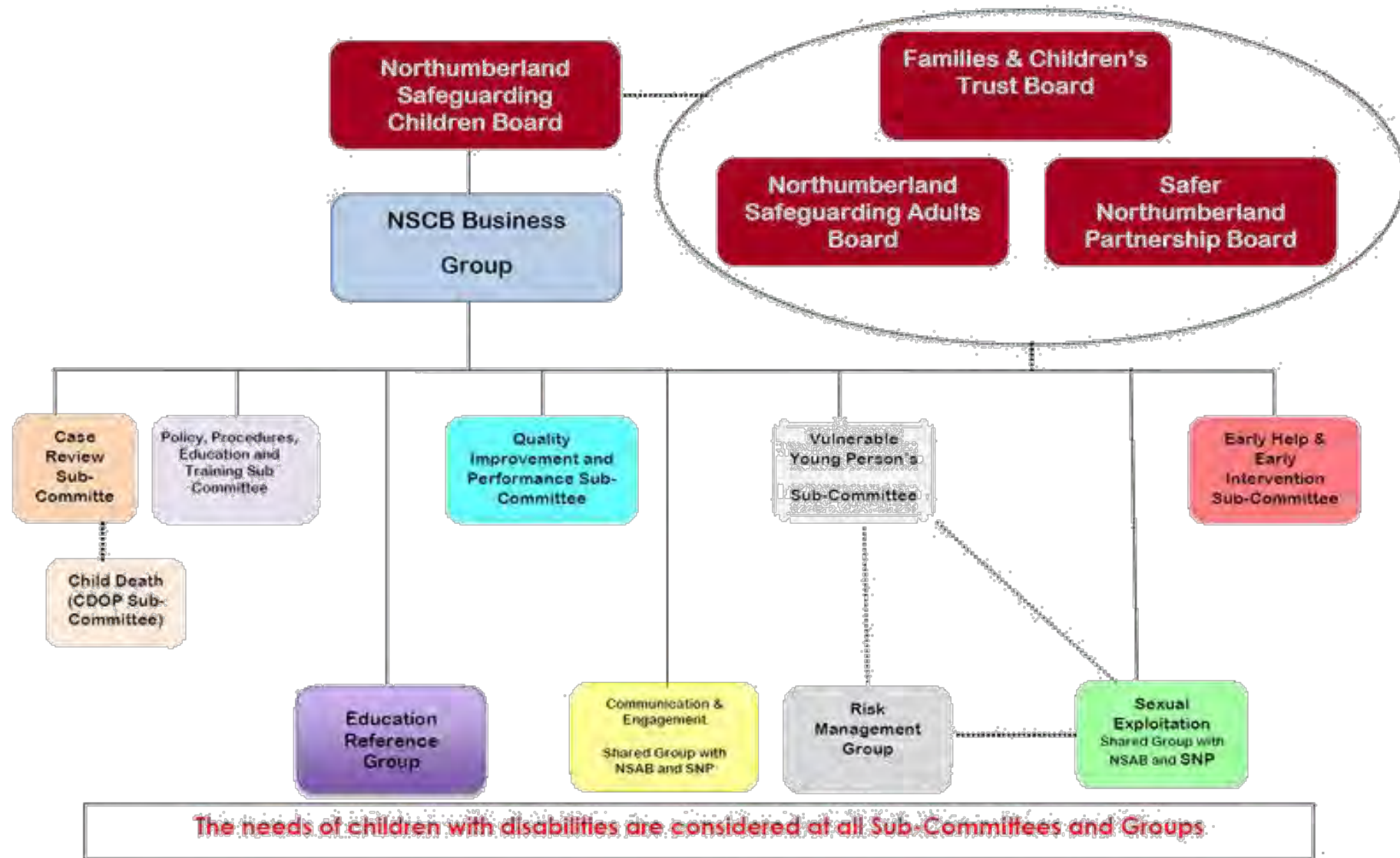
The guidance states that the annual report 'should provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services. It should identify areas of weakness, the causes of those weaknesses and the action being taken to address them as well as other proposals for action'.

The report should:

- Recognise achievements and progress made as well as identifying challenges
- Demonstrate the extent to which the functions of the NSCB are being effectively discharged
- Include an account of progress made implementing actions from Serious Case Reviews (SCR)

The NSCB works closely with the Families and Children's Trust (FACT) which is specifically accountable in Northumberland for overseeing the development and delivery of the Children & Young People's Strategic Statement. This report identifies challenges for the NSCB, the FACT and other key strategic bodies. The FACT Board considers the report in preparing and refreshing the Children & Young People's strategic statement. The Health and Well-being Board (HWB) is required to consider the report in completing the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The NSCB holds both those bodies accountable for their delivery of good safeguarding practice.

### 3.1 The NSCB structure



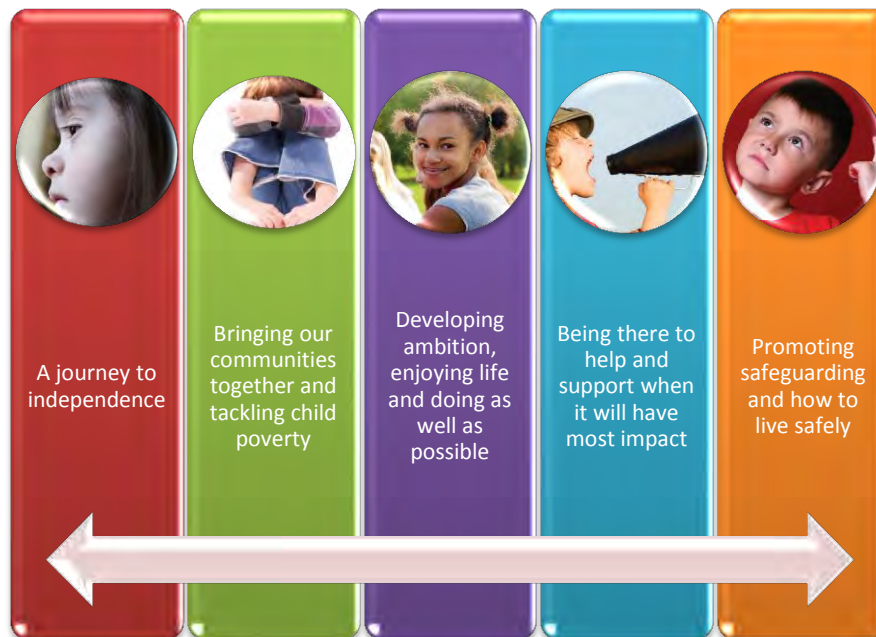
## 4.0 NSCB vision, values and principles

### Our Vision

Is for Northumberland based services to work together with children, young people, families and friends in order to secure happy and healthy lives for all.

### 4.1 Our values

We will promote these values in order to influence our behaviours jointly with the FACT Board



### 4.2 Our principles

The Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board and all managers, employees, professionals, volunteers, carers, independent contractors and service providers must ensure that their practice reflects an approach which is guided by the following principles:

#### Child-centred

The child should be seen (alone when appropriate) by the lead social worker in addition to all other professionals who have a responsibility for the child's welfare. His or her welfare should be kept sharply in focus in all work with the child and family. The significance of seeing and observing the child cannot be overstated. The child should be spoken and listened to, and their wishes and feelings ascertained, taken into account (having regard to their age and understanding) and recorded when making decisions about the provision of services.

#### Rooted in child development

Those working with children should have a detailed understanding of child development and how the quality of the care they are receiving can have an impact on their health and development. They should recognise that as children grow, they continue to develop their skills and abilities.

### **Focused on outcomes for children**

When working directly with a child, any plan developed for the child and their family or care giver should be based on an assessment of the child's developmental needs and the parents/caregivers' capacity to respond to these needs within their family and environmental context. This plan should set out the planned outcomes for each child, progress against these should be regularly reviewed and the actual outcomes should be recorded.

### **Holistic in approach**

Having a holistic approach means having an understanding of a child within the context of the child's family (parents or care givers and the wider family) and of the educational setting, community and culture in which he or she is growing up. The interaction between the developmental needs of children, the capacities of parents or care givers to respond appropriately to those needs and the impact of wider family and environmental factors on children and on parenting capacity requires careful exploration during an assessment.

### **Ensuring equality of opportunity**

Equality of opportunity means that all children have the opportunity to achieve the best possible developmental outcomes, regardless of their gender, ability, race, ethnicity, circumstances or age. Some vulnerable children may have been particularly disadvantaged in their access to important opportunities and their health and educational needs will require particular attention in order to optimise their current welfare as well as their long-term outcomes into adulthood.



### **Involving children and families**

In the process of finding out what is happening to a child it is important to listen to the child, develop a therapeutic relationship with the child and through this gain an understanding of his or her wishes and feelings. The importance of developing a co-operative working relationship is emphasised, so that parents or care givers feel respected and informed, they believe agency staff are being open and honest with them, and in turn they are confident about providing vital information about their child, themselves and their circumstances. The consent of children, young people and their parents or care givers, where appropriate, should be obtained when sharing information unless to do so would place the child at risk of suffering significant harm.



### **Building on strengths as well as identifying difficulties**

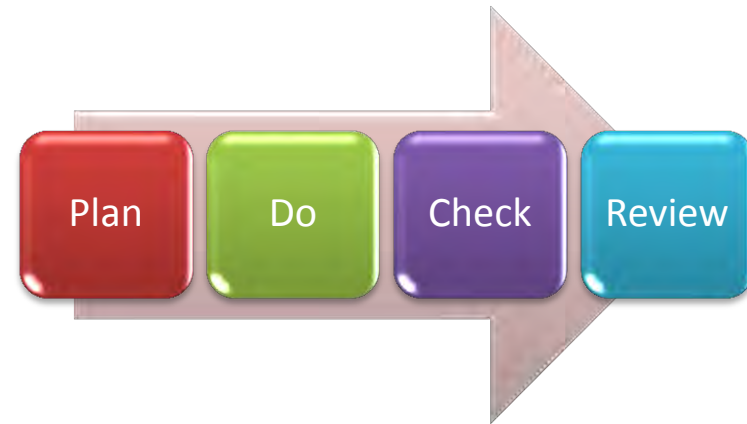
Identifying both strengths (including resilience and protective factors) and difficulties (including vulnerabilities and risk factors) within the child, his or her family and the context in which they are living is important, as is considering how these factors are having an impact on the child's health and development. Too often it has been found that a deficit model of working with families predominates in practice, and ignores crucial areas of success and effectiveness within the family on which to base interventions.

### **Integrated in approach**

From birth, there will be a variety of different agencies and services in the community involved with children and their development, particularly in relation to their health and education. Multi and inter-agency work to safeguard and promote children's welfare starts as soon as it has been identified that the child or the family members have additional needs requiring support/services beyond universal services, not just when there are questions about possible harm.

### **A continuing process not an event**

Understanding what is happening to a vulnerable child within the context of his or her family and the local community, and taking appropriate action are continuing and interactive processes and not single events. Assessment should continue throughout a period of intervention, and intervention may start at the beginning of an assessment.



### **Providing and reviewing services**

Action and services should be provided according to the identified needs of the child and family in parallel with assessment where necessary. It is not necessary to await completion of the assessment process. Immediate and practical needs should be addressed alongside more complex and longer term ones. The impact of service provision on a child's developmental progress should be reviewed at regular intervals.

### **Informed by evidence**

Effective practice with children and families requires sound professional judgements which are underpinned by a rigorous evidence base, and draw on the practitioner's knowledge and experience. Decisions based on these judgements should be kept under review, and take full account of any new information obtained during the course of work with the child and family.

#### 4.4 Improving outcomes

All our work is underpinned by an agreed set of approaches, shared with the FACT Board, so that we all will work together to support the five improvement areas set out in the Children and Young People's Strategic Statement 2015-2018:

- Improve communication with partners and reduce bureaucracy
- Increase impact using feedback from children, young people and families and then tell them what has improved as a result
- Use of best practice to drive the skills and values of the trust workforce to meet common goals
- Ensure the multi-agency commissioning framework improves outcomes, develops more effective ways to work together and reduces inequalities
- Engagement with local organisations in the voluntary and community sector to improve existing services

#### 4.5 Business plan and strategic priorities

The vision of the NSCB is translated into action through a three-year Strategic Plan. However due to significant changes within the NSCB, it was agreed in April 2015 that an annual strategic plan would be set for 2015-2016 to ensure the NSCB had a robust and highly structured plan for the year.

The board's priorities reflected local issues, learning from case reviews and national initiatives. The strategic priorities were agreed at NSCB development sessions in 2015 allowing shared ownership of priorities agreed by all partner agencies. In line with good practice the board concentrated on five clearly articulated priorities which were reviewed and monitored by the business group.

The business plan (2015-16) was based on the NSCB priorities and provides continuity with the previous plan (2012-15):

- |   |
|---|
| • Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice |
| • Further promoting preventative and early help approaches                                  |
| • Improving partnership working with education services on the safeguarding agenda          |
| • Improving support to especially vulnerable children and high risk adolescents             |
| • Reviewing our response to sexual exploitation   |

#### Strategic Priority 1 – Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice

In ensuring that children and young people are protected and kept safe, we needed to be able to understand how they see and experience the things that happen to them and to consider the world from their perspective.

Therefore, we wanted to focus on the following;

- 1. By the end of 2016 we intended to have developed mechanisms for better capturing the voice of the child in the work of the Board.**
- 2. We planned to champion the child's journey through the NSCB Business Manager and NSCB training programmes.**

### **Strategic Priority 2 – further promoting preventative and early help approaches**

The NSCB remains committed to providing help and support to as many families as possible at the level of need. Too many families are having to be referred through children's social care in order to access early help services.

- 1. Through 2015-16 the NSCB planned to support the roll out of further early help hubs and monitor their impact on take up and outcomes**
- 2. Along with children's services the NSCB will contribute to a review of referral and access arrangements**

### **Strategic Priority 3 – Improving partnership working with education services on the safeguarding agenda**

Schools and other educational establishments have individual

responsibilities to keep children safe but they are also key partners in raising awareness, building resilience with students and their families and providing other preventative interventions.

In 2015/16 we wanted to,

- 1. Establish an Education Reference Group for the Board**
- 2. Support roll out of the Northumberland Stonewall group**
- 3. Review the Board audit process with Northumberland schools**

### **Strategic Priority 4 – Improving support to especially vulnerable children and high risk adolescents**

The NSCB in past plans has always sought to focus its attention on groups of children who are identified as being more vulnerable than others.

- 1. We intended to maximise the benefits of and monitor the impact of the Troubled Families programme on the outcomes for children**
- 2. The NSCB will continue to use and develop the Adolescent Risk Management model**
- 3. The NSCB planned to scrutinise the mental health Children and Young People's Service (CYPS previously CAMHS) Strategy and influence its delivery.**

## **Strategic Priority 5 – reviewing our response to sexual exploitation**

In the past two years the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation (CSE) has become much better understood.

A Police led sexual exploitation investigation has established that young people in the North East are as at risk from CSE as in other more high-profile parts of the country but we wanted to:

- 1. Continue to work in partnership with police and key agencies in progressing Operation Sanctuary**
- 2. Review and improve the Northumberland CSE Strategy particularly with Northumberland Safeguarding Adults Board and Northumberland Community Safety Partnership**
- 3. Continue implementation of the CSE Action Plan to progress our response to and prevention of CSE.**

### **4.6 Emerging issues**

#### **Neglect**

During the year the NSCB identified that the needs of disabled children should be met within each of the meetings with the NSCB structure as they were not explicitly named within the

priorities but remained a priority group with distinct needs due to their vulnerability. It was also clear in the performance data that Northumberland had significantly changed with an increase of the numbers of child protection plans that related to neglect. The NSCB working with Action for Children introduced an assessment tool (the Neglect Toolkit) and established a pilot group in the North of the County to see if the use of the tool made a difference to the quality of assessment and outcomes for children, young people and families. The pilot is due to feedback in October 2016. Alongside this the NSCB with partners developed a new neglect strategy that links directly to the early help strategy. This was introduced at a number of road shows across the county in early 2016. The strategy focuses on early intervention in cases with indicators of neglect which may support families and prevent later referral to statutory services.

### **4.7 Progress**

The business plan set out objectives and tasks within the five strategic priorities, identifying which sub-committees will take the lead and timescales for completion. The business plan is reviewed regularly through the sub-committees, business group and NSCB to ensure that emerging issues and themes can be included and to monitor the progress being made. See Appendix 4 for the 2015/16 strategic action plan



## 5.0 The National Safeguarding Context

### 5.1 Changes to national guidance.

#### [Working Together to safeguard children](#)

guidance was issued in March 2015 along with the following suite of documents:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [What to do if you are worried \(that a child may be abused\)](#) – revised guidance for professionals
- [Information Sharing Guidance](#)
- [Working Together guides for children and young people.](#)

Work has been completed in 2015 to implement these changes.

### 5.2 Concerns about responses to child sexual exploitation (CSE).

Over the last 6 years CSE has gradually become increasingly recognized and identified by agencies as a significant form of abuse and is proving a challenge to organisations across the country. A small number of high profile cases began to draw national attention and in 2009 statutory guidance was issued requiring NSCBs to respond strategically.

Responding to these concerns, Working Together (2015) includes a requirement of NSCBs to undertake regular assessments of partners' responses to CSE and to include this in the annual report.

### 5.3 Female genital mutilation and breast ironing

As well as the increasing focus on CSE, a growing awareness of the need to protect girls from female genital mutilation (FGM) led to clear guidance in the form of [HM Government multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation](#) in April 2016.

### 5.4 Emerging issues

Other emerging issues include concerns about trafficking of children. The Home Office introduced [Victims of modern slavery – frontline staff guidance in March 2016](#).

In 2016 HM Government introduced the [Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy 2016 – 2020](#). The strategies aim is to stop people offending, break the cycle of abuse, provide ways out of difficult circumstances, and ensure women and girls can live their lives free of violence.

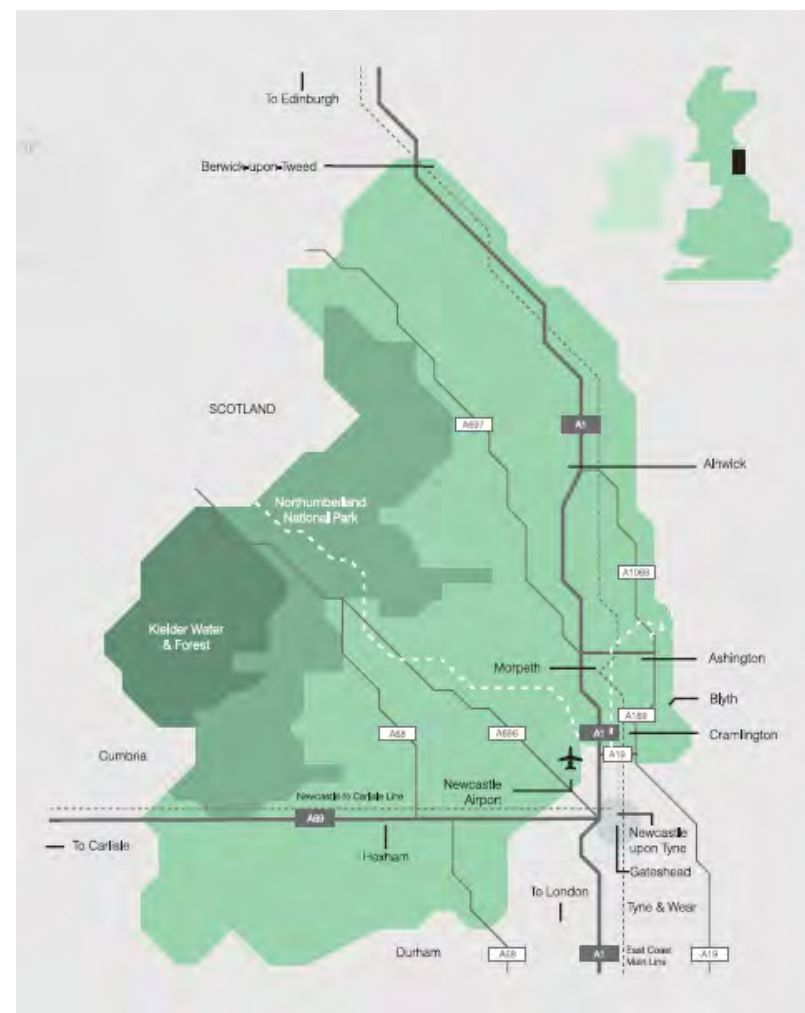
## 6.0 The local safeguarding context

### 6.1 The County of Northumberland

Northumberland is geographically the sixth largest county (5013 km<sup>2</sup>) in England but with a population of approximately 313,000 people is the least densely populated (63 per km<sup>2</sup> compared with 302/406 (NE/England). Children and young people aged 0 to 19 years constitute 21.5% of the total population and 4.7% of school age children are from a minority ethnic group.

The largest towns are Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Hexham, Morpeth and Alnwick which are set within extensive rural areas and uplands; areas of the county are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in England with 18.6% children aged below 16 years defined as living in poverty. Although this level is similar to the national average it masks the high level of poverty and deprivation in some defined areas of the county where almost two out of every three children live in households that are dependent on worklessness benefits.

Child poverty is calculated using a number of different factors. In Northumberland, the proportion of children in low income families in 2012 was 16.7%, less than the figures of the North East (22.6%) and England (18.6%). The rate of take-up of formal childcare by low income working families in 2011/12 was 14%, less than the rate for the North East and England (15%) over the same period.



The proportion of primary school pupils in receipt of free school meals in 2014 was 14.1%, less than the North east figure (21.2%) and England (17%).

The overall absence rate for pupils in 2013/14 was 4.4%. The prevalence of obese children in reception year for 2013/14 was 23.8% and 32.7% for children in year six.

At the last census in 2011 it was estimated that 99% of the total population were of white British origin. However, there has been subsequent inward migration from European Union accession countries to areas such as Berwick and Alnwick and children and young people from black and minority ethnic groups now constitute approximately 3.7% of the entire pupil population. There are currently 62 heritage languages spoken by children in all schools. Gypsy, Roma, pupils constitute 0.12% of the total pupil population. (Source: School Census Jan 2015). The health and wellbeing of children in Northumberland is mixed compared with the England average. Infant and child mortality rates are similar to the England average.

## **6.2 Issues and developments for partner agencies**

The Public Sector continues to face the challenges of financial restriction and increasing demand for services that were identified and considered in the 2014-2015 Annual Report.

In their annual safeguarding reports to the NSCB partner agencies have identified the key challenges that they are facing and the steps that they are taking to respond to them.

Northumberland County Council took on responsibility for Public Health functions which transferred from the previous Northumberland Primary Care Trust. Since then the Council has actively embraced its Public Health leadership role to protect and improve health and reduce health inequalities. The Public Health Team promotes PHSE including health and well-being and child sexual exploitation training. It has established an effective Health and Well-being Board which oversees a programme of strategy and commissioning,

The voluntary, community and faith organisations in the county contribute actively to the work of the NSCB through membership at the NSCB. VoiCeS also chair the voluntary sector assembly in Northumberland and actively represent the voluntary sector in the working of the NSCB, sitting on many sub-committees.

Many voluntary sector groups access the NSCB website and report finding it useful to check on safeguarding requirements for the sector and emerging issues.

### **6.3 Responding to child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and female genital mutilation**

Northumbria Police comment that nationally there has been a continual increase in the reporting of sexual offences (including historic reports) and domestic abuse. This increased demand is creating a significant resourcing challenge across the partnerships.

Northumberland County Council Housing Services have identified that the arrival of Syrian Refugee families in October 2016 will be a significant challenge. It will be essential that the children and young people arriving with their parents will be safeguarded both in the local community and in schools. A multi-agency group, chaired by Housing, is currently developing the service and will ensure that these issues are addressed.

In addition, the Home Office has recently asked that the Council consider accepting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. This is being considered by Children's Services before a response is issued and it will be key that appropriate supported housing is identified should the offer progress.

The Local Authority have a statutory requirement to implement the changes in the Children and Families Act to provide an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan where children and young people who require support from education, health and social care have a coordinated Education Health and Care (EHC) plan.

The Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust identified a challenge for them is to ensure that their Early Help offer fits into these new frameworks to ensure that we offer a seamless approach to children, young people and their families.

The Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) report that the biggest challenge the CRC will face in the forthcoming year will be the implementation of a new service delivery model which formed the basis of Sodexo's successful bid for a total of six CRCs across the country. The implementation of the new model is now well under way with the successful establishment of our HUB which now deals with all communications, intake of cases and enforcement of court orders.

The National Probation Service (NPS) have commented that delivering the NPS responsibilities for safeguarding children in accordance with national guidance but within the local context of LSCBs and in a way which can respond to the local initiatives or demands of individual Local Authorities remains a significant challenge based on the strategic footprint of the NPS.



Northumberland County Council Children's Services have identified that reducing social work caseloads to twenty open case remains a significant challenge. Work is ongoing to review all open cases, step down to early help where appropriate, and improve support to newly qualified workers. Noteworthy improvements have been achieved over the past 12 months from average caseloads reducing from over 30 to 24. Moving forward in view of Ofsted's comment the NSCB will be monitoring caseloads for each social work team rather than countywide averages as there could be variation. Also the number of looked after children has continued to increase and is now over 400. This poses challenges to the Family Placement Service and to the SW teams around capacity. Alongside many partner's budgetary pressures remain a significant challenge and Children's Services are reviewing their costs and looking for areas where efficiencies can be achieved.

## **7.0 Safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Northumberland**

This section addresses one of the key questions posed in the introduction to this report: 'How effectively are children and young people being safeguarded in Northumberland?' It provides an overall picture of the progress being made to improve services and outcomes for children and young people across the whole safeguarding system (from universal services through early help to statutory intervention).

It also identifies where more needs to be done.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Northumberland evidence is drawn from a wide range of sources and is arranged in the following format:

- Partner engagement with and listening to children and young people
- Monitoring and reviewing
- Inspections and reviews
- The incidence of the deaths of children and young people
- Lessons from serious case reviews and multi-agency deep dive reviews
- Allegations against professionals
- Private fostering provision
- Safeguarding in secure settings
- Performance management and quality assurance of safeguarding services
- Partner compliance with required safeguarding arrangements
- The child's journey through the safeguarding system and outcomes for priority vulnerable groups.
- Quality assurance and audit
- External input to the development of services
- Summary and whole system analysis
- The engagement and involvement of children and young people

### 7.1.1 The views of and experience of children and young people

#### Partner engagement with and listening to Children and Young People

Engaging with children and young people was a strategic priority to improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice. It is clear that to ensure that children and young people are protected and kept safe; we need to be able to understand how they see and experience the things that happen to them and to consider the world from their perspective.

To achieve this, we focused on the voice of the child through the section 11 audit (appendix 5) and the challenge event which identified good practice and compliance with the Standard 4 – Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families.

We have also developed our methodology for listening to children and young people to ensure that the methods we use are moving up the ladder of participation developed by Hart (1997).<sup>1</sup> We have supported the development of the Northumberland children's and young people strategic participation group. This group will provide a strategic lead, direction and focus for children and young people's participation across Northumberland, improving practice and communication. This group has links to children and young people's groups across all partner organisations.

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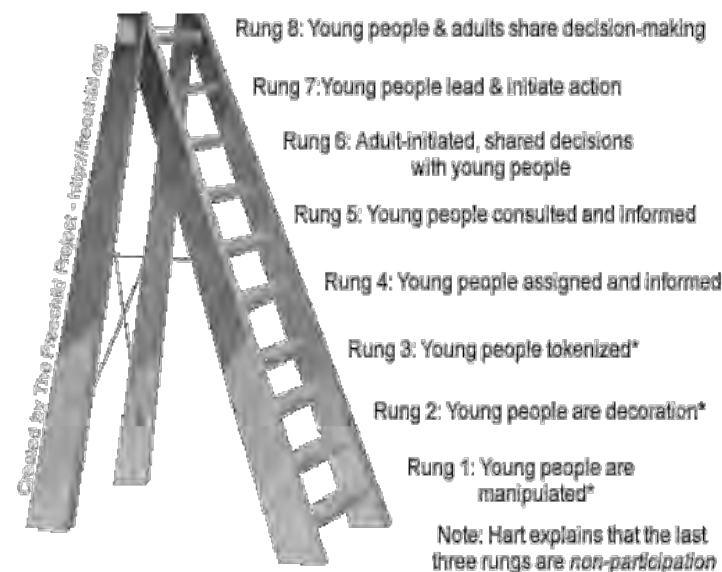
<sup>1</sup> Roger A. Hart (Children's Participation) 1997 Routledge

This enable the NSCB to engage with groups of young people with universal or specialist services of differing ethnicities, needs and experiences.

This relationship has already borne fruit with the [Pass it on campaign](#) initiated by young people and presented to the NSCB in 2016.

### 7.2 Monitoring and Reviewing

Many key processes and specific services are subject to independent monitoring and reviewing which provides a useful external measure of how well safeguarding is being carried out in Northumberland. This section considers the evidence provided from a number of sources.



### 7.2.1 External inspection and reviews

#### Ofsted Inspection of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

In January 2016 Ofsted undertook the unannounced Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board alongside the Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. Ofsted judgements were 'Good' for the Review of the LSCB.

The NSCB has developed an improvement plan based on the findings of the review and areas for improvement

1. Ensure that the Annual Report 2015–16 includes an analysis of the quality of services responsible for safeguarding children.
2. Ensure that performance information gathered through audit and data provides both qualitative and quantitative information about the impact of the neglect and early help strategies, including the consistent application of thresholds.
3. Ensure that the governance framework incorporates a robust audit methodology to strengthen the accuracy of findings.

The action plan which highlights progress against these improvement areas is available at Appendix 6



#### Northumberland County Council Children's Services

In the Ofsted inspection, Children who need help and protection, experiences and progress of care leavers and Leadership, management and governance were graded as 'Requires improvement' with adoption performance graded as 'Good'. The inspection report is available at appendix 5.

The report highlighted key strengths in adoption services, risk management framework, quality of foster carers, sexual exploitation/ missing children processes, educational support to looked after children by the Virtual Head teacher, and in intensive family support.

Ofsted commented that,

*The local authority's corporate vision and service priorities are appropriately ambitious and well aligned with those of other strategic bodies. This has not yet resulted in consistently good services for children. There is a gap between high-level strategy and ambition, which are good, and practice on the ground, which remains too variable. The pace of change has been slow although there are examples of more recent and rapid progress".*

Ofsted identified 15 recommendations and robust action plans have been developed to address these and regular updates on implementation will be provided to the Quality Improvement and Performance sub-committee and the NSCB during the year.

Children's Services has a Transformation programme with four work streams,

- Improving permanence planning and family placement
- Developing a single point of access (spa) for all new referrals from early help to safeguarding,
- Developing early help
- Review of systems and processes.

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

A Care Quality Commission inspection of Northumbria Healthcare Trust was conducted in October 2015. Health Visiting, Public Health School Nursing, Family Nurse Partnership and Safeguarding services were all included in the inspection and were assessed under the categories of: -

Overall, community health services for children, young people and families were rated as "Outstanding" across every category.





The inspection report highlighted the following: -

*“ staff protected children and young people from avoidable harm and abuse. Staff regularly received safeguarding supervision from managers and the trust safeguarding children team, who also kept services updated on outcomes and learning from serious case reviews. Managers and staff managed caseloads well, and there were effective handovers between health visitors and school nurses to keep children safe at all times. ”*

In Northumberland, there were 73 whole time equivalent (WTE) health visitors. Caseload sizes and staff capacity were identified as being within acceptable limits.

In terms of safety, the report also highlighted: -

*“The trust had a safeguarding policy and procedures in place and every member of staff we spoke with told us they felt confident about keeping children safe. Staff knew who to contact for advice and told us they would speak to their line manager or the children’s safeguarding team. Staff were able to describe to us in detail actions they would take if they had any safeguarding concerns.*

*Staff told us they were trained to the relevant safeguarding level.*

*Health visitors, school nurses and looked after children nurses received one-to-one child protection supervision sessions from the safeguarding team at least every six months, complying with trust policy. Most staff told us these sessions often took place more frequently, around every three months.*

*Outcomes from each session were recorded on the trust’s electronic records system, so staff could easily access the advice and feedback for future reference. Compliance was measured using a performance dashboard and when we reviewed this data, we saw 100% of staff had received the required supervision by 30 June 2015*

*Staff also told us safeguarding was a standard agenda item at regular clinical supervision meetings with line managers. The safeguarding children named nurse and senior nurses had a high profile across the community children and young people’s services. All of the staff we spoke with knew their named nurse and told us they could seek advice and support whenever they felt it was necessary.*

*All of the staff we spoke with were aware of FGM and child sexual exploitation and told us a new training package was in development. Staff could explain what action they would take if they identified a child at risk. There was also a multi-agency pathway to support staff. Nursing leads from health visiting, school nursing, the family nurse partnership, sexual health services and the looked after children team were also part of a sexual exploitation task group.*

*The purpose of this group was to ensure staff across the trust were aware of child sexual exploitation, recognise children who may be at risk and know how to respond to concerns.*

*The named nurse attended monthly safeguarding meetings, run by the local authority, to discuss cases and issues involving missing, sexually exploited and trafficked children and young people including meeting their emotional needs. Staff protected children and young people from voidable harm and abuse. Managers and staff discussed incidents regularly at monthly meetings and took appropriate action to prevent them from happening again. Staff regularly received safeguarding supervision from managers and the trust safeguarding children team, who also kept services updated on outcomes and learning from serious case reviews.*

*Clinical leads and service managers audited records annually and outcomes shared with individuals and the wider team. Managers and staff managed caseloads well, and there were effective handovers between health visitors and school nurses to keep children safe at all times. On a day to-day basis, staff assessed, monitored and managed risks to children and young people and this included risks to children who were subject to a child protection plan or who had complex health needs.*

*Staff were very positive about working for the trust and leadership was excellent across all services. There was a clear management structure and managers were visible and involved in the day-to-day running of services. "*

### **Northumbria Police:**

Northumbria Police is one of the largest and top performing police services in the country, serving a population of 1.5 million people from a wide range of communities, covering an area of more than 2,000 square miles in North East England and is rated as "Good" by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

Northumbria Police has been subject to numerous inspections by HMIC including vulnerability and honour based violence (HBV). The force was deemed to be good in vulnerability and prepared in all aspects for honour based violence. Although still one of the top performing forces, the Chief Constable is committed to achieving outstanding in all areas of vulnerability.

Together with partners, Northumbria Police have also been inspected by Ofsted, HMIC, CQC and HMIP.

### **Summary of good news stories/campaigns/work**

- Training was provided at the end of 2014-15 reinforcing, RADA, DASH.
- Coercive control training 2015
- Safeguarding risk assessment training will be delivered this year to reinforce good practice
- Development of Multi agency tasking and coordination (MATAC) focussing on repeat domestic abuse offenders.

- Operation Encompass
- Victim first Northumbria

Northumbria Police were subjected and inspection following PEEL: Police effectiveness inspection in 2015 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary with the following observations,

*“Overall the force provides a good response to and safeguards missing children, and victims of domestic abuse, and is well-prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation.”*

*“The force has trained officers to investigate more complex and serious crime, such as child abuse, serious sexual assault and homicide. The force has increased the numbers of specialists for the investigation of complex sexual exploitation cases involving vulnerable children and adults. Most of the serious and complex crime cases that HMIC reviewed had evidence of thorough investigations with clear investigation plans, and strong and consistent supervisory oversight. In particular, we found evidence of strong efforts to keep vulnerable victims engaged and supported within the investigative process.”*

### **Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)**

The CCG continues to demonstrate a high level of commitment through partnership working with NSCB with on-going involvement at board and sub group level of the relevant designated professionals and Director of Nursing, Quality and Patient Safety.

The designated nurse is a member of all NSCB sub committees chairing the case review committee and newly formed sexual exploitation committee which is a partnership across three boards, NSCB, Northumberland Safeguarding Adult Board and Safer Northumberland. She is an active member of the national NHS England child sexual exploitation (CSE) sub group.

An Internal Audit has been carried out to review the CCG's organisational arrangements around quality improvement, this included elements of safeguarding. The CCG has received a significant level of assurance with no issues of note.

NHS England has conducted two benchmarking exercises regarding Looked after Children (LAC) and safeguarding vulnerable people as part of a northern regional pilot. No major concerns were highlighted. As a result, action plans have been developed and its delivery will be monitored through the CCG's internal governance systems.

The NHS England Accountability and Assurance Framework requires CCGs to have arrangements in place to secure the expertise of designated professionals. It was highlighted that LAC was an area for further development with regards the designated nurse role. To strengthen the current arrangements, the designated nurse for safeguarding's role has been expanded to incorporate LAC within her remit as a dual function. This arrangement is monitored through internal governance processes. The designated doctor for LAC is also more aligned to the CCG than previously with regular meetings with both the nurse and commissioning lead. The doctor attended the General Practitioner's (GP) safeguarding network and presented to the GPs regarding their role with LAC in primary care.

A GP safeguarding network was established and has been well received and well attended over the past 12 months. It is led by the designated doctor, designated nurse and named GP and is used as a method to provide peer review, professional development and as a conduit to share learning from cases including cases reviews and embed NSCB priorities. As well as health representatives, partner agencies have attended to provide updates, examples of this was of a senior manager (children's services) who provided an update on the Early Help Hubs and the designated nurse has also done a presentation regarding child sexual exploitation.

A system has been implemented to deliver consistent single agency training to all GP's and relevant primary care staff.

This includes all learning from case reviews and has been updated as required; it has differed from the previous process which was more ad hoc. The training is evaluating well with GP's feeling it is delivered at an appropriate level. The following are an example of some quotes from evaluation forms; "higher level of understanding", "Think Family", "Looking at the bigger picture".

It was identified through the 'Eve' SCR and data provided to NSCB that the figures for GP's attending child protection case conferences was low and few reports were submitted. The GP's often stated they did not receive invites in time for them to make arrangements to attend or produce a report. The designated nurse worked with children's social care to implement an electronic system for sending out invitations to GP's for these meetings. A report template devised by the named GP is always attached. This was communicated to GP practices extensively and continues to be raised through training and GP safeguarding network. Although GP's have found it difficult to attend child protection case conferences for a variety of reasons, often due to perceived short notice and the timing of meetings coinciding with surgeries, there has been a marked increase in reports being provided which has ensured better information sharing than previous years.



### **Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust**

A six months pilot was undertaken in 2015 of a Safeguarding and Public Protection (SAPP) duty system for staff across the organisation to receive safeguarding advice and support. This was subsequently audited, identifying that staff welcomed the advice and support given by the team with a named practitioner to assist with complex cases. This was acknowledged and the SAPP team triage system was developed. The triage system has been operational since December 2015; Trust staff have appreciated the support provided from the SAPP team. A subsequent audit of the triage system 2016 has provided assurance that standards of timeliness, level of support offered and actions required to safeguard are in place.

An audit was also completed of the safeguarding process following a service user's journey from the safeguarding concern raised, the actions taken and the outcome.

The audit demonstrated that concerns raised by clinicians to the SAPP team were appropriate. Robust information was sought to safeguard with appropriate referrals made to other agencies.

Timely referrals were completed, accepted and investigated or further referrals made by Children and Adult Social care services to ensure action was undertaken to safeguard vulnerable people.

All safeguarding training from June 2016 will be provided by the trust training academy in line with all other trust training. Within Corporate Transformation 2015/16, the SAPP team practitioners from May 2016 provide safeguarding and public protection now advice across the domains of, safeguarding adults, children, domestic abuse, public protection and prevent. This will increase the knowledge and skills of the SAPP team as well as ensuring trust staff have easy access to advice, supervision and support.

All safeguarding and public protection policies have been audited within the Trust internal audit programme with assurance given.

The Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust priority for 16/17 is to consolidate the SAPP practitioner's skills and knowledge to fulfil their new roles and responsibilities.



## **National Probation Service**

The National Probation Service, North East Division, has appointed a safeguarding lead at Assistant Chief Officer level who convenes a divisional group which includes representation from North of Tyne. The aim of this group is to identify current practices and ensure that there is consistency across the division in regard to NPS child safeguarding.

To this end the NPS have issued the following documents:

- Safeguarding Children Interim Guidance June 2015
- NPS Partnership Framework – Local Safeguarding Children Boards February 2016
- Safeguarding Children – Mandatory Requirements for NPS staff and Sentence Plan Objectives for Offenders

Safeguarding Children is an agenda item on monthly North of Tyne Management Meetings.

The Head of Cluster for North of Tyne is a member of Northumberland, Newcastle and North Tyneside LSCBs and senior managers contribute to the work of the NSCB by being active members of relevant sub committees.

Challenges for the National Probation Service includes continuing to deliver their responsibilities for safeguarding children in accordance with national guidance but within the

local context of LSCBs and in a way which can respond to the local initiatives or demands of individual Local Authorities.

NPS North of Tyne continues to deliver:

- Effective working in MAPPA as part of the Responsible Authority
- Good quality information sharing
- Robust risk assessments and effective multi agency risk management plans which have a primary child safeguarding focus.

### Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company

Between 22 and 26 February 2016 Ofsted, CQC, HMI Constabulary (HMIC) and HMI Probation (HMIP) undertook a joint inspection of the multi-agency response to abuse and neglect in South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough. This inspection included a 'deep dive' focus on the response to child sexual exploitation and those missing from home, care or education. "The inspection identified a number of strengths across the partnership in relation to raising awareness in the community about the risks of child sexual exploitation. This is leading to increasing identification of those at risk and effective responses to children when risks are first identified. The partnership is aware of many of the areas that need further development, both in respect of the effectiveness of multi-agency practice at the front door and in the quality of practice in supporting children at risk of child sexual exploitation."

In relation to the work of the CRC the inspection report states - *"The probation services have a strong focus and good understanding of child protection, which has been maintained during a period of significant change. The ability of staff in the CRC to remain focused on the needs of children has enabled them to manage cases in a way that both supports the management of risk of harm to others and promotes the safety of children."* NCRC are involved in responding to the joint the action plan.

Northumbria CRC underwent significant organisation changes during the last year, and the CRC continues to evolve. Local Management Centres (LMCs) are now the base for the provision of CRC services. There is an LMC in Blyth, a neighbourhood centre in The Company continues to seek suitable long term reporting facilities in both Alnwick and Hexham, which will replace current MOJ legacy arrangements. As with many other public services the CRC service delivery model actively encourages agile working and we will continue to investigate all potential community facilities where we can engage with our service users within their own communities in Northumberland.

NCRC continues to offer a distinct approach to its work with women. As far as possible, women are offered the opportunity of a women responsible officer, and are supervised in women-only environments in our women's hubs. These are located in community facilities and run by the CRC women's champions and the Changing Lives charity. The women's hubs for Northumberland are based at the Buffalo Community Centre, Blyth and the Susan Kennedy centre in Ashington.

The NCRC Safeguarding Children Policy and Safeguarding Children Staff Guidance were reviewed and updated in May/April 2016. This was to reflect operational changes and changes to staffing roles and responsibilities.

A training audit was completed to understand where existing responsible officers were in terms of SGC training (they are required to attend a minimum of every three years). As well as LSCB training, Laurus (the training organisation commissioned by Sodexo to provide training to NCRC) offers safeguarding training which is the equivalent to level 2.

Rehabilitation Activity Requirements (RAR) – the Positive Pathways Programme has been the cornerstone of RAR delivery, with a version specific to women and a further version for perpetrators of domestic abuse. For 2016 the Victim Awareness RAR has been revised, and four more RAR have been introduced – Cannabis, Alcohol, Novel Psychoactive Substances (legal highs) and Masculinity and Offending.

NCRC is due to migrate to a new IT case management system (OMS) which will include changes to our risk management tool and sentence planning document. This will require a large scale training programme to be rolled out across the organisation in the autumn of 2016. Any changes to risk management or sentence planning tools will ensure that any actual or potential risks to children are considered.

The design and furnishings within our new Local Management Centres (LMCs) is modern and open plan, interview facilities currently being exclusively booth style. This has presented some issues with regard to privacy and

confidentiality, which the parent company Sodexo is now seeking to address.

Without a doubt the biggest challenge the CRC will face in the forthcoming year will be the implementation of a new service delivery model which formed the basis of Sodexo's successful bid for a total of six CRCs across the country.

The implementation of the new model is now well under way with the successful establishment of our HUB which now deals with all communications, intake of cases and enforcement of court orders. Phase two will include the introduction of volume management of identified cases supported by the interventions provided by our supply chain partners. These partners will focus on dynamic risks factors, housing, employment, finance & debt and substance issues.

CRC staff will continue to focus on offending behaviour via the delivery of RARs and monitoring including access to live daily arrest data from Northumbria Police.

The CRC maintains its commitment that all cases where a child is subject to a child protection plan will be managed by a qualified Probation officer.

## Education settings

The Education and Skills Service continues to monitor safeguarding standards in education settings i.e. schools, academies, alternative providers, Free Schools and independent schools. All Ofsted inspections in 2015/16 have graded the safeguarding section at Good and above regardless of the overall judgement which is a testimonial to the Education Service safeguarding standards service work.



All education settings are required to have in place the safeguarding arrangements of their Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Quality assurance of those arrangements in Northumberland is achieved through a section 175/157/11 safeguarding standards audit tool.

All education settings, including alternative providers, are expected to use this tool to regularly self-assess their safeguarding standards against a set of clearly defined criteria agreed by Northumberland's Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB).

The process allows the Education and Skills Service, in partnership with the NSCB, a framework to regularly monitor and challenge when necessary safeguarding standards in individual settings.

The audit tool template has been adapted for use by schools and education settings to ensure that the requirements of the DfE statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (July 2015) are also met.

The Education and Skills Service has implemented preventative measures to provide assurance the safeguarding standards of all schools and education settings meet the requirements of the NSCB.

Those measures are:

- The development of a team manager's role to provide a support service to education settings and to the NSCB as part of the organisation re-structure of the Education and Skills Service;

- The creation of an Education Reference Group for the NSCB chaired by Senior Manager Education and including representation from all school phases and education partnerships, including academies, Northumberland College and alternative providers;
- Nominating the Head teachers of Astley High School, NunnyKirk Hall Independent Special School and Prudhoe Community High School as schools' representative members on the Board.
- A half termly bulletin for education settings – Safe to Learn –introduced as part of the NSCB's communication strategy.
- Development of training on Governing Bodies' Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities.
- Embedding Local Authority school improvement Education partnerships to ensure that School Improvement Partners monitor and challenge safeguarding requirements to meet Ofsted and NSCB requirements.
- Effectively contributing to all NSCB sub-committees and the Board
- Supported the NSCB training programme and undertaken, Governor and awareness raising training in education settings.

There is evidence that this framework has successfully identified emerging concerns about safeguarding standards allowing the Service to intervene early. Often this support is provided in response to a request from the setting for guidance. Using the safeguarding standards self-assessment tool generates an action plan for improvement which can be monitored by the setting and the Service within agreed timelines.

### **Northumberland College**

During Northumberland College's last inspection report in 2013 Ofsted the report stated that the college complies with its statutory duties in relation to safeguarding and child-protection legislation.

The following comments were made:

*"The college meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding students. All staff complete mandatory training and arrangements to ensure the well-being of students are good. The safeguarding team manager works closely with the designated governor and has good links to the local authority and external agencies. A mentor team works actively to support students who have either self-reported or have been referred as needing safeguarding support.*



*Students feel safe and know where to seek support. Teachers and student learning mentors appropriately challenge students' attitudes, ideas and behaviours. Inclusion is a high priority for the college."*

In September 2015 the college introduced 'My Concern' software and in the Student Services Information Advice and Guidance Matrix Assessment carried out in January 2016, the following was noted as an area of particular strength.

The implementation of 'My Concern' which has improved the recording of safeguarding concerns and ensures that issues are signposted to the right people within the Service so the necessary action and/or support is provided.

The college has an active improvement strategy including:

With the introduction of the 'My Concern' software and the increasing number of students with mental health issues, consider providing additional support and CPD for Mentors around mental wellbeing both for the students and themselves. This will help to further develop the knowledge and skills of the Mentors and enhance the support provided.

Since the Matrix report was received mentors have received additional training on mental health issues as they affect young people and the Student Services Team also employs 2 specialist officers who provide social, emotional and mental health support for students.

All staff have received training on Prevent and Fundamental British Values. Mentors have developed a tutorial package covering this which is being expanded to include 2 additional workshops which will be mandatory for all students from September 2016. From August 2015 to July 2016 0.7% of the 536 concerns logged on My Concern were in the category "Extremism and Radicalisation".

### **Children & Family Court Advisory & Support Service (Cafcass)**

Cafcass publish an annual Quality Account. This sets out how they have driven up the quality of casework and shared best practice with the sector during 2015-16. It highlights significant improvements have been achieved while meeting rising case demand across both public and private law.

The [full report](#) is available for further details, but in summary it shows how, through innovative practice, they have:

- Continued to improve the quality of practice, building on the Good with Outstanding Leadership rating of Cafcass's 2014 Ofsted inspection, increasing the quantum of Good and Outstanding casework.

- Learnt more about the impact of their work for children by assessing the quality of case practice against four child-focused outcomes introduced through refreshed Quality Assurance and Impact Framework, and used this insight to drive improvements
- Equipped practitioners with the tools and knowledge to strengthen practice and improve analytical reporting.
- Most notably embedded our Evidence Informed Practice Tools and disseminated learning driven by focused strategies for areas such as child exploitation and equality and diversity, and which caters to what Cafcass practitioner's need.
- Supported Cafcass practitioners to enhance their expertise and improve the quality of recommendations and management of risk through pilots, such the clinical psychologist pilot which provided access to 1:1 consultation with accredited clinical psychologists. this is now an embedded service.

Cafcass Chief Executive Anthony Douglas said: *"I'm delighted Ofsted thought our work was up there with the very best in the country and wanted to showcase what we do for the benefit of the sector. Ofsted were especially impressed with the way we are all leaders of practice and leaders for children in cases. We will continue to build on this as we take our service forward in these increasingly challenging times."*

### **Northumberland County Council Children's Homes**

Northumberland County Council has 3 Children's Homes and a Short-Break Service unit. In 2015-2016 all had Ofsted inspections, the judgements in March 2016 were judged 'Outstanding', 'Good' and 'Adequate'.

**Barndale** – *"Young people and staff see their safety as priority. Staff have a very good knowledge of each young person's needs and potential risks, which fully promotes their welfare and well-being".*

**Phoenix House** – *"Staff recognise the need to keep young people safe. They work hard to help the children to understand the risks that they would face when they go missing".*

**Coanwood** – *"Staff work hard with other agencies to keep young people safe. Share information which protects young people. Local police regularly visit the home to update staff about trends in the area relating to community safety".*

**Thorndale** – *“Staff have agreed with young people a protocol for accessing the internet, this enables young people to stream content whilst giving staff the ability to limit its use sensibly and ensure young people are kept safe”.*

### **7.2.2 The incidence and nature of Child Deaths in Northumberland**

The Child Death Overview Panel consists of senior clinicians and safeguarding business managers. A Child Death Overview Panel Co-ordinator is employed to coordinate the Child Death Overview Panel arrangements as well as the rapid response and local case discussions. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) continues to see an overall reduction in the number of deaths of children and young people in the county. This is an encouraging trend, in line with that experienced nationally, to which the work of many sectors, agencies and organisations has contributed. The Annual CDOP Report for 2015/16 is attached as Appendix 7.

Detailed information about child deaths has now been accumulated over several years, and the pattern that has emerged seems fairly consistent from year to year.

It is also consistent with the national pattern of child deaths described in the report “Why Children Die”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Why Children Die: deaths in infants, children and young people in the UK Part A. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and National Children’s Bureau. May 2014.

By far the greatest number of deaths occurs to very young babies aged under a month. From a public health perspective, the single factor most amenable to change in the neonatal age group is tobacco. Smoking is, of course, also a contributory factor across many other prominent causes of death such as sudden infant death and deaths from infections, so there is no doubt that we should focus and renew our efforts to prevent smoking. Alongside this in the North of Tyne CDOP other modifiable factors include co-sleeping and consanguinity.

### **7.2.3 Serious Case Reviews (SCRs)**

One of the key functions of the NSCB is to ensure that lessons are learnt from the circumstances of serious child care incidents that will improve future practice and reduce the risk of such incidents re-occurring in the future.

In 2015/16 the NSCB completed two Serious Case Reviews and published one of them named Eve, the other SCR is embargoed due to criminal proceedings.

The learning from the Eve review can be summarised as:

- Understand and analyse risk – particularly relating to the impact of chronic neglect
- Use chronological information to support this
- Avoid ‘start again syndrome’ and over-optimism – particularly in relation to un-assessed improvement

- Understand the history and role of fathers
- Understand and analyse children's experiences and the impact of the care they are getting
- Understand the threshold for significant harm
- Be confident to challenge parents and other professionals – 'respectfully disbelieve'
- Recording systems and practice
- Establishing relationship with individual children and spending time with them separate to the parent
- Sharing of information – particularly at conferences and within core groups, including provision of written reports

### **Impact of Serious Case Review**

#### **Eve**

This serious case review has had direct impact on front line practice. Examples include, the SCR initiated Multi-Agency Case File Audits, a series of briefings for staff, the NSCB seeking reassurance through the s11 audits about the issues of fathers being included in assessment in respect of their role in the family, the NSCB commissioned specific training into working with uncooperative families. GPs have received specific briefings and GP conference 2015 and the CCG developed a GP safeguarding Toolkit with an audit planned to scrutinise use.

The NSCB guidance was updated to include a multi-agency substance misuse pathway to include addictions and birth planning.

The Substance Misuse pathway was audited in July 2015. The audit provided good evidence of identification of families who had Child Protection Issues within the maternity records. All women who had substance misuse issues were part of the MDT meeting, with 100% of women having a care plan in notes. In all cases of substance misusing women a pre discharge planning meeting was held. There was good evidence of clear communication through the MDT meetings to other agencies.

The sample used in the audit included Substance misusing women and non-substance misusing women which made interpretation of the findings difficult. A recommendation was made for the audit tool to be modified and to only include substance misusing women in the audit which will be part of maternity services annual audit plan.

A standard core group template for initial and review core groups has been developed. A standard written agreement for cases has also been drawn up. The written agreement must be reviewed and updated at the core group and distributed to the care/core group.

A core group audit template has been developed and a sample of core groups have been observed by senior managers from social care. The findings from these observations have been written up in a briefing paper and this has been shared with the Business Sub Committee, Senior Practitioners, Team Managers and Social Workers.

The Children and Family social work assessment template (replacing the initial and core assessment) was launched in March 2014. The template has a section about the Public Law Outline (PLO) and a guidance note for the minimum and maximum duration of the PLO period.

Practice Guidance has been issued on Pre Proceedings and PLO training has been delivered. A PLO aid memoir has been developed and shared with social care.

A standard legal planning meeting template has been developed which clearly evidences the background, current concerns, immediate safety, parenting capacity and the legal advice given. This document is shared with the Senior Manager and Independent Reviewing Officer. Senior Managers meet with Legal once per month to discuss cases, challenges and good practice.

A PLO/Legal panel has been established to track PLO and legal cases.

To improve attendance at conference all invites and reports for all conferences are now sent and received electronically.

### **Kirsty**

This SCR was completed in 2015 but remains embargoed due to criminal proceedings. However, the action plan has been taken forward to prevent delay in learning being established. The Case Review Sub-Committee working with the Policies, Procedures and Training Sub-Committee have reviewed the Bruising on Immobile Babies procedures, the physical abuse course and have embedded

the learning from the case in all NSCB training without naming the source, referring to a Northumberland case. These recommendations are subjected to an ongoing action plan, including audits.

### **7.2.4 Managing allegations against professionals**

The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is well established and provides a co-ordination role for partners dealing with allegations made against professionals and produces an annual report for the NSCB. The LADO works well with local partners to manage allegations and investigate concerns. The types of notifications in 2015/16 are broadly in line with previous years and expectations:

- The number of notifications to the service increased by 2% compared to 14/15, and increased by 10% when compared to 13/14.
- 71% of these were from agencies which have the most contact with or access to children and young people (e.g. education, foster carers, early years' settings, residential provision) (77% in 14/15)
- 41% (45% 14/15) of notifications relate to allegations of physical abuse, 36% (35% 14/15) to inappropriate behaviour (including ICT/internet use) and 22% (18% 14/15) to sexual abuse.

- 36% of notifications received resulted in strategy meetings, where there is a clear indication that a child or young person has suffered significant harm or that the behaviour of a professional may pose a significant risk to a child (52% 2014/15). 32% of allegations were substantiated (27% 2014/15).

The Ofsted inspection report in April 2016 made specific reference to how the designated officer role is taken very seriously. Allegations of abuse, mistreatment and poor practice by professionals and foster carers are robustly investigated to ensure children and young people are safeguarded.

### **7.2.5 Private Fostering**

Children and young people who go to live with adults outside of their immediate family are 'privately fostered' and are potentially vulnerable. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 set out a policy and procedural function for the NSCB in relation to private fostering. The NSCB role includes monitoring and quality assurance and to ensure that public awareness is raised about private fostering. Private fostering is a statutory responsibility of Children's Services.

The Department for Education return for 2014-2015 stated that there had been ten notifications of private fostering arrangements during 2014-2015.

It is positive that the notifications came from a range of professionals with three coming from educational staff; one from another local authority, two from social workers, one from a support worker, one from 'Childline', one from a hospital and one from a family member. This was a result of work with a number of partner agencies, including in particular, the identification of potential private fostering arrangements through the school admissions system. Work to ensure that front line Social workers and partner agencies are aware of private fostering has continued.

Following the last report to the Board, there was an awareness raising session with all housing officers in the County, as well as information being sent to health and education colleagues.

The outcomes of children within Northumberland who have been in private fostering arrangements during 2015 included one young person becoming subject to a Special Guardianship Order with their carer and the Local Authority securing a care order in relation to a child whose mother had died. A number of children returned to parent's care subject to support on a child in need basis and many young people have now reached 16 years old and are no longer legally privately fostered. In addition, there were 2 children who were temporarily in private fostering arrangements whilst accessing education in the Northumberland area.



The tracking of notifications indicates there has been a significant reduction in the number of new notifications of private fostering arrangements from 2015 to 2016 with 6 new notifications, with 3 of these becoming continued private fostering arrangements. It is not clear if this is as a reflection of the greater involvement in securing permanence for children by the Local Authority with more arrangements being assessed and supported as Regulation 24 arrangements, which may have previously been supported as private fostering arrangements. Further information is required around these reductions in notifications of private fostering arrangements.

In January 2016, the Government advised that they would no longer be requiring a Private Fostering return for the DfE.

However, Northumberland continues to monitor and track all children subject to private fostering arrangements at any time through the Private Fostering Lead role. This records the date and source of referral, the reason for the arrangement, the duration of private fostering arrangement and the outcome of the private fostering arrangement. The Ofsted report from April 2016 comments on private fostering in Northumberland and states:

*“Policies and procedures for private fostering are clear but not understood or applied by front-line social workers and managers.*

*Assessments in the three cases where children are currently in private fostering arrangements have not been undertaken within statutory timescales. There are significant gaps in visits to children from their social workers. The local authority recognised private fostering has not been given enough attention.*

A key area for work following the Ofsted Inspection was highlighted as being around ensuring that private fostering arrangements are developed further.

In addition, the policies and procedures for private fostering were updated in 2015 and further work is required to support staff in working through numerous documents required in this process to ensure that they can understand and comply with statutory guidance to ensure that all children in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded.

The current action plan will involve delivering specific training for team managers involved in new referrals to identify potential private fostering arrangements and to ensure all front line staff are aware of the need to progress private fostering procedures. It is anticipated that work will focus upon identifying new private fostering champions in each of the teams (due to many staff moving on in their role) along with focused support around the current private

fostering module within the Integrated Children's System. Whilst there was statutory visiting to children in private fostering arrangements, which is tracked with a weekly report, it is acknowledged that there have been periods where there have been gaps in recording of visits and in particular, delay around the 10-day timescale for the initial private fostering visit. Briefings were set up with all teams to ensure that there is greater focus around the compliance with private fostering regulations.

### 7.2.6 Safeguarding in Secure Settings

Another group of children and young people who are particularly vulnerable are those who are placed in a secure residential setting.

Northumberland has one secure establishment for children and young people; [Kyloe House secure children's home](#).

#### Number of Physical interventions at Kyloe House in Categories

	Oct 14	Nov 14	Dec 14	Jan 15	Feb 15	Mar 15	Apr 15	May 15	Jun 15	July 15	Aug 15	Sept 15	Total
Cat 1		3	1					1		1			6
Cat 2	4	8	6	12	2	8	7	7	3	4	6	2	69
Cat 3	5	8	6	1	1	1			1				23
Cat 4	1	1		1		2	1	1			2	2	11
Cat 5													
Total	10	20	13	14	3	11	8	9	4	5	8	4	109

Kyloe House is located on the Netherton Park Campus situated near Stannington Station, close to the market town of Morpeth, Northumberland. Kyloe House is home for 12 young people and is managed by the Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group. The unit was purpose-built in 1997 and is set in a rural location in well-maintained grounds. The home creates a caring environment within the parameters of a secure home. The décor and furnishings are kept to a high standard through a child-centred planned maintenance programme.

The age range is 12 to 17 years on admission, although young people can be accepted at age 10 with Secretary of State Approval. The placement period will be dependent on needs to meet the identified Care Plan and ongoing requirements of the young person. The unit accommodates young people on a welfare basis and young people within the Criminal Justice System.

Cat 1 is a low-level intervention such as turning and guiding the child from a risk situation. Cat 2 is a comfort hold used to offer reassurance whilst guiding the child away from risk or danger. Cat 3 is used when there is a level of resistance to be supported from risk or danger and requires two staff to engage the intervention, such as a figure of 4 hold which can move to a seated position. Cat 4 and 5 are the highest intervention manoeuvres requiring two or more staff, including a prone position.

The number of incidents fluctuates over the reporting period. This is reflective of the number of admissions and discharges from the Home and the chaotic and violent behaviour, including self-harm initially presented by the young people admitted. The rise in November, December 2014 and January 2015 were indicative of changes in the peer group and again in March, April and May 2015.

The inspectors commented that,

*“Staff are skilled in the implementation of de-escalation techniques. They intervene assertively to resolve conflict between young people and have good strategies to help young people who are angry. Experienced staff are highly effective in using their tone of voice and body language to diffuse aggression. They ensure that young people are able to regain their composure without losing face. When physical intervention is required to ensure the safety of young people or staff, only approved techniques are used”.*

Any changes in the peer group will impact on group dynamics for a period of time whilst relationships are developed and young people engage with staff.

Kyloe, House is currently rated “Good” by Ofsted from an inspection in September 2015.

## **Performance Management and Quality Assurance of Safeguarding Services**

Ensuring the effectiveness of multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people is the second of the NSCB core functions. The Board has developed a comprehensive overview of the quality, timeliness and effectiveness of multi-agency practice facilitated through the NSCB performance management system which is based on three components:

- 1) Monitoring partner compliance with the statutory requirement to have effective safeguarding arrangements in place
- 2) A Performance Management Framework based on the strategic priorities of the Board and including measures from the national Children’s Safeguarding Performance Information Framework.
- 3) A multi-agency Quality Assurance and Audit Programme outlined in the Governance framework.

This system complements and feeds into the Northumberland Framework for Learning and Improvement which promotes a culture of continuous improvement across the partnership.

A performance report is provided to each main Board meeting and its key messages are assessed both in the meeting and followed up, with Board members and within the Quality and Improvement Performance (QIP) Sub-Committee. The Multi-Agency Data Set includes data from partners pertaining to their front line practice. This is evaluated and challenge questions are included in the report. This assesses if the level of performance is sufficient and effective; areas for improvement are identified. For example, data on attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences raised challenges from partners about its accuracy, which when unpicked was more about the timeliness and routing of invites. An electronic invite system has now been implemented to provide a more efficient and robust system, the effectiveness of which is being evaluated by the QIP Sub-Committee.

The NSCB has also challenged single agencies and other Board's to demonstrate improvements; examples of this are a challenge to children's services regarding improving assessments within time scale's and a challenge to the Family Justice Board about court listing timescales. The data set includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that monitor the effectiveness of early help (e.g. Early Help Assessment, KPIs of neglect, universal HV offer and a set of KPIs for the NSCB performance).

#### 7.4 'Section 11' Duty to Safeguard' Compliance

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) requires LSCBs to gather data to assess whether partners are fulfilling their statutory obligations. In Northumberland, compliance with s.11 is monitored every year using a self-assessment.

The self-assessment is designed to support and inform internal governance and assurance arrangements and is designed to cross reference to external inspection frameworks and professional standards and guidance.

Northumberland has a history of 100% compliance with our s.11 processes and this year organisations maintained that standard.



For the 2015/16 audit, NSCB used an online auditing system developed by Virtual College that is designed to simplify the audit process for all agencies involved.

Progress and completion rates were tracked. Feedback from those who have used the online tool has been positive with reports that the process was intuitive and ergonomic.

The Section 11 Self-assessment Audit Tool is designed to help evaluate safeguarding processes and arrangements against 8 core standards. This involves those completing the audit and self-assessment to address a number of key questions relating to each standard.

The assessment tool was designed to provide agencies with the opportunity to highlight areas of strength and to identify areas for improvement in respect of their section 11 duties and responsibilities. This will assist the NSCB in identifying where to target support in order to drive safeguarding standards upwards. The audit process did not require agencies to submit documentation as evidence; however, evidence may be requested at a later stage.

The response by all organisations was excellent with 100% compliance; organisations have identified areas for improvement and set action plans. Looking at the results as a whole, 93% of audit questions were classified as meeting the minimum requirement, many of these exceeded the minimum expected.

A themed Section 11 Challenge Event was held in March 2016 with the areas of action clarified and the outcome was that 97% of standards were met with actions in place to address the 3%.

The themes under challenge included:



#### Further developments

In addition to the annual s.11 audit we have developed an s.11 audit specific for GPs as the language used within the main s.11 often commented about organisational needs, which sometimes was misinterpreted to mean the CCG rather than individual surgeries.

The NSCB has also developed with the Education reference group an s175/s157 audit for schools which provides the NSCB with the information they require, extending this to cover information

required by the schools to meet their own Ofsted frameworks and keeping Children Safe in Education 2015.

### 7.3.2 The Child's journey through the safeguarding system and outcomes for priority vulnerable groups

The NSCB performance and quality assurance framework collates data from across the partnership about safeguarding activity. Established in 2015 and regularly refreshed to include measures from the national Children's Safeguarding Information Performance Framework, it is based on an 'Outcomes Based Accountability' approach, asking three questions: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Did it make a difference (particularly to outcomes for children and young people)?

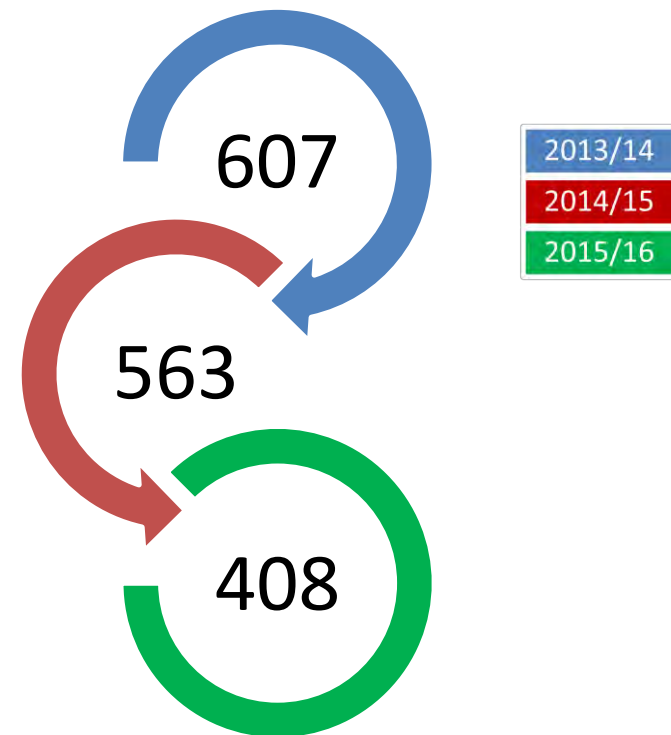
#### Children and Young People subject to a Child Protection Plan

Children and young people are made subject of a multi-agency child protection plan when it is assessed at a child protection conference that they have suffered or are likely to suffer 'significant harm.'

Whilst the circumstances of each case are dealt with carefully and comprehensively, the overall number of children subject to a plan and a comparison with statistical neighbours can give an indication of the effectiveness of the safeguarding system as a whole (and in particular the efficacy of Early Help and Early Intervention Services).

"in the three months leading up to the inspection, 2,117 contacts were made to children's social care. Only 50% (1,109) met the threshold for referral". This led them to comment that the threshold for access to statutory services is not yet fully understood or applied across the partnership or within children's social care. Northumberland receives more contacts than its statistical neighbours.

#### Children in Need Figures (Per 10,000)





Northumberland's Children in Need numbers have steadily dropped over the last three years and now are below the regional average although are higher than statistical neighbours.

#### Numbers of CPPs at 31st March 2016



345

Numbers of CPPs at 31st March 2014



355

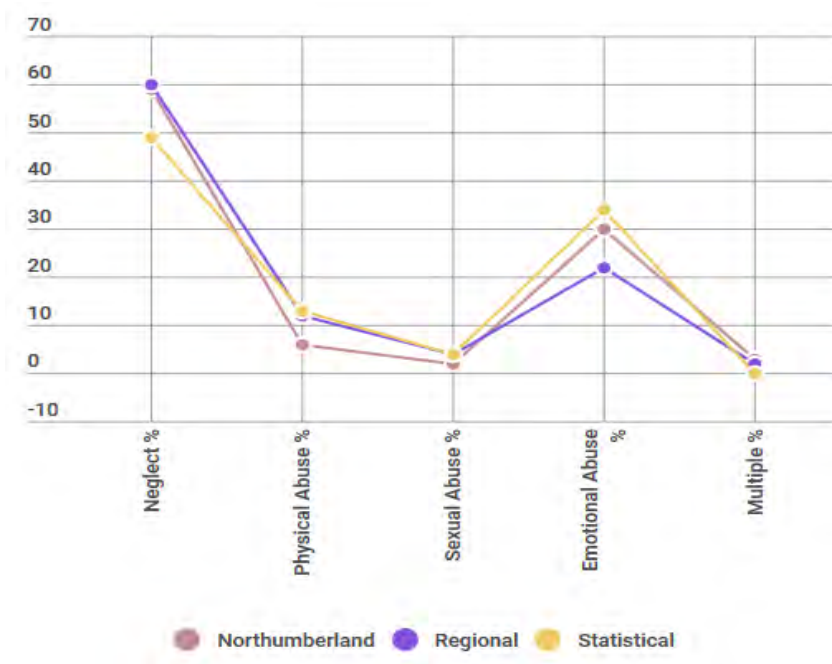
Numbers of CPPs at 31st March 2015



361

Numbers of CPPs at 31st March 2016

Northumberland has historically had higher than average rates of looked after children and child protection cases compared to various comparator groups. The Child protection plan rate per 10,000 for Northumberland is 59.40 with an average of neighbouring authorities at 59.50, statistical neighbours are at 44.59

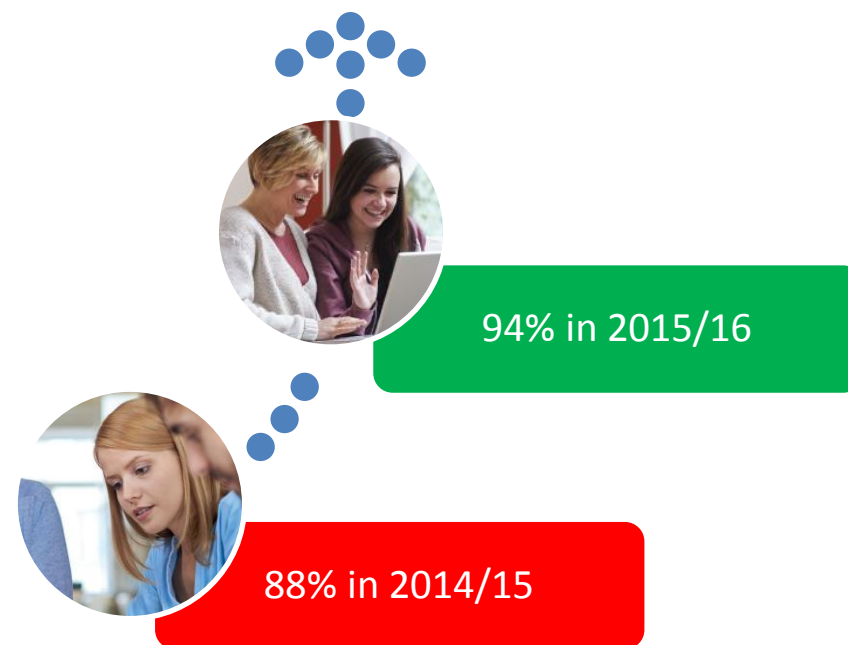


The proportion of CPPs starting due to physical abuse has reduced to 6% from 9% in 2014/15 compared to 15% in 2012/13, meanwhile the proportion of CPPs starting due to emotional abuse has increased during this period 29% in 2014/15 compared to 25% in 2012/13 – both in line with the national picture.

CPPs starting due to sexual abuse accounted for just over 5% of all CPPs, in line with the national figure of 5%. The use of multiple abuse categories has increased in recent years – from 2% in 2012/13 to 13% in 2014/15, and is now above the national picture.

	Neglect %	Physical Abuse %	Sexual Abuse %	Emotional Abuse %	Multiple %
<i>Northumberland</i>	59%	6%	2%	30%	3%
<i>Regional</i>	60%	12%	4%	22%	2%
<i>Statistical</i>	49%	13%	4%	34%	0%

### Statutory child protection visits

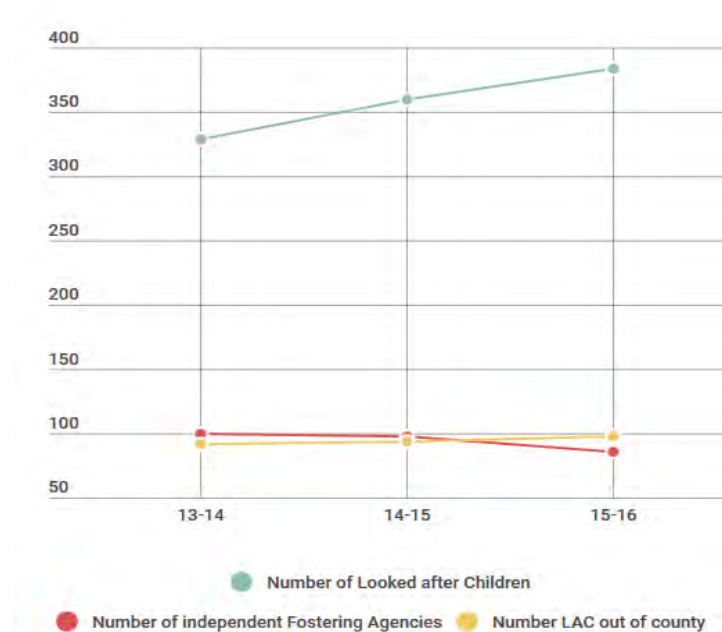


There has been an improvement in statutory child protection visits in Northumberland by social workers. Benchmarking comparisons show Northumberland is now equal to the national average from 2014-15 in terms of % of all CP visits being within time scale

## Children and Young People who are Looked After

The number of children and young people who are 'looked after' in Northumberland had been steadily increasing since 2013.

The number of children and young people looked in 2013/14 was 521 and has increased incrementally to 552 in 2014/15 to 568 in 2015/16.



This trend resulted in significant pressure on the budgets of agencies working with looked after children, indicates the increased probability of poor outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

The use of independent placements has reduced since 2014, from 15 to 12. Northumberland Children's Services' policy is never to place children in Private Homes rated lower than GOOD by Ofsted.

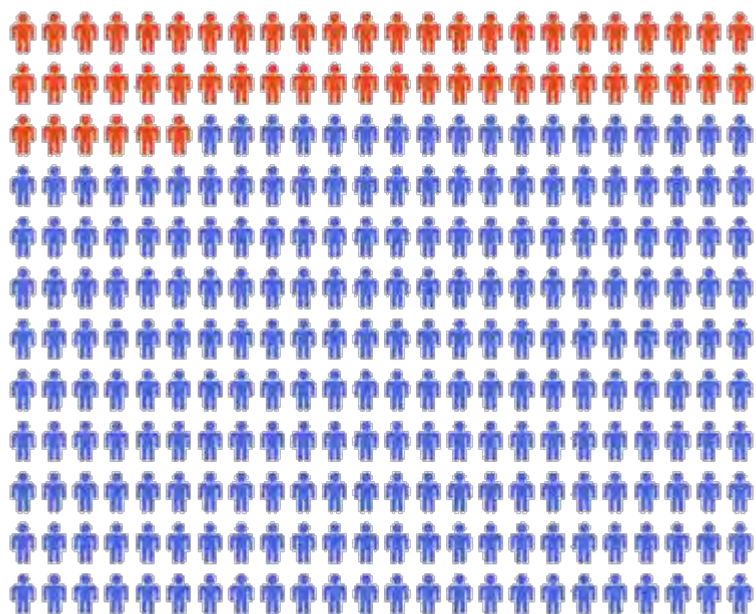
Northumberland's 'Staying Put' Policy has resulted in more young people remaining with their foster carer post 18 which, although entirely appropriate for the individual children has nevertheless resulted in a loss of 8 in-house foster placements. As part of the policy, young people in foster placements can remain in those placements until they are 21 years old. This also includes those young people who are in IFA placements at the age of 18. At March 2015, 8 young people were in staying put placements.

Northumberland is part of the NE6 consortium (North East 6 local authorities), where accommodation in private residential homes is commissioned via the NE6 portal. Northumberland provides a Quality Assurance officer for a named group of providers who are registered successfully with the consortium and procurement requirements. The Service Manager for LAC robustly monitors the appropriateness and quality of all external placements.

## Educational progress for LAC

The effectiveness of progress on education matters. The independent reviewing service was asked to focus on the quality of the child's education experience and its impact on their well-being.

Of the 127 Looked after Children where an education issue was identified, 103 (81%) had seen an improvement since the last review.



This is reassuring and again demonstrates a determination to ensure the education attainment of Looked after Children remains a high priority.

Northumberland's Virtual School for Looked after Children

continues to have a positive impact on achievement, with evidence of attainment improving and gaps with non-LAC children closing over time. Overall achievement is improving and already well above national averages for Looked after Children at every key stage.

### **Children and Young People suffering or at risk of Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

During 2015, the Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan was reviewed with adult care and community safety colleagues resulting in the recommendation to establish a Sexual Exploitation

Sub-Committee of the Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Adult and Safer Northumberland Board's. Improvements to sharing information and intelligence continue to be monitored and improved. Northumbria Police undertook an audit to further assist the NSCB partners understanding of sexual exploitation in Northumberland.

The Child Sexual Exploitation strategy includes a revision of the NSCB procedures in relation to sexual exploitation which includes a clear process for the identification and assessment of cases, including a risk matrix. The LSCB has undertaken a significant training programme in relation to CSE. CSE is embedded within all NSCB training courses, multi-agency, early years and across schools. The strategy was also adapted to include stand-alone CSE training events.

Ofsted provided a view on the arrangements to safeguarding children and young people in their inspection report from April 2016,

*'Multi-agency arrangements to identify and meet the needs of children missing from home, education or care are good. Arrangements to identify and support children at risk of sexual exploitation and radicalisation are robust and lead to timely actions to safeguard children in most cases'.*

The numbers of referrals to Children Social Care about CSE have increased from 2014 which may be linked to the awareness raising training programme, although the data was not collected until late 2014 so 2015/16 will provide the NSCB a baseline for monitoring

The NSCB purchased an e-learning module from the Virtual College and have made this accessible for all organisations across Northumberland with 350 completions this year. In March 2015 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Awareness Day, the Director of Education and Skills for NCC made it mandatory for one member of staff from each Northumberland school to undertake this training.

The joint SE sub-committee had recorded and is currently finalising a webinar to ensure training and information is accessible across the county. The NSCB also invited all High Schools that deliver PSHE

to attend multi-agency training events in June, which was supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The training was delivered in an integrated way with other agencies including Health Improvement, Northumberland Adolescent

Services and the Police and attendees were provided with resources to support the delivery of classroom sessions.

To ensure we had a comprehensive strategy regarding licensed premises and activities in relation to sexual exploitation and trafficking we identified that we needed to undertake some work with the Joint Sexual Exploitation Sub-Committee in relation to taxi driver licensing.



The business manager took this forward with Northumberland County Council Licensing Committee and training across Northumberland for 1460 taxi drivers will include mandatory training

on CSE and trafficking as a condition of their license. This was completed by February 2016; with non-compliance causing a driver's license to be withdrawn.

### **Children and Young People who go 'Missing'**

There is a close relationship between children and young people being reported as missing from home or care and the risk of sexual exploitation. All children and young people who go missing from home benefit from a return home interview. Where appropriate, a vulnerability checklist is completed. This considers a wide range of risk and protective factors and includes all children who have suffered or who are at risk of suffering sexual exploitation.

The Risk Management Group (RMG) Guidance and Vulnerability Checklist (VCL) has been reviewed by the Vulnerable Young Persons Sub-Committee chair and core members of the RMG.

The updated guidance and VCL has strengthened the Signs of Safety approach, the identification of sexual exploitation (with a focus on the potential additional layers of vulnerability around the LGBTQ community) and includes other vulnerabilities such as radicalisation and extremism and the need to highlight to adult care to support the smooth transition to adulthood, particularly around S117 aftercare.

The work of the RMG is overseen and monitored by the NSCB. The Missing Children's Social Worker, Senior Manager/RMG chair/children's sexual exploitation lead meet with the Police Missing Persons Coordinator between each RMG to share information about missing children and young people, hot spot locations and to consider who else could be referred to the RMG.

The Social Worker for Missing Children (SWMC) is employed by Barnardo's under secondment within Northumberland Children's Services and is a core member of the RMG and Sexual Exploitation Sub Committee of the three safeguarding boards. There is also a part time Project Worker who supports the work of the SWMC. The post holders have a county wide role and undertake independent Return Interviews with children, young people and adults (eligible for support from the leaving care team). They also work directly with children and young people, parents, carers, foster carers, residential workers, police and schools and co-deliver multi-agency training with health colleagues, both locally and regionally.

An audit of missing person's data demonstrated that we had success at using police data when a child or young person went missing, however there were some issues around recording the return of the person.



This has been improved after audit and return dates and times are now gained from police data. The Local Authority also shares intelligence with the police gained in return interview to support police action.

The Ofsted report in April 2016 stated,

*“There are highly effective mechanisms in place to respond to and safeguard children and young people who go missing from home or education or who are at risk of being sexually exploited. There is good communication between education professionals and children’s social care who monitor when children are missing from school. All children and young people who go missing from home benefit from a return home interview. Where appropriate, a vulnerability checklist is completed. This considers a wide range of risk and protective factors and includes all children who have suffered or who are at risk of suffering sexual exploitation”.*

### **7.3.3 Evidence from NSCB Auditing Activity.**

In order to monitor and evaluate the quality of partnership and single agency working the NSCB draws on a variety of audits and surveys including its own Governance Framework, and the findings of audits undertaken ‘in house’ by partners.

### **NSCB multi-agency audit findings**

The calendar of NSCB audit activity and findings is set out Audit impact statement 2015-2016 in appendix 8.

In 2015/16 there were a number of important changes taking place nationally and locally. The NSCB considered these changes and how they impacted on our audit priorities and objectives for 2015/16.

Some of the important changes are as follows:

- Outcome of enquiries into the historic and current prevalence and nature of child sexual exploitation.
- Further financial restraints on public sector services
- Introduction of inspections of LSCBs
- Organisational changes

The NSCB priorities shaped the audit plan for 2015/16 which included,

- Early Help Assessment Audit Report
- EHA Audit Overview Report
- Evaluation of change to practice following training
- Eve Serious Case Review
- Kirsty Serious Case Review
- Missing Children and Return Interview Audit
- Multi-Agency Case File Audit
- Multi-Agency Case File Audit
- NSCB Financial Contributions Paper
- Observation of Early Help Hub
- Policies and Procedures Audit
- Safeguarding standards in schools
- Section 11 2014
- Section 11 2015
- Training Needs Analysis

## **7.4 Summary and Whole System Analysis**

For the NSCB, in discharging its responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding system as a whole, it is helpful to address a series of questions:

### **7.4.1 Are we doing the right things?**

The NSCB plays an active and dynamic leadership role in monitoring and shaping services for children. Ofsted identified that governance is a strength and partnerships across adults and children's service are well established. The NSCB partners challenge each other and hold each other to account. The NSCB has taken a lead in establishing strategic developments, such as sexual exploitation, radicalisation, early help and neglect.

The sub-committees, such as the sexual exploitation sub-committee, the prevent strategy group and child death overview panel (CDOP) have joint accountabilities. This has further promoted a joined up approach with partners and neighbouring local authorities, which prevents duplication in a time of scarce resources. The scrutiny of a range of data from key partners, such as social care, education, police and health through the use of key indicator set and dashboard are in place to enable the Board to monitor effectively the delivery of its priorities.

The NSCB undertook a review of effectiveness of Sub-Committees in September 2015 and the review ensured that the NSCB priorities and the statutory duties of the NSCB were evident in the structure, terms of reference and work plans of the sub-committees. This will be reviewed and scrutinised

further in 2016 through an audit undertaken by the internal audit team from Northumbria Healthcare Trust.

### **7.4.2 Are we making sufficient progress?**

There is evidence that good progress continues to be made to rebalance the safeguarding system:

- In order to extend its reach into schools and other education providers, the Board has expanded its head teacher membership and established an Education Reference Group chaired by the Virtual Head, with representation from all educational provision in the county.
- A particular focus in 2015/16 has been to better understand and improve the partnership response to child sexual exploitation. Reviews undertaken indicate that whilst good progress is being made, momentum needs to be maintained in 2016/17; there remains much more to do.
- Where Early Help hubs are established, there is evidence of positive impact, for example in the shared understanding and application of thresholds for statutory services.

### **7.4.3 Are we managing risk appropriately and safely?**

Assessing and managing risk is a key responsibility in safeguarding children and young people and the NSCB has been absolutely clear that this must be maintained

appropriately and safely during the period of 'whole system change' and accompanying restructuring being undertaken by many partners. The NSCB has considered the following factors in assuring itself that practice and multi-agency working is appropriate and safe:

#### **Findings from external inspections:**

- The Local Authority was judged to be 'requires improvement' by Ofsted in April 2015 and a transformation action plan is being implemented and monitored by the NSCB.
- During the inspection in January/February 2015 no children and young people were referred to the Local Authority as being at immediate risk of significant harm.
- In November 2015 the Care Quality Commission undertook an inspection of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. The overall rating for services was 'Outstanding' and an action plan is being implemented.
- In 2015 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary visited Northumbria Police and the force was deemed to be good in Vulnerability and prepared in all aspects for Honour Based Violence.
- Partner compliance with statutory duties to ensure arrangements are in place to effectively safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people:
- The self-assessment audit undertaken by partners in 2015/16 represented on the Board indicated improved

compliance since the previous audit in 2014/15.

- The majority of schools, child minders and day care settings inspected by Ofsted in 2015/16 were rated 'good' or better.
- The number of Third Sector organisations attending NSCB training and working as partners of the NSCB continues to grow.

#### **Performance data and trends**

- Capacity pressures in social work teams continue to be addressed evidenced through reducing caseloads, increasing statutory visits and improved timeliness of completing assessments.
- Decisions on referrals to social work teams are being made promptly.
- The QIP and Vulnerable Young Persons sub groups have reviewed data on self-harm and agreed that deeper investigation should be a theme for the Board. For example, analysing trends on repeat hospital admissions and tracking what happens to young people where their Child and Families F assessment has identified self-harm as a factor.
- Data on attendance and reports at CP conferences reveals improvement for GPs attendance and significant improvements in the provision of reports. The QIP sub group recommending greater use of video links to enable GPs to participate.
- Numbers subject to a CP plan have started to rise again – up to 390 now and significantly above the national average.

- The NSCB is supporting Children's Services to drill-down into the data and the QIP sub group will audit of decision-making.
- Key statutory responsibilities are being undertaken in a timely manner, although the timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences needs to improve.
- The level of Child Protection Plans relating to neglect continues above statistical neighbours, the impact of the neglect strategy, pilot and early help strategy will continue to be monitored.

### **Findings from Audits**

The NSCB undertakes a series of audits throughout the year to ensure that frontline practice in managing risk safely outline below is the case file audit from October 2015 as an example. The results from audit are reviewed by the Quality, Improvement and Performance sub-committee and feedback to the NSCB and partners for action.

### **Multi-Agency Case File Audits**

The case review sub-committee holds case file audit days on an annual basis. A theme is chosen and cases are examined by the members of the Case Review Group. The audits can and have led to the commission of a case review if the findings signal a concern about practice or about how agencies work together to safeguard children.

### **Rationale for this audit**

The rationale for this audit was set by the NSCB case review sub-committee in October 2015; this had a specific focus on complex need in families, and focused on Domestic Violence, Parental Substance Misuse and Parental Mental Health. We also agreed to include recommendations from Eve, a recent Serious Case Review and recommendations from an unpublished Serious Case Review embargoed due to criminal proceedings. This introduced to the audit the issues of roles of fathers in families and if these were recorded in records, uncooperative families, evidence of supervision, and the use of chronologies and if the child was visible in the records undertaken by all agencies.

### **Recommendations from the audit**

- The voice of the child is important and can be portrayed even when the child is unable to communicate or too young. This should be raised through NSCB Policy, Procedures and Training Committee.
- Organisations should have arrangements in place to ensure information is available for initial conferences and strategy meetings held in school holidays.
- NTW to provide assurance to NSCB regarding the thresholds used when deciding when a FACE risk assessment is necessary
- All agencies invited to attend ICPC should provide a written report.

- When arranging a strategy meeting, CSC should always check to see whether there is any involvement from mental health services and ensure the appropriate person is invited.
- One auditor identified that they were having problems with receiving late invites to child protection conferences, since July 2015 these have been sent electronically. This case was outside that timescale. Attendance at child protection should continue to be monitored by NSCB Performance and Quality Assurance Group.
- The electronic recording system implemented by NHCFT needs to be reviewed to continue to develop ways of using the electronic record to streamline processes; also pre-birth information needs to be included on the safeguarding tab.

#### **Good practice identified in these cases**

- Feedback should be given to the individual social workers regarding the quality of the assessments, CP Plans and records.
- Police records demonstrated that there was clear records of attendance at CP meetings including strategy meetings, minutes and plans were visible on police case file system for all audited cases.

- The case involving a concealed pregnancy provided clear evidence of the positive and successful use of the concealed pregnancy guidance and how all agencies worked well together. The same case also demonstrated flexibility of role; the case due to being concealed had no allocated Health Visitor or Midwife, due to this short fall the NHCFT Safeguarding Nurses undertook an operational role until allocation was made.
- Police records were maintained on the audited cases including cases where there was no investigatory role for the PVP.
- Good work with young person to enable them to attend meetings.
- *“Excellent response and collaboration from all agencies to support this young person, CYPS, school, social worker. Family and friends all responded to her safety plan”.* Quote taken directly from one audit form.
- *“Clear evidence of consistent work by the allocated social worker with both parents (They were at odds with each other) that contributed to successful outcomes and positive progress made for all concerned”.* Quote from audit.



#### **Learning identified through audit process:**

Not all agencies were in a position to provide information for the purposes of the audit, feeling the template used was not relevant for their agency. NSCB should review the process of undertaking multi-agency audits to ensure it includes gathering information from GPs, individual schools and the police.

#### **7.4.4 Conclusions**

A review of the information and intelligence considered by the NSCB throughout 2015/16 and analysed through the annual review process suggests that overall the direction of travel is appropriate, good progress is being made to realise partnership objectives and that change is being managed carefully and safely.

#### **7.4.5 What are the emerging challenges for the Partnership?**

The NSCB Annual Review process (April – July 2016) has identified that the key challenges set out in the Business Plan 2015/16 remain relevant alongside ensuring stability and that children and young people remain safe at a time of change for the NSCB, outlined in the Wood Report and the Governments response.

## 8.0 Links to other Strategic Bodies

Part of the NSCB's role is to hold other strategic bodies to account for their role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The NSCB complies with its statutory responsibilities in accordance with the Children Act 2004 and the Local Safeguarding Children Board Regulations 2006. The Board has an established relationship with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Families, Children Trust Board (FACT), Northumberland Safeguarding Adult Board (NSAB), Family Justice Board and Safer Northumberland Partnership (SNP) through cross membership and sharing of reports.

This report and Business Plan 2016/17 will be formally presented to the Chief Executive of Northumberland County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner and senior managers of partner organisations who work with children and young people in Northumberland, shared with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Families and Children's Trust and published on the Safeguarding Board website.

## 9.0 Assessment of the extent to which NSCB functions are being effectively discharged

This section of the Report reviews the way in which the NSCB has carried out its functions and responsibilities during the year, met its statutory requirements and taken forward its priorities.

It considers:

- How the NSCB has undertaken its work
- How it has promoted a shared culture of continuous improvement
- How effective the NSCB has been
- How the NSCB has progressed its NSCB strategic priorities

### 9.1 How the NSCB has undertaken its work

The NSCB, in meeting its statutory requirements and progressing an ambitious business plan needs to be well organised and the efforts of its members effectively coordinated. This section considers how this has been undertaken in 2015/16.

### **9.1.1 Board Membership and Meetings**

During 2015/16 the NSCB met bi-monthly, with the Business Group meeting monthly. The independent chair identified attendance from the majority of key partners at the Board as a strength. Exceptions were highlighted as Cafcass and Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company.

A request for representation from Cafcass was forwarded to their senior management and an officer at an appropriately senior level was identified. Attendance subsequently improved and as with any partner agency, the level of attendance is noted at each meeting of the NSCB. There is commitment from Cafcass to attend whenever that is possible. Cafcass attended 3 times during 14/15. The chair has met with Cafcass again outlining the need for attendance in their role as a statutory partner. An appropriately senior representative attended November's meeting and the organisation has been actively involved in discussions over the issues raised at sub committees.

In September 2015 we recruited two head teachers to sit on the NSCB after a period of illness of the previous head teacher representative meant no representation from schools. This has been enhanced further with invitations to head teachers of a Non-Maintained Special School who attended the NSCB for the first time on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

Nationally, probation has undergone significant organisational change in the last two years, particularly the element of service that has become the Community Rehabilitation Company – in Northumberland that has been one of the teams that has moved into the company Sodexo. Relationships and operational work has been positively maintained during this period but the level of organisational disruption has had an impact on attendance at Board, complicated not least by ongoing confirmation of correct email addresses for dates of meetings for CRC Board members.

### **9.1.2 Supporting the work of the Board**

Making headway on the work plan of the NSCB is heavily reliant on the input of staff from all partner agencies through sub-committees, the training pool, contributing to Serious Case Reviews and Multi-Agency Deep Dive Reviews and through engagement Audit programme. The commitment shown by agencies and their staff is testament to the seriousness with which the NSCB is viewed and the shared intent across the partnership to improve multi-agency working, services and outcomes for children and young people.

Sub-committees, reference and task groups meet on a regular basis to monitor and progress their components of the business plan. All meetings within the NSCB in 2015/16 have been quorate. Established sub –committees meet bi-monthly, with additional sessions arranged as required. Reports of work undertaken and decisions made are provided for each Board meeting and annual summaries considered as part of the Annual Review process.

### Developments in 2015/16 include:

Since August 2015, the Board has benefited from a dedicated business manager who takes forward the work of the board and who led on the review of the sub-committees ensuring that the NSCB priorities and the statutory duties of the NSCB were evident in the structure, terms of reference and work plans of the Sub-Committees.

The Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and Action Plan was reviewed with adult care and community safety colleagues resulting in the establishing of a Sexual Exploitation Sub-Committee of the Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Adult and Safer Northumberland chaired by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children.

Establishing an Education Reference Group which has lead on the development a Section 175/157 audit taking into account the quality standards from the 2004 Children Act and keeping Children Safe in Education 2015 which is due to be undertaken in 2016.

The development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that monitor the effectiveness of early help (e.g. Early Help Assessment, KPIs of neglect, universal HV offer and a set of KPIs for the NSCB performance).

The Policy, Procedures, Education and Training Sub-Committee undertake evaluations of the impact of training on front-line practice on quarterly basis, sampling a specific professional group; in January 2016 the focus is designated safeguarding leads in schools. The most recent report provided information about the direct impact, for example, *“They have become much more aware and questioning of thresholds and show a greater level of critical analysis and reflection on their own practice. This has been evident in individual supervision sessions, case discussions at team meetings and in their conversations with professional colleagues from other teams and agencies around specific children”*.

The development of Neglect and Early Intervention Strategies endorsed by the Health and Well-Being Board and launched during a series of roadshows in March 2016.

We undertook a comprehensive review of policies and procedures. The revised procedures went live in December 2015 and have been updated to ensure that they reflect national guidance, local policy and learning from the last two SCRs. This includes a new procedure to ensure that all child protection plans considering babies routinely consider their sleeping arrangements to ensure that they are safe, and a new procedure concerning immobile babies with identified bruising.

### 9.1.3 NSCB multi-agency training pool:

The NSCB is committed to model partnership working through the delivery of multi-agency safeguarding training from a pool of trainers made up of representatives from partners. This maintains a partnership perspective on training content and multi-agency working. Training is a strength of NSCB, ensuring that sufficient, high-quality, responsive, multi-agency training is available and accessible.

The training programme is informed by; identified national and local needs, learning from case reviews, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 guidance, the Intercollegiate Document for Health Care Staff, and the multiagency training needs analysis. These needs are communicated to the Policy, Procedures, and Training Sub-Committee by representatives from partner agencies. The multi-agency training programme offers a range of training at different levels to meet the needs of practitioners, depending on and sensitive to their roles and responsibilities. A clear training pathway is set out in the training prospectus and remains updated responding quickly to local issues and learning from audit, Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and children's, young people's and families' experiences. Attendance at multi-agency training by school based staff improved significantly from 43 in 2013 to 179 in 2014 and continues at that improved rate.

To ensure accessibility and sufficiency, face-to-face training is delivered during and beyond the normal working day, as well as via e-learning. Single agency training is provided where appropriate, for example, to Residential Units, or Voluntary and Private Service providers. The training offer is enriched by the involvement of trainers from partner agencies to develop and deliver multi-agency training. The 'pool' of trainers includes those from; Children's Services, Probation, Police, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. The trainers are supported by the NSCB Training and Development Officer, who provides continuing professional development opportunities for the trainers. The Quality Assurance Protocol includes a mechanism for the observation and development of the trainer's practice. The Training and Development Officer quality assures the training courses, ensuring the programme reflects key learning and recommendations, remains child focused and in line with Munro Recommendations.

The NSCB uses a similar model to undertake audits of multi-agency practice, using a variety of staff from partners (practitioners, first line/ middle and senior managers). A pool is identified for each audit being undertaken, supported by the Business Manager.

It is to partners' credit that in a time of increasing financial constraint their staff have continued to support the NSCB 'pool approach' to multi-agency training and auditing, promoting as it does a genuine partnership approach to learning and improving.

#### **9.1.4 Carrying out the work of the board through the annual business plan**

Progress on the objectives and tasks within the NSCB Business Plan are monitored through Business Group meetings and reported on a regular basis to the Board. As part of the Annual Review a report on progress against the Business Plan 2015/16 indicated that

- 90% of tasks had been completed or were proceeding on time
- 10% of tasks were progressing but had slipped against timescales



This level of performance demonstrates the ability of the Board, its constituent groups and the Business Unit to progress an ambitious and complex work plan in a timely and effective manner.

Resourcing this programme of work relies to a significant extent on input of staff time from partners that supplement a core base budget and a commissioning budget.



## Board income and expenditure

In addition to the time that partners contribute to the work of the NSCB, some organisations are required to contribute financially. Working Together 2015 requires that the Board should not be overly dependent on contributions from one partner; in 2015/16 – 15 the distribution of funding and expenditure was as follows:

Annual Budget 15/ 16	£128,067
Expenditure	Cost (£)
Independent Chair	£14,796
Employee costs:	
<i>Business Manager (Part Year)</i>	£31,038.46
<i>Business Support/Development officer (2 days)</i>	£12,000
<i>LSCB administrator</i>	£17, 714
<i>Training Officer</i>	£33,857
<i>Performance and Quality Assurance officer</i>	£12,330
<b>Total staffing Costs</b>	<b>£104,021</b>
Training Costs:	
Training programme – venue and commissioned trainers	£23,200
<i>Income from training</i>	<i>(+ £21,500)</i>
SCR Reviews learning events	£800
Professional Fees –Independent Author – SCR	£12,351.00
CDOP Co-coordinator (North of Tyne)	£1867.89
CDOP RMSO for child death services	£708.34
CDOP annual return work and work on revised Form C	£300.00
Tri.x – maintenance of online procedures manual	£4,400
Enable Audit Tool	£8,000
NSCB meetings – associated costs	£670.20
Info / Communications e.g. printing, publicity -	£749.00

Campaigns/publicity in response to local and national issues	
National Working Group (NWG) membership	£500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£24,046</b>
Partner Contributions and Income	
Northumberland County Council (shortfall)	£107,017
Northumbria Health Care Trust – received	£5000.00
Probation – received	£500.00
<i>Northumbria Police</i>	£5000.00
Public Health – received	£10,000
CAFCASS – received	£550.00
<b>TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>£128,067</b>

### 9.1.5 Development of Effective Inter-Agency Procedures

An important contribution to the first of the NSCB's objectives; to co-ordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, is made through the development of policies and procedures for use by professionals across the partnership. The Policy, Procedures and Training sub-committee leads this work, in collaboration with the theme experts, which ensures that a set of consistent regional procedures are maintained.

Work progressed in 2015/16 includes:

- Review of all NSCB procedures and policies
- Development of the Sexual Exploitation Strategy

- Development of the Early Help and Early Intervention Strategy
- Development of the Neglect Strategy
- Revision of the Bruising of immobile babies' procedure
- Development of a sub-regional Female Genital Mutilation Pathway
- Development of the Breast ironing procedure

### 9.2.2 Undertaking Serious Case Reviews

Serious child care incidents where abuse or neglect is known or suspected or where there are concerns about the way in which agencies worked together require careful consideration to ensure accountability for practice and to identify lessons that could help improve services for children and young people in the future. Learning and actions taken from Serious Case

Reviews (SCRs) and Multi-Agency Deep Dive Reviews relating to services and outcomes for children and young people are outlined in (7.2.3) above.

In 2015/16 the standing SCR sub-committee met on 6 occasions and undertook the following:

- Concluding the Kirsty SCR with the Lead Reviewer, communication this to the NSCB
- Ensuring the action Plan from Kirsty was taken forward regardless of the embargo ensuring learning was established as early as possible within the restrictions on the embargo
- Ensuring the Eve Action Plan was monitored and all action points concluded
- Undertaking multi-agency file audits

### **9.2.3 Communicating and Raising Awareness**

#### **Background**

Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) and Northumberland Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) are responsible for safeguarding vulnerable people, both children and adults. The boards are made up of key partner organisations and are responsible for identifying concern and the safeguarding and protection of individuals and they protect some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

Safer Northumberland Partnership aims to make the county a safer and more desirable place to live, work and visit by working with key statutory and voluntary partners and communities, to prevent and respond to issues of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

Both NSCB and NSAB work closely with Safer Northumberland to focus keeping people safe.

The three board sub-committee developed a communications plan that sets out how the boards communicate the work to keep children and adults safe across the county to board partners, the public and stakeholders.

Overall communications objectives:

- To raise awareness of the work of the three boards including ongoing campaigns for safeguarding children, adults and Safer Northumberland
- Promote awareness in our communities that everyone can contribute to safeguarding
- Promote the welfare and safety of residents of all ages in local communities
- Give reassurance and confidence regarding the safety of residents in Northumberland
- Encourage the participation of local communities in the work of the three boards where appropriate.

The key messages to be included in all communications:

- Safeguarding is everyone's business and we all have a role to play
- There is a raft of working taking place to prevent and respond to issues of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.
- What to do if someone needs help and who to signpost to e.g. the Police, Childline, social workers
- Safeguarding training and resources sign posting for people who work with young people and vulnerable adults
- Specific campaign messages

#### **9.2.4 Delivery, Co-ordination and Assessment of Single and Multi-Agency Training**

The NSCB continues to identify its training offer as a strength and this was recognised by Ofsted in their inspection.

In 2015/16 the training pool lead by the NSCB training consultant provided a significant level of training to multi-agency groups both in face to face training and e-learning.

#### **Headline Statistics:**

Multi-agency programme learning events delivered	69
Days of multi-agency training provided (full-time equivalent)	51.5
No of attendances at multi-agency learning events	1,366
Average attendance at each learning event	20
Learning events cancelled	11
Additional multi-agency learning events delivered in response to identified need	12
E-learning completions via Virtual College	2,794
Total completions on NSCB approved training	7727

### Additional Learning Events to Support NSCB Priorities

1. **Sexual Exploitation Briefings for Taxi Drivers** – part of the implementation of the *Sexual Exploitation Strategy*; 28 x 1-hour briefing sessions were delivered across Northumberland (December 2015 – March 2016) and approx. 1,460 delegates attended. Sessions were delivered by a Learning and Development Officer with both Police and Licensing Officers in attendance at each session. NHCT also provided a member of staff to support this training.
2. **Response and Recovery Events** – part of the *Contest Strategy*, these learning events were for strategic managers and used a role play scenario to raise awareness of contingency plans and critical incident procedures
3. **Community Recovery Events** – also part of the *Contest Strategy*, these learning events were for operational managers and focussed on the process of community recovery planning after a critical incident
4. **Outcome Star** training – part of the *Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy*, this training promotes use of a tool adopted by Northumberland to work directly with service users. It provides information which enables professionals to demonstrate measurable outcomes for families and agencies, particularly when working with neglectful parenting.

5. **Working with Neglect: Practice Toolkit** – a training session in the North to support the pilot of the Action for Children Neglect Toolkit in that geographical area.
6. **Quality assurance support for Early Years training:** development and pilot of new DSL training for Early Years settings and bespoke training for a child care setting following an Ofsted-reportable safeguarding concern.
7. **Working with Attachment and Loss in Schools:** focus on working with impact of neglect and abuse in school environment – part of Attachment and Resilience Training Strategy.

### Training for Schools

- 27 sessions in Safeguarding in Education
- 8 DSL Refreshers for Schools sessions
- 4 DSL Roles and Responsibilities sessions
- 3 sessions in Working with Attachment and Loss

There has also been a substantial amount of face to face WRAP training provided for schools and the NCC Awareness of Prevent e-learning is also available for school staff.

## E-Learning

There were 2,794 e-learning course completions via the NSCB contract with Virtual College:

- 993 Introduction to Safeguarding
- 60 Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect – Foundation Version
- 969 Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect – Core Version
- 2 Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect – Police Version
- 16 Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect – Young Person Version
- 430 Child Sexual Exploitation
- 105 Domestic Abuse Awareness
- 38 Hidden Harm (Parental Substance Use)
- 32 Parental Mental Health
- 25 Safeguarding Disabled Children
- 75 Common Core of Skills and Knowledge
- 21 Child Development
- 14 Short Break Care for Disabled Children
- 11 Children and Young People's Development in Health and Social Care Settings
- 3 Think Safe, Be Safe

The Northumberland workforce has also completed the following Virtual College e-learning as part of the Home Office contract:

- 2,277 FGM
- 30 Forced Marriage

There have been 8 course completions on the NCC Private Fostering e-learning.

## Training by VoiCeS for Voluntary Sector Organisations and Community Groups

As from April 2015, financial constraints led to VoiCeS having to withdraw from delivering safeguarding training to the voluntary and community sector within the NSCB training strategy (i.e. free of charge to local VCS groups). However, they have continued to provide a range of safeguarding courses, introducing a nominal attendance charge which goes towards delivery costs:

- 3 x Awareness of Safeguarding Children and Adults (37 delegates)
- 5 x Introduction to Safeguarding Children (47 delegates)
- 1 x Designated Person in VCS (5 delegates)

This face to face training plays a vital role in ensuring that key messages from the NSCB are communicated to small voluntary organisations at the heart of our local, rural communities.



## Impact evaluation

In line with the NSCB Impact Evaluation Strategy, a qualitative impact evaluation telephone survey has been conducted and this year's target workforce group was schools. The sample

group were selected 20% of the schools who accessed whole school or Designated Safeguarding Lead / Multi-Agency Child Protection training between September and December 2015. Headteacher's/ Designated Safeguarding Leads undertook a telephone based audit.

The NSCB Business Manager made a scheduled phone call to gather the responses.

100% of the target group responded to this process and the feedback was entirely positive.

Below are some examples of responses:

*Training gave me the confidence to question other professionals when I disagreed with a decision they had made*

*Staff are more confident reporting concerns to DSLs and DSLs are more confident working in a multi-agency basis. The training empowers you to believe you are doing the right thing and pick up the phone to the locality team.*

*Yes, a number of them, here is an example; last training we focussed on low level concerns and how to build up a picture (chronology). I developed a form and file to monitor low level concerns which in themselves may not raise concern, however if these demonstrate a picture over time the support our work to safeguard children and report to CSC when relevant.*

*The training is very relevant and effective; I just wish other types of mandatory training were as well run*

*Attachment/Looked after Children training – provided interesting information about cognitive development and neural pathways which helped staff to understand behaviour patterns of some of our vulnerable pupils. Teachers commented on the quality of the training and it has definitely encouraged some teachers to reflect on their practice and approach certain situations from a more informed position*

*The training is exactly what we want from the NSCB ...fantastic very relevant extremely knowledgeable and supportive. It has allowed us to put in place robust safeguarding procedures and practice based on the training."*

In February 2015, we conducted a small pilot of a post-training evaluation questionnaire devised in partnership with the Safeguarding Adults Board. Sent out 3 months after the course, it asks a sample of delegates to identify specific examples of the impact of training on their professional practice and requires managers to endorse this learning. The pilot return rate was low, and we are attempting new methods to gain this post course information. We will be reviewing and re-testing the process in 2016-17.

We have continued to capture and record 'informal' and unsolicited feedback about the impact of training on practice and examples of this are:

- 'Prevent' referral made by social worker as a result of attending Safeguarding Children in Extremism
- Referrals to Missing Children's Social Worker following attendance at Child Sexual Exploitation
- Adoption of Outcome Star as an impact assessment tool by Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services
- Referral to Children's Social Care by child care setting as a result of bespoke training for the nursery staff
- Attendance at attachment training by NTW staff "has clearly increased staff's ability to think more about attachment and the impact and that it has long term impacts.

Written evaluations on the day of training ask delegates to identify what they have learnt and how this will influence their practice. This usually generates responses relating to increased confidence to refer/challenge and increased knowledge of policies and procedures. However some more specific comments include:

- "Keep the child at the heart of the assessment"
- "Looking at the bigger picture in families and seeing things through the eye of the child"
- "Planning for safer internet day at work"
- "New skills on how to support the children who have been subject to emotional abuse"
- "The knowledge I attained on this course will directly influence the way I deal with clients I work with"
- "Will look at participation & 'voice of the child' with very small children aged 0-5"
- "Interesting resources that were useful and that we can use"
- "I want to feed these strategies in school so we build consistency for students"
- "It will make me more assertive if I am faced with situations which concern me"
- "Use the 'stress bucket' as a tool"
- "Focus on child's needs & experiences"

## Analysis of Information

There continues to be a steady increase in school staff accessing the NSCB training programme. Some of this attendance relates to new Designated Safeguarding Leads attending Multi Agency Child Protection training as part of their mandatory training for the role. Schools are now sending a wider group of staff with pastoral responsibility on this course and are also accessing a wider range of courses above and beyond the mandatory requirement as they see the benefit of the training and the impact it can have on their safeguarding practice. There has been a significant increase in school staff attending face to face CSE training (Head teacher's and Designated Safeguarding Leads are now required to undertake e-learning or face to face training on this subject). Introduction and development of the Section 11/Section 175 Audit has had a positive impact of schools engaging with safeguarding training and being clear about Ofsted and NSCB expectations around this.

It is possible to see from the year-on-year comparisons of attendance when the 'bulges' come from those services which require specific staff groups to complete multi-agency training every 3 years. This is particularly useful for identifying training needs of NHCT, NTW and GPs.

There has been a continuation in joining up learning opportunities across Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards and the Community Safety Partnership, particularly around the Contest agenda and the Sexual Exploitation Strategy.

Although most of the learning events are held in Cramlington (West Hartford Fire Station), we continue to ensure that there is a selection of training provided in the North and West of the county.

The pilot of offering some courses jointly with North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Board was successful and we shared delivery and costs of safeguarding disabled children training. through this reciprocal arrangement we were able to run viable courses and give staff a choice of dates, reducing the risk of course cancellation. We will continue to seek opportunities to use this model in 2016-17.

Rigorous application of the charging policy has led to a continued reduction in cancellations and 'no shows' at learning events.

### **9.3 How well has the NSCB progressed its objectives and met its statutory responsibilities?**

#### **9.3.1 Summary of progress to address Strategic Objectives and specific challenges set for 2015/16**

The business plan (2015-16) is based on the NSCB priorities and provides continuity with the previous plan (2012-15):

1. Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice
2. Further promoting preventative and early help approaches
3. Improving partnership working with education services on the safeguarding agenda
4. Improving support to especially vulnerable children and high risk adolescents
5. Reviewing our response to sexual exploitation

#### **Strategic Priority 1 – Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice**

The work on engaging with children has now been taken forward with the development of a multi-agency Northumberland Children & Young People's Strategic Participation Group Meeting. This enables the NSCB to engage with children and young people across all services in Northumberland. The business manager is a member of this

committee to ensure that safeguarding remains at the heart of participation and engagement. There has also been some success in the work the Youth Service has undertaken with a group of young people developing the [Pass it on Campaign](#) with young people presenting their work to the NSCB. The 1001 voices and Healthwatch Northumberland provided a research project into the views of young people in respect of accessing health services. This was taken forward by the business manager to the education reference group and the Early Help and early intervention Sub Committee to ensure that the young people views were heard and acted on in service development.

The views of children have been embedded into the training programme by the training consultant from national work undertaken by the NSPCC, Scottish Government Social Research and the Centre for Research on Children and Families.

#### **Strategic Priority 2 – further promoting preventative and early help approaches**

The Early Help Hub process was started following a series of meetings held by Head teachers from the Blyth partnership of schools and senior staff from key agencies working in Blyth. These meetings started as a result of head teachers identifying that they wanted a more coordinated timely response to meeting the needs of families in Blyth. At times they were challenging as agencies explored their understanding and perceptions of each other. The outcome from these meetings was a proposal made by the Early Intervention and Prevention Senior Manager (which had been developed in partnership with a number of others) to have an early intervention hub where

referrals would go into one central point and then allocated at a multi-agency meeting. It was agreed that the NSCB would support the roll out of further hubs.

This model was extended in 2015 to two then finally four Hubs County wide. The West Early Help Hub has been established in November 2015 with the North hub following soon afterwards. During the Ofsted inspection we were challenged about the impact of the two newer hubs regarding their efficacy. Give this the NSCB has undertaken observations at all of the hubs to ensure that there was continuity of provision across Northumberland.

Direct feedback of the West hub offered this observation:

*“During the case discussion the chair related each case to the thresholds for intervention and supported the group to identify the best placed lead organisation to undertake the lead role with the family. It was clear due to the open discussion and the acceptance of referral that this was a well-established group who had a good understand of not just their home organisations criteria for referral, but the NSCB thresholds”.*

The statistics provided to the NSCB identify that the hubs receive referrals from all partner organisations, attendance and acceptance of allocations is good.

### **Strategic Priority 3 – Improving partnership working with education services on the safeguarding agenda**

The education reference group was established in September 2015 and is chaired by the Virtual Head Teacher and including representation from all school phases and education partnerships, including academies, Northumberland College and alternative providers; the group nominated the Head teacher of Astley High School, the Head teacher of NunnyKirk Hall Independent Special School and the Head teacher Prudhoe Community High School as a schools’ representative member of the Board, The group provides a half termly bulletin for education settings – Safe to Learn –introduced as part of the NSCB’s communication strategy. It has improved the engagement and partnership working with schools and provides a forum for sharing of good practice, sharing NSCB policy and guidance and enabling focus training to take place.

The group has achieved all the objectives on its action plan, the meeting attendance is good and reflects the work of the chair to engage with the members of the reference group. The feedback from the members is highly positive.

The Northumberland Stonewall group has presented directly to the NSCB and the Vulnerable Young Persons Sub-Committee about the safeguarding needs for children and young people who are Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ). This presentation was well received and the NSCB supported the group to present in the council chamber to members and officer with invite guests.

The NSCB working with the Education reference group reviewed the section 11 audit and developed a s175/s157 audit tool for use by schools and education settings to ensure that the requirements of the DfE statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (July 2015) are met.

All education settings, including alternative providers, are expected to use this tool to regularly self-assess their safeguarding standards against a set of clearly defined criteria agreed by Northumberland's Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB). The process allows the Education and Skills Service, in partnership with the NSCB, a framework to regularly monitor and challenge when necessary safeguarding standards in individual settings.

#### **Strategic Priority 4 – Improving support to especially vulnerable children and high risk adolescents**

The NSCB continues to ensure that all partners are aware of and sure of their role in supporting assessment and making referral to the supporting families programme. This is through the training programme, regular reports to the LSCB from the Children's Senior Manager responsible for Supporting Families.

The work of the Risk Management group using the ARM model continues to respond to and safeguard children and young people who go missing from home or education or who are at risk of being sexually exploited. The NSCB receives reports about what actions are taken to keep them safe and are reassured that the work of the risk management group helps to reduce risk to vulnerable young people and adults.

All children and young people who go missing from home benefit from a return home interview and the quality of the return interviews has been audited by the NSCB. Where appropriate, a vulnerability checklist is completed. This considers a wide range of risk and protective factors and includes all children who have suffered or who are at risk of suffering sexual exploitation. Where appropriate, children's cases are escalated to a weekly risk management group (RMG) that is chaired by a senior manager from the local authority and benefits from a high level of commitment and participation by agency partners. The RMG provides a clear, multi-agency focus on risk and need. Vulnerable adults are also discussed in the group with good input from adult services. This ensures a good read-across between children and adult issues and if required expedites interventions from adult services for parents and carers and transitions for older young people into adult services.

The CYPS strategy has been presented to the NSCB and the partners provided challenge back to the service.



## **Strategic Priority 5 – reviewing our response to sexual exploitation**

The NSCB continues to work closely with the Police in progressing operation sanctuary and has supported partners to add capacity into the multi-agency team based with Northumbria Police.

The sexual exploitation sub group was implemented and is undertaking delegated functions on behalf of Northumberland Safeguarding Children's Board, Safer Northumberland Partnership and NSAB. This group monitors, reviews, improves, and progresses the sexual exploitation strategy action plan.

The SE sub group has now met on four occasions in 2015/16 with excellent attendance and commitment by partner agencies.

The main aim of the group is to influence and oversee implementation of the SE Strategy at a strategic level. It was evident a lot of work had been commenced regarding SE and the group will serve as a hub to share good practice and developments.

Work to date includes

1. The NSCB Risk Management Guidance for young people has been reviewed and the Vulnerability Checklist has been strengthened.
2. Northumberland Adolescent Service have reviewed it's Return Interview process to have a stronger focus on SE

3. The multi-agency SE webinar is nearly completed and will be launched on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016 which coincides with national SE awareness day
4. The training Task & Finish Group continues to work with partners and training action plan agreed
5. The 'Sex and Relationship curriculum' has been updated and rebranded and will now be known as 'relationship and sex education'.
6. Over 1000 existing Northumberland taxi drivers have now received SE training and this is mandated as part of the licence application process to ensure all new drivers access this training.

Future work:

1. Communication campaign across hotels and B/B's
2. The next training priority has been identified as doormen and licensed premises
3. Undertake problem profile
4. Continue implementation and embedding of SE Strategy.

## 9.4 How effective is the NSCB?

Section 9 of this report has detailed the considerable amount of work undertaken by the NSCB, its constituent groups and partners during 2015/16 to lead and support the safeguarding of children and young people in Northumberland and to hold agencies to account for their performance and practice.

The Board monitors progress against its objectives, self-challenges and responsibilities through a variety of methods: e.g.

- The Business Plan which indicates that 90% of tasks were completed or proceeding on time
- The performance and quality assurance framework, which indicates improving partner compliance with safeguarding requirements, the continued re-balancing of the children's safeguarding system and assurance that the quality of multi-agency interventions with children and young people is steadily improving.
- The review of work to address actions, which indicates that progress has been made on all but 2 of the 20 set for 2015/16 from the business plan.
- Review of sub-committee action plans demonstrates the efficacy of the action planning and achievement of outcomes

The Ofsted inspection judgment of 'good' in April 2016 provides external assurance that the Board is making good progress.

The report highlighted:

The NSCB plays an active and often dynamic leadership role in monitoring and shaping services for children. Its Annual Report 2014–15 provides detailed information about the Board's achievements and priorities for 2015–16.

Governance is a strength and partnerships across adults and children's services are well established. Partners challenge each other constructively and hold each other to account.

The Board has played a key role in driving and monitoring strategic developments, such as sexual exploitation, radicalisation, early help and neglect. Sub-committees, such as the sexual exploitation sub-committee, the prevent strategy group and child death overview panel (CDOP) have joint accountabilities. This has further promoted a joined up approach with partners and neighbouring local authorities. The Board collects and scrutinises a range of data from key partners, such as social care, education, police and health. A key indicator set and dashboard are in place to enable the Board to monitor effectively the delivery of its priorities.

Reports concerning outcomes for children looked after particularly those placed out of county, are not provided to the Board as part of the bi-monthly performance data, which would support the Board to understand how their needs and outcomes are met. However, the needs of children looked after are considered by the Board within other reporting mechanisms such as reports from a consortium of six Local Authorities regarding residential placements for children looked after, the independent reviewing service report and adoption and fostering data.

The multi-agency training plan is comprehensive and is responsive to emerging issues. Multi-agency attendance on training courses is good and e-learning courses are widely available. Evaluation includes a rolling programme of telephone surveys amongst different groups of practitioners and managers.

The Board consults with a range of youth groups. Access to an advocacy service has recently been extended by the local authority to children attending child protection conferences. It is too early for the NSCB to know whether this is making a difference.

### **Ofsted identified 3 areas for improvement which are now part of the NSCB improvement plan for 2016/17**

1. Ensure that the Annual Report 2015–16 includes an analysis of the quality of services responsible for safeguarding children.
2. Ensure that performance information gathered through audit and data provides both qualitative and quantitative information about the impact of the neglect and early help strategies, including the consistent application of thresholds.
3. Ensure that the governance framework incorporates a robust audit methodology to strengthen the accuracy of findings.

#### **9.4.1 What are the emerging challenges for the NSCB in 2015/16?**

At its development session in July 2016 the Board considered the issues for itself and the partnership that had emerged during the review process:

The Board needs a better understanding of:

- Out of County Placements for Looked after Children (possibly through the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership)
- Working across regional boundaries to prevent duplication

- Participation and engagement - “voice of child” - extend beyond young people to include under fives
- The use of and the streamlining of data
- The application of Thresholds
- How to ensure succession planning for Key members of the safeguarding workforce
- The implications of the Wood Review and the Government response
- The impact on public services of continuing financial constraint

#### Areas for improvement for the NSCB:

- This annual report will be drafted with information supplied by partner agencies regarding the quality of services they provide in relation to safeguarding children.
- The annual report will be presented to the NSCB members for comment and challenge and final review prior to publication.
- The QIP sub-committee will ensure that performance data provides clear information about the impact of neglect and the early help strategies, including the development of proxy indicators for neglect in early help that will support the NSCB to understand the impact of the strategy.

- The NSCB in the light of the SIF inspection and review of LSCB will review the thresholds documents and re-launch the revised thresholds across all services.
- All training programmes will focus on the application of thresholds across the continuum of services provided to children and young people, including early help within universal services
- The NSCB will undertake a series of audits during 2016-2017 researching the application of thresholds, including from the viewpoint of people making referrals, people receiving them, and the various points within services where thresholds are applied, for example, strategy meetings, and child protection review conferences.
- The NSCB will seek assurance from partner organisations that any actions identified through the audits are completed within agreed timescales.
- The Neglect strategy will be launched during a number of multi-agency ‘Neglect’ roadshows in June 2016
- A robust audit methodology will be drafted and reviewed by NSCB member organisations quality and audit teams to ensure the audit methodology strengthens the accuracy of findings.

These issues informed discussion and debate at the Annual Review meeting as the Board considered its priorities for 2016/19.

From the Annual Review Process and the Annual Performance Report the NSCB has identified a series of challenges for itself to be addressed in 2015/16. These are designed to maintain and increase the current momentum for positive change in the development and delivery of services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

## **10.0 Challenges for 2016/17**

### **10.1 Priorities the NSCB is setting itself for 2016/17**

The business plan for 2015/16 was set for a year due to significant changes to the chairing arrangements and the new role of business manager being introduced. At the development day the NSCB believed that the current priorities should stand as initial progress has been good, however there is still progress to be made in respect of the priorities

Give this the NSCB Priorities for 2016-2019 are:

- Improving focus on the child's experience of services and better embedding it in practice
- Further promoting preventative and early help approaches
- Improving partnership working with education settings on the safeguarding agenda
- Improving support to especially vulnerable children and high risk adolescents
- Reviewing our response to sexual exploitation

## **11.0 Conclusions**

These will be set out in greater detail and action plans set in the Business plan for 2016/19

Overall, looking back over 2015-16 the Board, through its partners, has delivered a strong, effective and challenging programme of work designed to consistently and continuously improve what it is like to be a child growing up in Northumberland. This report demonstrates the range of work and the impact it has had, as well as the Board's ambition to be even better at meeting its statutory objectives and functions. Whilst there is, as always, a lot to still to do, 2015-16 was a year which culminated in a strong Ofsted report, much improved internal and external challenge between partners on the Board, a strong degree of shared ownership and excellent co-operation. The journey in 2015/16 has built on the strong and mature relationships of the partners. This has enabled the NSCB to make steady forward development, coupled with growing mutuality of purpose, and respect.

As a consequence, the Board is able to set its priorities for 2016-19 with confidence. The challenges the Board has agreed to pose across the system are based on sound evidence and good data, and are designed to keep partners focused on the complex

issues that need to be resolved. The greatest challenge of all is maintaining progress, in a challenging and changing public sector environment, through a time of policy changes and new National priorities without losing sight of what matters – the children and young people of the County.



## Appendices

1. NSCB Self-assessment 2015/16
2. Ofsted in Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, April 2016
3. Glossary of Terms
4. NSCB Board Membership
5. NSCB s11 Audit Report 2015/16
6. NSCB Improvement Plan 2016
7. CDOP Annual Report 2015/16
8. NSCB Audit Impact Statement 2015/16